

Final Project Evaluation
(October 2002)

Community Co-Managed Park System for Belize
(BZE/98/G32/A/1G/99)

A UNDP/GEF Project
Funded by the GEF and PACT

FINAL DRAFT

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Acronyms

AMT	Aguacaliente Management Team
AWS	Aguacaliente Wildlife Sanctuary
BAS	Belize Audubon Society
CBO	Community-Based Organization
CLTP	Community Leadership Training Programme
EE	Environmental Education
FBNP	Five Blues National Park
FCFR	Freshwater Creek Forest Reserve
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GOB	Government of Belize
GPWS	Gales Point Wildlife Sanctuary
LMT	Local Management Team
MED	Ministry of Economic Development
MNREI	Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment, Trade and Industry
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PACT	Protected Areas Conservation Trust
PIR	Project Implementation Review
PSC	Project Steering Committee
RMA	Rapid Management Assessment
SAGE	Southern Alliance for Grassroots Empowerment
GEF/SGP	GEF Small Grants Programme
SPEAR	Society for the Promotion of Education & Research
TIDE	Toledo Institute for Development and Environment
TPR	Tri-Partite Review
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

1. Methodology

This evaluation is based on in-country interviews and review of documentation conducted during a 14-day period in August 2002.

Interviews were conducted with: the Government of Belize (MED, MNREI); Belize's national conservation trust fund (PACT); the Project Manager; the National Project Director; members of the Project Steering Committee; NGOs; CBOs; LMTs; Village Council members; consultants involved in this and other relevant projects; UNDP/Belize; GEF/SGP Belize; and wildlife researchers.

Meetings were requested with the key donors involved in biodiversity conservation in Belize, but because the GEF is the primary donor in this field, and because the other key donor, the European Union, does not have representation in Belize, this was not pursued. It is therefore important that UNDP/Belize ensure that the key findings of this evaluation are shared with other donors interested in conserving biodiversity in Belize.

Field visits were made to: Freshwater Creek Forest Reserve, the nearby communities of San Estevan and Santa Marta and the FFCFR office in Orange Walk; Five Blues National Park and the bordering community of St. Margarets; the communities of Laguna, Dump, and Big Falls close to the Aguacaliente Wildlife Sanctuary; the AMT office in Punta Gorda; and, the Gales Point community bordering the Gales Point Wildlife Sanctuary.

Documentation reviewed included co-management agreements, the UNDP Country Cooperation Framework (CCF) for Belize, the original project document and the two logical framework matrices that served to revise it, most of the environmental education materials produced by the project, all TPRs and PIRs, PSC minutes, two of the four RMAs produced by the project, the framework for developing PA management plans produced by the project, the systematization report, project files, summary descriptions of other relevant projects in Belize, summary descriptions of other relevant GEF projects in the world, and other documentation requested from the Project Manager including list of people hired by the project, list of people fired during the project, list of all equipment provided by the project, list of PSC members over the life of the project.

Audit reports were not reviewed for lack of time and because this will be done by UNDP/Belize.

The evaluation "team" was comprised of only one person, the UNDP/GEF consultant. Unavoidable circumstances did not allow UNDP/Belize to participate more fully. Moreover, prior to the mission, the ARR was unaware of the need for UNDP participation in the evaluation. Lack of UNDP representation on the team did not allow maximum benefit (learning from the project) to be derived by UNDP. Nevertheless, the keen interest of the ARR in the project, and his strong desire and commitment to learn from the evaluation experience will greatly mitigate this shortcoming. Finally, the evaluation team could have benefited from a Belizean team member with relevant expertise.

2. Executive Summary

This UNDP/GEF Medium Size Project ends this month. The project lasted three-years and four-months, and was financed by GEF and the Protected Areas Conservation Trust (PACT), Belize's national conservation trust fund. PACT acted as the Implementing Agency for this US \$825,000 project, of which US \$75,000 was contributed by PACT.

According to the original project document approved by the GEF, the project was to “strengthen and solidify the co-management structure in existing parks, expand the network of co-managed parks, develop co-management infrastructure network, and create a model for a new type of protected area for private-public lands”.

By project end it was expected that “a system of community co-managed parks would have been established, the number of NGOs involved in co-management of protected areas (PAs) in Belize would have increased, the capacity of communities to manage PAs would have been enhanced, and an ancillary park system managed by community organizations under the direction of the Conservation Division of the Forest Department would have been created”.

Twice during the three-year project, significant and substantive changes were made to the project objectives and activities. Consequently, end of project expectations were also significantly modified during the project.

At project end, the critical barriers preventing effective co-management¹ of PAs remain basically unchanged from the pre-project situation. As a result, management of the four PAs included in the project has not significantly improved from the pre-project situation.

Critical barriers were never clearly defined during the project design stage (as they should have been). Because it is essential to understand these barriers in order to overcome them (the purpose of GEF projects), this evaluator has attempted to identify and describe these below. Critical barriers preventing effective co-management of PAs in Belize appear to be:

- 1) Lack of capacity of the key government entity responsible for management of PAs, i.e., the Forest Department², to implement their responsibilities related to co-management of PAs.
- 2) Lack of capacity of CBOs to implement their responsibilities related to co-management of PAs.
- 3) Inadequate policy and legislative framework for biodiversity conservation in PAs and for co-management of PAs.

¹ Unless otherwise specified, co-management in this document refers to co-management between the Forest Department and CBOs.

² With the restructuring of the MNREI, the Forest Department is now organized into two Divisions, the Sustainable Forest Management Division (comprised of the 3 Programme Areas of Exploitation Control, Sustainable Forest Management, and Pine Beetle Control), and the Biodiversity Division comprised of 4 Programme Areas including Protected Areas, Wildlife Management, Biodiversity Management, and Law Enforcement and Wetlands.

- 4) No adequate mechanism in place to review PA management plans, thus quality of management plans is not assured.
- 5) Inappropriate financial demands placed on CBOs, detracting from their prospects of becoming economically viable.
- 6) Lack of a clear model of co-management describing: a) the respective roles and responsibilities of the co-managing entities, b) the organizational structure that would best allow for communities to be meaningfully involved in co-management, c) how such a structure would function, and with what resources, d) financial flows and mechanisms required to obtain/secure economic viability, e) staffing requirements, f) collaborative requirements to ensure technical soundness in PA planning and management.

Although Barrier # 6 (above) was never clearly defined, it was recognition of this barrier that resulted in the project. The project was, in fact, intended to address this barrier. Partly because it was never so clearly stated, the project failed to do so.

Although limited success can (and has been) achieved despite these barriers, as long as they exist, there is significant risk that investments in biodiversity conservation in Belizean PAs³ will not be successful, and, even if successful in the short term, may not be enduring.

At present, Belizean law allows for uncontrolled “de-reservation” (or withdrawal from protected status) of PAs, and also allows for what would normally be illegal extraction of resources in certain PAs upon the Minister’s approval. Thus, donor investment in conserving biodiversity within PAs in Belize is not, at present, secured. Monies spent on protecting an area would be ill spent if the area is later de-reserved. Likewise, monies spent on enhancing capacities to enforce regulations pertaining to fishing, hunting or extraction of timber would be ill spent if these activities are being allowed by government where such activities are not allowed by law. Therefore, it is recommended that the GEF carefully consider this and other barriers outlined above in the negotiation and design of any future PA management/biodiversity conservation projects in Belize.

Through a series of modifications, the project altered its ultimate *goal*, i.e., the conservation of biodiversity in PAs, and focused instead on a few *necessary but insufficient* elements related to this, mostly organizational and individual leadership development, and environmental awareness – both of which *contribute* to this goal, but neither of which *are* the ultimate goal. The project also altered its primary *objective*, which was to describe and to test a new approach to management of PAs, i.e., shared management or “co-management” between the Forest Department and CBOs. Although the project succeeded in enhancing community leadership skills and increasing environmental awareness, the original stated goal and objective (on the basis of which GEF funds were allocated) were not achieved.

³ Unless otherwise specified, PAs refer to public-land PAs not to private PAs (which are also quite common in Belize).

3. Overall Recommendation Regarding Future GEF Assistance

There should be no further GEF funds provided for either management or co-management (between the Forest Department and CBOs) of PAs (other than those funds provided under the GEF/SGP) until the critical barriers to effective implementation of this form of co-management are removed. This recommendation applies only to sole management of PAs by the Forest Department or to co-management between the Forest Department and CBOs.

This recommendation does *not* apply to:

- Co-management arrangements such as that proposed for the Golden Stream PA. The proposed PA, the Golden Stream, is private land that is managed by an NGO (with CBO participation) and, as such, the Forest Department has no responsibility for enforcement in the area. Therefore, lack of Government capacity to implement enforcement is not an issue in this case, and thus does not present a barrier.
- Co-management between the Forest Department and NGOs. Compared to CBOs, NGOs have more resources available to them and it is realistic to assume that they either have, or can get, the resources required to ensure adequate enforcement. At present, this is unrealistic for CBOs—they must depend on the Forest Department for this. In the case of co-management between the Forest Department and an NGO, a detailed plan should be required providing convincing evidence that the necessary delegation of authority as well as adequate resources (of the NGO or from co-financing with other donors) will be available to take on the enforcement responsibility.
- Co-management arrangements involving the Fisheries Department. Compared to the Forest Department, more government funds have been dedicated to ensuring at least a minimal presence in marine protected areas, thereby enabling at least some enforcement of regulations.
- Biodiversity projects other than those focused on PAs.
- GEF funds for climate change, international waters, or ozone initiatives.

