

Assessing the Contribution of Small Grants Programs to Natural Resource Management

Dr. Martin M. Mujica

International Development Research Centre

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Introduction

The main objective of this summary document is to assess the contribution of Small Grant Programs (SGP) to natural resource management (NRM) research agendas and practices in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) and to program the development of the Centre's Minga Program Initiative.

Three SGP are the object of this assessment:

- (1) Monitoring and Evaluation (**M&E**) in NRM, administered by the *Red Internacional de Metodología de Investigación de Sistemas de Producción* (RIMISP), with offices in Santiago, Chile;
- (2) Co-operation and Conflict (**C&C**) in NRM, administered by the *Universidad para la Paz*, Ciudad Colón, Costa Rica; and
- (3) Community-Based Coastal Resource Management in the Caribbean (CBCRM, or **Costas**), administered jointly by the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Fisheries Unit at Belize City, Belize and the International Ocean Institute (IOI), at *Universidad Nacional*, Heredia, Costa Rica.

The first overall observation to be made is that the SGP administering organisations delivered what the funding centre expected and what their leaders promised to do in order to facilitate the process, that the work plans were accomplished, the budgets were respected, the outputs were reached. We confirm also that project selection processes were accurate, budgets were made seriously and carefully and high standards were reached in documents and products.

The contact with the funds administering organisations and with some project leaders and participants showed a common willingness developed from shared values, with a wide variety of activities and proposals, and diversity in approach. This overall

impression leads us to believe that it is now time for a more structured organisation of the activities as a whole, enlarging the common base of values to more theoretical and methodological aspects, and restraining the excessive blossoming of initiatives pointing in different directions.

Background Information

The three competitive grants are an integral part of IDRC's Minga Program Initiative (PI) "Alternative approaches to natural resource management in Latin America and the Caribbean". The PI is focused on the use of research to enhance decision making on NRM (equity, sustainability and efficiency) in LAC. Clients are those in the public, private, non-governmental organisation (NGO) and international technical assistance and financing sectors, who make decisions on policies, programs and projects directly related to developing and conserving renewable natural resources.

The objectives are formulated in terms of:

- (1) Synthesis: To synthesize lessons learned about multi-stakeholder approaches to sustainable and equitable NRM, including organisational principles and ways to manage conflicts over natural resources.
- (2) Methodology: To identify and generate effective tools and methodologies to support multi-stakeholder approaches to NRM.
- (3) Application: To develop strategies to apply lessons learned from multi-stakeholder NRM to new situations. Institutional change: To promote the adoption and integration of multi-stakeholder NRM in organisations by analysing and demonstrating the effectiveness and benefits of such approaches.

The SGP are one of the key activities aiming to promote multi-stakeholder approaches and methodological diversity. They cover all the four objectives above. The SGP promote interdisciplinarity and gender and social analysis, encourage change in research and

social agendas and contribute to developing the relationship between researchers and decision makers.

Assessment of the Different Components

Project Results

One of the more recurrent opinions among project teams is the value of the SGP as a meeting place for people interested in innovative methods for NRM. This recognition extends to the thematic aspects of the program—stakeholder analysis, community participation, consideration of the positive aspect of conflict, and evolution from conflict to collaboration.

The SGP's main contribution was perhaps to bring in new actors to become involved in NRM concerns, and particularly the foundation for new management practices. Before the launching of the SGP, some of the organisations were working with a piecemeal approach, mainly focused on action, and not always based on research. In many cases, introducing the idea of management forced the organisations to return to undertaking integrated actions oriented to their local communities.

Competitive Grants Program for Research on Monitoring and Evaluation Methods for NRM Projects and Programs in LAC

The general objective of the M&E Program is to enhance the decision-making capacity of LAC actors (public, private, NGOs) with a role in policy and program or project cycles impinging on NRM. This is to be accomplished through support to SGP via research and generating knowledge on M&E methods and approaches to measure poverty and issues of natural resources degradation.

The fund contribution to RIMISP, the M&E administrating organisation, allowed the network to extend to new organisations willing to explore and experiment with new management techniques for monitoring and assessing their actions.

The RIMISP officials recognised that, at the organisation's level, the IDRC fund helped improve assessment methodology and the use of indicators. The RIMISP network follows a capacity-building strategy. However, results show only relative success and that, in some cases, the projects would do better to focus on the systematization of their experiences rather than on developing new methods.

The best projects, in terms of results and RIMISP perception, were those with previous experience in M&E and implementation of new methods. Conversely, projects with little previous experience in M&E and trying to invent, or experiment with, unknown methodologies in response to the call for proposals, were unable to demonstrate anything new and failed to report their past experience in a form that could have been useful to other organisations or projects. The projects trying to invent a new methodology out of little or no experience elaborated indicators that were more descriptive than analytical.

The *Comunidades y Desarrollo en el Ecuador* (COMUNIDEC) project, *Sistema de Desarrollo Local* (SISDEL), emerged from the 16-year experience of that organisation in providing methodological expertise to local organisations (mainly municipalities, native groups and minority cultural groups). Their main reason for presenting a project to the contest was their interest in methodology. But, once involved with NRM, they shifted to a more integrated approach that proved better suited to their real situation. They also discovered multi-stakeholder analysis and later applied it in local development planning.

The experience of the *Grupo de Análisis para el Desarrollo* (GRADE) in Tambopata, Peru has some characteristics in common with the Ecuador COMUNIDEC project in

terms of contribution. GRADE had moved from development projects to macroeconomics research by 1985-1987. NRM strategies, as a working theme for GRADE, appeared in the early 1990s with the opening of environmental concerns to new aspects (for example, mining). As GRADE developed the NRM strategies, new needs for M&E methodological studies became evident.

Leverage effect

Several informants mentioned the leverage effect of these projects. This effect is more evident to them since the grant amounts are relatively modest in comparative terms.

