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Lessons-learned Reporting on Stakeholder Involvement: Pantanal and Upper Paraguay



Abstract: The new Brazilian Water Law placed special emphasis on the implementation of decentralized and participatory management of water resources at the basin level. The approach taken during the early project preparation phase was based on the assumption that the most effective way to actively involve main stakeholders in the project is to involve them directly in the formulation and execution of project activities. The established collaboration with universities, research institutes, NGOs, consultants, local governments, and governmental institutions during the SAP formulation phase creates the basis for the institutional arrangements required to implement the SAP, and ensures the active and effective participation of local stakeholders in the implementation process. The Pantanal experience in involving basin stakeholders was implemented in the conditions of a single country and in the context of relatively well-established and qualified institutions, social organizations, and water users which were capable of mobilizing technical and research resources for their direct participation in the proposed demonstration projects and feasibility studies.

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**Implementation of Integrated Watershed Management Practices for
the Pantanal and Upper Paraguay River Basin**

Lessons Learned Reporting on Stakeholder Involvement: Pantanal and Upper Paraguay

Experience of the GEF sponsored

“Implementation of Integrated Watershed Management Practices for the Pantanal and Upper Paraguay River Basin” GEF Project ID: 583

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The main objective of the Project was to promote the formulation and implementation of a Strategic Action Program (SAP) for the Integrated Management of the Pantanal and Upper Paraguay River Basin (UPRB). Project activities were designed to enhance the environmental functioning of the predominant ecological system, protect the wetland biodiversity, and implement strategic activities that address the root causes of environmental degradation. The strengthening of basin institutions responsible for water resources management in the basin, the generation and dissemination of information, and the integration of environmental concerns into economic development activities on a sustainable basis were key elements of this project.

The project was composed of six components: (i) water quality and environmental protection; (ii) conservation of the Pantanal; (iii) soil degradation; (iv) stakeholder involvement and sustainable development; (v) organizational structure development; and (vi) watershed management program implementation. The activities (or sub-projects) related to these components resulted from the proposals presented by the relevant basin actors during the project design phase.

The project total funding was US \$ 16,403,000 with US\$ 6.61 million of GEF grant and US \$ 9,788,000 of co-financing primarily from the Government of Brazil. It was executed in Brazil, from January 2000 to March 2006. The project has been executed with the participation of the National Water Agency-ANA (National Executing Agency), UNEP (GEF Implementing Agency), OAS (International Executing Agency), the States of Mato Grosso and Mato Grosso do Sul, and various stakeholders and organizations of civil society.

ISSUE AND CHALLENGE

*(a) Transboundary Water Management (TWM)
Issue: Demonstration Site Selection*

The project was conceived at the time of the discussion and subsequent approval of the new Brazilian Water Law, which is based on five basic principles in water resources management: hydrographic basin as a planning unit; multiple water uses; water as a limited and vulnerable resource; economic value of water; and decentralized and participatory management. The law placed special emphasis on the implementation of decentralized and participatory management of water resources at the basin level. In this context, the project represented an excellent opportunity to set the basis for the implementation of National Water Resources Policy in the Upper Paraguay River Basin and the Pantanal through hands-on stakeholder involvement and active institutional and organizational strengthening with the view of the basin as a primary planning unit.

The National Water Resources Plan (NWRP) provides for the National Water Resources Management System, the principal functions of which are the establishment of policies, plans, and regulations for the control of water use and the preservation and restoration of water resources. This system comprises the National Water Resources Council (CNRH), the National Water Agency (ANA), the Water Resources Councils of the States and the Federal District, the Basin Committees, and the Basin Agencies. Due to the multinational character of the Basin, the CNRH has a special Technical Chamber (CT-GRHT) that has held meetings and carried out activities in the Upper Paraguay River Basin, in collaboration with Bolivia and Paraguay, to address common problems and shared interests.

In the UPRB, differences exist in the legal and institutional frameworks in effect in the States of Mato Grosso and Mato Grosso do Sul. Nonetheless, these state systems are based upon the same principles and rely upon the same policy instruments as the National Management System.

The Upper Paraguay/Pantanal Project conception and design were based on the guidelines and priority actions identified in the Plan for the Conservation of the Upper Paraguay Basin (PCBAP) approved by the Government of Brazil in 1996. Activities for the control of land degradation due to urban, agricultural and mining activities, wetland conservation, support to popular participation in the management of natural resources, and control of water-borne contaminants, including persistent organic pollutants, identified as priority actions under PCBAP, were selected to integrate the GEF project in order to catalyze implementation of specific actions recommended in PCBAP. This selection, on the other hand, conditioned the involvement of certain institutions responsible for the issues at stake.

(b) How was the issue addressed

Overall strategy

During the project development phase, a specific component on public participation was designed and agreed. Although not a Stakeholders Involvement Plan per se, this component oriented the activities aiming to involve basin stakeholders in the project execution and, ultimately, in the management of the basin resources. The approach taken during the early project preparation phase was based on the assumption that the most effective way to actively involve main stakeholders in the project is to involve them directly in the formulation and execution of project activities. This approach was coupled with a number of strategies aiming at broadening the stakeholders' participation modalities and seeking to make a step further from information and consultation to participation in decision-making.

