GEF Medium-Size Project:

Sustainable Use of Biodiversity in the Western Slope of the Serrania del Baudo

April 22, 2004

Mexico and Colombia Country Managing Unit
Environmentally and Socially Sustainable Development Sector Unit
Latin America and the Caribbean Region
The World Bank Group

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Basic Data

(1) Date of Completion Report**:** April 24, 2004

(2) Project Title: Sustainable Use of Biodiversity
in the Western Slope of the Serranía del Baudó; Colombia

(3) GEF Allocation: US$ 725, 000

(3a) Period of Project Implementation: June 1999-December 2002

(4) Grant Recipient/main Contact: Fundación Natura, Bogota Colombia

(5) World Bank Manager/Task Team: Paola Agostini – Juan Pablo Ruiz

(6) Goals and Objectives: (include any changes in the objectives):

The goals and objectives of the project remained consistent throughout project implementation. The goal of the project was to develop a participatory management system for the sustainable use of biodiversity in the Western slope of the Serrania del Baudo through a joint effort among representative governmental institutions and local communities.

The main objective of the proposed project was the development of a strategy for the sustainable use and conservation of biodiversity with the participation of local communities and administrations. The project supported dialogue and laid the basis for a more environmentally grounded development plan for the region given that specific development programs for the region had presented conceptual and methodological differences in approach with respect to the cultural systems of its inhabitants and to their relationship with the natural environment. In particular the project supported activities directed towards: (1) the verification and generation of ecological and socioeconomic information which will be made available to the local communities and administrations; (2) the training of local stakeholders for participation in the planning processes and the defining of policies for the conservation of biodiversity in the region; (3) the establishment of a network of protected areas in the region; and (4) the formulation of proposals and the implementation of projects of local and regional interest that responded to needs of conservation and sustainable use of global biodiversity.

Based on the mid-term evaluation and the experience of the project, certain components needed to be strengthened and fine-tuned, whereas others warranted a reduction of effort. This is true for the protected areas component, which was originally conceived as a land use planning and management strategy for conservation purposes. But given the ongoing process of collective land titling for black communities in the region which coincided with the start-up of the project, some sectors of the community were unwilling to accept this component, tending to view it as a threat to the ongoing titling process. Likewise, the extension of new protected areas did not require the amount of effort originally planned during project preparation. In contrast, activities such as community based fisheries needed to be strengthened in order to consolidate and strengthen certain strategic local and regional inter-institutional and community alliances. These activities proved to be key for improving participation and developing sustainable production systems within the context of regional biodiversity conservation.

(7) Financial Information:

The budget was implemented in accordance with annual work plans. Some minor reallocation of funds among components occurred following recommendations of the mid-term review. These recommendations included the need for greater support, follow-up and training for local groups executing the biodiversity use and conservation sub-projects, the consolidation of environmental data centers, and the production of materials for dissemination.

An increase in service and technical assistance costs also occurred as the project was extended by four months due to the delayed arrival of the first and second payments, which meant that staff-related costs (technical assistance) had to be met up to December 2002.

The sources of co-financing included the Fundacion Natura, local governments and other donor (Government of the Netherlands, World Wildlife Fund, Friends of the Earth, (Ecofondo). Their total contributions were received and utilized as planned in the amount of US$539,300.

The following two tables provide a breakdown of project costs according to (i) Disbursement Category and (ii) Project Component.

Table 1: By Disbursement Category

GEF DISBURSEMENT CATEGORIES	APPROVED	EXECUTED	APPROVED	EXECUTED	APPROVED	EXECUTED	TOTAL Executed (approximation)
	YEAR 1	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 3	
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE	$ 81,704	$ 67,984	$ 89,997	$ 93,047	$ 111,061	$ 121,740	283,000
WORKSHOPS	$ 27,235	$ 27,236	$ 41,378	$ 22,680	$ 15,866	$ 34,563	85,000
GOODS	$ 36,313	$ 36,282	$ 0	$ 6	$ 0	$ 0	37,000
WORKS	$ 9,078	$ 8,452	$ 10,345	$ 10,786	$ 5,289	$ 5,478	25,000
SERVICES	$ 4,539	$ 5,808	$ 10,345	$ 7,727	$ 13,750	$ 15,097	29,000
UNALLOCATED	$ 4,539	$ 2,434	$ 8,276	$ 8,864	$ 7,404	$ 8,920	21,000
SUB-PROJECTS	$ 45,391	$ 0	$ 51,723	$ 272	$ 37,020	$ 133,886	135,000
OPERATIONAL COSTS	$ 36,313	$ 36,848	$ 36,206	$ 35,670	$ 37,020	$ 37,013	110,000
TOTAL	$ 245,112	$ 185,044	$ 248,268	$ 179,051	$ 227,412	$ 356,697	725,000