For the same project, GRADE was able to raise additional funding (US\$35,000 from the Regional Fund for Agricultural Technology, FONTAGRO) for a total of US\$60,000, including US\$10,000 as GRADE contribution to complement the US\$15,000 from IDRC-Minga/RIMISP. The contribution that GRADE makes to research capacity building is also important to the research agenda, advancing the theme of non-agricultural rural employment as an important issue in Peruvian development studies, and in that of research team building.

In the COMUNIDEC project in Ecuador, the experience with local NGOs and governments also had a leverage effect through merging participative methodologies and intercultural approaches. This was achieved both in terms of theory and in terms of synthesis with other experiences and projects in NRM.

The leverage effect also works backwards. The *Centro Agronómico Tropical de Investigación y Enseñanza* (CATIE) project in Nicaragua is validating a methodology developed in two former projects with financial support of the international development agencies of Denmark, Norway and Sweden. The area in which the M&E-funded project was carried out is one of the seven demonstrative or replication areas for the two original projects.

Contribution of RIMISP

For the project teams, RIMISP is much more than the fund administrator. They recognise RIMISP leadership in identifying new critical issues in evaluation and in orienting projects and NGOs towards new perspectives. In the case of GRADE, the project research design was improved following RIMISP observations that helped GRADE open new interactions with other institutions, for example with the national land registry services. This experience helped GRADE understand that a multi-stakeholder approach needs good information sharing and GRADE now applies this lesson to other experiences and projects. The Forest Management project also recognises the value of RIMISP as an intellectual leader, and therefore the leverage effect of RIMISP's action.

Conflict and Collaboration in Natural Resource Management

The C&C Program aims to establish a research program on multi-stakeholder approaches to managing conflicts over natural resources in LAC, through a competitive, transparent and efficient small-grant program.

The contribution of the C&C projects to the development of a particular methodology in conflict and collaboration seems to be less homogenous than that of the M&E projects. The main source of the differences comes from the project teams' variety of interpretations regarding cooperation and conflict and their attitudes towards conflict resolution techniques. The concept of Alternative Conflict Management is not always used in the projects' language. In one case studied in this assessment, the project team does not consider conflict resolution as an objective but measures success in terms of new mobilization around the conflict and not on cooperation, which is seen much more as resignation. Stakeholder analysis is no different in this case from a rigid social class analysis. This interpretation also affects NRM, since this project finds the

very notion of management unacceptable because it is interpreted as the management of an unbearable situation. In conversations with several project leaders, the identification with these viewpoints emerged and was corroborated.

An exception to the general observation made in the preceding paragraph is the Inter American Centre for Sustainable Ecosystems Development (ICSSED) project in Chile. A critical approach allowed ICSSED to contribute to conflict resolution by a very pragmatic stakeholder analysis and by facilitating contacts between these same actors.

The Intermediate Technology Development Group (ITDG) also had a very creative approach to the issue of water distribution and use. The group inventoried and used traditional Quechua forms of recognising conflict and cooperation when building new organisational capacity for resolution. The management approach used a diagnostic of the communities, properly identifying stakeholders and their water needs. The ITDG acted as technical resource, facilitating training, and preparing water use regulations and management devices. This approach contributed to revitalizing the indigenous culture and brought more autonomy to relationships between the native communities and between them and the state agencies.

In the same water resource area, the experience of the *Centro de Estudios Superiores Universitarios/ Universidad Mayor de San Simón* (CESU/UMSS) in Cochabamba is different. Participation in the C&C fund is within a context of linkage between academia and the *Federación Departamental Cochabambina de Regantes* (FEDECOR). Both partners prepared the project in May 2000, in a climate of high confrontation – the so-called “water war”. This conflict reached a new high level by the fourth quarter of 2000, soon after the project was approved, and in the first half of 2001. In that context, with CESU/UMSS participating very actively in the mobilization, resolution was clearly viewed as a research concept, separate from the reality of the struggle. The implicit idea was that mobilization should lead to a win-lose outcome more than a win-win one. As long as the project partners were convinced that their cultural vision of water

management was correct ¹, they were also convinced that they were the only possible winners, despite all the difficulties of their struggle.

The case of the *Sociedad Peruana de Derecho Ambiental - Oficina de Asesoría y Consultoría Ambiental* (SPDA-OACA) project in the Lurín valley in Peru was completely different again. Although the project is directly related to the grassroots level, it is based more on a proposal for the future: the transformation of valley production and land use according to the needs of both the valley population and metropolitan Lima. Stakeholder analysis in this case was much less dichotomous and more related to social and economic variables. The SPDA, and especially OACA, realised that a more militant role reduced their ability to intermediate with the wide variety of stakeholders intervening in the situation. Stakeholder analysis permitted OACA to reconsider its role and to look for a more intermediate position. They discovered that this repositioning contributed to define their own added value: to know the conflict from the inside and then to plan conflict resolution from a unique privileged position.

Concern over the interface between local and general interest existed in a relatively modest project (US\$9000) by Cecilia Martínez and local partners in the Tempisque basin in Costa Rica. The local presence in this project is represented by a community organisation, *Raíces*, and by a sugar-cane company. The project co-ordinator emphasized local knowledge and how this could be shared in conversations oriented to resolving the conflict through a mutually accepted agreement. The community group conducted a useful lobbying effort directed at government institutions. These activities resulted in the declaration of an Area of Natural Heritage (*Área de Patrimonio Natural*) in favour of the local land. The company, after conversations with other local stakeholders, changed its policies in order to stop buying up land for monoculture expansion and adopted a new approach of partnership with small-scale producers. The outcome was local management of resources through concerted action of the different actors. This was an important contribution of the project to the demands existing for the conservation of wetlands (*humedales*) in different regions of the country.

