ENVIRONMENTAL ADVOCACY IN CENTRAL AMERICA

PATHS AND ACHIEVEMENTS ON THE JOURNEY

Seven years Contributing to Environmental Governability under a Rights-Based Approach and Democratic Exercise

September 2012

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FOREWARD

The Regional Program for Environment in Central America, supported with Danish cooperation, established a milestone in management and conservation of nature for IUCN and the region.

This assertion is based on all of the things we learned as organization from the conceptualization and implementation of Component 2 of the Program: “Support to research and advocacy organizations in Central America”.

For over six years the intensity of the work matched the magnitude of the challenge taken on in attempting to improve the region’s environmental situation under an integrating approach, with a civil society strengthened and empowered to mobilize conservation through institutional structures.

Anyone familiar with Central America and its varicolored situation, its political contexts and institutions and social and environmental conditions will comprehend the toil this objective involved, demanding from any standpoint.

And yet, as organization we always believed that what actually made this mission possible was how the Program had been thought out, and how this vision was coherent with a system of work anchored in strengthening civil society to generate positive changes in the development model and natural resource management.

Some of the lessons this report describes in more detail indicate why PREMACA has something programs and projects value so greatly, which is replicability. I point this out for a specific reason: the Regional Program for Environment in Central America was flexible without losing technical rigor; it was practical without losing sight of its strategic character, and this makes it a worthy model to follow.

This flexibility was especially visible in the regional, national and local scale of the work, in each of these spatial contexts sufficiently grounded in processes or structures to keep it sustained. Another sign of flexibility was the accessibility of this work, where organizations of different level and origin participated under equal conditions but within the frame of their potentialities and experiences, in this way making use of their specialties and maximizing the value of inclusiveness.

Social innovation for sustainable development through the creation of social networks, enabling cooperation between complementary and supplementary sectors and calling on board groups traditionally excluded from environmental discussion—these were other characteristics that demonstrated the program’s breadth of vision, on one hand, and on the other reflected a very particular capacity to open up spaces of encounter and forge synergies that have been maintained over time.

All of the results clearly illustrate that well thought out cooperation focused on people moves sectors and human groups to generate their own social counterparts, based on the work many

men and women still continue today even after the end of the program, whose fruits will continue multiplying.

These results also indicate that the complexity associated with the political and social processes of advocacy tends to be extrapolated to people's living conditions and to conservation aspirations transcending the boundaries inherent to isolated projects. It is at this translucent frontier of limits where myths are disproven, such as, for example, that base organizations do not have the capacity for advocacy, or that productive and financial sectors are divorced from the discussion of sustainability.

This report offers a brief space for reviewing the lessons that so often lie outside our field of vision during the speeding flash of projects underway. It is also an effort to demonstrate that the best environmental conditions are a multifaceted contribution leading to less poverty, more participation, greater equity and more democracy and wellbeing.

Grethel Aguilar
Director, IUCN
Mesoamerica-Caribbean

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document is to describe and pass on achievements, challenges and lessons from the Project for Advocacy and Research on Environmental Policy (2006-2012) implemented by the IUCN, accompanied by different sectors and actors in Central America. The results show a region with new ways of carrying out environmental advocacy, new alliances and projects to improve compliance with laws and generate better conditions for the sustainability of resources and life.

"Through civil society action in advocacy and research, countries in the Central American region move forward in the construction and implementation of policies, legal frameworks and local, national and regional environmental legislation linked with policies for sustainable development." (PREMACA Program Document, p. 5, 2005)

Basic input to prepare this document came from a series of systematizations by IUCN collaborators and staff over the seven years of project execution, along with data, analysis and conclusions collected during this period. Other invaluable inputs came from the knowledge and experience accumulated by the IUCN team directly involved in carrying out the project, and recovered in work meetings and conversations.

The primary source of learning enabling IUCN to improve what it does in the region derives from the continuous exercise of systematizing and analyzing what is experienced. Our intent here is to share what was learned in the simplest and most synthesized way possible, so that this experience can be a source of learning for other institutions and organizations working in advocacy.

The interest in disseminating the project's results and lessons reflects one of its basic underlying conceptual premises: *knowledge is the most valuable resource societies, organizations and institutions have, yet often the very resource they take least advantage of; good knowledge management is vital for the success of environmental advocacy.* Our objective is to contribute in this sense, by sharing our experiences and reflections with you.

Chapter 1 describes the origin of the project and IUCN as executor of Component 2 of PREMACA, with strategy for its execution explained in chapter 2. Chapter 3 examines results and scope, and chapter 4 and 5 the two overarching processes implemented to reach the proposed objective. Lastly, lessons and success factors are presented in chapter 6.

PREMACA

A Strategic Association for Conservation and Environmental Governability

The origin of the Project for Advocacy and Research in Environmental Policy dates back to 2004 when the Central America Regional Environment Program (PREMACA) was created with the support of the Danish International Development Agency.

Regional Program for Environment in Central America (PREMACA)

Danish cooperation has supported environmental projects and programs in Central America since the early 1990s. The country's strategy on development aid in the region, published in 1998, reaffirmed environment as a priority theme and thus opportunity to create PREMACA (2005-2010) with Danish backing. The objective of PREMACA was to improve conservation, sustainable natural resource use and poverty reduction through better environmental management by the States and civil society. (PREMACA Program Document, p. 8, 2005).

Program Strategy

Considerations and Measures to Tackle Poverty Reduction

The development objective aimed at an environmental management strategy linking environmental conservation with poverty reduction, as well as actions with civil society, governments and other stakeholders.

