

Evaluation Abstract

Title, author and date of the evaluation report:

Project Evaluation Report: Policy Influence Processes in Promoting Gender Equity in the Agrarian and Environmental Management of Central America, prepared by Roxana Volio and Lola Ocón, May 2002.

Name of project, programme or organizational unit

IUCN Mesoamerican Regional Office (acronym in Spanish: ORMA)

Objectives of the project, programme or mandate of the organizational unit:

1. Promote policy influence processes in the agrarian and environmental management of Central America as a way of mainstreaming gender equity at the local, national and regional level.
2. Consolidate ongoing processes through other initiatives supported by the Dutch cooperation.

IUCN area of specialisation: Gender

Geographical area: Central America: Guatemala, Nicaragua, Honduras, Salvador and Costa Rica.

Project or programme duration, length of existence of organizational unit:

June 2000 – May 2003

Overall budget of the project, programme or organizational unit:

USD 1,745,487; a local counterpart: USD 522,231

Donor(s): Royal Netherlands Embassy

Objectives of the evaluation:

1. Identify project achievements and limitations and formulate follow-up recommendations
2. Analyze the processes generated by the project at the governmental level
3. Analyze the processes generated by the project at the Towards Equity Regional Networks (acronym in Spanish: REDNAS)
4. Analyze the linkages between:
 - NGOs working as National Facilitating Units (acronym in Spanish: IFN) and REDNAS
 - IFN and Regional Facilitation Units (acronym in Spanish: UFAR)
 - IFN and ministries
 - UFAR and ministries
5. Identify to what extent the project's position and implementing structure contribute to gender equity in the region. Effectiveness of the project monitoring and information systems.
6. Identify how project activities fit into the new sector-based policy of the Netherlands Government
7. Identify action lines for the next project phase

Type of evaluation:

External formative evaluation, conducted at the end of the second year of project implementation.

Period covered by the evaluation: June 2000 – May 2002

Commissioned by: Royal Netherlands Embassy

Audience:

IUCN Mesoamerican Regional Office; Peace and Human Development Arias Foundation; Project Steering Committee –UFAR; NGOs working as facilitating units at the national level (IFN); REDNAS, including development initiatives and projects; gender units of agricultural and environmental ministries in the region; and the Royal Netherlands Embassy.

Evaluation team: Roxana Volio and Lola Ocón

Methodology used:

- Documents review and analysis:
 1. Biannual Reports
 2. National Work Plans
 3. Written materials produced on different topics: coastal-marine areas, ethnicity, credit, protected areas, institutional planning and management.
- Evaluation sessions with the Project's Regional Management Committee (Acronym in Spanish CGER)
- Working sessions with the UFAR, the IFNs and the REDNAS.
- Working sessions with the gender units of the ministries of agriculture and environment, and with the policy units within each ministry.
- Interviews with the Planning Units within ministries and other key informants, project managers, IUCN staff, the Regional Director, Arias Foundation Staff, and representatives of the Royal Netherlands Embassy.
- Working session with the UFAR to give feedback to the process.

Questions of the evaluation:

The evaluation questions were not specified in the evaluation methodology. However, it can be assumed from the report that the evaluation sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the project's achievements and limitations?
2. What processes have been generated and methodology used in mainstreaming gender equity at the ministerial level (planning, policies, activities)?
3. What has been the project's impact on the governmental institutions, NGOs and projects involved?
4. What has been the impact of the project's technical assistance and capacity building activities at the various working levels?
5. What has been the impact on sectoral policies?
6. How has the project's relationship developed with the Women's National Mechanisms and the Ministries of Agriculture and Environment?
7. In what way have the service delivery and coordination mechanisms developed with the REDNAS?
8. Have project publications been useful?
9. What is the added value of the project's regional dimension?
10. How effective has the project's monitoring and information system been?
11. How effective have the mechanisms developed to guarantee sustainability of the process been? Which ones have worked? Which ones have not worked?
12. What were the effects of the financial strategy used by the Royal Netherlands Cooperation in financing project implementation at the national level?

Findings:

1. The disasters caused by Hurricane Mitch in some Central American countries and the earthquake suffered by El Salvador in February 2001 re-orientated cooperation policies towards rebuilding the region. This limited the capacity to influence policies and procedures in mainstreaming gender.
2. National elections and the instability characterizing the structure, functioning and institutional culture of the Ministries of Agriculture and Environment have obstructed the creation of a favorable political environment for institutionalizing gender policies.
3. Differences in terms of resource availability, commitment and gender consciousness between the agricultural and environmental sectors, as well as within and among the countries and REDNAS, represented a major challenge for the UFAR and project implementation.
4. The awareness and capacity building activities developed by the project through the use of the “Toward Equity” series have been of great importance to the policy influence process.
5. The mechanism established by the Royal Netherlands Embassy to progressively decrease financial support for the project in each of the countries (IFN and REDNAS) has had a negative effect on policy influence. The organizations participating in the REDNAS started competing for available resources, thus forcing the National Facilitation Units to cover some of the activities previously financed with project funding, with their own limited resources.
6. In general, there are good relations between the organizations that form part of the project.
7. As a result of project activities and other stakeholders in Central America, an enabling environment exists in the region for promoting gender policies in the area of agriculture and the environment.

Recommendations:

For the current phase:

1. Strengthen the policy influence processes through guaranteeing continuity of activities initiated in the ministries as well as by reaching the new ministerial authorities through the UFAR and IFNs.
2. Strengthen the ministerial gender units (provide more financial, technical and political support).
3. Analyze the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the IFNs and REDNAS for exerting policy influence. Design activities to deal with weaknesses and use comparative advantages.
4. Strengthen the teamwork of the Arias Foundation and IUCN in advancing policy influence processes in the agricultural and environmental sectors. Currently, work in this area seems isolated.

Recommendations for a next phase:

1. The UFAR should assume a more political role, focusing on reinforcing the environment created during the first implementation phase at the highest ministerial level.
2. The UFAR should design and implement a strategy and a work plan for mainstreaming gender in ministries.
3. The UFAR should reinforce the creation of networks and linkages with other organizations at the national and regional levels to create the appropriate conditions for mainstreaming gender policies in the agricultural and environmental sectors.
4. IFNs and REDNAS should be in charge of the capacity building processes. This function should be explicit in the project strategies and action plans of these units.
5. The Royal Netherlands Embassy may harmonize criteria with other donors to include “gender equity” as a commitment in all agreements signed with the agricultural and environmental sectors. They can also promote the investment of a certain percentage of project resources into gender equity.
6. Conduct a diagnostic assessment within ministries in identifying areas in which the gender approach should be incorporated, and design a strategy for each ministry, unit and division.
7. With the support of the Netherlands Embassy, the UFAR should continue strengthening the ministerial gender units.

8. The new project strategy should be designed and agreed upon by IUCN, the Arias Foundation and the CGER.
9. Establish better coordination mechanisms among the ministerial gender units of each country.
10. Reactivate the REDNA functions in Honduras.
11. Distribute financial resources in accordance with the geographical, ethnic and cultural characteristics of each country, as well as in line with the planned activities.

Language of the evaluation: Spanish

Available from: UICN ORMA and IUCN Global Monitoring and Evaluation Initiative, Gland, Switzerland