¹ Water belongs to *Pachamama* (the Earth); nobody should become rich with water exploitation.

IDRC-Minga has a very complete and coherent position on conflict and collaboration in NRM (Buckles, Daniel [Editor] [1999]. *Cultivating Peace: Conflict and Collaboration in Natural Resource Management*. Ottawa, IDRC, 300 p. ISBN 0-88936-899-6. Versión en español [2001]: *Cultivar la Paz: Conflicto y Colaboración en el Manejo de los Recursos Naturales*, ISBN 0-88936-939-9. Version française [2001]: *Cultiver la Paix: Conflits et Collaboration dans la Gestion des Ressources Naturelles*, ISBN 0-88936-945-3). This could inspire organisations working on this theme. The contrast between the IDRC position on C&C and the reality of some of the projects leads to recommendations, below, in the area of training and in that of theoretical support.

Community-based Coastal Resources Management Program in the Caribbean

The Costas Program has as general objective to promote, through research, a multi-stakeholder approach to coastal resource management in the Caribbean with a view to enhancing sustainable development.

The contribution of the Costas projects seems to be of a different nature than that of the two other SGP funded by IDRC-Minga. The M&E and C&C are essentially thematic and methodological funds on two aspects of NRM. Costas appears more as a “geographic” fund, based on coastal regions in the Caribbean, as its complete title indicates. Many of the C&C and M&E projects are also community-based, but none are based in the Caribbean. This is the only fund that has reached English-speaking countries. All Cuban projects are associated to this same SGP.

In the case of the Costas projects, there is no applied methodology to test and therefore their success and their contribution to a research agenda is not different from other research-for-development projects. This observation does not mean that the Costas Program is of less value than the other two. It only implies that the focus of this program, mainly in terms of contribution to a research agenda, must be reviewed. The

preliminary evaluation of the program concluded the same. In a prospective look at the second phase, the evaluators proposed some structural reorientations, such as emphasis on interdisciplinary approaches, gender issues and institutional linkages. They also indicated the need for collaboration mechanisms with C&C as a strategy for a “better characterization of the stakeholders concerned by the projects”.

Different project teams in the Costas SGP do not understand the concept of “community-based management” under the same premises. The people working at the administrating organisations (CARICOM Fisheries Unit [CFU] and IOI-*Universidad Nacional* [UNA]) observe that, in some cases, the community component is merely formal and it should be better labelled as individual local participation. In other cases, the concept of stakeholders is understood as citizen participation or as local or municipal management. The same informants recognise that the notion of stakeholders is exterior to the organisational culture of most of the projects they supervised, at least in the Spanish-speaking countries.

Lack of interdisciplinarity is one of the challenges that Costas should respond to in a new stage. According to the informants of both administrating organisations of this fund (CFU and IOI-UNA), interdisciplinarity is a condition of success for these projects. Those projects considered the most successful are those where interdisciplinarity was best developed.

Management of the Small Grant Programs' Mechanisms

Overall, we can assert that the three funds have achieved a high degree of reliability in the call for proposals, the selection of projects and the administration of the funds. Some differences and some exceptions exist to the general observation in the experiences of the different funds.

M&E

The experience of RIMISP as administrating organisation is quite different from the two other funds, for several reasons:

- By definition RIMISP is a network.
- RIMISP had certainly a legitimate interest in accepting the fund administrative responsibility as leverage for its own network development.
- A substantive content aspect in the M&E objectives interested RIMISP.

The RIMISP staff mentioned the following improvements:

- The organisation of two committees for the fund management: Restricted and Enlarged.
- The Restricted Committee's design of a set of rules to be enforced by the Enlarged Committee in the selection process.
- The Restricted Committee's approval of the final list of selected projects.
- The adoption of some changes in the selection criteria.
- The organisation of a workshop for selected projects' representatives, soon after the selection.

The RIMISP officials recognised a weakness at the convocation level: their difficulty to elicit proposals from groups from countries with official or majority language other than Spanish. No corrective action is proposed at this time.

Teams at the projects' level thought highly of RIMISP process management capabilities. Notwithstanding, some problems were mentioned in relation to the proposal assessors, who were not part of RIMISP staff. At the project level, there was some demand for dialogue with RIMISP and amongst participants.

C&C

The processes in the C&C fund are somewhat differently co-ordinated than those in the M&E fund.

First, in C&C there is a program committee that not only has project selection responsibilities but also is in charge of monitoring and evaluation. The informants evaluated success in the accomplishment of the monitoring task as relatively modest: in some cases, the calendar of visits to projects was not respected and the committee members did not visit some projects. In a few other cases, the reports are very poor or simply absent. The fund administrators tend to consider this lack of success with a certain flexibility, arguing that those visits were not essential for the projects or for the program. The fund administrators would like to introduce some changes in the committee composition but, at the time of the present evaluation, it was not clear how this could be done, who should be replaced and how and by whom the decision could be taken.

The second difference with M&E processes is the more extensive use of Internet for C&C managing operations. Essentially, this is based on Online Proposal Appraisal (OPA), an open source code interface with many capabilities for managing project selection processes. The OPA was highly useful for management purposes at the administrating organisation level, for the selection process and monitoring, and for the

program specialist in IDRC-Minga. In general, OPA is essentially viewed more as a storage and retrieval system than as a management and decision-taking system. When the time arrived to study documents, people preferred to use printed papers; when letters were to be sent, they preferred e-mail sent by the usual servers; when reports were due, they prepared them as usual in printed form, perhaps with a digital copy on diskette or as e-mail attachment.

The existence of three other instruments could facilitate the work of C&C people at the processes level. The first is at the conceptual level: the existence of a book by IDRC on the subject of the delegated fund (Buckles, 1999; see reference, page 6). It seems that the book, even if apparently well diffused in LAC, is not sufficiently used.