Environmental Governability and the Rights Approach

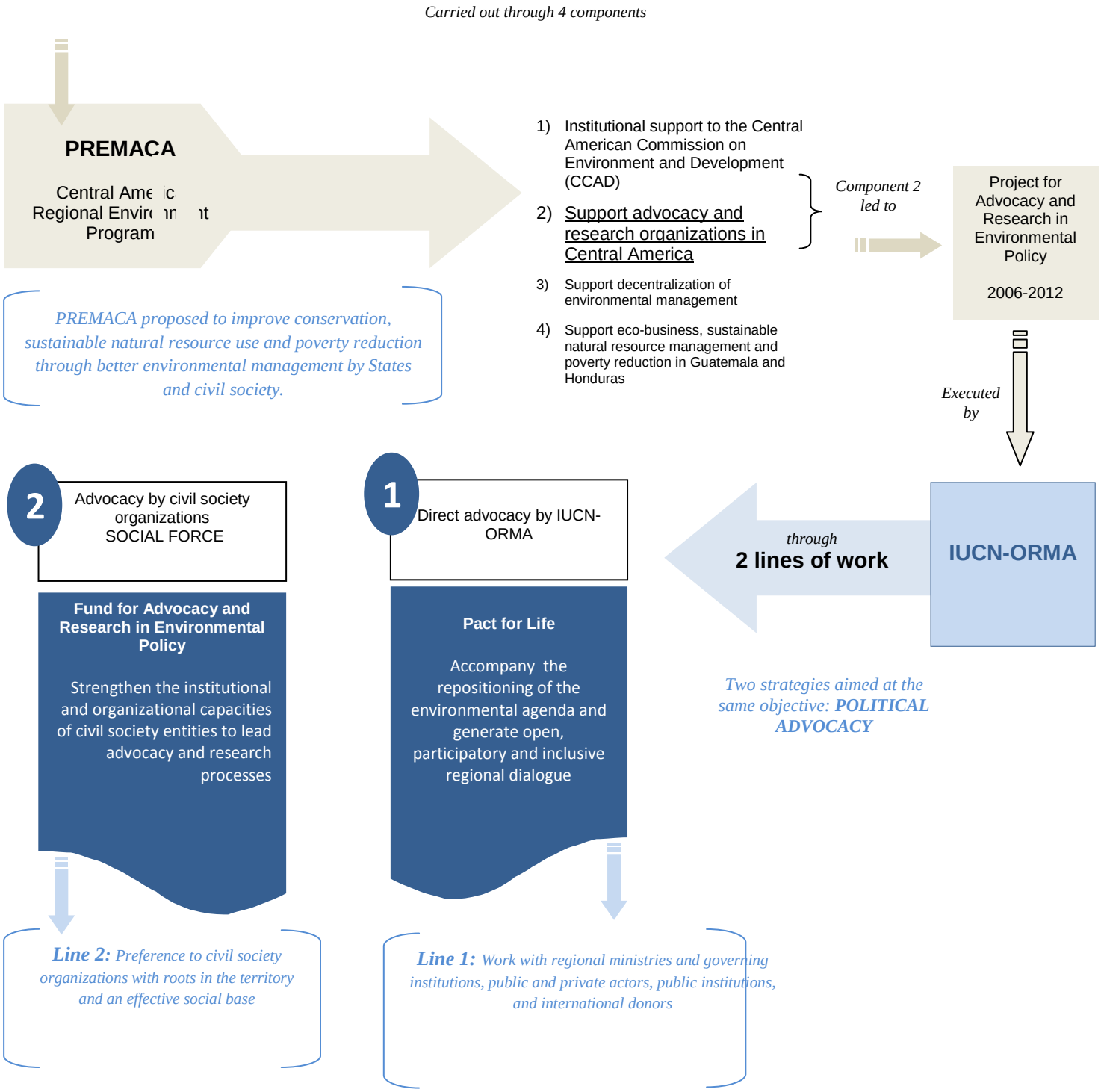
To promote environmental governability and greater implementation of environmental laws and policies in the region, the program proposed, first, to raise the States' capacity to design and implement such policies and laws, and second, build civil society capacity to anticipate and democratically influence the process, promoting dialogue between the two and supporting government agencies, inter-governmental institutions and civil society to design, implement and monitor application of environmental laws and policies.

Crosscutting Themes and Priority Themes

The implementation of a rights-based approach means helping close social gaps and inequalities between different sectors of the population. The project therefore targeted inequalities and social exclusion for ethnic and gender reasons.

A Regional, National and Local Strategy

The program sought to support the regional integration process in Central America through support for the Environmental Plan of the Central American Region (Plan Ambiental de la Región Centroamericana-PARCA). With its approval by the environmental ministers in July 2005, the countries committed to promoting harmonization and strengthening application of environmental legislation in the frame of international environmental conventions. PARCA also includes decentralization of environmental management and municipal strengthening as important elements that will make it possible to develop more effective and wise environmental systems.



Graphic 1. **Origin of the Project for Advocacy and Research on Environmental Policy and Its Two Lines of Work**

Within this context, IUCN was charged with driving Component 2: Support to Environmental Research and Advocacy organizations.

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature

Created in 1948, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) was the first environmental organization in history and is now the largest global network for conservation and sustainable development.

Its mission is to influence, encourage and assist societies throughout the world to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature, and to ensure that any use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable.

The IUCN is comprised of three pillars: its Members, Technical Commissions and Secretariat. There are 1100 members, including social organizations, government agencies and nongovernmental organizations in approximately 160 countries.

The Secretariat has a 1100-person staff working in more than 60 offices all over the globe.

In addition, IUCN includes a worldwide scientific community of some 12000 experts, working on a volunteer basis through six commissions that provide theoretical and applied support for the Union's work.

In the area of Central America, Mexico and the Caribbean, IUCN has a regional office (IUCN-ORMA-IC) with over 25 years of experience, as well as several offices distributed throughout the zone that strengthen its work.