It is recommended that GEF/SGP funds continue to be made available to CBOs to enhance the capacity of CBOs to co-manage PAs.

4. Critical Barriers to Effective Co-Management of PAs in Belize

At the end of this three year and four month project, the barriers preventing effective co-management⁴ of PAs remain basically unchanged from the pre-project situation. Although these barriers were never clearly defined during the project design stage (as they should have been), it is clear that most barriers that existed then still exist today.

4.1 Definition of the Critical Barriers

The six critical barriers preventing effective co-management of PAs in Belize are:

- 1) Lack of capacity of the key government entity responsible for management of PAs, i.e., the Forest Department⁵, to implement their responsibilities related to co-management of PAs.
- 2) Lack of capacity of CBOs to implement their responsibilities related to co-management of PAs.
- 3) Inadequate policy and legislative framework for biodiversity conservation in PAs and for co-management of PAs.
- 4) No adequate mechanism in place to review PA management plans, thus quality of management plans is not assured.
- 5) Inappropriate financial demands placed on CBOs , thus detracting from their prospects of becoming economically viable.
- 6) Lack of a clear model of co-management describing: a) the respective roles and responsibilities of the co-managing entities, b) the organizational structure that would best allow for communities to be meaningfully involved in co-management, c) how such a structure would function and with what resources, d) financial flows and mechanisms required to obtain/secure viability, e) staffing requirements, f) collaborative requirements to ensure technical soundness in PA planning and management.

4.2 Background Information Related to Critical Barriers

Critical Barrier # 1:

This lack of capacity is attributed to lack of government priority assigned to PAs, manifested in the miniscule budget assigned to the Protected Areas Programme. Lack of capacity of the relevant government entity is also attributed to lack of political will, manifested in recognized inadequate capacity and few attempts to rectify the situation (e.g., no reinvestment of revenues earned from PAs back into PAs, few attempts to seek support from donors to enhance capacity).

⁴ Unless otherwise specified, co-management is understood to be co-management between the Forest Department and CBOs

⁵ With the restructuring of the MNREI, the Forest Department is now organized into two Divisions, the Sustainable Forest Management Division (comprised of the 3 Programme Areas of Exploitation Control, Sustainable Forest Management, and Pine Beetle Control), and the Biodiversity Division comprised of 4 programme areas including Protected Areas, Wildlife Management, Biodiversity Management, and Law Enforcement and Wetlands.

The Protected Areas Programme receives less than ½ of 1 % of the already very restrictive budget assigned to the Ministry to which it belongs, the MNREI. And, although PAs cover more than 45% of the national territory, there are no government staff in any of the nation's National Parks, Wildlife Sanctuaries or Nature Reserves. The Protected Areas Programme has only 2 staff (both based in the capital city), and not even one full-time vehicle.

The newly (Sept. 2, 2002) adopted institutional structure of the MNREI will not significantly enhance the government's ability to effectively engage in co-management of PAs. With an annual budget of only US \$116,629, (Estimate of Revenue and Expenditures for 2002-2003, Government of Belize), and with none of this amount allocated for on-the-ground management of PAs, the Protected Areas Programme cannot possibly adequately co-manage (or manage) PAs, even with backstopping from the entire Forest Department. According to the new institutional structure, the entire Forest Department (as opposed to the Protected Areas Programme alone) should be more involved in PA management. Nevertheless, it seems highly unlikely that the overall situation regarding management of PAs will significantly improve. After all, the Forest Department is, itself, stretched to the very limit. The entire Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment, Trade and Industry (to which the Forest Department belongs) receives a mere 1.6 % of the national budget (Estimate of Revenue and Expenditures for 2002-2003, Government of Belize). Given these extreme resource constraints, it is highly unrealistic to assume that the Forest Department can adequately manage the nation's PAs, or even monitor the management of these PAs by others.

Critical Barrier # 2:

CBOs do not at present possess the technical expertise nor the organizational capacity to effectively co-manage PAs. Most operate through Local Management Teams (LMTs) with LMT Boards comprised of 7 volunteers who themselves engage in very limited PA management activities (mostly "manning" of entrance areas). LMTs simply do not have the time or the capacity to manage PAs.

Critical Barrier #3:

At present, co-management in Belize takes place with no legal framework that allows for it. Furthermore, the legislation currently applied to allow for co-management is inappropriate, and, on some points, contradictory to existing co-management initiatives.

The National Parks System Act gives the Minister great discretionary powers to deviate from the Act, and as such provides little guarantee for long-term conservation of biodiversity in PAs. Numerous licenses to extract resources in PAs (where this is not normally allowed) or to cultivate crops inside PAs have been granted by applying such discretionary powers. In at least one of the PAs included in the project, a human settlement, including sugarcane fields, exists within the PA, allowed by a former Minister, and large tracts of what was previously part of the PA have been "de-reserved". This "loophole" in the legislation pertaining to PAs detracts from conservation efforts

and certainly does not assure external donors that their conservation investments will be cost-effective in either the short or the long term.

De-reservation of PAs, i.e., the practice of converting areas within PAs into non-protected areas, is common in Belize. There is no legislation regarding “de-reservation” of PAs. This makes conservation investments very risky indeed.

Critical Barrier # 4:

At present an ad-hoc committee, the Protected Areas Technical Evaluation Committee (PATEC) exists. PATEC has not met for some time, and has never been constituted as a standing committee.

Critical Barrier # 5:

According to the standard (CBO) co-management agreement, 10% of earned revenues by co-managing entities is paid to Government. This revenue goes to the General Revenue and is not returned to the Forest Department. Until recently, another 20% was to be paid to PACT. PACT has, during the time period over which this evaluation took place, done away with this requirement.

Nevertheless, PACT continues to attach a fee to concessions within PAs. Not only are fees demanded from the CBOs, these do not receive any of the revenues the government collects such as the fee for conducting research in a PA or the fee for camping in a PA.

Critical Barrier # 6:

Co-Management of PAs between GOB and CBOs

Co-management of PAs has been taking place between the GOB and CBOs since the mid 1990s. The first official co-management agreement of this kind was between the Forest Department and Friends of Five Blues National Park, a CBO based in the village of St. Margarets. That agreement was signed in 1995. Five Blues NP was one of the four PAs included in this project. In addition, Laughing Bird Caye Natural Monument has been co-managed between the Forest Department and a CBO, the Friends of Nature, since 2001. Lastly, the Caye Caulker Marine Reserve is also co-managed (since 2001) between the GOB (in this case the agreement is between both the Fisheries and the Forest Departments) and a CBO, FAMRACC (Forest and Marine Reserve Association of Caye Caulker). In sharing and learning from experiences in co-management between GOB and CBOs, the relatively long history of co-management (albeit not formally recognized as such) between GOB and fishing cooperatives in Belize should also be considered. No formal co-management agreement has ever been signed between these later entities, but the experience may be relevant.

Other Forms of Co-Management in Belize

Other forms of co-management have a longer history in Belize. Co-management between the government and NGOs (as contrasted to CBOs) has existed since 1982. The Belize Audubon Society (BAS) has had the longest and most extensive history of this form of co-management in Belize. BAS currently co-manages eight PAs. Local Advisory and Regional Advisory Committees are being piloted as a structure for

involving community stakeholder groups in the management of these PAs. The NGOs liaise with communities living near the PAs through these Committees. The first co-management agreement for a *Marine* Reserve was with another NGO, TIDE (Toledo Institute for Development and Environment). That agreement was signed in 2000. TIDE's approach is different from that of BAS in several respects. Another NGO, TASTE (Toledo Association for Sustainable Tourism and Empowerment), co-manages the Sapodilla Cayes Marine Reserve.

Yet another form of co-management in Belize is co-management of *private* reserves between Government and NGOs. The first such agreement was between the Forest Department and the Programme for Belize (PFB), an NGO.

This section is not intended to provide a comprehensive description of the various co-management models existing in Belize, but rather merely serves to point out to the reader that forms of co-management exist in Belize other than the one this project focused on.

4.3 Recommendations Regarding Removal of Barriers

Removal of Barrier # 1

The Government should take immediate and concrete steps to pursue strengthening the Forest Department, and in particular, the Protected Areas Programme of the Forest Department. Use of some UNDP/Belize core resources for this purpose is encouraged. In addition, the GOB should actively pursue assistance from other donors, and if requested by GOB, UNDP/Belize should assist the government in this regard, perhaps by organizing a donor roundtable.

Removal of Barrier # 2

The GEF, through the SGP, should provide immediate follow-on assistance to those CBOs involved in the co-management project to enhance their capacity to implement their responsibilities related to co-management of PAs. It is recommended that the GEF/SGP fund the development of management plans for the protected areas included in the co-management project. It is recommended that the plans be developed using the framework developed by the co-management project, and considering, as well, the activities outlined in Annex 3 of this document.