The other two tools are more at an instrumental level: a CD-ROM (Barker, Alan & Firoze Manji [2000]. *Writing for Change. An Interactive Guide for Effective Writing, Writing for Science, and Writing for Advocacy*. CD-ROM and users' guide. Oxford, fahamu / Ottawa, IDRC. ISBN 0-88936-932-1. Versión en español co-edición Montevideo, Nordan [2001]: *Escribir para el Cambio*, ISBN 0-88936-964-X. Version française co-édition Paris, ESKA [2002]: *La Rédaction, Instrument de Changement*, ISBN 0-88936-977-1) and the Web site of Jacques Chevalier on stakeholder analysis (<http://www.carleton.ca/~jchevali/STAKEH2.html>). Nothing prevents the three groups, which should have concerns on stakeholder analysis and writing tasks, from using these tools. It seems that project teams have very preconceived ideas about methodology, including the testing of what they discovered as new, conducting the projects in a preconceived way.

Costas

The main characteristic of this fund's management is that, contrary to the two former SGP, there are two administrating organisations: IOI-UNA and CFU. This formal arrangement to share administrative responsibilities was a source of conflicts and

problems in the first phase of Costas. IDRC-Minga requested changes in the arrangement for the second phase. The new equal status that both organisations will have in the second phase hopefully will help erase past difficulties. The administering organisations expect to arrive at a common understanding of rules and procedures and at a clear division of labour between them in regard to the projects.

Costas SGP and associated projects also use OPA, but in a different manner than in C&C. Costas program and project teams do not make use of the on-line appraisal capability for which OPA was primarily created. Only the repository function is in operation in this program, with a relatively high level of satisfaction amongst the users. This agrees with our perception of OPA being used as a resources depot rather than as a managing system.

The participation of a Canadian university as a full partner in the Costas program is distinctive compared to the other two SGP. The *Université Laval* (UL) was present from the start. In fact, the Laval team's contribution to bilingualism (English – Spanish) in the program was most important. It was thought that the UL team's contribution would be mainly scientific but it quickly moved towards administrative support, because the program needed this at the start. The UL team also played a role of mitigation agent as tensions appeared between IOI and CFU, and by extension between the Spanish-speaking and English-speaking components. As new situations emerged, the UL team showed flexibility in dealing with them and this ability was undoubtedly a good contribution to the program.

The UL produced several outputs:

1. A guidebook containing very useful background information (Savard, Katherine [1999]. *Guidebook on IDRC Coastal Zone Management Program in the Caribbean*. Preliminary version, March. Ottawa, IDRC, internal document).
2. A Steering Committee guidebook for the first round of awards selection (Breton, Yvan & Katherine Savard [1999]. *Steering Committee Guidebook. Collaborative*

Management of Coastal Resources in the Caribbean. First round of awards. Belize, CFRAMP / IOI / IDRC / UL, May, internal document).

3. A reference book, a very complete document on the Caribbean and on the specific theme of the program under the format of a “reader” (Savard, Katherine & Yvan Breton [Editors] [1999]. *Ciencias Sociales y Manejo Comunitario de Recursos Costeros: Libro de Referencias / Social Sciences and Community Based Coastal Resources Management.* Ottawa, IDRC / CIID, internal document). This bilingual book was prepared before the beginning of the SGP operations.
4. A bibliography, presented in three languages (English, French and Spanish) on community-based coastal resources in the Caribbean (Savard, Katherine [2000]. *Bibliografía Selective / Selective Bibliography / Bibliographie Selective. Gestión Comunitaria de los Recursos Costeros del Caribe / Community-based Coastal Resources Management in the Caribbean / Gestion Communautaire des Ressources Côtières dans les Caraïbes.* Ottawa, CIID / IDRC / CRDI, internal document).
5. A first evaluation undertaken in winter 2000.
6. A preliminary evaluation undertaken by the UL team, with a substantial monitoring component following the visit to each one of the projects (Savard, Katherine & Yvan Breton [2001]. *Preliminary Evaluation: Projects Research. Community-based Coastal Resources Program in the Caribbean.* CFRAMP/IOI/Université Laval. Ottawa, IDRC [restricted circulation], 80 p).
7. The final report (Breton, Yvan, Brian Davy & Daniel Buckles [2001]. *Balancing People and Resources. Interdisciplinary Research and Management of Coastal Areas in the Caribbean. Results of the First Phase: Context, Case Studies, Methodological Lessons and Prospectives.* A collective CBCRM program publication. Ottawa, IDRC / Heredia, IOI / Belize, CFU / Québec, UL, December [restricted circulation]).

The active participation of UL and its contribution was very positive in the SGP experience.

Conclusions on the Management of Small Grants Programs' Mechanisms

The management processes at the operational base of Minga's SGP are operating well. The main underlying values are respected: transparency, devolution of responsibilities and specialization in the associated tasks. Without doubt, some problems emerged in the first phase but conditions for overcoming these are now in place.

Each SGP has, or is building, its own tradition. In the second phase, now beginning in all three funds, these traditions are respected and the adoption of some functional reforms help their improvement:

- In the M&E case, these comprise reformulating some of the selection criteria.
- In C&C, as is also the case in Costas, it is mainly by the organisation of a start-up workshop, without eliminating the final one.
- In Costas, it is by a drastic reform of the division of tasks between IOI and CFU that might eliminate the serious conflicts between the two organisations in the past. This reform is supported by the structure of two steering committees, one scientific and one administrative, each with the participation of different representatives of the administering organisations, both with the participation of the responsible Senior Program Specialist of IDRC-Minga and with scientific support from UL participation.

But, in all three SGP, the second phase might also be the time to adopt new operational arrangements.