The IUCN-ORMA-IC program for the 2009-2012 period tackled the main challenges at that moment: a new pact and agenda for life between the different actors and sectors of regional development and conservation; recognition and strengthening of new models of governance, alliances and multi-stakeholder platforms for natural resource management; promotion of new legislation and tools for natural resource management; environmental evaluation and management; promotion of rights and strengthening of the advocacy capacities of Indigenous peoples, Afrodescendents and local communities; and mitigation, adaptation and reduction of vulnerability to climate change.

Based on the learning generated during that period, the proposed 2013-2016 program displays IUCN's integrated work in nature, ranging from deep knowledge of biodiversity to equitable management of nature's use. This cycle articulating *knowledge -> policies -> action* is reflected in each of the program's three areas:

- ✓ *Valuing and Conserving Nature*
- ✓ *Effective and Equitable Governance of Nature's Use*
- ✓ *Deploying Nature-Based Solutions to Global Challenges in Climate, Food and Development*

IUCN's Value Proposition

> A "value" proposition" is the way an organization uses its qualities to give value added to its products and services.

IUCN's main qualities are clearly its members, network of experts organized through its commissions, and the highly motivated and competent staff of its General Secretariat. As value proposition, IUCN:

- Generates reliable knowledge and strengthens capacities

IUCN is recognized for its solid, science-based knowledge in the area of conservation and sustainable natural resource management, an essential input to inform and influence policies and practices at all levels. With this knowledge, IUCN strengthens decision-making by the different social actors, building and strengthening their capacity.

- Constructs multi-stakeholder and multi-sector platforms

  IUCN helps build bridges between the different agents and promotes common solutions and actions. IUCN uses its unique structure and credibility to establish platforms among multiple stakeholder groups with the objective of unifying divergent points of view.

- Provides coverage from the local to the national, regional and world, and vice versa

IUCN's positions are backed by lessons learned on the ground and from the generation of knowledge. Field interventions become learning centers to explore and discover what actually works in practice. Combining its experience from the field and global networks, IUCN acquires the level of credibility needed to influence national, regional and international laws. Thanks to its reach, IUCN promotes the spread of knowledge and experience beyond political and cultural frontiers. IUCN is the only environmental organization that holds a place in the United Nations General Assembly, giving it an important and unique passport to international discussion on environment and development. IUCN not only responds to national interests, it is a regional platform.

- Advocacy standards and practices

Putting together its energy and local-to-global reach, IUCN uses its knowledge to develop and influence international, regional and national norms and practices. In some cases IUCN has developed standards such as the Red List of Threatened Species and System of Protected Area Categories. The IUCN's approach of influencing standards and practices helps ensure that decisions 1) are based on the best available standards of science and knowledge and 2) receive input from a broad range of stakeholders.

IUCN's Role as Facilitator in Social, Environmental and Institutional Processes in Central America

Working without interruption for the past 25 years, the Regional Office for Mesoamerica and the Caribbean Initiative (ORMA-IC, www.iucn.org/mesoamerica), headquartered in San Jose, Costa Rica, employs more than sixty professionals in three thematic areas:

- *Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity*
- *Livelihoods and Climate Change*
- *Rights and Environmental Governance*

IUCN's work in this region of the world spans the seven Central American countries (Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama) along with Mexico and the Caribbean Initiative, which includes the 35 countries of the Wider Caribbean and independent territories.

IUCN currently has 107 members in Mesoamerica and the Caribbean: four Member States, 4 government agencies, 93 national and 5 international nongovernmental organizations and one affiliate. Almost 500 experts contribute to the Union's six commissions—Species Survival; Environmental Law; Environmental, Social and Economic Policy; Education and Communication; World Commission on Protected Areas; and Ecosystem Management—with vast scientific knowledge and influence on the themes and priorities each promotes.

The success of IUCN's approach to the Project for Advocacy and Research on Environmental Policy was facilitated by the characteristics of its diverse membership and capacity to facilitate, promote and contribute to the State and civil society environmental agenda with respect to compliance with objectives, scale of execution (global, regional, national, local and community), organizational landscape (institutions, businesses, trade associations, NGOs, and civil society groups), technical and methodological needs, transparency and accountability.

Regional Context

A Prior Analysis toward the Search for Solutions

Danish cooperation (DANIDA) has provided support to environmental projects and programs in Central America since early 1990. In mid-2004, the Royal Embassy of Denmark in Managua, Nicaragua, began a new identification process culminating in a design proposal that gave rise in 2005 to the Regional Program for Environment in Central America (PREMACA).

The main findings of the identification process indicated 1) the need to strengthen the environmental agenda and regional institutionality; 2) that despite governments' efforts to pass environmental laws and policies there was little real implementation; 3) that the environmental ministries and other authorities were assigned very low budgets; and 4) as stated in the Regional Human Development Report:

> *"…effective environmental governability in Central America depends not only on formal integration at the regional level, but also on greater commitment from governments on strengthening the institutions created in this area to make them capable of accomplishing the objectives for which they were created."* (UNDP. Second Report on Human Development in Central America and Panama, 2003:189)

In the political and economic arena, three milestones marked the course of the Central American countries at the outset of this century:

a) The **Esquipulas process** initiating a peace agenda and transition toward democracy. The re-launching and advance of the Central American Integration System was accompanied by the opening and modernization of the region's economies.

b) In 1998, **Hurricane Mitch** destroyed lives and infrastructure and Central American economies crumbled, with serious consequences for social and environmental capital. The entire region had to reset its priorities.

c) **Trade opening** from 2003 on. Central America re-launched negotiations for free trade treaties. Alongside this renewed economic opening marked by negotiations with the United States and the European Union, there was a **retraction of State action** and consequently greater participation of market forces in socioeconomic dynamics.