CBOs should seek to partner/collaborate with NGOs (both Belizean and international) or other private institutions (again, both Belizean and international) to enhance their capacities, and also to ensure that until such a time as their own capacity is adequate, the tasks involved in managing PAs for which they are responsible are adequately addressed through these partnerships/collaborative arrangements.

Removal of Barrier # 3

Revise the National Parks System Act to reduce the current unacceptably high level of risk of ineffectual investments in conservation of biodiversity in PAs. The clause in the existing Act that gives the Minister extensive discretionary powers should be eliminated

or revised. De-reservation of PAs should be specifically addressed in the Act, and the criteria required for de-reservation clearly outlined.

The National Parks System Act should also be revised to avoid contradictions with co-management agreements. For example, while co-management agreements allow for infrastructure to be built during the one-year period following the signing of the agreement and before a management plan is presented, the Act stipulates that no infrastructure can be developed until a management plan is presented.

Removal of Barrier # 4

The Forest Department should formalize procedures for reviewing proposed PA management plans and should establish a standing, technical committee to review such plans before approval. It is essential that at least several individuals on this committee have on-the-ground experience in PA management (preferably as PA Directors), and not merely theoretical knowledge of PA management. Representatives of private PAs in Belize should also be included on the committee. There appears to be rather extensive experience in PA management in Belize (although not in either government or CBOs). This expertise should be represented on the committee, along with representatives of government and others. Establishment of this Committee as a standing committee, as long as there is very strong technical expertise in protected areas management represented on the committee, would suffice to remove this barrier. It is critically important that people with extensive *on-the-ground* experience as National Park Directors and Forest Reserve managers be represented on the committee.

Note: Government is in the process of transforming PATEC (Protected Areas Technical Evaluation Committee), an ad-hoc committee that has not been functional for some time, into a standing committee responsible for reviewing proposed PA management plans. If the composition of the new PATEC reflects the considerations outlined above, barrier # 4 will soon be removed.

Removal of Barrier # 5

Until such a time as Associations become economically viable (i.e., they can pay for PA staff, essential equipment, and other normal operating costs) it is recommended that no payment to Government be demanded from them. This payment detracts from achieving financial sustainability. Once economic viability is demonstrated, such an arrangement could be initiated, but then instead of the current practice of paying 10% to General Revenue, this should go directly to the Protected Areas Programme of the Forest Department. Such revenues should be used for the express purpose of implementing government's responsibilities as per co-management agreements (i.e., enforcement and some infrastructure development).

At the time of the evaluation mission, in addition to the 10% due to Government, an additional 20% of revenues earned by co-managing entities was to be paid to PACT. This requirement has since been done away with, and thus no longer presents a barrier.

Nevertheless, the fee which PACT now attaches to concessions within PAs still presents a barrier which requires attention.

Removal of Barrier #6

Engage a variety of stakeholders in conducting a review of the various co-management models currently in use in Belize, describing these and comparing and contrasting these with other tested co-management models existing in other countries (Nicaragua, Zimbabwe, etc.). Describe both successful and unsuccessful elements of these models. Based on this, describe: a) the respective roles and responsibilities of the co-managing entities, b) the organizational structure that would best allow for communities to be meaningfully involved in co-management, c) how such a structure would function and with what resources, d) financial flows and mechanisms required to obtain/secure viability, e) staffing requirements, f) collaborative requirements to ensure technical soundness in PA planning and management. Prepare a policy that describes the fundamental requirements for co-management of PAs in Belize, allowing for flexibility and creativity. Incorporate this policy in the national protected areas policy (planned for revision).

5. Project Concept and Design

5.1 Project Concept

The concept of the project, although never so explicitly stated, was to conserve biodiversity in PAs that are actually or potentially threatened by unsustainable use by local communities and others.

This concept was solid. The focus on PAs makes sense because most of the globally significant biodiversity in Belize presumably exists within these areas. The focus on areas under threat also makes sense as these require more immediate attention.

5.2 Project Approach

The approach adopted to reach the goal, i.e., enhance the motivation and incentives of one of the primary stakeholders (i.e., communities living around the PAs) to protect the PAs they live close to, was appropriate. The approach to enhancing the motivation of these stakeholders was to give them decision-making responsibilities regarding the management of the PA, and allow them to derive benefits from the PA.

More should have been done to understand the motivations of the various stakeholders (especially the communities) for becoming involved in management of PAs. From the evaluator's visits to the communities, the single most important motivating factor seems to be the prospect of deriving financial benefit from PAs from tourism. This may not be a realistic expectation in the case of some of the PAs included in the project (or in the case of others around Belize). Expectation of financial gain is one of the most common motivations for local people to want to become involved in PA management, but others

include: a) apparent threat to the resources they currently depend on, b) desire to benefit from use of a resource not currently available to them, c) nostalgia about the way things were. The project approach should have considered a wider spectrum of possible motivations. Had it done so, the design of the project would have been improved.

5.3 *Project Design*

5.3.1 Time Frame

The time allowed for the project, i.e., three years, was too short.

5.3.2 Project Scope

The scope of the project was too broad.

5.3.3 Project Budget

The budget for the project, given the scope, was too small.

5.3.4 Site Selection

Little attention seems to have been given to establishing criteria for selection of PAs and communities to be involved in the project. This was a critical error. The project would have likely been more successful had it included fewer PAs. Because the project was to have described a pilot/model for co-management of PAs, inclusion of one or two PAs, instead of four, may have been more beneficial. The geographic distance between the four PAs also negatively affected the ability of the project to achieve its objectives. It may have made sense to include one National Park (where no extractive use of resources is allowed and where primary motivation for local participation in management is prospect of financial gain), and one Forest Reserve (where extractive use of resource is allowed and where primary motivation for local participation in management is prospect of use of resources themselves, e.g. fishing, hunting, extraction of timber.) This would have been beneficial because management of these two types of PAs is significantly different, thus, co-management models would differ from Forest Reserve to National Park.

5.3.5 Use of Project Development Funds (PDFs) to Ensure Solid Project Design

A PDF A project would have helped to ensure a better project design by: a) establishing clear criteria for site selection, b) undertaking preliminary consultations with communities before any decision was made about sites/communities to be included in the project, c) clarifying appropriate objectives and outputs of the project, and d) identifying the best institutional arrangements (who should act as Implementing Agency, what should be the role of the PSC, etc.).

5.4 *Project Document*

The original project document was severely flawed. It was unclear, often contradictory, and unrealistic in terms of what was to have been achieved. Twice during the three-year project, significant and substantive changes were made to the project. The first revision took place in December 1999; the second a year later, in January 2001. Changes were documented in the form of Logical Framework Matrices. In some cases, changes represented improvements, in others they did not. Appropriate, clearly defined, and comprehensive outputs were never specified, and in part as a result of this, the project objectives were not fully achieved.

It is normal, and even beneficial, for projects to undergo some revision related to project *activities, time frames and budget allocations*. One purpose of regular M&E during a project is, after all, to identify changes that should be made during the project life to enhance prospects of project success. It is *not* normal, however, for project *objectives and approaches* to be significantly changed after project approval by the GEF.

The number and extent of changes and lack of clarity in the project documents, make it extremely difficult to evaluate the project on the basis of these documents. In many cases, the original expected end result has nothing to do with the modified one. For example, in the original document, one of the expected end results of the project was “increased number of NGOs participating in co-management of parks”. This changed to the seemingly unrelated end result, “The project is collaborating with the communities within the pilot areas to prepare an infrastructure development plan for their area and to mobilize the resources to implement the infrastructure development plan.” It is not clear how the one relates to the other. Nevertheless, neither the original nor the changed end result is appropriate. It is unclear whether the intent of the original end result was to further a different co-management model, i.e., co-management between government and NGOs (as opposed to co-management between government and CBOs – the focus of this project), or whether it was to enhance the capacity of CBOs through the formation of partnerships with NGOs. The first end result would have been inappropriate in this project. The second, would have been appropriate, but should have been clearly stated. This is only one of many possible examples of how the project documents were flawed.

6. **Project Activities and Products: Their Relevance, Quality & Impact**

6.1 *Framework for Developing PA Management Plans*

Cost:	US \$7,396 for two consultancies + cost of workshop itself
Relevance:	Low
Quality:	Low
Impact:	Low
Cost-Effectiveness:	Low

A framework for developing PA management plans was developed and was accepted by the Forest Department for use in future development of management plans for PAs in Belize.

The framework does not, in the evaluator's opinion, represent an improvement over existing frameworks commonly used throughout the world. It is unclear why such a framework was developed when solid frameworks already exist. There was no need to re-invent the wheel. Greater emphasis should have been placed on reviewing existing frameworks before deciding that Belize had to have its own. At the end of the exercise to develop the framework, it was decided after all to adhere to an existing framework, i.e., Wilson's guidelines⁶, and that modifications would be made to the format according to the agreed upon changes. A workbook to guide implementation of the framework was also to have been produced. Neither the final format for management plans nor the workbook has been produced as of the time of this evaluation.

The exercise of developing the framework may have helped those participating in the workshop to better understand what management plans are for, and how they should be developed, but, again, this might have been accomplished by simply reviewing existing frameworks.