Lessons and Recommendations

The Minga Research Agenda and SGP Proposals

A certain difficulty appears in transmitting the IDRC-Minga message on NRM down to the project level. The Minga research agenda on NRM is not well known. Several projects declared little or no knowledge on some principles of the Minga approach. But, as soon as the debate is open on such questions (for example, on the need for stakeholder analysis), it appears that the different actors share these principles and that the project leaders have many affinities with them. A common point of departure is necessary in order to have a coherent set of projects aligned in a shared array of ideas concerning NRM and the different aspects defined for the SGP. The internalisation of this point of departure could prevent the presentation of proposals that merely promise to reinvent the wheel. A good starting point for this dissemination of the IDRC-Minga research agenda could be the sharing of the “state of the art” in the specific funds’ objectives with project partners and administering organisations.

Minga needs to initiate a certain degree of **convergence** between the three delegated funds in terms of the discussion of some theoretical and methodological principles. This does not mean that all projects should have the same orientation but that, in order to participate in the call for proposals, a minimum of understanding of common principles must be required. Minga is not a research grant agency aiming at the advancement of science. Minga has a coherent proposal on alternative NRM to overcome resource degradation in LAC and its relation with poverty. This must be reflected more evidently in the call for proposals.

In order to strengthen the relations between the three funds and with IDRC-Minga, at least one **common activity** should be planned. This event should permit the systematization of the experience of the first phase and develop new, shared understanding of the NRM problematic, and new methodological standards. This could

be especially rich, considering the yet insufficiently explored connections between the three domains.

We recommend establishing a system of “positive discrimination” of proposals aimed towards **priorities in the Minga research agenda**. We do not recommend a system of points to implement this. We think that such a system could produce some distortion in the selection of themes by the organisation presenting proposals. We prefer that Minga priorities be clearly established in the call for proposals and that this becomes an invitation to present proposals in these areas without too many directives.

Special consideration should be given to exploring the possibility of a more important participation of **Brazilian proposals**. That could imply that RIMISP and *Universidad para la Paz* will need to have a Portuguese version of some documents, perhaps with the special support of the IDRC translation services.

The call for proposals should be very explicit on the conditions for applications, on the selection procedures and on the relationship that the selected organisation might establish with IDRC-Minga and with the other actors.

Organisation

Special attention should be given to improving decision-making procedures, especially in terms of ensuring the functioning of **program committees** in the three funds. We suggest that these committees should be integrated not only by Canadian members (IDRC, UL, etc.) and by the delegated fund coordinator but also, as now is the case in C&C, by LAC experts. Where a program committee exists, as in C&C, we recommend an evaluation of the characteristics and the participation of the committee members. Where the committee exists only for the project selection, we recommend that its function be extended to program orientation and project monitoring and evaluation. In

all cases, a clear distinction of responsibilities between the committee and the permanent staff must be designed.

Each of the SGP in the administering organisations tends to be a team of permanent technical staff for administrative and monitoring purposes. If this tendency is confirmed with the beginning of the second phase of each program, a complete **assessment of needs as well as staff availability** must be done.

If IDRC or Minga should choose to develop new SGP in the future, we recommend that particular attention be given to the **selection of the administering organisation**. We assert that this selection process is as important as that of projects and the consequences could have bigger impact on the programs. We recommend that the selection process be based on two instruments: (1) A set of criteria for the selection, and (2) A public and transparent call for proposals.

Devolution

The SGP are based on a philosophy of devolution: IDRC has a broad desire to devolve management responsibility to institutions in Latin America wherever possible. Devolution in the context of IDRC work is essentially capacity building and in that sense is an objective *per se*. Devolution has the sense of common responsibility in the handling of business covering common interests. This style of work should be implemented at all levels.

Particular priority should be given to projects considering actions at **local development** level using multi stakeholder analysis and strategy.

As an application of this recommendation, the selection committees should encourage proposals that study **relationships with decision-making actors** with emphasis on the concerns of the three SGP and on NRM generally. In this sense, projects that

emphasize the study of decision-making processes and propose mechanisms for the implementation of decisions will be of great value. Monitoring activities should observe how the project teams consider this dimension and appropriate guidance must be offered in this area.

The devolution style of work should be implemented at all levels. This means that **responsibilities must be shared** between IDRC, permanent staff at the administering organisations, program committees and project teams. In some cases, it means that new structures must be created and new procedures must be designed and implemented. The following table gives an illustration of the share of responsibilities we are recommending for each of the abovementioned actors.

Recommended sharing of responsibilities

Actors	Responsibilities
Local/regional level: NGO, institutions, academia	(1) Research on their own realities (2) Characteristics: multi-stakeholder analysis, interdisciplinarity, participatory, action oriented, gender oriented, decision-making oriented (3) Systematization of experiences (4) Projecting sustainability
Program committees	(1) Process orientation (2) Projects selection (3) Theoretical support in areas of the committee members' own domain of expertise (4) Research support (training on research techniques and orientations; training on systematization) (5) Facilitation of institutional linkages (6) Supporting sustainability (7) Monitoring and evaluation
Administrating organisations staff	(1) Theoretical support (2) Methodological support (3) Administrative support (4) Network building (5) Dissemination of results and experiences
IDRC - Minga	(1) Theoretical support on NRM and trans-funds and fund-specific aspects (2) Financial support (3) Networking support (4) Support to dissemination of results and experiences (5) IDRC's trans-program exchanges and institutional systematization (through point [1] and as an output of these exchanges)

Participation

Participation must be implemented at all levels. Working with different project teams particularly requires respect of each party's skills and of the contribution of each to the group as a whole. This aspect must be considered in group activities, such as workshops, in which the co-ordinating organisations and facilitators must promote active participation. In that sense, these events must be planned as a whole, taking into account the contribution of each participant. A passive approach in which

participants are only recipients of information, knowledge or instructions must be avoided.