The analysis by PREMACA and IUCN in 2005 underscored the following:

- ***Trade liberalization** as the core theme of economic strategy in the region*
- *Tension between two opposing trends concerning **forests and biodiversity**: protection and uncontrolled expansion*
- *Rising threats to **water resources** and increasing difficulty in access to drinking water*
- *Oil dependence poses an **energy challenge for the countries**.*

The economic and commercial agenda predominated, with the negotiation and signature of trade treaties paralyzing discussion of the environmental agenda in most of the countries. This was compounded by social discontent due to persisting structural problems of poverty, inequality, and insuperable gaps that had widened between the rural and urban world. As a result, tension between the political and environmental agenda ran strong.

Alongside the challenges were **opportunities**, possibilities and riches that could be taken advantage of:

- Spaces and initiatives aimed at decentralization, social participation, governability and local management
- Diverse local capacities and knowledge to carry out advocacy and generate public policies and legislation
- More and more groups and sectors interested in environment
- Greater access to communication technology, making it easy to reach more people better and faster in order to manage knowledge and strengthen influencing capacities
- Citizens' greater openness to dialogue, creative forms of communication and horizontal as opposed to vertical and impositional relating
- More interest and willingness to strengthen local styles of development and low-impact development (some municipalities, socially and environmentally responsible businesses, organized community and social groups)

Investigation of the Central American countries' situation led to the conclusion that the participation of civil society organizations with capacity to conduct research and influence environmental policy at the regional and national level was essential to achieving environmental governability in the region.

PREMACA's Component 2 arose to help address this need, and was executed by IUCN from 2006 to 2012 as the **Project for Advocacy and Research in Environmental Policy.**

One of the criteria for working with IUCN is its extensive experience in environmental management and advocacy and research actions at the regional level, as well as its unique formation that brings together the voices of organized civil society and government, enabling ongoing dialogue.

2

A REVAMPED ENVIRONMENTAL ADVOCACY

IUCN-ORMA proposed to drive a process of strategic advocacy to help revitalize the environmental agenda in the Central American region, wherein environment should be mainstreamed in medium and long-term development programs, mainly those connected with economic integration, trade liberalization and social, energy and productive policy in the region.

This challenge was undertaken based on collective reflection by the IUCN work areas or thematic units and partner organizations and specialists in the region. It involved a reading and comprehension of new socioeconomic dynamics and environmental challenges, as well as an analysis of the IUCN's own advocacy experience in Central America.

IUCN member organizations played a leading role in the design and implementation of the Fund for Advocacy and Research (FIE) through support for the idea, inputs for prior reflection, dissemination and participation with their proposals alongside other organizations of the region.

From this reflection emerged a revamped strategy, contained in the IUCN-ORMA Advocacy Strategy Plan 2006-2010, to help construct a more sustainable Mesoamerican society with more alliances and new social accords. This plan incorporated innovative elements with respect to methodologies, instruments, and ways of working, resulting in strategically planned and structured impact, with better analyses of the context, continuous reading of the situation, more debate, and knowledge about political advocacy and about the social actors in the region, which signifies greater conceptual and political and strategic clarity.

For IUCN, the world's oldest and largest environmental organization, this was a novel way of developing the project, as it has also been for participating organizations and for the environmental agenda in the Central American region.

TWO LINES OF WORK AND A SINGLE OBJECTIVE

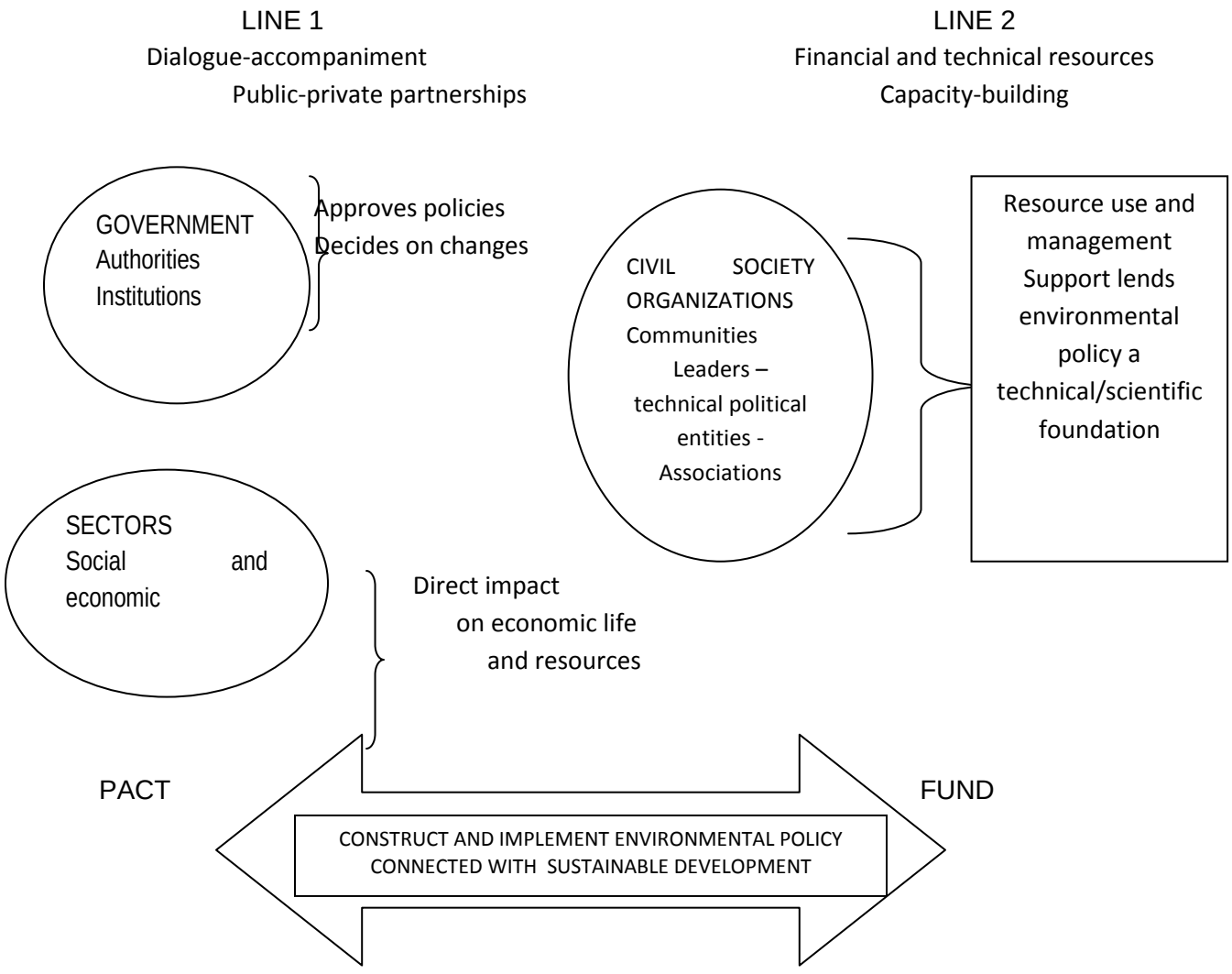
Under the guiding image of a Central America constructing environmental governability with equity, strategy was designed interlacing civil society and government in two lines of work:

"For us, Line 1 and Line 2 are part of the same political orientation of advocacy, except that they work with different sectors and actors. One builds social force and the other builds the right conditions and political climate for advocacy to take place." *Hubert Méndez, former project coordinator*

- Line 1: Direct environmental advocacy by IUCN toward national and local governments, regional bodies and other sectors of political and economic influence, from which arose the Pact for Life and other advocacy initiatives with governments and donor agencies

- Line 2: Direct environmental advocacy by social organizations, for which the Fund for Advocacy and Research on Environmental Policy arose

Diagram 2, below, illustrates the approach of each line and its relation to the general purpose of the Component.



GUIDES FOR THE JOURNEY: EXPERIENCE AS THE BASIS

As in every new challenge, it was necessary to assess previous experience and identify strengths on which to create the new. Knowledge management, local empowerment, the promotion of dialogue and agreement, research, social and gender equity and citizen participation were part of the strategies, principles and crosscutting themes implemented to achieve the project's success.

Guiding Image

A Central America that constructs environmental governance in order to ensure sustainability and foster equity

Principles

Solidarity, equity, justice, integrality, openness, progressiveness, horizontality, diversity, inclusion, sustainability, empowerment and adaptability

What is "advocacy" for the IUCN?

The IUCN defines advocacy as "…conscious action, directed not spontaneous, of a social group in order to change a given situation.

IUCN-ORMA. *Plan Estratégico de Incidencia. Centroamérica 2006-2010. Buscando el Norte*, page 29

NEW PATHS OF ADVOCACY IN CENTRAL AMERICA

One of the most notable turns the strategy took in the region was working simultaneously with actors and sectors in and outside the environmental movement: cooperatives, development associations, political parties, unions, churches, academic sectors, banking, construction, transportation, Indigenous and Afro-Caribbean peoples, artists, local governments, ministries and others. These actors and sectors were not pre-defined; they joined in during the process.

There was already vast experience in regional advocacy work with governments and civil society to drive environmental policies, laws and projects. For more than 20 years IUCN has supported the regional, national and local agenda, from constitutional reforms to regional conventions and local agreements. For Grethel Aguilar, IUCN-ORMA Regional Director, accumulated knowledge was the foundation: *"We already had proven experience; what we did was transfer what we knew how to do well and drive it in non-traditional themes; that was the challenge. However, it wasn't simply a matter of replication, but a greater challenge: non-traditional themes were taken on, with non-traditional sectors and an unconventional way of working with them all. The fundamental reason had already been expressed in the region by different voices: environment should be the crosscutting theme in decision-making for sustainable development, which entails working with the different social and economic sectors."*

New Sectors, Actors and Themes

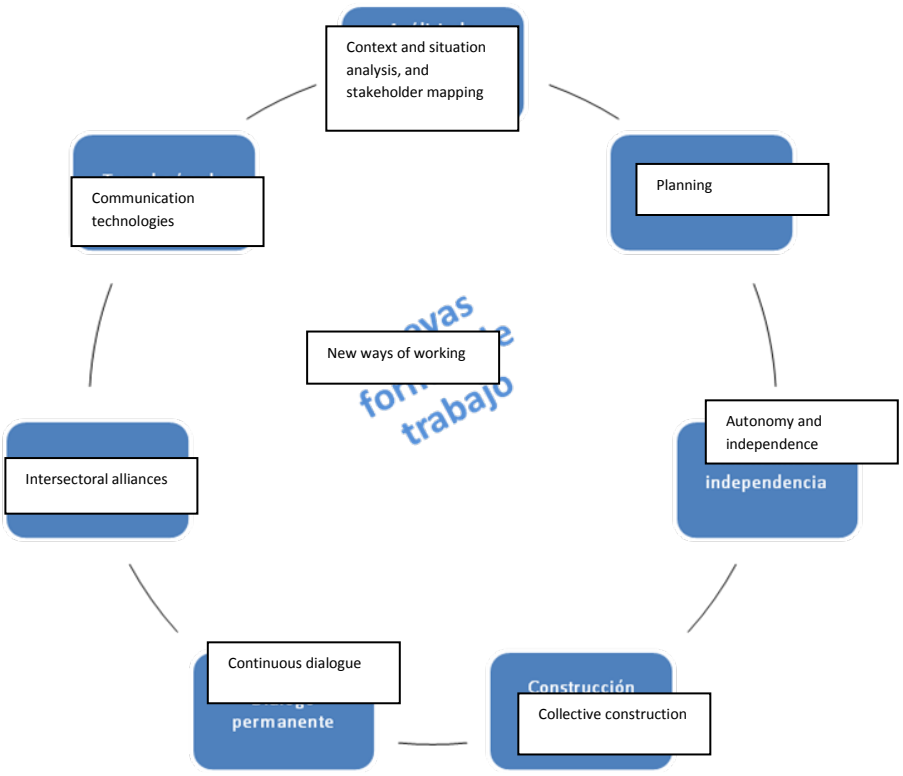
Placing life at the center has made it possible to walk alongside others in the region in the search for options, solutions and innovative paths to protect and preserve life in all its dimensions.