Table 2: By Project Component

	Planned in Project Brief			Actual		
Project Components	**Total Cost**	**GEF**	**Others**	**Total Cost**	**GEF**	**Others**
Gathering and Systematizing information	1,001,300	100,000	901,300	1,006,614	106,000	901,300
Education and Communications	499,040	160,000	339,040	508,338	170,000	339,040
Strengthening Local Institutions	502,000	160,000	342,000	493,720	152,000	342,000
Network of Protected Areas	324,520	80,000	244,520	332,754	89,000	244,520
Support to Subprojects	422,870	150,000	272,870	407,008	135,000	272,870
Project Management and Administrative Costs	212,630	75,000	137,630	209,702	73,000	137,630
Total	**2,962,360**	**725,000**	**2,237360**	**2,958,136**	**725,000**	**2,237,360**

Table 3: Cofinancing

Co financing (Type/Source)	IA own Financing (includes PDF-A) (mill US$)		Local Government and Communities* (mill US$)		The Nature Conservancy (mill US$)		Other Donors** (mill US$)		Total (mill US$)
	Proposed	Actual	Proposed	Actual	Actual	Proposed	Actual	Proposed	Actual
– **Grants**	750,000	750,000			1,560,560	1,560,560	539,300	539,300	2,962,360
– **Loans/Concessional/ market rate**									
– **Credits**									
– **Equity investments**									
– **Committed in-kinds support**			137,500	137,500					
– **Other**									
TOTALS	750,000	750,000	137,500	137,500	1,560,560	1,560,560	539,300	539,300	2,962,360

* Most local support was in-kind.

* This support came from the Government of the Netherlands, World Wildlfe Fund, Friends of the Earth, and Ecofondo

II. Project Impact Analysis

(1) Project Impacts

The project had a significant, and, most importantly, positive, impact on local communities. The fact that the project benefited from the background and acquired experience of the executing agency made it possible to forge ahead in improving the working conditions of local groups and associations, assessing the activities of local groups, and in particular, enhancing awareness of the need for a holistic approach to the issue of managing biodiversity. Project implementation was challenging as it took place in a complex social and political context, with unanticipated social conflict. Most of the indicators related to project objectives and project outcomes were achieved. However, some such as the development of the GIS proved to be far too ambitious. The process of defining indigenous land ownership is underway but at the time of ICR preparation has not been completed. This affected the overall outcome related to the establishment of protected areas. Some of the more notable outcomes were:

- Four model management plans for private nature reserves were prepared along with a watershed management plan (target indicator was 2 management plans)
- The Río Valle watershed management plan was prepared with the active participation of the Community Council and the *Natura* Foundation.
- Key species conservation plans were prepared including the vegetation inventory in Juna and the marine tortoise conservation initiatives in Playita and Playa Larga which represent an integral part of the September Nature Reserve Management Plan.
- Project supported preparation of 40 sustainable use sub-project proposals (target was 20) of which 13 are being implemented in fisheries, wildlife use, product processing, recycling and traditional local lore (target was 9).
- Two regional environmental data centers were established. The Nuqui High School and the Solanenas Women's Group are managing these centers.
- Training was a key project activity and helped to insure improved participation in local stakeholder decision-making
- Overall targets of communications plan were achieved.

Some of the outcomes which were not achieved included:

- Project failed to reach its target of 12,000 additional hectares under protection
- The GIS was not completed due to a lack of technical, logistical and human resources necessary to manage it, and was substituted by the production of maps.
- The two community environmental councils were not established since they were deemed to be redundant to the services provided by the regional data centers
- The web page was developed towards the end of the project but it has limited use in the region because of lack of internet access among the regions population
- The project did not work with indigenous communities as those communities chose not to participate, and focused its efforts on Afro-descendent communities instead.