Particular attention needs to be given to establishing stronger **links between the project teams and scientists from natural and social sciences** through participation in workshops, conferences, lectures and other activities in the domains of the three SGP and in NRM in general. This could be assured by special funds in the projects' budget, by the administering organisations arranging the organisation of some scientific events, and by opening the internal workshops to one or two invited persons while taking into consideration that the workshop program of activities must not be too time consuming nor changed into an academic activity.

Action research has a special value for projects in terms of local impact in communities. This orientation permits the research activity to be connected with social needs and priorities. When people are involved in research about their own reality, they tend to abandon the role of clientele, or object of the research activity, and become full subjects. Scientific results are consequently useful in a more concrete, practical way.

Interdisciplinarity

Interdisciplinarity is not easy. Researchers and professionals who work on NRM seem to be too influenced by their own disciplines. On the other hand, it is difficult to integrate different approaches. In this sense it seems paradoxical that biology, physics and chemistry are generally referred to as “hard” sciences. In many cases, the sciences that could appear as “hard” (for their difficulty in opening up to different approaches) are social sciences in general. This is the case for projects with a social sciences' base, which may occur more in C&C than in the two other funds.

In the selection of projects, special attention needs to be given to the potential they have in terms of **the development of a scientific tradition** in the domains of the three

SGP. This criterion should include not only interdisciplinarity, as was asked in the past, but new actions improving the scientific aspect of the projects. As an example, this includes:

- The reinforcement of international standards shared by the scientific community;
- An adequate balance between different disciplines;
- Different levels of experience of senior and junior professionals, and therefore the possibility of training new people to insure the sustainability of the projects;
- The capacity to develop scientific, replicable tools, such as indicators or monitoring and evaluation procedures; and
- The capacity for producing scientific outputs, such as publications and diffusion material; etc.

The experience of having a **Canadian university partner** should be extended to at least one of the other SGP if a third phase is developed. This experience should be preceded by a serious research effort to identify desirable inputs from such a partnership and by the design of a partner selection process according to the characteristics of the program and with reference to the expertise of the Canadian university in the specific SGP domain.

Gender

Gender is still an area where important discussion is needed. In some projects, the underlying idea on gender is associated with a lack of gender discrimination. In NRM, a gendered approach could provide new insight on unequal access to resources, on the lack of collaborative practices, and on the perception of the situations related to NRM. These aspects were not sufficiently worked upon in the first phase of the three SGP. To open the research to gender aspects offers new possibilities of innovative research with a high potential of utility and mobilizing capacity.

Funding dissemination

The dissemination of available funds over a large number of projects is not always the best decision. Marginal amounts could mean marginal outputs. In some cases, more substantial financial support could be necessary in order to obtain results that are difficult to get or to give sustainability to some projects. This evolution towards fewer projects with more important grant amounts could be part of the strategy of developing additional phases to any of the projects. This strategy must not be understood in Darwinist terms as the survival of the fittest but, on the contrary, in the sense of a consolidation of advances to obtain results relatively easily with additional support.

Replicability is not necessarily expensive. As the funds are limited and there are projects with enough dynamism that share the same perspective as the three SGP, replicability could be encouraged by special funding at a lesser amount. This probably could be done by delegation to the projects' replicating source, by this mechanism reaching projects that may not apply to the SGP but that could merit financial support in terms of their importance at the local level.

Networking

Networking is today's working. In this sense, networking must not be assumed as an additional task, perhaps at the project's end. Networking must be implemented in every moment of the project life, even before the project exists, in the preliminary steps. For example, diagnostics of a situation can and should be done through networking, exchanging information with other actors, discovering together the web of relationships between stakeholders in the action. There is no experience of this form of networking, and to initiate this kind of practice could be useful.

The **use of OPA** in the selection process and in monitoring and evaluation should be continued in the cases of C&C and Costas. A backup protocol should be established

for cases where the system, or access to it, failed. Testimonies on OPA are not sufficiently conclusive and for this reason we consider that OPA merits further testing. This opportunity must be followed by a review of protocols of access and use, and by a global evaluation.

The possibility of establishing permanent **training and communication methods through Internet** should be explored. This could begin with an electronic forum for each of the funds and, after evaluation of the experience, the organisation of other activities.

Partnership

Partnership building is the main strategic tool for the program's consolidation and to gain sustainability within each of the funds. Partnership, in this case, must be understood not as a static relationship but as a process in terms of alliance building with different stakeholders from the project level to the relationship between IDRC and organisations involved in the programs. Partnership is also networking development and networked action.

Dissemination of results

Each project has its own responsibility in making public the systematization of its own experience. If this is done, then the other projects may discover new results and new experience and the network of the institutions working with the same research orientations and agenda may be expanded. This expansion might help to build new action capabilities, institutional change and sustainability for the projects.

End Note

After two and a half years of having three SGP in operation, and at the beginning of a new stage, we conclude that the program has taken the right direction. The new period may be of greater productivity in terms of conceptualisation, construction, relationships between the three funds and with IDRC-Minga, training and sharing abilities through the Internet, and partnership development with stakeholders.

The foundations for what must be accomplished from now to the end of the life span of the programme are solid and it seems that the different actors could accommodate the changes to be undertaken.

Programs and projects (1st phase)

M&E

Program

Monitoring and evaluation of natural resource management.

Competitive grants program for research on monitoring and evaluation methods for natural resource management projects and programs in Latin America and the Caribbean.

- *Red Internacional de Metodologías de Investigación de Sistemas de Producción (RIMISP)*

Projects funded

1. Ownership rights, regulation of concessions and optimum use of natural resources: criteria for regulating Brazil nut harvesting in the province of Tambopata, in the Peruvian jungle.
 - *Grupo de Análisis para el Desarrollo (GRADE).*
2. Development of a monitoring and evaluation methodology for sustainable forestry management in the Primary Tropical Humid Forest in Brazil and the Natural Pinewood Forests of Honduras.
 - *Universidad para la Paz*
 - *Escuela Nacional de Ciencias Forestales de Honduras*
 - *Universidade do Amazonas*
 - *Mil Madereira Itacoatiara*
3. Biological indicators of the sustainability of extractive forestry in the Eastern Amazon (Brazil).