6.2 Development of PA Management Plans

Cost:	0
Relevance:	High
Quality:	NA
Impact:	NA
Cost-Effectiveness:	NA

No PA management plans were developed during the project. The reasons provided by the Project Manager for this shortcoming is that the Local Management Teams (LMTs) were not at the stage of preparedness to become involved in PA management, and, in addition this budget line of the project was significantly under-budgeted. Instead the project focused on enhancing organizational and leadership skills of the LMTs.

Organizational and leadership training was clearly needed and beneficial, but in addition to this training, emphasis should have been placed on preparing the LMTs for actual PA management. Efforts should have been made to review PA management plans for other PAs in Belize and from other parts of the world to better understand what is involved in PA management and to become familiar with good models of PA plans. The GEF and others have funded the development of many PA management plans around the world. Excellent examples of these are available. The opportunity to study these would have been helpful to LMTs in enhancing their awareness of what is involved in managing a

⁶ "Guidelines for the Preparation and Content of Terrestrial Protected Areas under Co-Management Agreements" (Wilson, 2001)

PA. It was apparent to the evaluator that LMTs were, at end of project, still unaware of many of the tasks involved in PA management (other than providing visitor services). And, in the case of the FCFR, LMT members were not clear about what was/was not allowed in the PA they hope to co-manage. The LMT was not able to provide any details about existing and past timber concessions (who has these, for how long, and for what type/level of extraction, etc.), or allowable and illegal activities in the Forest Reserve. This is not a reflection on the LMTs, but rather on the project. Annex 3 to this report outlines some of the activities that might have usefully been pursued (in addition to studying PA plans) in the elaboration of PA management plans.

Because PA management plans were not developed during the project (as was planned), the Project Manager, in an attempt to help the LMTs get funding for the development of such plans, drafted proposals for this and submitted these to the GEF/SGP. To date none of these proposals have been funded as the GEF/SGP feels there was insufficient community involvement in the development of the proposals. Steps are now being taken to address this shortcoming, and there is some likelihood that assistance will be provided to develop management plans for most, if not all, of the four PAs.

In the event that the GEF/SGP does fund the development of management plans, it will be important to clearly outline project activities, expected project outputs and outcomes, and the process for achieving these (see Annex 3 for some suggestions in this regard).

6.3 Enhancing Capacity of CBOs to Manage PAs & Enhancing Management of PAs

Cost:	Unable to determine
Relevance:	High
Quality:	Low
Impact:	Low
Cost-Effectiveness:	Unable to determine

Although some helpful activities were undertaken and some useful equipment provided, this was insufficient to significantly enhance the capacity of the LMTs to manage PAs. Much more attention should have been placed on this aspect of the project. Also, as a general observation, more training should have been done in Belize and less abroad.

Many basic PA co-management issues remain to be resolved, such as, for example, the functioning of the LMTs and the LMT Boards. Clearly a Board (comprised of 7 persons from local communities) cannot manage a PA, yet, at present, this seems to be the plan in the case of Five Blues NP (the only PA for which a co-management agreement exist). These volunteer Board members are currently taking turns “manning” the entrance to the NP on their day off from other unrelated responsibilities. Clearly, this is not sustainable in the long-term. And, even if sufficient funds existed to pay for park personnel, the mechanism whereby communities (not just LMTs) would benefit from the PAs is

unclear. Is some dividend eventually to be paid to community members? Are community members to have special access to certain resources in PAs? What is the formal mechanism for sharing information between LMTs and Local Village Councils? These, and many other questions that might have usefully been answered by the project still remain unanswered at project end.

While the project was ongoing, project funds were used to pay stipends for Rangers, thus, at least some (although very limited) PA management activities other than simply collecting entrance fees were taking place (in the case of at least one of the PAs). Since the project concluded its field activities, all Rangers and others involved in any aspect of PA management other than manning the entrance gate have been terminated due to lack of funding for their salaries.

Insufficient attention was given to ensuring sustainability, either by seeking follow-on funding with enough advance before project end, or by finding ways of achieving financial viability (perhaps not a realistic goal for the immediate future).

In the case of Five Blues NP, the number of visitors to the Park increased significantly last year. The increase was attributed to greater awareness of the PA due to distribution by the Belize Tourism Board (BTB) of a project-developed brochure about the PA. Because entrance fees represent the sole source of revenue for the PA, this revenue is very important. Yet, more brochures had not been taken to the BTB after the first set was exhausted because of confusion regarding possible fees to be paid to the BTB. The project should have helped to sort this out, along with the larger issue of economic viability. For example, even a mock work up of recurrent operating costs, number of staff required, equipment required, etc., could have helped to give the LMT an idea of what they need to aim for, and how they might possibly get there. In the case of Five Blues NP, the LMT was not able to provide an indication of revenues earned during the previous year from entrance fees, or how much was spent by the LMT (this information was, however, recorded in their record book). Nevertheless, one would hope that some general idea of financial viability would be in mind, even if not exact figures. This is not a reflection on that LMT, but rather a reflection of the lack of attention given to these matters in the project.

The project:

- Provided limited operating equipment to help mobilize and facilitate the work of 4 LMTs (1 vehicle, 1 computer and 1 printer for each LMT, 1 vehicle radio and a hand-held unit for Five Blues (these did not work due to poor reception), 1 chainsaw and other tools for clearing of trails and demarcation of park boundaries for 2 LMTs, 3 park benches for Five Blues).
- A few LMT members visited two PAs (Half Moon Caye Natural Monument and Laughing Bird Caye National Park) to exchange experiences on co-management. This type of activity is very helpful.
- Members of the Five Blues LMT visited Chaa Creek Resort to exchange experiences on ecotourism. This type of activity is very helpful.

- 8 LMT members (2 from each area) undertook a visit, organized by the University of Idaho, to visit PAs in the U.S. In this evaluator's opinion, it would have been less costly and more helpful to visit more PAs in Belize instead of visiting Yellowstone, Grand Teton and other PAs in the U.S. Those PAs, with more than a million visitors a year and enormous budgets compared to the budgets available to even the best funded PAs in Belize, do not provide a realistic model for the 4 PAs involved in this project. Furthermore, the community visited in the U.S., e.g., Jackson, is not representative of local communities living around PAs either in the U.S. or elsewhere. Jackson is known as a millionaire town, and as such would have little in common with any of the villages participating in the project.
- 2 LMT members (one from both Five Blues and Freshwater Creek) participated in a workshop in Mexico conducted by RARE on tourism outreach. (According to the Project Manager, the training was not considered helpful because the level was too advanced for the participants.)
- Trained 4 people from St. Margarets (the community by Five Blues National Park) to become spelunking tour guides. Training was done by a private tour operator. The training was of good quality and was considered helpful. None of those trained, however, ended up working for the LMT as tour guides. Two left to work with a private tour operator, and two are no longer interested in working as tour guides. The model of contracting with experienced private entities to provide training is a good one which should be further pursued. Lack of ability of the LMT to retain the trained persons is indicative of another problem (e.g., lack of meaningful financial motivation) which the project should have tackled.
- 2 persons (1 LMT member from Five Blues and the Project Field Coordinator for Freshwater Creek) participated in a course on tourism at INBIO in Costa Rica. (No information was obtained by the evaluator on the quality or application of this activity.)
- Involved LMT members in mangrove restoration on Gales Point peninsula covering small portions of a one-mile stretch along the peninsula. Seedlings were collected and replanted. No monitoring of the seedlings took place after planting, thus it is impossible to know if this effort was successful.
- Signs were made and put up in all PAs (This was an appropriate activity. The evaluator noted, however, a problem with letters falling off several signs. For example, the sign that once read "Now entering Five Blues National Park", now reads "No entering Five Blues National Park" (a message contrary to the one intended).
- Developed logos for 3 PAs that were used on road signs and letterhead.
- Produced color brochures for Five Blues NP (one promoting the NP and one promoting the Bed and Breakfasts owned by two local women's cooperatives). 2000 copies were made.
- Produced large wall maps for each of the 4 PAs (4 maps). The evaluator asked to see the map in one of the areas. No one from the LMT who attended the meeting had knowledge of the map.
- Assisted LMTs in drafting proposals for: 1) Development and improvement of the trail system at Five Blues. The proposal was submitted to RARE, but was not funded because, according to RARE guidelines, trails must be able to pay for themselves, and this was not considered feasible. 2) Protection of the Hawksbill turtle in the Gales

Point Wildlife Sanctuary area. The proposal was funded by PACT after some delays due to inclusion of request to pay salary of a ranger (when payment of salaries is not allowed under PACT guidelines). Funds will not be released for another year pending qualification for receipt of PACT funds which stipulate that organizations, including community based ones, be legally registered and in existence for a period of at least one year before they are eligible for PACT funds. 3) Infrastructure development in Five Blues NP (latrines, canoe dock). PACT funded the project, which is now underway. 4) Development of protected area management plans. Proposals were submitted to GEF/SGP. It is probable that at least two, and perhaps 3 of the proposals will be funded. (See comments in section on...)