The following table provides additional details on project impacts directly related to the project's objectives and outputs.

Project rationale and Objective	Indicators in Project Brief	Results
The project rationale is the development of a participatory management system for the sustainable use of biodiversity. Objective: The development of a strategy for the sustainable use and conservation with the participation of local communities residing along the western slope of the Serranía del Baudó.	Two municipal participatory land use management plans	➢ Support to the municipal authorities of Bahía Solano and Nuquí for the formulation of the land use planning provisions of Law 388 of 1997. ➢ The Río Valle watershed management plan was prepared with the active participation of the Community Council and the *Natura* foundation.
	Guidelines for the sustainable development of fishing activities.	➢ The guideline document for the development and management of artisanal fisheries in the northern Chocó coastal area defined the research, training, production development, organization, infrastructure and other priorities for the fisheries production chain. ➢ New projects were prepared and presented as a guide to resource seeking, based on the earlier guidelines.
	Guidelines for the sustainable development of agricultural and livestock activities	➢ Definition of the general guidelines for the development and implementation of agricultural and livestock activities in the Río Valle basin.
	Key species conservation plan.	➢ Key species and strategies for their conservation were identified in a regional-level Species Conservation Plan as part of the project's work on agricultural and livestock systems and regional uses of biodiversity in black* communities. ➢ The vegetation inventory in Juná, an input of the management plan, led to the preliminary identification of forest species. ➢ Marine tortoise conservation initiatives in Playita or Playa Larga remained an integral part of the September Nature Reserve management plan.

	Wildlife Management plan in indigenous territory	➢ Due to policy decisions on the part of the Regional Organization of Embera Women (OREWA), *Fundacion Natura's* planned joint efforts with this organization and with other local indigenous councils in the coastal region were not implemented. ➢ Management Plans in indigenous territories were not developed since the indigenous groups chose not to participate in the project
	Establishment of two municipal environmental citizens' councils.	➢ No councils were established. The experience with the formulation of EOTs and the subsequent recommendations led to contact with local leaders in black communities in the two municipalities, which laid the groundwork for more formal proposals for municipal and/or regional citizens' organizations. .

	Sustainable biodiversity subprojects developed.	➢ Over 40 subproject proposals from the three municipalities in the GEF project area were prepared. 13 are being implemented under the GEF project, with long-term sustainability strategies, based on the sustainable use of fishery resources, agricultural and livestock resources, terrestrial wildlife use, biodiversity product processing, recycling, and assessments of local lore (cultural heritage), and communication.

Project outcomes	Indicators in Project Brief	Results
1. Ecological and socioeconomic data and information concerning regional plans and projects available to local stakeholders.	1.1 Two environmental data centers established in the region.	➢ Creation of two environmental data centers, with a collection of over 350 documents concerning the environment, institutions, legislation, general collections, videos and reference documents in each centre. The mapping database includes over 35 thematic maps at varying scales, both printed and electronic, all open to the general public. This objective has been fully achieved. The centers were warmly welcomed, and each has become a nexus of environmental education and group capacity-building in these two municipalities. ➢ The centers were turned over to the Nuquí High School in Nuquí and to the Solaneñas Women's Group 'Women with a Future' in Bahía Solano, with the commitment that the centers would continue to function as community service centers. ➢ In accordance with an action and management plan for the centers, the groups agreed to continue to offer such additional services as audiovisual materials, equipment leasing, and communications services.
	1.2 Two GIS available for use by local stakeholders.	➢ The Geographic Information System was not completed, and this coincided with the mid-term evaluation conclusion that the region lacked the technical, logistical and human resources to manage such a 'sophisticated' system at this time, and that local needs are still rather more simple. A well-managed map library open to the public was deemed sufficient. The map library contains over 40 thematic and general maps at scales ranging from 1:25 000 to 1:500 000, with the corresponding CDs.