- Conservation International
4. Monitoring and evaluation using the PESA participative method: a revision of the PESACRE agroforestry systems project in the community of Novo Ideal (Brazil).
 - *Pesquisa e Extensão em Sistemas Agroflorestais do Acre* (PESACRE)
 5. Extension of the monitoring and evaluation component of the local development system (SISDEL) in Ecuador.
 - *Comunidades y Desarrollo en el Ecuador, Fundación de Desarrollo* (COMUNIDEC).
 6. Validation of a monitoring and evaluation methodology for strengthening the participative strategy of managing the natural resources of Estero Real, Nicaragua.
 - *Centro Agronómico Tropical de Investigación y Enseñanza* (CATIE).
 7. Construction and evaluation of a desertification index in rural populations of Chaco Árido (Argentina)
 - Faculty of Agricultural Sciences, *Universidad de Córdoba*.
 - Secretariat of Sustainable Development and Environmental Policy, Government of the Republic of Argentina.
 8. Monitoring and evaluation method in the Monarch Butterfly Model Forest (Mexico)
 - Secretariat of the Environment, Natural Resources and Fisheries, Government of the United States of Mexico.

C&C

Program

Conflict and collaboration in natural resource management.

- *Universidad para la Paz*

Projects funded

1. The irrigating smallholders of Cochabamba in the Water War: an experience of social pressure and negotiation (Bolivia).
 - *Centro de Estudios Superiores Universitarios, Universidad Mayor de San Simón (CESU / UMSS).*
 - *Federación Departamental Cochabambina de Regantes (FEDECOR)*
2. The efficiency of institutional arrangement in natural resource management: conflict management in the communal management of mountain forest (Bolivia).
 - *Comunidad de Estudios Jaina*
3. Fishing agreements, an alternative for the management of fishing resources (Brazil).
 - *Instituto Amazônico de Manejo Sustentável dos Recursos Ambientais (IARA)*
4. The lessons of the Bío-Bío dams for the alternative management of ethno-environmental conflicts in Mapuche territories, Chile
 - *Instituto de Estudios Indígenas (IEI), Universidad de la Frontera (UFRO).*

5. Identification, systematization and resolution of conflicts in the establishment and administration of areas of management and exploitation of marine resources that live in contact with the sea floor (AMERB) in Chile: the case of Playa Ritoque and Farallones de Concón in the Valparaíso region.
 - Inter American Centre for Sustainable Ecosystems Development (ICSSED).
6. Historical evolution of the alternative management of conflicts over the possession and use of the territory and its natural resources in the Pacific area of the Cauca Valley, Colombia. Case study based on comparative analysis.
 - *Fundación CENIPACÍFICO*
7. Role of socio-environmental conflict in local environmental management. Case study of the Bolsón and Ortega communities, in the lower watershed of the Tempisque, Guanacaste (Costa Rica)
 - Cecilia Martínez and several local partners.
8. From conflict to proposal: community incidence in the formulation and analysis of environmental policies (Costa Rica)
 - *Cooperativa Autogestionaria de Servicios Profesionales para la Solidaridad Social* (Coope Sol i Dar).
9. Local cultures and the management of environmental conflicts in a transition society: the case of Mexico
 - Department of Regional Studies, *Universidad de Guadalajara*.
10. Evaluation of the use of participative mapping for the resolution of land use conflicts within the hydrological reserve Filo del Tallo, Darién (Panama)
 - *Comité Salvemos el Filo del Tallo* (COSAFIT).

11. Promoting smallholder institutions for confronting the social and intercultural conflict in the management of irrigation water in the Peruvian Sierra.
 - Intermediate Technology Development Group (ITDG).
12. Social and environmental impact in the alternative management of conflicts and natural resources in the Andean zone of Peru.
 - *Casa Campesina del Centro de Estudios Andinos Bartolomé de las Casas*
13. Alternative management of conflicts linked to soil use in the Lurín River watershed, Lima, Peru.
 - *Sociedad Peruana de Derecho Ambiental (SPDA)*
 - *Oficina de Asesoría y Consultoría Ambiental (OACA).*
14. Participative management of the rural area of Montevideo. Evaluation and in-depth study of an innovative experience (Uruguay).
 - *Centro Interdisciplinario de Estudios sobre el Desarrollo (CIEDUR).*
15. Yacambú River watershed: conflict in the use of water for human consumption and agricultural irrigation (Venezuela)
 - *Centro para la Gestión Tecnológica Popular (CETEP).*

Costas

Program

Community-based coastal resources management program in the Caribbean.

- International Ocean Institute (IOI), *Universidad Nacional (UNA)*
- CARICOM Fisheries Unit (CFU)

Projects funded

1. Promotion of fisherfolk participation in fisheries management planning. Barbados.
 - Fisheries Division, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Government of Barbados.
 - Barbados National Union of Fisherfolk Organisations (BARNUFO)
2. Identifying past and current methods of coastal resources management in the southern coast of Belize.
 - School of Continuing Studies (SCS), University of the West Indies
 - University of Belize
 - Toledo Institute for Development and Environment (TIDE)
3. Cultural typology of water management in the island of San Andrés (Colombia).
 - *Instituto de Estudios Caribeños, Universidad Nacional de Colombia*
 - *Corporación para el Desarrollo Sostenible del Archipiélago de San Andrés (CORALINA)*
 - *Colegio Antonia Santos*
 - *Instituto Bolivariano*
 - *Comité de Participación Comunitaria de San Luis*
 - *Las Madres Comunitarias*
 - *Grupo de discusión del Plan de Ordenamiento Territorial*
4. Problems of small-scale tourism on the Atlantic Coast of Costa Rica.
 - *Fundación para el Desarrollo Económico, Social y Ambiental del Centro América (FUDESOL)*
5. Participatory research to provide the foundations toward the co-management of *calva* (*Centropus parallelus*) in Barra del Colorado, Limón, Costa Rica.
 - *Instituto de los Recursos Costeros y Marinos (INRECOSMAR)*