The venture of relating with new actors in turn signified adding new themes and reflecting about **life,** which resulted in a revamped approach to environment on the part of IUCN and the actors accompanying it in the process: more all-encompassing, comprehensive, participatory and horizontal. The intrinsic diversity of life, expressed in Central America's socio-cultural multiplicity and ecosystems, is imperiled due to an erroneous development style and because laws are not enforced or have not been created. From this perspective, the project's approach of linking environment with new actors and themes such as construction, transportation, banking, and housing constitutes a contribution in the search for alternatives reflecting a development style that is environmentally, socially and economically sustainable.

New Ways of Working

Implementation of the component established a new milestone in Central America in the design and method used from a regional body to carry out social investment, by sustainably generating management capacities in community actors and fostering public-private partnerships, and bringing together different social, economic, and government sectors to protect resources and lower the impact of economic activities. It was demonstrated that local small and medium-scale organizations can carry out advocacy with solid results and positive effects, especially in terms of mobilizing funds and simplifying procedures.

Graphic 3 shows the main methodological aspects innovatively incorporated in the project's implementation.



- **Context and Situation Analysis and Stakeholder Mapping**

Analysis of the context and situation was fundamental for decision-making within IUCN-ORMA and with participating organizations and sectors. This analytical capacity is essential to gain a joint, strategic vision of a region.

This study was a valuable tool to make decisions, facilitate processes and contacts and prepare agendas with different social sectors. It was also extremely useful for moving from the local to the national and regional plane—or vice versa—and creating intersectoral platforms or networks.

- **Planning**

The project placed a great deal of importance on planning so the Strategic Advocacy Plan 2006-2010 was formulated from the start, fleshing out the two lines of work. Strategies were also planned for each sector and actor based on their conditions, possibilities and expectations, but with the flexibility to adjust to individual dynamics.

Advocacy planning was fostered within a logical framework so that organizations would go beyond carrying out influencing actions, and place advocacy within a strategic institutional frame.

- **Collective Construction, Alliances and Participation**

The project achieved the results it did because different sectors contributed to the design, conception and structuring of the processes. The participation of a wide range of actors, organizations and networks that linked regional work together was a way of going beyond the concept of project "beneficiaries" to constructors and protagonists of their own processes, with no one who could contribute in environmental advocacy and revitalization of the environmental agenda left out.

Another pillar in the collective construction was respect for the autonomy of the participating organizations.

"Each one defines their own agenda. We don't tell them what to do, we just advise with a technical and strategic vision of how their agendas can have greater impact. This is a change in how to do advocacy."

Cecilia Martínez, Coordinator of the Pact for Life

"The organizations decide what they're going to do. Certain themes were established in the frame of the priorities identified in the regional analysis and in the frame of action for the Fund, and within those themes the organizations decided on their actions. Our role was to believe in them and provide technical accompaniment so they could improve what they do."

Zelma Larios, coordinator of the FIE

Establishing intersectoral alliances for the protection of environment and life was a deliberate strategy to reach the project's long-range objectives. In all of the influencing actions driven by both the organizations and IUCN, forging alliances for joint creation of solutions and proposals was sought and encouraged.

- **Continuous Dialogue**

Continuous and open dialogue was promoted between civil society and governments. Examples include the design of national environmental agendas and discussion with political parties, close coordination between the environmental units of local governments and communities to formulate laws and ordinances, interinstitutional spaces for dialogue that were created or reactivated, public-private partnerships and others.

Work panels, meetings, exchanges, forums, trainings, advising, investigations and project formulation were all opportunities for horizontal and transparent dialogue. The meeting ground for the organizations and institutions was contributing to a revitalization of political commitment to life in the region. Continual dialogue facilitated the social construction of a series of commitments to specific action for regional life and sustainability, and enabled the organizations and sectors to consolidate representativeness and legitimacy at the local or regional level.

- **Use of Communication Technology**

Citizens have the right to information and participation. It has to do with being able to influence ways of using natural resources in order to attain decent living conditions,

making them agents of their development.

New communication technology offers an effective means of forming networks that transcend national and regional borders and link people and organizations throughout the world.

"Eco-book.net" was created as an instrument for spreading and generating knowledge in the project. This social network revolutionized the communication mechanisms that had been employed by IUCN and the organizations that accompanied them in this process. It was Central America's first social networking that was exclusively socio-environmental in nature. Training workshops, technical assistance and meetings for exchange and local, national and regional dialogue, along with publications, documents and videos were provided to and from this network.

The directed, systematic and strategic use of social networking for policy advocacy has been widely demonstrated in the recent history of political change throughout the world. As the team so accurately pointed out, the contribution of networks in terms of democratizing information is absolute. Levels of reflection generally occur in elite forums, as opposed to networks where there is greater access to information and knowledge management about the themes of interest. Eco-book is aiding the development of reflective processes and awareness about environment and encouraging novel forms of management.