- Developed work plans for 4 LMTs covering the 1-year period from May 2002 to April 2003 (i.e., period immediately following project completion). Instead of contracting a consultant to develop the plans, these should have been developed by the Project Manager together with the LMTs.
- Facilitated Five Blues LMT to become a member of MEA (the Mesoamerican Ecotourism Alliance). MEA promotes ecotourism in Central American countries. This was a good idea but to date no tours have been brought into Five Blues through this network.

6.4 *Establishing Co-Management Agreements*

Cost:	US \$3,526
Relevance:	High
Quality:	Low
Impact:	Low
Cost-Effectiveness:	Low

No co-management agreements were signed during the project. At the outset of the project, only one of the LMTs had a co-management agreement. This is still the situation at project end.

Co-managing entities must be legally registered (amongst other requirements) before they can obtain a co-management agreement. Because none of the CBOs were legally registered at the outset of the project, this had to be done before pursuing co-management agreements. The project helped develop and revise Articles and Memoranda of Association and bylaws required to legally register the 4 LMTs. All 4 LMTs now have legal status. This, however, represents only one of four requirements to obtain co-management agreements (see below).

More could have been done to help LMTs decide if they really want to pursue co-management and, if they do, to: 1) ensure LMTs were clear on what is required from government to obtain a co-management agreement (legal status is only one of several requirements), 2) enhance awareness of what is entailed in co-managing a PA, 3) enhance awareness of existing co-management agreements to study the good and bad in these, and, 4) pursue the other three requirements to obtain co-management agreements.

Based on discussions with the various LMTs, there seems to be confusion as to what is required to obtain a co-management agreement. The project should have, at the very minimum, provided clear information on this to the LMTs. Even the Project Manager had erroneous information, believing that a management plan was required *prior* to the signing of a co-management agreement. In fact, proponent groups have up to one year *after* signing a co-management agreement to provide a management plan.

According to the Director of the Protected Areas Programme, requirements for obtaining a co-management agreement are:

- 1) Communities must demonstrate interest in managing the PA and indicate this interest in writing to the Protected Areas Programme.
- 2) Three general community meetings must take place to present the idea of co-management to the communities bordering or actively using the PA. These meetings should be organized by the proponent group, which must advertise on radio and newspaper⁷ that such community consultations are planned at least 2 weeks prior to the meetings.
- 3) Letters of recommendation must be presented from a) the Area Rep, b) the Village Council Chairperson, c) any existing tourism associations, d) any groups such as, for example, womens groups, that may exist in the community. (Note: Guidelines do not exist at present indicating what should happen in the event that any of these groups oppose co-management.)
- 4) The proponent group must be a legally established organization.

6.5 Community Leadership Management Training

Cost:	US \$55,284
Relevance:	High
Quality:	High
Impact:	High
Cost-Effectiveness:	Med

- Trained 29 community members from participating communities in leadership skills.

Although the total number of people trained was small, i.e., 29, the CLMT was cited more than any other project activity as the most helpful aspect of the project. Almost without exception, participants found the training extremely useful and many indicated that it profoundly changed their approach to life.

Based on the participant's own accounts, as a direct result of the CLMT, they have become much more active in their communities and this has been translated into community development that might not have otherwise taken place. As such, this

⁷ This is a relatively recent requirement that did not exist at time the project was initiated.

training was extremely effective. It is recommended that the model be pursued in other conservation initiatives both within and outside of Belize.

Unfortunately, although the training was translated into action on community development, it does not appear to have been translated into biodiversity conservation action. In the case of San Estevan, for example, as a direct result of the CLMT, LMT members mobilized to bring about a much needed school extension, planting of trees in the school yard, renovation of the community center, and construction of cabanas in the village for tourists. Nevertheless, nothing has been done by the LMT to tackle the obvious illegal activities taking place in the Freshwater Creek Forest Reserve, the PA the LMT wants to co-manage.

During the evaluation visit to the Forest Reserve, 3 illegal activities were observed at the entrance alone. Big trees had been cut and were laying at the side of the road at the Reserve entrance, there were signs of illegal fishing in the creek, and four men were observed carrying trees just cut down and placing them in their pickup. A former Minister had allowed someone to establish sugar cane fields inside the Reserve, and no action has been taken by the LMT to attempt to stop this while it is still at a manageable level. Driving into the reserve one passes a large expanse of sugar cane fields that were once part of the Forest Reserve until the area was “de-reserved”. This should provide ample concrete evidence that the same thing can, and will likely, happen unless immediate action is taken to prevent it. Yet, the obvious threats are going un-addressed by the LMT.

In the case of Five Blues National Park, the frequent washout of the bridge leading into the Park presents a severe constraint to visitation, as the Park is unreachable unless the bridge can be crossed. Despite their recognition of this as a critical constraint, the LMT has not been successful to date in mobilizing help to fix it. Again, one might have hoped that the leadership training would have been applied to resolve this problem.

There is one example of which the evaluator is aware, however, of where leadership training was put into practice to enhance conservation. In the case of the Gales Point LMT, when a truck turned over spilling oil into the creek which serves as drinking water for the community, the LMT mobilized to force the government to help with the clean up of the area. LMT members recognized that the leadership training had given them the confidence and the tools to confront this environmental issue with success.

Although quality and impact of this activity are high, cost-effectiveness is considered lower because of the small number of people trained. If replicated in other projects in future, it is suggested that the approach of training trainers be adopted to increase the number of people benefiting from the exercise, thus enhancing the cost-effectiveness of the activity. In the case of the AMT, participants in the training shared their new-found knowledge with other community members who had not participated in the training by providing the training in a condensed form and in the local language (Kechi) using a role playing format. The event was apparently very successful and was videotaped.

The evaluator notes that although the cost of the first training session, which included three of the four LMTs, was \$26,671, the cost of the second training, which only included one LMT was more, i.e., US\$ 28, 613. Because of the high cost associated with the second session, this evaluator believes that only one session should have been offered, and the funds used for the second session directed instead toward activities more directly related to preparing communities for PA management. (Also see comments related to site selection.)

The CLMT was perhaps the biggest project success.

6.6 Environmental Education

Cost:	US \$62,273
Relevance:	High
Quality:	Medium
Impact:	Medium
Cost-Effectiveness:	Medium

- Trained 15 elementary school teachers from Freshwater Creek and Gales Point in environmental education, and arranged for them to receive credit for this training from the Ministry of Education. This was a very cost-effective activity.
- As a byproduct of the teacher training, two helpful Government School resource booklets were developed (one for FC & GP). These will be used as resource materials by teachers. (As school was not in session during the project evaluation it was not possible to meet with teachers to see how this booklet will be used.)
- Produced 4 descriptive booklets about 4 communities in the vicinity of two PAs (FCFR and GPWS). The booklets described the villages' past, present and visions for future development, including their relationship with the protected area. This was an innovative idea that should be replicated in other conservation projects.
- Produced two popular children's' coloring books (3,500 copies) using artwork of the local children. The coloring books were helpful both as environmental education materials and also in helping to make the link between the LMTs and the communities at large.
- Developed video documentaries about 3 PAs to be used for outreach work by LMTs. The videos were completed 3 months prior to project completion. To date the primary use of the videos is by LMT members themselves.
- Produced 100 slides of the AWS to be used by that LMT in their outreach work.
- Conducted very popular community tours of PAs. Tours were especially helpful for those people living in villages bordering the PAs who had never been inside them. The approach of offering the tours first to schoolchildren and then to their parents seems to have been particularly effective. (This activity should be done regularly, at least once a year.)

EE Materials

Due to time constraints, review of all EE materials produced by the project was not possible. One brochure, one community booklet, one Government School Resource booklet, and one coloring book were randomly chosen for review. A few of the reviews are presented below.

Gales Point Government School Resource Booklet

The idea of the resource booklet is very innovative, as was the approach to its production. The teachers themselves contributed a lot to the booklets and photos used in the booklets were taken by community members. Overall the product is also good, but the section on wildlife could have been improved by not limiting the description of species to general information about the species, but rather explaining the importance of Gales Point for these species. After all, Gales Point is the second most important nesting site in the Caribbean for the globally endangered Hawksbill turtle, and it has the biggest population of Antillean Manatee in the Caribbean. Only one page is devoted to “Conservation in Gales Point”. The booklet could have been improved by including a more detailed description of what is being done and what is planned in future by the local community and others to protect these and other species. It would have been helpful to explain the specific conservation efforts underway rather than simply state that, “Dedicated residents such as Mr. Leroy Andrewin and others work on a grass roots conservation efforts to conserve the Hawksbill turtle and their habitat and nesting sites”. More information on other species such as mangroves could have been included. Only a list of several varieties of mangroves was presented. Information could have been included on the function and importance of mangroves in the ecosystem, potential and actual uses of mangroves, what is being done to protect them, what needs to be done, etc. Surprisingly, nothing is said either about co-management (what is it, how is it done, why is it being considered) or about the LMT.

“Living Around Protected Areas” Coloring Book

This is a nice coloring book, especially because it is meaningful to the people it was intended to reach. The coloring book has been distributed in all participating communities. It is not being used as a coloring book because of the limited number of copies made (people are very proud of their children’s artwork which appears in the book and therefore want to keep the coloring book on the shelf instead of drawing in it), but it is much appreciated by people and is considered to have been a helpful activity. To enhance its already positive effect, other donors should be approached (including local Area Reps) to have more copies made, and perhaps to make a new coloring book each year.