6. The community management of natural resources (Caribbean). Community project in Bahía de Nipe, Cuba.
 - *Centro de Investigaciones Pesqueras*
7. Community management and integrated development of coastal resources with a special reference to mangroves. Cuba.
 - *Universidad de Pinar del Río*
8. The setting up of a model for the management of coastal resources among the Cuban communities.
 - *Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO)*
9. Coastal resource management oriented to establish a management plan for a National Marine Park in Cuba
 - *Centro de Investigaciones Marinas (CIM), Universidad de La Habana*
10. University project on community-based study and conservation of Cuban sea turtles.
 - *Centro de Investigaciones Marinas (CIM), Universidad de La Habana*
11. Re-valorising indigenous knowledge: Garden and compost in the fishing community of Santa Clara, Yucatán, Mexico.
 - *Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán*
12. Community-based marine protected area in San Felipe, Yucatán, Mexico.
 - *Centro de Investigación y de Estudios Avanzados*

13. A step toward food security in the Caribbean: developing a collaborative approach to food safety.
 - Caribbean Environmental Health Institute, Saint Lucia
14. Integrated conservation management of Nariva swamp (Trinidad – Tobago).
 - University of West Indies (St-Augustine)
15. Synthesising the Caribbean experience in stakeholders' analysis for participatory natural resources management.
 - Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI)
 - Jamaican Conservation and Development Trust
 - University of the West Indies, Barbados
 - Department of Fisheries, Government of Trinidad and Tobago
 - *Universidad de Puerto Rico*
 - *Centro para la Conservación y el Ecodesarrollo de la bahía de Samana, República Dominicana*

APPENDIX I

Response to the Evaluation

Simon Carter, Team leader Minga Programme Initiative, IDRC

The preceding report is a welcome contribution to collective learning amongst IDRC staff, our partners in the three organizations administering small grants programmes, and the recipients of the grants. We expect that the report will be of considerable use to other IDRC programmes and other donor organisations that may be considering using this modality in the future, as well as to our partner and other research organizations faced with the challenge of administering SGPs.

Some of the lessons from this study, made available by the evaluator during the process of writing the report, were incorporated into the second round of the Conflict and Collaboration SGP and the Fondo Mink'a de Chorlavi administered by RIMISP (<http://www.fondominkachorlavi.org>). In particular, start-up workshops have been designed to provide a shared theoretical and methodological grounding for all recipients. We anticipate that this will also go some way to addressing some initial differences in capacity amongst recipients. The role played by project committees continues to evolve and still needs further thought. Participation has declined in some cases because of members' other commitments and priorities, and the issue of recognition for this important contribution needs further thought.

Small grants programs need to be seen in the context of IDRC's broad desire to devolve management responsibility to institutions in Latin America wherever possible (either where capacity exists or where we want to create/strengthen it). A key question that arises from the study that should be addressed by anyone planning a small grants program is "What are you trying to build: recipients' capacity or the administering organization's scientific and/or organizational capacity?" If the former, experienced administering partners should be sought, probably through a competition, as Dr. Mujica

suggests in the final section of his report. If the latter, as part of a longer term process of building scientific capacity, then some risks have to be taken in terms of finding the right partner with the potential to evolve into a future leading institution. Long-term commitment on the part of the donor will likely be necessary, as will a lot of patience, and a willingness to work closely with the staff of that organization to evaluate interim results, resolve problems, advise on procedures and provide advice and a sympathetic ear in moments of crisis.

It is probably too early, or Minga provides as yet too small a sample, to assess what is the particular contribution of this mode of program delivery vis-à-vis others (e.g., networks or traditional projects), or under which precise conditions SGPs should be used. Some observations are worth sharing at this point, nevertheless:

- One of the important reasons why Minga established an initial SGP was to scout the field of participatory monitoring and evaluation, to find out who was “out there” beyond the institutions we already knew. In this respect, this and the other SGPs have been highly successful, laying the ground for a broadening of our network of partners in the region and for building critical masses of institutions working on common issues or in similar contexts.
- Size can be a limitation on the scope of work undertaken in SGPs, although modest research funds can enable small organizations to make a significant contribution by building focused research onto considerable empirical expertise (as in the case of COMUNIDEC). SGPs are not a substitute for well-funded, medium- to long-term research, which is essential to understanding change and for experimentation and social learning in the broad area of human-environment relations.

- The “niches” for SGPs are more in the realms of exploration, synthesis and initiating communities of practice around key issues and themes. These communities have to be consolidated over time using various modalities.
- SGPs are probably not relevant in situations where research capacity is very low, or highly variable. In the former case, capacity building and institutional strengthening for research is an essential first step. In the latter, awards will generally be captured by the stronger players.

Where it is not possible or not a priority to continue to develop a research community after an SGP, it may be useful to follow up with recipients after a few years to discuss whether and how they have built on the work funded by the programme.

The Rural Poverty and Environment Working Paper Series

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16. Currie-Alder, B. 2004. *Sharing Environmental Responsibility in Southeast Mexico: Participatory Processes for Natural Resource Management.*
17. Suzuki, R. 2005. *The Intersection of Decentralization and Conflict in Natural Resource Management: Cases from Southeast Asia.*
18. Bruneau, R. 2004. *Watershed Management Research: A Review of IDRC Projects in Asia and Latin America.*

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