The most interesting dynamics in information and communication technology (ICT) take place when people from the most varied geographical origins interact around a common interest or theme. In the case of the Pact for Life, concern for restoring balance between human beings and their environmental and social setting through online social networking takes a tangible form in Eco-book.

Pilares magazine, p. 82

Eco-book.net

A new socio-environmental network born in mid-June, 2010. By 2012 the number of people registered had grown to more than 7,000, with 65 thematic groups and over 17,000 people accessing the site from several countries of Latin America.

Eco-book brings together teenagers, artists and writers, to tourism operators such as hotel owners in the region, all interacting in a forum for dialogue on behalf of nature and development.

The social network contains news of environmental, cultural and socioeconomic events in Latin America, along with blogs and commentary by users, a carbon calculator, digital radio platform, knowledge center and trivia about climate change, water and consumption habits. It integrates a communication platform comprised of Facebook and Twitter profiles, with around 7,000 users that interact daily, informing one another, sharing and commenting on the information posted free and open to the public.

Website: www.eco-book.net.

A Strategy that Contemplates Cost-Benefit

30% of each dollar received corresponds to total operation costs, leaving around 70% for direct investment in projects.

Of the 30% set aside for operational outlays, 11% went to actual administrative expenses and the remaining 19% was allocated to technical advising.

The power of the strengthened leadership of the civil society organizations that work for natural resource conservation and better living conditions was validated by the results of this experience, since tangible impacts were demonstrated at excellent cost-benefit ratio.

For example, with the $30,000 the organizations received on average to finance their advocacy processes they were able to cover one or two stages in getting a public policy approved. This means they made a serious match investment and used the contributed resources efficiently.

The process carried out with Banco Popular y de Desarrollo Comunal de Costa Rica resulted in a portfolio of environmentally sustainable financial products worth several million dollars. **An eco-credit line of US$38,000,000,** a product aimed primarily at small and medium enterprises with a business line oriented toward sustainable natural resource use, provides credit for up to 180 months, encouraging and financing investment such as:

- Generation of clean energy - Management and disposal of solid waste
- Reduction of CO2 emissions- Energy efficiency
- Environmental conservation – Water resource management
- Other economic activities with positive impact on the environment

3

WHAT DO WE HAVE TODAY?

RESULTS AND REACH OF THE PROJECT

Communities and Organizations Strengthened in a Context of New Political-Institutional Relations

After seven years of execution, the Project for Advocacy and Research in Environmental Policy has achieved important results in the construction and implementation of environmental policy in Central America with the participation of civil society and government, contributing to the exercise of democracy, governance and the generation of experiences and knowledge in the organizations, institutions and sectors.

Under the spirit of dialogue, convergence and participation, the project moved forward in the construction and implementation of policies, legal frameworks and local, national and regional legislation connected with sustainable development, strengthening the political advocacy capacities of organizations and other social actors and influencing environmental management in the Central American States and economic and social sectors.

The leading role toward changes in legislation, policies, regulations and ways of carrying out advocacy in the region was played by the organizations and institutions implementing initiatives during the project's seven years. It is thanks to the efforts, dialogue and commitment of more than 200 organizations, sectors and government institutions that the results we now present were obtained. IUCN-ORMA, as facilitator of processes, and DANIDA, whose vision and commitment to Central America materialized in this project, were the important pillars of the achievements obtained.

117 regional, national and local policies were formulated, modified or implemented; 16 processes and policies at the regional level have been influenced directly by the IUCN; 5 social-economic sectors incorporated environmental management in their activities and more than 10 groups/sectors in economic, cultural, political (political parties), Indigenous, Afrodescendents and academic spheres (universities). All in all more than 250 organizations participated in the project.

After seven years, a great variety of sectors and organizations can be seen participating and striving in an organized way to overcome gaps that affect the sustainability of life, generating policies, programs, projects, actions, dialogues, encounters, campaigns and networks, and incorporating environmental management in their agendas and activities.

Social capital, organizations, public institutions and communities strengthened as a whole toward conservation, resource protection under the legislation influenced, damage prevention through the dissemination and implementation of standards, awareness-raising and the

cessation of actions injurious to the environment, thereby decreasing the impact of economic activities, production and operation.

A Reaches in Environmental Governability and Management by States and Civil Society

National and regional political processes are frequently influenced from the global level, and in turn, regional practices can even come to influence international policies. The social and economic sectors can influence policy change in conservation themes in Mesoamerica and the Caribbean at different levels of global, regional, national, transboundary and local governance.

Hence, creating public and civil capacities to design, execute, monitor and evaluate environmental policies—which include technology transfer and financing instruments—has been and continues to be one of the main challenges in the region to help improve governability.

Elsewhere, the social situation of violence in the region calls for strengthening civil society to assert its rights in an environment of challenges. If we weaken the environmental organizations that provide technical arguments, plan and research environmental problems, it all comes down to nothing more than political and ideological debate. (Marco Vinicio Cerezo, Fundación para la Ecología y la Conservación, Guatemala, FUNDAECO). In this sense, the project supported governments, organizations and sectors with technical accompaniment, facilitation of spaces for dialogue, construction and implementation of environmental policies, formulation of strategies, positioning and generation of knowledge to contribute to better environmental governability.

Impetus to Women's Participation in Regional and International Spaces of Dialogue

Formation of the Network of Indigenous Women instigated strengthening for women's participation in spaces of dialogue and analysis on themes such as biodiversity, protected areas and climate change. Oriented by an agenda and operational instruments for its implementation, constructed by them, women have participated with their own proposals and positions in the Biodiversity Summit in Nagoya, Japan; the Climate Change Summit in Cancun, Mexico; and the Congress on Protected Areas.