2. Set of indicators for decision-making concerning the sustainable use of biodiversity (state/pressure/response)	2.1. At least ten indicators designed and used in decision-making.	➢ Document prepared on the conceptual and methodological guidelines for the preparation of indicators. ➢ Participatory preparation of decision-making indicators related to artisanal fishing, agricultural and livestock activities, tourism and hunting. ➢ Three local groups have developed 30 indicators for analyzing their progress and arriving at decisions, based on environmental, economic and organizational criteria. An additional two groups are preparing "Principles, Criteria and Indicators", but are waiting for the onset of their productive activities to implement these indicators. Fishery groups are ahead of the other groups with at least three groups now managing state/pressure/response indicators . ➢ The hunters' group defined Principles, Criteria and Indicators (PCI) guidelines for hunting which need to be analyzed for the preparation of indicators on wildlife use.
3. Local stakeholders trained in legal and technical aspects for the sustainable use of biodiversity.	3.1. Number of local stakeholders participating in the development of plans and policies for the sustainable use of biodiversity increased by 25% over baseline. 3.2. Number of local proposals for the sustainable use of biodiversity increased by 25% over baseline.	➢ Training for leaders and members of municipal and community councils was targeted at handling the legal and juridical instruments needed to solve problems of access to existing and available resources in the territory. ➢ Other training mechanisms designed to acquire administrative, accounting and organizational capacities took the form of over 40 proposals by local groups, and the implementation of 13 of these in areas such as fishing, agriculture, communication, planning and recycling.

4. Communication plan implemented	4.1. 5,000 persons reached. 4.2. 20 organizations managing information. 4.3. One operational web page. 4.4 Two environmental data and communications centers in use by local stakeholders.	➢ The current estimated population of the northern Chocó coastal zone is about 12 000 people. Mindful of regional alliances, exchanges through study travel and workshops, production-oriented and regional activities such as tourism and fisheries, it is fair to say that more than 5 000 people have been reached by the communications plan. ➢ Of these four indicators, neither the web page nor the two specific communications centers were thought to be necessary in that the environmental data centers were already acting as epicenters for the dissemination of biodiversity-related and biodiversity use data, through the data on fishing, agriculture, hunting, eco-tourism and other items, whereas the communication strategies were specific for each theme. ➢ The Web page for the dissemination of the project's principal outputs and objectives was put on line at the same time as this executive report. This is not an effective tool for dissemination in this region as there is no internet coverage.

5. Policies and strategies for the sustainable use of biodiversity planned, agreed, and defined by local stakeholders.	5.1 Participatory development of two land use management plans. 5.2 Number of agreements, norms, and regulations for the sustainable use of biodiversity increased by 25% over baseline. 5.3 Number of local stakeholders participating in national decision-making activities for the sustainable use of biodiversity increased by 25% over baseline. 5.4 Legal establishment of 10 local organizations.	➢ Municipal authorities of Bahía Solano and Nuquí assisted in the formulation of Land Use Planning Schemes according to the provisions of Law 388 of 1997, by means of data delivery and support for this participation by the various sectors. ➢ Agreements and resolutions were reached on controls on harpoon fishing and another on the use of 1/2 inch mesh fishing nets. ➢ Year two saw support for the preparation of the Rio Valle watershed management plan, comprising discussions and the establishment of a mixed technical committee with the Río Valle community council. ➢ Agreements for the sustainable management of hunting, resolutions for sustainable fishing and agreements for the development of sustainable tourism were all established within the context of norms and controls for the sustainable use of biodiversity. ➢ Organizations and groups continued to form and consolidate around themes such as fishing, agriculture, and hunting. There are now more than 20 legally and formally constituted, operational, organized groups, where there were initially no more than ten ➢ The participation of local stakeholders in regional or national decision-making is limited to the contributions of groups such as ASOHECO (eco-tourism) and GIC-PA to the dialogue on national strategies and policies concerning their respective areas.