AWS Brochure

The overall quality of the brochure is fair. The target Audience for the brochure is unclear, thus its practical use is questionable. At times the brochure seems to be directed at a general audience, while at other times, the brochure seems to be directed more toward potential tourists. A better map could have been included. Although the UN logo appears, the UNDP name is omitted from this and most other EE materials.

6.7 *Rapid Management Assessments (RMAs)*

Cost:	US \$53,445
Relevance:	High
Quality:	Low to Medium
Impact:	Low
Cost-Effectiveness:	Low to Medium

The project:

- Produced RMAs for 4 PAs. At the time of this project evaluation all RMAs are still in draft.

Rapid resource inventories should include social, cultural and economic data, not just biological data. There are many good examples of such rapid assessments, including ones developed in other GEF-funded projects around the world. Unfortunately, none of these were reviewed prior to undertaking the exercise.

The British Natural History Museum was contracted to conduct the RMAs. Contracting such an institution is appropriate, but TOR should have stipulated that local people from participating communities be involved in the field activities, and that on-the-job training be done with them during the process of conducting the RMAs. This would have enabled the project to derive the additional benefit of enhancing local capacity at the same time information was collected.

A consultant was hired by the project to review the RMAs produced by the Natural History Museum. The consultant's report indicates his review was "to examine how well the consultants have dispensed with their obligations under the contractual agreement and less on content and editorial quality of the report". Review of materials/products produced by a project is a task normally undertaken by a Project Manager, not contracted out to a consultant.

Because of time constraints associated with this evaluation, only the Gales Point RMA was reviewed. Although the consultant who reviewed the RMAs considered the Gales Point RMA to be the best, even that RMA had significant shortcomings in this evaluator's opinion. Very little information is presented in the RMA on sea turtles or manatees, yet this area represents the most important nesting site for sea turtles in Belize, and the most important area for Antillean manatees not only in Belize, but in the entire Caribbean and Central American region. There appears to have been little input into the RMA by local turtle researchers, despite the important experience and information these people possess. Even though very current turtle data is available (a ranger who works for the LMT conducts daily surveys, and when the evaluator met with him, he had very good up-to-date information), none of this data is presented in the RMA. Instead, information is presented from 1992 and 1993, and then only for one of the three globally endangered sea turtles present in the area (the other two are not even mentioned in the RMA). Data presented for manatee is equally scarce and out of date. The Manatee data presented is

from 1991, when, once again, very current information is available through the ongoing Manatee research project. The researcher, who lives right in Gales Point, was apparently not contacted by the RMA team. Overall, information presented on the fauna of the area is scarce.

In addition, RMAs should include information on current types and levels of use of resources in and around the PA (what is hunted, what is approximate take, what species are fished, what other resources are used, how are resources used, etc...). This information was lacking in the RMA.

Finally, as noted above, resource inventories should include social, cultural and economic data, not just biological data.

Despite their weaknesses, the RMAs may be used as one input into developing management plans for the four PAs, but, it will be necessary to complement the RMAs by compiling existing information and gathering new information pertaining to the information gaps cited above.

7. Project Implementation

7.1 Timeliness of Delivery of Goods and Services

In general, goods and services were not delivered on a timely basis. This was mostly due to re-orientation of the project twice during three years.

7.2 Disbursement, Use and Accounting of GEF funds

Due to lack of time and personnel, this evaluation did not include an assessment of disbursement or accounting of funds.

7.3 Disbursement, Use and Accounting of PACT funds

Due to lack of time and personnel, this evaluation did not include an assessment of disbursement or accounting of funds.

8. Project Monitoring

8.1 Financial Monitoring

Because of time constraints, no evaluation was made of the adequacy of financial monitoring of the project. UNDP/Belize plans to review audit reports as part of its normal project closure procedures.

8.2 Backstopping by UNDP/GEF and GOB

More backstopping by both UNDP/GEF and UNDP/Belize would have benefited the project.

8.3 Indicators and Benchmarks to Monitor Project Progress

Impact-oriented indicators and time-bound benchmarks for monitoring their progress throughout the project life were not adequately defined in the project documents.

9. Overall Project Successes

- The CLMT was perhaps the biggest project success. It is suggested that this be replicated in other projects in future. If replicated, it is suggested that the approach of training trainers be adopted to enhance the cost-effectiveness of the exercise.
- The approaches used to develop EE materials and some of the materials themselves were especially successful, and should serve as a model for other projects with EE components.
- Systematization (although a word which most outside of Belize may not understand) of the project was very helpful and should be replicated in other projects. Systematization refers to the documentation of events that transpired during the project. A systematization report was prepared for the project, thus documenting what took place over the 3-year project period.
- Because of linkages established between the project and the Belize Audubon Society (BAS), a Belizean NGO, significant assistance was rendered in helping that organization to further develop their co-management approach. This is considered an important project success because BAS is, at present, the most important NGO involved in co-management of PAs in Belize.

10. Overall Project Shortcomings

- The project underwent frequent, extensive changes in its objectives and expected end results. This constantly moving target made it difficult at times to even understand what the project objectives were. This, compounded by often ill-defined expected results, detracted significantly from achieving greater success in the project.
- The government entity with the mandate for protected areas management, i.e., the Forest Department, should have been a key partner in the project. Unfortunately, it was not. To enhance prospects for sustainability, the Forest Department (MNREI) should have been the Implementing Agency for the project. PACT could have provided co-financing for the project without acting as Implementing Agency. PACT neither has the mandate nor the experience in project implementation, rather it is a funding entity. As this evaluator understands it, the primary reason for designating PACT as the Implementing Agency was its financial flexibility. Had the Government contribution been brought under project control early on in the project, this flexibility would have existed anyway. By not making the Forest Department an intimate

partner, benefits in terms of capacity building and sustainability were sacrificed for financial flexibility -- flexibility that could have otherwise been secured. (Note: PACT did well as Implementing Agency, this comment does not relate to their performance, but rather to the issues described above.)

- No model/prototype for co-management between Forest Department and CBOs was fully described, and therefore no real test of such a pilot/model was done (as was intended). Moreover, different models of co-management have not been adequately described (not an expected result of this project) and therefore confusion between these still exists. Little distinction is made between co-management between government and NGOs, co-management between government and CBOs, co-management between government and private entities, co-management of private reserves between private entities and CBOs, etc.
- There were no clear criteria for selecting the PAs and communities to be involved in the project. It is not clear on what basis the various sites were selected. It is clear, however, that this lack of solid, clear criteria led to significant project problems.
- Inadequate attention was given to sustainability. The few PA management staff hired during the project have all been terminated for lack of funds. At the time of this writing, decisions regarding how project vehicles and equipment will be distributed had not yet been made, but even if the LMTs are given these resources, it will be difficult for them to continue paying recurrent costs associated with office rental, email, fuel, etc.
- Inadequate effort to learn from existing relevant experience both within and outside of Belize, and both within and outside the GEF.
- Outputs were not well thought out. As a result, UNDP/GEF cannot expect many of the things that would have been very useful from this project because these were not clearly asked for.
- Inappropriate indicators were sometimes used, and no benchmarks were used.
- No co-management forum was held during the project life and such a forum was only planned for project end. This would have been helpful at project outset and another to share results closer to project end, still leaving time to have a follow-up meeting with Government decision makers to promote decision making regarding co-management with CBOs.
- Inadequate oversight of the project by UNDP/GEF. Closer monitoring could have enhanced knowledge of project earlier on and possibly prevented some of the shortcomings in the project. Because of the small size and limited staff of UNDP/Belize, this office may require more support than usual from UNDP/GEF. The office might also benefit from greater backstopping from UNDP/El Salvador on UNDP procedures.

- TPRs and PIRs tended to be overly generous in their assessments of the project, sometimes indicating satisfactory progress when this was not the case. This, in the end, is not helpful to the project.
- The PSC was ineffectual. Several factors contributed to this, including: a) insufficient representation of people with technical background in PA management on the PSC, b) lack of clarity of PSC members regarding the role and responsibilities of the PSC, c) numerous changes of representation in most of the key institutions on the PSC, resulting in little continuity and lack of familiarity with the project by new PSC members, d) political realities of a small community, and, e) lack of project management experience by many of the PSC members and by the Project Manager.
- The Project Manager’s background, although in a related field, i.e., Natural Resource Recreation, is not in PA management. Lack of experience in PA management may have detracted from achieving more of the PA management objectives of the project.
- There was inadequate diffusion of information amongst the key stakeholders.
- Too many “loose strings” exist at end of project. Better wrap-up is required. At the PSC meeting just prior to the evaluation mission, it was agreed that the Project Manager would share key project documents including training modules and the systematization report with the PSC. These should have been shared all along. With only administrative closure of the project remaining, no written conclusions regarding the viability of co-management between GOB and CBOs have yet been developed or presented to the various stakeholders (including GOB and the CBOs involved in the project), and no mechanism is in place to share lessons learned from the project other than the final evaluation debriefing (which is intended to describe lessons learned from the project experience, not from the project substance). Because the planned co-management forum will not take place during the project, it is especially important that the Project Manager present her own assessment of the project and her conclusions on the viability of the co-management approach in Belize. Otherwise, there is little to springboard from.
- Although work plans have been developed for the various LMTs, no plan of action has been developed outlining recommended next steps (other than development of management plans) to ensure maximum benefit is derived from what was accomplished by the project. Again, this brings into serious question how this project will serve as a springboard to something else.