The comprehensive approach used in the context of the Upper Paraguay/Pantanal Project included a wide range of modalities to promote the targeted high levels of involvement and commitment from basin stakeholders, including:

- **Direct participation in the project design phase.** During the project design phase, the Technical Coordination organized three regional workshops in the UPR Basin, involving the participation of more than 200 persons representing 60 social, academic, private, non-governmental, and governmental institutions, including all public sector levels. All relevant basin stakeholders presented proposals for pilot projects and/or studies, and many of them were selected to be included in the project document as part of its 44 decentralized activities.
- **Coordination and execution of demonstration projects and feasibility studies.** All demonstration projects and studies remained under the coordination of the institutions that originally formulated and presented them. Among the executing partners there were governmental agencies (federal, state, and municipal), academic and research institutions, and NGOs.
- **Recruitment of local experts for the project activities.** For the execution of its activities, the project counted on consultancies that provided additional opportunities for stakeholders' involvement, especially in terms of involving pertinent academic and research institutions, civil society organizations, the private sector, and individual experts active in the area.
- **Organization of thematic events and technical meetings, education and training activities.** A total of 116 public events involved more than 4,530 participants representing a total of 258 federal, state, and municipal bodies, NGOs, research institutions, and private enterprises. A number of educational programs were developed and implemented, such as the Environmental Education Program for the Tourism Sector in the Miranda River Sub-Basin and the Environmental Education Program for local environmental agents, carried out in local schools and communities.
- **Public consultations and validation of the Strategic Action Program-SAP process.** The public consultation process comprised 5 public events, with the participation of 363 basin stakeholders representing almost 60

organizations and institutions. A special effort was also made to coordinate actions with the already existing or planned programs, plans, and initiatives within the Upper Paraguay Basin.

- **Dissemination of information and project results through video documentaries, printed material, publications, and web page.** Although time and funds consuming, the three documentaries (Introducing the Pantanal/Upper Paraguay Project; Ecological Corridor Pantanal-Cerrado; and Taquari River: Problems and Solutions) produced at and reflecting different stages of the project execution, proved very useful in terms of conveying problems, strategies, and solutions as well as raising awareness among a broad range of basin stakeholders. Another important element was the feedback to all participating stakeholders at the end of the project activities. The final documents were published and first sent to all institutions that took part in the process.
- **Promotion of public-private and government-community dialogues and partnerships.** A number of project activities were designed and carried out in a way to promote partnerships. For example, a public-private partnership was implemented in the area of sustainable tourism, by developing and implementing a detailed methodology and training courses for the management of buffer zones and nesting grounds areas in the Pantanal.
- **Coordination with neighboring countries.** Although the project has been implemented as a single-country initiative, during its execution an effort was made to promote cross-border coordination, in view of future joint initiatives in the Pantanal. In this context, four international workshops with the participation of competent authorities from Bolivia and Paraguay were held between 2003-2005.

During the process, the project sought to recognize the specific characteristics of the social, economic, and cultural groups in the basin, adopting different approaches to involve and promote their participation in the project and in the management of the basin. For example, the project organized and empowered the local fishermen communities, promoting the

recognition of the professional category of the live bait collectors and their participation in the re-formulation of the State Law regulating capture and transport of live baits in the State of Mato Grosso do Sul, as well as ensured their representation as members of the State Fishing Council. The project was also catalytic in promoting the involvement of NGOs in the execution of some key project activities related to eco-regional planning, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable tourism.

Pros and cons of adopted approach

The approach of integrating the processes of project design and execution with the direct participation of basin actors proved extremely positive for the establishment of a dynamic relationship of feedback and active commitment from the basin actors and the subsequent success of the project activities. Moreover, the involvement of basin stakeholders in the structure of project execution provided for the first time in the UPR Basin a common space and a meeting point for interaction and discussion among the different sectors involved in the basin. At the same time, the process contributed to the local institutional capacity building and strengthening.

The established collaboration with universities, research institutes, NGOs, consultants, local governments, and governmental institutions during the SAP formulation phase created the basis for the institutional arrangements required to implement the SAP, and ensured the active and effective participation of local stakeholders in the implementation process. In addition, these institutions can help to organize grass-root/beneficiaries groups as they work directly with local communities.

From a management standpoint, the highly decentralized structure adopted during the project design phase demanded an additional effort in order to organize and unify administrative and approval procedures as well as adapt the budget structure to the project format. In order to maintain the cohesiveness of the project objectives and aimed results, the Technical and International Coordination also planned and convened periodic Coordination Workshops with all Sub-project Coordinators.

During the second year of project execution, an adjustment was made to the way the institutions

responsible for the execution of the activities related to the project management structure. Initially, the only formal link between them were the activities' Terms of Reference, which in some cases did not translate into the necessary commitment to the timely execution of the sub-project and responsibility for the equipment being acquired with project funds. During 2001, the new National Executing Agency- ANA negotiated and signed Agreements of Technical Cooperation with all institutions responsible for sub-project coordination. A total of 13 Agreements with federal, state, municipal, and non-governmental organizations were signed, establishing an inter-institutional articulation model to be replicated by ANA in the process of the implementation of the Agency's mandates related to the National Water Resources Policy.

The strategy of actively involving basin stakeholders into the SAP formulation process for the Pantanal and the Upper Paraguay River Basin has raised significant expectations in relation to the implementation of the SAP. Currently, due to financial and other constrains, the implementation phase has been delayed and a growing sense of frustration has been sensed in the basin.

REPLICATION

The Pantanal experience in involving basin stakeholders was implemented in a single country and in a context of relatively well-established and qualified institutions, social organizations, and water users which were capable of mobilizing technical and research resources for their direct participation in the proposed demonstration projects and feasibility studies. A relatively little mobility of the people responsible for coordinating sub-project activities was experienced, thereby ensuring continuity and coherence of the process.

In order to replicate the experience, it would be important to consider the need for an additional management effort and funds for coordinating project activities and orienting the specific sub-projects towards the overall project strategy and outcomes.

REFERENCES

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KEYWORDS

- ◆ Stakeholder involvement
- ◆ Project design

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