6. Network of private protected areas established.	6.1 8 initiatives for the establishment of protected areas identified (categories I-VI of the IUCN). 6.2 4 protected areas management guideline plans. 6.3 12,000 additional hectares under protection	➢ Participatory preparation of four model management plans for protected areas (nature reserves. ➢ Of these four reserves, three remained within the national network of private reserves, bringing 53 hectares under some form of protection. They are part of the regional network of private reserves in the Chocó area. ➢ The problem of public order is complicating the implementation of these plans, but there is some progress and the plans do leave room for the implementation of concrete action as and when an appropriate scenario presents itself. ➢ At this particular time, the process of defining black and indigenous ethnic and territorial land ownership now underway in the area is not favorable to a discussion of the complementarity and compatibility of this process with the establishment of nature reserves (private or other), despite the fact that collective ownership does include a clear ecological dimension. For this reason, of the four initiatives, three concerned private reserves, and a fourth is at the discussion stage. ➢ Collective land titling for the two community areas of Bahía Solano and Nuquí is under the respective authority of the Los Delfines and Los Riscales community councils
7. Local sub-projects for the sustainable use of biodiversity implemented and self-sustained.	7.1 One general database of local initiatives and projects developed. 7.2 20 proposals formulated. 7.3 Nine sub-projects funded and implemented.	➢ The objective of implementing at least nine projects was fully achieved and represents the most important indicator for the project with respect to the sustainable use of biodiversity. ➢ A base of 40 proposals was successfully organized in the form of profiles organized by theme in participatory fashion. ➢ A total of 13 sub-projects were approved, implemented and supported during the implementation phase. These sub-projects covered aspects of biodiversity ranging from hydrobiological, agricultural and livestock resources, organization, assessments of traditional cultural lore, communication, biodiversity product processing and recycling..

(2) Project Sustainability

A key aspect of project sustainability is how activities were strategically focused on the principles of conservation and sustainable use and the manner in which these concepts have been internalized by the groups and institutions which participated in the project. Project support focused on strengthening groups already engaged in extracting, producing and processing traditional natural resource, on reassessing and reviving traditional skills, and on stakeholder group planning for species management and conservation. During implementation the conditions for sustainability of project impacts were improved through investments in: (i) capacity building/training; (ii) network creation; (iii) information management and (iv) sub-project implementation. In addition, the project outcomes have contributed to continued interest on the part of donors in future projects.

i) Capacity building/training

Social and economic project sustainability involved strengthening the 13 biodiversity use and management groups. Group capacity-building/training efforts focused on organizing and maximizing sustainable production. The focus on key regional activities such as artisanal fisheries, eco-tourism, natural resource processing, planned hunting and recycling reflected the real needs and desires of local communities.

The recognition of the Community Councils as key authority figures in the new ethnic/territorial ownership scenario in the region furthers institutional and social sustainability. The enhanced position of these new authority figures in the black communities brought about by the availability of information and public participation, is fundamental to increasing the likelihood of sustainability of project impacts.. The Councils are gradually gaining a clearer picture of what needs to be done and what their own responsibilities are. This has been brought about by their active involvement in the land use planning and management activities supported by the project.

(ii) Network creation

The project succeeded in producing agreements among local stakeholders, promoting and consolidating alliances and networks, and creating a feedback effect leading to ever greater sustainability of these efforts. Networks were established in topic areas similar to those which received training in sustainable production (fisheries, eco-tourism, planned hunting and watershed management). Network creation is an important outcome which enhances the prospects of sustainability.

(iii) Information management

The establishment of the environmental information centers was a key goal of the project and was deemed essential for helping lay the groundwork for building and sharing knowledge in the communities of Nuquí and Bahía Solano. The general opinion, based on surveys, consultations and interviews confirmed the importance of these centers and the need to continue with this effort.

These communities are now managing the centers, having made the required agreements with: (i)the government authorities for the payment of administrative personnel; (ii) Telecom (telephone company) for a reduction in the costs for the use of internet and telephone, and (iii) the library of the Instituto de Investigaciones Ambientales del Pacífico (Pacific Environmental Research Institute) for the handling of collections, among others.

Additionally, in Nuquí where a high school has assumed the responsibility of managing the center, the potential exists for institutional support from such government entities as the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Environment. Finally, communities gained solid experience in using the information available in these centers for the preparation of subprojects and in developing skills to help attract additional financial support.