11. Recommendations

- UNDP/Belize should carefully review the biodiversity add-on proposal currently under consideration to ensure adequate attention is given to assessing the capacity of the Forest Department (including, but not limited to, the Protected Areas Programme)

to implement their responsibilities regarding management and co-management of PAs, and that a specific plan of action to address capacity constraints in that Department is developed under that project. Any NCSA proposal that might be developed in future should also ensure that these issues are addressed.

- Representatives of the Protected Areas Programme of the Forest Department, PACT and the GEF/SGP should undertake joint field visits to the 4 PAs and to the LMTs to see first hand the situation on-the-ground in the PAs and in the LMTs, and to come to a clear understanding and agreement of what is required to finalize the proposal to develop management plans and what will be the expected outputs, other than the management plan itself, from that project/s if funded.
- The Forest Department, and in particular the Protected Areas Program, should be intimately involved in any future UNDP or UNDP/GEF biodiversity conservation related projects. In the case of those projects specifically directed at communities (and not at government), such as is the case of the GEF/SGP, the Forest Department should still be involved as much as possible.
- Criteria for selection of areas to be included in projects should be clearly spelled out and adhered to in all future GEF projects.
- Especially in projects where local communities are key stakeholders, Project Development Funds (PDF) should be sought to help ensure adequate consultations and appropriate project design.
- The influence of media is often greater than that exerted by any one project. In future conservation-related projects, a small amount of project funds should be allocated to allow for a group of media representatives (radio, TV, newspaper) to tour project areas both at the mid-term and toward the end of the project, and report on the good and the bad. This is a good way of helping to keep a project on track, sharing lessons learned, and, finally, provides an additional incentive for people to strive for impact, not just achievement of project activities.
- At the first PSC meeting of any project, UNDP should clearly spell out the role and responsibilities of the PSC, Project Manager, Project Director, Executing and Implementing Agencies, and of UNDP itself.
- Strive for more interchange of information between relevant projects/initiatives in the country at the outset of a project to learn from existing initiatives, and continue this interchange of information regularly throughout the project life. (The annual meeting of all GEF Project Managers in Belize organized by UNDP is a good initiative that should be continued and replicated in other countries.)
- Pay more attention to mechanisms to promote sustainability of project-initiated and project-supported activities after project end. Especially in cases where project funds

exceed the budgets of those organizations/entities they are intended to assist (as is the case in this project), sustainability should be a key concern in project design.

- Place greater importance on understanding factors that motivate stakeholders to be involved in a project.
- Clearly define impact-oriented indicators and time-bound benchmarks for monitoring their progress throughout the project life.
- Whenever significant changes in the objectives and/or activities of a GEF project are considered, these should be brought to the attention of UNDP/GEF before proceeding.
- UNDP/GEF should more closely monitor GEF projects to help ensure lessons are shared between GEF projects, actual experiences and products are shared between projects, and that sufficient familiarity with GEF exists in UNDP country offices to enable them to effectively support projects.
- UNDP/GEF should send a “problem solver hotshot” to resolve problems when red flags are raised (and while there is still time in the project to do something about it), especially in those projects for which external mid-term evaluations have not been planned.
- There should be more extensive communication between UNDP/GEF and UNDP COs on organizing evaluation missions (UNDP/GEF should provide the CO with a list of documents required, procedures, expected UNDP/CO participation, the CV of the external evaluator, etc.)
- In future project mid-term and final evaluations, include a UNDP Country Office representative (an unpaid member of the team), someone from the country with relevant expertise, and an external evaluator on the team. The external evaluator normally acts as the Team Leader.
- In future project evaluations, compile the following documents for the evaluation team before arrival: All TPR and PIR reports, all project manager reports, all audit reports, copies of all products produced during the project (e.g. PA management plans, environmental education materials, resource inventories, frameworks, etc.), a list of all relevant ongoing, recently completed and planned projects in the country, the UNDP CCF, an organogram of government, and, where available, an organogram of the Ministry in which the project is located, a list of all committees that exist for the project and the TOR for each.
- A draft agenda (with time of meeting, name, title and telephone of person to be met, and meeting place) should be sent from the UNDP Country Office to UNDP/GEF with a copy to the leader of the evaluation team for comment before arrival, giving sufficient time for changes to be made if required. The Project Manager should be

asked for her/his input, but should not be responsible for setting the agenda or for arranging the meetings (this is particularly sensitive in evaluation missions).

12. Lessons

- Unless critical barriers are clearly identified and described early on (preferably during the project design stage), they are unlikely to be addressed by the project, and, if not addressed by others, this will negatively affect a project's chances of success, and may also negatively affect chances for further funding.
- Project development funds (PDFs) are available through the GEF. PDF projects can be very useful in ensuring that the project design is well thought out. Not engaging in PDF activities can be potentially harmful especially for those projects where local communities are to be intimately involved in the project.
- Inappropriate selection of project sites can significantly curtail a project's chance of success. Clear criteria for selection of sites should be spelled out and adhered to. Once a project begins, it is difficult to modify project sites, even when these are found to be inappropriate. It is far better to do the necessary homework regarding site selection during a PDF project.
- A PSC should steer a project as necessary to ensure that it reaches its ultimate goal. This is, itself, not a lesson as the roles and responsibilities of a PSC should be well known. The lesson in the case of Belize is that UNDP needs to ensure that any PSC fully understands its role at the outset of a project, and that at least some persons experienced in project management are on the PSC.
- Avoid the combination of an inexperienced PSC and an inexperienced Project Manager.
- Much more monitoring from UNDP/GEF is required to ensure that projects are well designed and that these stay on track. The PIR is not necessarily the best tool to use to gauge whether a project is in need of help. External mid-term evaluations are normally more effective and should be planned for even in shorter projects (3 years or less).
- Overstatement of project success is not helpful. If red flags are not raised, especially in PIRs, a project cannot expect help from UNDP/GEF. As long as the project appears to be progressing satisfactorily (according to the PIRs), UNDP/GEF will have no cause to intervene. If backstopping is desired, UNDP/Country Offices need to indicate this in PIRs and request help from UNDP/GEF. For their part, UNDP/GEF needs to have much more timely response to the Country Office and much better follow-up.

- Clear, concrete and detailed description of expected outputs is extremely important. If appropriate outputs are not clearly described, the project cannot expect to get them.
- Good indicators greatly facilitate project evaluation. Lack of such indicators makes it difficult to monitor or evaluate a project. Nevertheless, if appropriate outputs are not described, even good indicators will not help.
- Unless impact-oriented indicators, linked to benchmarks, are defined and pursued, a project may not achieve its objectives, or may achieve its stated objectives, but have no real impact.

12.1 Recommended Mechanisms to Share Lessons

- Lessons learned from this project should be shared at the planned co-management forum.
- The Forest Department, PACT and UNDP should consider doing a radio interview on the popular morning radio program to discuss co-management of PAs in Belize and to share some lessons learned (this may be especially useful following the co-management forum to bring the subject to a wider audience).
- Like all GEF documents, this evaluation report should be made available to all interested parties.

Annex 1

Agenda for the Evaluation Mission ⁸

⁸ Contact UNDP/Belize to obtain Annex 1.

Annex 2

List of Participants At Debriefing to Share Preliminary Evaluation Findings (Including An Outline of What Was Covered at the Debriefing)

Following is an outline of what was covered at the debriefing organized by UNDP/Belize and held in Belize City on August 30, 2002:

- Describe purpose of the evaluation.
- Describe methodology used.
- Define co-management & what is required for effective co-management.
- Introduce concept of critical barriers.
- Present evaluation overview regarding pre and post project situation (critical barriers and on the ground co-mangement).
- Discuss identified critical barriers and recommendations of how to remove them.
- Present overall recommendation regarding GEF funds for PA management in Belize.
- Describe how the evaluation report is organized.
- Present overall project successes.
- Present overall project shortcomings.
- Return to discussion of critical barriers.
- Present recommendations.
- Present lessons.
- Discussion

List of Participants:

1	Dylan Vernon, UNDP/Belize	14	Rose Anderson, Field Coordinator, Project
2	Lisel Alamilla, Project Manager	15	Bartolo Teul, YCT/GSCP
3	Phillip Balderamos, UNDP GEF/SGP	16	Pulcheria Teul, SAGE
4	Claudette Hulse, UNDP/Belize	17	Lincoln McSweeney, Gales Point
5	Valerie Woods, PACT	18	Janet Gibson, WCS
6	Natalie Rosado, Protected Areas Programme	19	Sharon Lindo, ANDA
7	Armin Cansin, MNREI	20	Anna Rossington, BAS
8	Carlos Moreno, MED	21	Diane Wade-Moore, BAS
9	Odilia Galdamez, Five Blues	22	Aeron Moreno, BAS
10	David Romero, Five Blues	23	Lilia Ayuso, AFFWCFR
11	Anna Hoare, Project Consultant	24	Edilberto Romero, PFB
12	Desiree Graniel, CZMAI	25	Diane Haylock, Project Consultant
13	Imani Morrison, CZMAI	26	Nellie Catzim, BAS
		27	Nicascio Coc, BAS/CBWS
		28	Antonio Pott, Chemox
		29	Virginia Ravndal, UNDP/GEF Consultant

Annex 3

Recommended Activities to Include in GEF/SGP Projects To Assist CBOs to Develop PA Management Plans

The GEF/SGP is considering financing the development of PA management plans for at least some of the PAs that were included in the co-management project. Following are some thoughts on activities that should be included in that type of a project.