(iv) Subproject Implementation

The selection of sub-projects reflected a true participatory approach to setting priorities and an understanding that the sustainability of sub-project benefits requires an ongoing commitment to invest community resources. A typical sub-project incorporated into its design aspects related to production, planning, communications, valuation of traditional knowledge, environmental security and organizational enforcement.

Sub-projects such as the one focused on recycling have clearly defined sustainability mechanisms. Managed as a small business with the support of the municipality and the Regional Corporation, the community has already signed contract with the municipality of Bahía Solano to be the group in charge of collecting and separating the garbage. While sub-projects focused on communications such as the radio station face difficult challenges because there is little opportunity to obtain advertising revenue.

Moving forward, the most challenging aspect of sub-project sustainability will likely be financial. Market development in the project area is weak and very few communities are at the level of economic development which permit market forces to operate so as to generate profitable and marketable surpluses.

(iv) Follow-up Activities

The project has played a catalytic role in attracting resources from other donor organizations. The WWF, Plan Pacifico, and the IDB will support follow-on activities in the project area over the next few years.

The project contributed to *Fundación Natura*'s conceptual and methodological dialogue in this region and other national settings is important. An NGO's sustainability in a given region depends on how adaptable and flexible it can be in the course of its existence and its work. Measured by this yardstick, the management of the principles of conservation and the sustainable use of biodiversity in a complementary fashion through local production-oriented projects represents progress.

(3) Replicability

The project's impacts present many of the requirements for replicability. It supported organized regional alliances or inter-agency and community groups where similar socio-economic and environmental realities exist. It may help reinforce networks of commitment and social development (ie. GIC-PA, the Hunters' Association, the Community Councils, El Cedro, ASOHECO). The project supported traditional and non-traditional production activities, respecting the social and cultural organizational dynamics, such as women working in recycling, processing and fishing activities. The project supported decision-making based on the analysis of indicators constructed by the groups themselves. It supported the commitment of service groups through the management of data centers and focused efforts at the various levels of local and regional power structures while combining the principles of sustainable use and conservation. It breaks the conventionally accepted dichotomy between conservation and production/income-generation.

Project replicability also suggests that the project's methodology be validated. The World Bank has made a solid contribution to the development of a sound methodological approach through its provision of funds for local discussion and review of the project prior to project implementation. The successes and impacts noted earlier suggest that this type of project is replicable in the Chocó and in other parts of the country. Indeed the methodological used has made a contribution to the Environmental Action Fund of *Fundacion Natura* which attempts to develop small budget, high-impact projects.

The exchange of experiences between communities and groups in diverse regions has been and will continue to be an important mechanism for diffusion of project results. For example, the Pacific Fishing Network and the National Fishing Network have been the direct beneficiaries of activities undertaken under the project including implementation of subprojects, information management, and training. Both these networks now have a communications strategy that guarantees the diffusion of all the experiences of their member groups. Already the pattern of inter-institutional and community management of fishing have been accepted and diffused as a model that can serve in other places.

(4) Stakeholder Involvement

The overall goal and specific objectives of the project would have been difficult to achieve without active stakeholder participation. Communities in this region of the Choco were the major project stakeholders and their participation was build into the design of all project activities.

The production of bibliographies and map data in the communities of Bahía and Nuquí made it possible from the outset to incorporate all relevant stakeholders and sectors (education, production, health, planning…) into this project activity. The strategy of broad dissemination of this information allowed the public to determine whether or not to use the information.

The training component targeted specific sectors of the population, especially community leaders, and people in charge of policy-making (municipal and community councils). Training was also focused on associations or groups that had a vested interest in biodiversity use and conservation. Coordination and delegation of responsibilities within these groups and the development of decision making processes and structures were key elements which required a high level of stakeholder involvement. Also, as the representatives of these groups, once the sub-projects had been implemented, they gained in prestige and recognition by the local authorities for their stance on the environment, resource management, health issues and the like. The training program also covered the legal instruments for the political and administrative management, as well as the legal tools available to citizens for ensuring enforcement of the prevailing norms.

Communities whose economies depend on fishing were among the most active in terms of participation. Capacity-building for these groups involved three coastal municipalities, the community councils, 19 fishermen's groups, women fish processors, fishery product vendors, and the participation of eight support institutions, including NGOs, the Fisheries Institute, the Port Authority, *Natura*, and others. All decisions concerning fisheries activities are channeled though the committees of this alliance, and priorities are set by the group in line with the priorities of artisanal fishermen. To this we must include the incorporation of GIC-PA within the National Fishing and Aquaculture Network, especially the Pacific Network, which broadened the range of action and influence of this sector.

(5) Monitoring and Evaluation

The evaluation and monitoring of project activities was a three-tier process: one level comprised the technical team comprised of local technical experts and field coordinators; the second, the beneficiary groups themselves; and the third monitoring and follow-by the Bank.

The external support team housed in *Fundacion natura* maintained constant contact with the local teams, which enabled problems to be addressed in a quick and efficient manner. Each member of the team was responsible for specific aspects of the project and the required follow-up based on his/her area of expertise (hydrobiology, agriculture and livestock, tourism, etc…). The most widely used mechanism was working meetings between team members and different beneficiary groups along with meetings with the regional network alliances.

Periodic monitoring and evaluation efforts also focused on the sub-projects and everyday activities supported by the project. Sub-Project evaluation was facilitated by the technical team. Book-keeping

as well as the technical and production aspects were all reviewed and evaluated. Some groups developed and implemented a monitoring mechanism based on social, economic and environmental indicators. This data is vital for decision-making within the groups.

Lastly, the mid-term evaluation sub-contracted by the Bank used field visits and broad-based interviews and workshops to analyze the extent of compliance and progress in achieving project objectives, and making the necessary adjustments for the last year of the project. This evaluation in part analyzed project performance based on the project logframe and resulted in a recommendation that the project focus on activities with the best potential for success, and explicitly recommended that training, communications and capacity-building focus on support and follow-up of the local sub-projects.

(6) Special Project Circumstances

Certainly the work dynamics was affected by the arrival of armed groups and violent events in the project area. Numerous meetings, events and workshops were canceled or rescheduled. Venues were often changed along with profiles of event participants. The permanency in the field of members of the team was equally affected, demanding novel approaches to monitoring and evaluation. The economic options based in the use of the biodiversity were limited by the presence of armed groups in the slope of the Serranía, which forced the displacement of residents with the abandonment of the traditional agricultural activities. Tourism development was also affected, after having been identified as a central focus for regional economic development. Equally, the risk of approaching some topics and mechanisms of collective territorial management, reserves or protected area management outlined the necessity to reorient some actions (for this reason we made reference to the Constitution of the 91 in which the rights of collective titling to the black communities are contemplated and the Community Council modified the way to work locally). The situation of *public order* was a major factor in carrying out the projects. Population displacements, rural migration, unemployment, productivity declines and the overall level of personnel security affected the original baseline situation and affected overall project performance.

(7) Institutional Capacity / Partner Assessments

One aspect of the project that deserves emphasis was its technical and financial flexibility. In such a highly complex and swiftly changing setting, adjustments and reorientation in the course of the project were inevitable. The World Bank team's sound response in not objecting to requests for changes in the budget, methodology or themes to be covered was striking in this respect. Unquestionably, the constant monitoring of the executing agency by the Bank team facilitated trust and rapid response to these requests.

Fundación Natura, the executing agency, proved to be a partner that was accepted and recognized by other donors. This was expressed in the successful allocation of substantial counterpart funds, paving the way for future support for the process initiated by the project.

The management of projects on this scale is and will continue to be a challenge for NGOs and institutions like *Fundación Natura*. They must respond to the challenge by continuing to strengthen and improve project management. This is another major lesson learned. The capacity to achieve continuity in the processes has been a hallmark of the work of *Natura*, which has maintained its clearly stated objectives and activities in the region uninterruptedly for the last 15 years. It has demonstrated the capacity to plan and develop programs in a cooperative context with other ongoing projects. This is true of cooperation with regional projects such as the Strategy Project for planning regional development implemented by the Dutch Government and the agricultural and livestock sector project supported by WWF.