Note: I recommend that, at the outset of the project, all CBOs participating in the project partner with some other organization, be it an NGO or other institution or organization with experience in PA management, and that “partner” accompany the CBO throughout the activities described below. That partner may or may not later be involved in assisting the CBO to implement some of the PA management activities.

Activity 1. CBOs should review PA management plans from other countries to become familiar with what is included in such plans, and to become familiar with what is actually entailed in on-the-ground management of PAs. (Sri Lanka has some good PA plans developed under an old GEF project, as do many other countries.)

Activity 2. CBOs should review the framework for developing PA management plans (i.e., the framework developed by the co-management project) to become familiar with the consultative processes that should be used in developing the PA management plan.

Activity 3. Together with the Forest Department, CBOs should review Government requirements for co-management agreements (see section ---- in this report), and outline a plan of action (with tentative dates) to meet these requirements.

Activity 4. CBOs should review existing co-management agreements (both from other PAs in Belize and from other countries, e.g., Nicaragua), and find out from GOB what is/is not negotiable in these agreements.

Activity 5. Together with the Forest Department, the CBOs should make a comprehensive list of all activities normally undertaken in PA management (e.g., regular wildlife censuses, exotic plant and animal control, visitor management, infrastructure development, infrastructure maintenance, patrolling and other forms of enforcing regulations regarding hunting, fishing, extraction of timber, etc., development and implementation of management plans for certain key species of plants and animals, fire management, etc...) Note: The aforementioned are only a few of the activities normally involved in PA management, these are provided for illustrative purposes only. PA management activities will, of course, differ according to the type of PA. Management activities in Forest Reserves will, for example, include determining sustainable harvest levels for the extracted species of plants and animals and monitoring this extraction as well as monitoring the various plant and animal populations. In contrast, it is not necessary to determine sustainable harvest levels of species in most National Parks (as

this is not normally legal). Again, this is just an illustrative example, clearly there are many more differences in management activities according to the type of PA for which the management plan is being developed.

Activity 6. CBOs should now divide the list created in Activity 5 into two lists; the first list being the list of activities that the CBO wants to be responsible for (under the co-management agreement), and second list being the list of PA management activities that the CBO wants the GOB to be responsible for.

Activity 7. CBOs should discuss the two lists with the GOB and come to a tentative agreement (which will form the basis of the future co-management agreement).

Activity 8. Assess the capacity of the CBO (in terms of knowledge, experience, time available to engage in the task, equipment needed and available, etc..) to undertake the activities that appear on their list of “things to do”. Note: CBOs should not assess their own capacities, although they should be involved in the assessment. The assessment of CBO capacities should be done by an organization or individual with extensive on-the-ground experience in PA management – perhaps someone who has been a Park or a Forest Reserve Manager.

Activity 9. Return to the tentatively agreed upon division of responsibilities (as per Activity 7 above) and make adjustments as desired.

Activity 10. For those PA management activities for which the assessment of capacities indicates that inadequate capacity exists for effectively carrying out the particular PA management activity, do a cost-benefit analysis to determine if it is more cost-effective to enhance the capacity of the CBO (for that particular activity), or if it is more cost-effective to seek collaboration with another entity to undertake that task. (Remember that it may be possible to have a short-term partnership in which an outside entity carries out the task at the same time they provide training to the CBO.)

Activity 11. Develop a directory of persons/institutions and organizations (Belizean and international) with expertise in the various activities normally involved in PA management. (Clearly, this activity can be initiated early on in the project and would only have to be done once, although such a directory should be regularly updated.) The directory should include the name of the organization/person/institution, the specific areas of expertise they possess, a description of their experience, and complete contact information (including email). This directory should be compiled by someone with extensive knowledge of conservation organizations in and outside of Belize.

Activity 12. Draft the PA management plan and initiate consultations (according to both GOB regulations and the “Framework for Development of PA Management Plans”) to discuss the draft and get inputs from a variety of key stakeholders.

Activity 13. Finalize the PA management plan and describe a five year plan of action to implement the PA management plan.

Activity 14. Based on a) the agreed upon division of responsibilities between the GOB and the CBO, b) the assessment of the capacities of the CBO, c) the identification of potential collaborators, and d) the PA management plan itself, establish MOUs (or other types of agreements) with appropriate persons/institutions/organizations to (once the co-management agreement is in place) implement aspects of PA management. These MOU should be specific, detailing precisely what the collaborator will be responsible for. For example, instead of stating that “the collaborating entity will be responsible for the day-to-day management of the PA along with the CBO”, the agreement might read, “the collaborating entity, -----, will be responsible for conducting annual census of manatees and filing these reports with the CBO no later than one week after such census is done. The collaborating entity will also be responsible for training one local ranger in manatee census techniques. This training will be accomplished within the first six months of the agreement....” Again, this is only an illustrative example showing the level of detail that should be included in any MOU. (Note: GOB should require assessment of capacities of those entities it forms co-management agreements with, and some assurance that, in the case that those entities do not themselves possess adequate capacity, that they will collaborate with others to ensure the PA management activities for which they are responsible are being adequately carried out.)

Activity 15. Seek funding to implement the various aspects of the PA management plan. (This activity can be initiated early on in the project so that at end of project, once the PA management plan is ready, there are funds available to implement it.)

Note: The above is not a comprehensive list of activities that should be undertaken, but provides perhaps at least a starting point that those finalizing the proposals to the GEF/SGP can build on further.

At appropriate points throughout this process, CBOs should engage in the consultations and other activities required by GOB to obtain a co-management agreement. I haven't included these as activities here, but before a proposal is funded these should be specified.

Annex 4

Evaluator's Conclusions Regarding Potential for Co-Management of PAs in Belize

Presented here are the *evaluator's* very brief conclusions, based on project results, about present day co-management potential between GOB (in particular, the Forest Department) and CBOs. It is hoped that the *Project Manager* will also present her conclusions in her final report (which should be shared with the variety of stakeholders). The conclusions presented here are the evaluator's conclusions to be presented to the GEF, and, as is the practice in all GEF activities, these are shared with the various in-country stakeholders through access to this final project evaluation report.

Bearing in mind the overall goal of the project, to conserve biodiversity, (as opposed to strengthening community organizations, building capacity of any entity, government or non-government, making people more aware of the environment – all of which contribute to this goal, but none of which are the ultimate goal), it is important to critically analyze whether or not this goal is likely to be reached through the approach adopted by the project.

The project adopted the co-management approach because the government indicated its intention to pursue a model of co-management, but before proceeding needed to know if this form of co-management (directly with CBOs as opposed to with NGOs) is viable, and if viable, if it is the best one to pursue.

Thus, it seems to be a given that co-management will be pursued in Belize, the question is what kind of co-management. There appear to be several models of co-management in Belize. In most cases, on-the-ground management of PAs is minimal, thus the term co-management may be somewhat deceptive. Nevertheless, the term itself refers to management by more than one entity.

Four models of co-management exist in Belize. These are: 1) co-management of public PAs between Government and NGOs, 2) co-management of public PAs between Government and NGOs with CBO participation managed by the NGO, 3) co-management of private reserves between the landowner (normally an NGO), and Government, 4) co-management between Government and communities bordering or nearby the PAs. In this model, communities are represented by CBOs.

As stated above, at least in the case of model # 4, i.e., co-management between Government and CBOs, on-the-ground management of PAs is minimal. Because most of these areas are under some degree of threat (illegal fishing, extraction of timber, hunting), the biodiversity in these areas is not secured. Active management is required to ensure long-term biodiversity conservation. Yet, as noted elsewhere in this report, most CBOs lack the capacity (technical) and the resources to effectively manage PAs, and their partner in management, the Government, although possessing greater technical capacity, lacks the means of implementing management on-the-ground.

From what this evaluator understands, in those areas where co-management agreements exist between government and NGOs, in practice most of the management is by the non-governmental entity. Governmental responsibilities related to co-management (i.e., enforcement, assistance in provision of infrastructure, and shared responsibilities in the joint management of the PA) mostly go undone.

Co-management between the Forest Department and CBOs, using the “model” approach adopted in the co-management project does not appear to be realistic at present. The best approach to co-management appears to be the one most commonly in use today in Belize, i.e., co-management between government and NGOs, with local advisory councils providing inputs into the management of the PA, and deriving benefit from it, but not directing this management themselves. The model needs to be further refined, but this appears in general to be the most viable approach.

Co-management of private PAs between Government and private companies, ensuring that these companies have local advisory councils, is another model that deserves further investigation.