III. SUMMARY OF MAIN LESSONS LEARNED

The existence of clear guidelines for (i) co-financing of local sub-projects; (ii) selection criteria; (iii) procedures for monitoring project implementation and budgetary management were very important elements for sub-project selection.. The fact that the project managed to organize a basis for action of over 40 proposals is an indication of the level of project outreach and public appeal.

Support of the technical team in the discussions on priority-setting for the selection of sub-projects in accordance with existing guidelines for areas such as fishing, agriculture and livestock, or wildlife management. Some of the arguments guiding project selection involved elements such as risk levels for these proposed projects given the current situation in the region, their potential to solve current problems, their potential impact on the region and how they might strengthen the capacities of the target group or alliance.

In communities with limited technical and managerial capacity, training at all levels is essential. This applies not only to book-keeping and administration, but also to the technical aspects of the activity. The lesson learned was immediately applicable in both production-related and organizational terms.

Establishing a strong link between traditional economic activity (hunting, fishing etc.) and sustainability is more likely to lead to increased community involvement in project activities. Communities were very responsive to the importance of conservation and are fully aware of the fact that respect of nature provides the basis for the continuing and sustained use of any human activity. The ability to handle the chain of production concept was vital in establishing responsibilities for and assessing the role of each member of the network, and in the search for solutions to benefit the entire community. The fact that the project provided support in planning hunting, communication issues and recycling shows that everything can turn upon the environmental issue. In these Pacific coastal communities of the Chocó, life revolves around the environment, the territory, and the management of its biodiversity.

Advanced computer based data systems such as GIS may be of limited value in communities that have no capacity to collect the required data or to interpret it. As the name implies, a geographic information system is a system that works by continuously recording data which can be managed, processed, and entered into a database, and then coordinated with a specific matrix or with geographic coordinates which allow us to visualize dynamic processes such as the continuous extraction of a given resource in a given area over a given length of time, an aid to decision-making. Where there is no means of generating this data, one cannot hope to get by with occasional, incomplete and discontinuous data-recording. One condition for starting a GIS is to know why one wants the system. In this case it is possible to see why it would be useful, but the conditions for recording the events one wishes to record are simply not present.

Projects working with communities with little experience in data collection/management need to design simple but relevant systems which communities fell comfortable using. The management of fishery databases from records kept by the fishermen along with coordinating capture events with the fishery map and analyzing them on the basis of state/pressure/response indicators constructed by the fishermen are realistic and attainable.

When training is viewed as a process designed to assist in the data management, there is a higher probability of local acceptance. A plan established on the basis of group discussion is followed by identification of the data needs of local groups and stakeholders. What is learned is immediately applicable, an obvious motivation for the target groups.

The support of local stakeholders working in municipalities, councils or other state bodies is based on a recognition of project achievements. The supply of human, technical, financial and logistical resources by the target groups and associations on their own initiative were a clear demonstration of

the success and usefulness of further aid. An interesting case in point is the support of Codechocó to groups such as the women's recycling group, in the form of a storage shed.

Donor and executing agency flexibility and the capacity to retarget project action at any given moment may prove necessary, especially in settings as changeable and complex as this one. Risk factors initially listed in the project document are a clear indication of the implicit challenge to achieving the objectives of the project, and an early indication of the need to skillfully skirt bottlenecks and problems which are bound to arise.

Communities are tired of the training which reflects more the interests of the projects executioners than the local necessities. Training through sub-project implementation was valued by communities.

The communication strategies should take into account traditional medias of communications used in these communities.

IV. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT STATUS

The first auditing report covered the period 1 June 1999 to 31August 2000, which was sent on 27 November 2000, with the auditor's approval.

The second report covers the period from 1 September 2000 to 31 August 2001, and was delayed, which compromised the normal course of the last payment and affected some activities in the Plan of Action. This delay had to do with problems of public order which made it hard to comply with certain activities. The delayed arrival of funds for the second payment also affected actual project execution, all of which resulted in the request for a project extension of four more months.

This new situation meant that project staff costs for technical assistance needed to be prolonged to 31 December 2002, and not 31 August 2000 as initially believed.

The auditing report for this last period, 1 September 2001 to 31 December 2002 was received in August 03, reviewed by the financial management specialist, Jeanette Estupinan, and accepted as unqualified by the World Bank.