With the signing of a policy document adopting the Mesoamerican Indigenous agenda and prioritization of themes, the Network of Indigenous Women gained recognition at the same level as CICA and CIMA, and joined the Network of Indigenous Women for Biodiversity (Red de Mujeres Indígenas por la Biodiversidad-RMIB). As a result of that recognition and the Network's continued work, in 2011 it was selected to coordinate the Abya Yala Indigenous Forum on Climate Change for a year, and in 2012 was nominated as coordinators of the World Summit of Indigenous Peoples.

The projects executed by women's organizations also made significant achievements in advocacy, as exemplified by the experience of CODEFEM, a collective for the defense of women's human rights, in Guatemala.

CODEFEM

Colectivo para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos de las Mujeres en Guatemala

In 2005, Tropical Storm Stan seriously affected populations in El Salvador and Guatemala, with grave loss of human life and enormous damage to social infrastructure and economies. In the wake of the storm, CODEFEM assessed the situation of women in the Guatemalan highland departments of Huehuetenango, San Marcos and Sololá (80% of whom are Indigenous), revealing exclusion and discrimination in the distribution of emergency aid and decision-making.

The appraisal had identified their needs and demands, and in response CODEFEM presented the project titled "Women Influencing Disaster Risk Management at the Community and National Level," which received three stages of funding in 2008, 2010 and 2012.

Four local coordination bodies comprised of women were formed for disaster reduction (Coordinadoras Locales de Mujeres para la Reducción de Desastres - COLMRED), three in the communities of Tojul, Manzanales and Sacchumbá, in the area of Tectitán, Huehuetenango, and the fourth in the villages of Esquipulas and La Unión, in San Jodé Ojetenam. These entities brought together organized women to make their proposals and demands known to local and national authorities. For example, women from the Tojul, Manzanales and Sacchumbá communities prepared development agendas with specific demands for disaster risk reduction, and for the first time in the municipality's history, held a forum during the 2011 electoral campaign with the eight mayoral candidates, who signed a pledge to comply with the demands if elected.

Defense and Protection of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and Afrodescendents

Central America's Indigenous populations live in conditions of extreme poverty and social exclusion. Although in some cases they have territories under their own systems of governance, systematic threat and damage from the advance of the agricultural frontier has now intensified due to the expansionism of extractive industries (metallic mining and hydrocarbons) and electric generation (dams for hydroelectric projects) that can exacerbate the situation of vulnerability and socio-environmental risk of these marginalized human groups. Moreover, these Indigenous territories, which even have a transboundary scope in some cases, overlap important Central American protected areas forming part of the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor. Not only are the livelihoods of these Indigenous populations at risk; so are the valuable biodiversity and thousands-year old cultural legacy of the region.

It was in this context that the project took on the challenge of protecting the territorial rights and knowledge, custody and use of genetic resources by Indigenous peoples. Advocacy carried out for protection of the genetic resources of Indigenous Peoples is illustrated below.

FPCI
Fundación para la Promoción del Conocimiento Indígena de Panamá

RMIB
Red Mujeres Indígenas sobre Biodiversidad

CIMA
Consejo Indígena de Mesoamérica

Drafting of the Regional Indigenous Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and Traditional Knowledge

This initiative arose as a priority of the Foundation for Promotion of Indigenous Knowledge (Fundación para la Promoción del Conocimiento Indígena-FPCI) and the Network of Indigenous Women ion Biodiversity (RMIB) and affiliated women's organizations in Panama (Fundación Ngobe Bugle, Organización de Jóvenes Emberas de Panama-OJEWP, Jóvenes Organizados para Vivir en Equilibrio con Nana Guadule-JOVEN), and base organizations in Kuna Yala (six communities: Ustupu, Mamitupu, Achutupu, Ailigandi, Ogobsugun and San Ignacio de Tupile). Their goal was to develop protocol on access to biodiversity resources and traditional knowledge, given the lack of unified tools supporting the Indigenous Peoples, especially Indigenous women, in their role in conservation, management and transmission of traditional knowledge.

Referents include the Convention on Biological Diversity, which establishes rules on access to and sharing of benefits, and the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits *D*erived from the Utilization of Genetic Resources, signed in October 2010 at the 10th Conference of Parties in Nagoya, Japan.

Through a practical application adapted from the Nagoya Protocol, a pilot protocol safeguarding genetic and natural resources was declared at the district level (*comarca*). It is also a protection and control instrument for these resources and the traditional knowledge of the Guna Yala Indigenous, and constructed by the subjects themselves. The Guna Yala community currently utilizes the protocol in negotiations with private companies such as Cocoa Wealth, which agreed to the following:

- US $ 1500 a month for use of the image and information of the Gunas
- Annual royalties of 3% for projects of interest to the Guna Yala
- Funds management through the Guna Yala Research and Development Institute
- Training in web page management and salary for one member of the Guna Yala Congress

Exercise of Democracy

Civil society participation, advocacy and engagement contribute to a culture of democracy and to ensuring good government and

environmental governance. It also fosters continuity of the environmental agenda when governments change.

Public policy can be formulated from the State with its institutions in representation of the society, known as the "top down" modality. Or it can be with the direct participation of society—or "bottom up"—taking the social practices and institutionality of the territory into consideration, along with the aspirations, needs and interests of the sectors that will benefit from or be affected by the policy's implementation.

"The water committees are now responsible for caring for the resource. Before, we used to be afraid when we went into the town hall, and now it's like going into my house. That fear is gone now thanks to the trainings and we enter bravely, ready to demand. Before none of the committees knew us because we practically never came into the town center. Now we support one other … Now we have more knowledge and the population has more awareness about managing natural resources." (Edgar Rafael Cuellar, Water Committee, village of Zapote)

The projects financed by the State contributed to the participation of civil society and its organizations in influencing decisions related to the public matters that affect them, as well as in orienting decisions by national and local government authorities or institutions and officials. This impacted on decisions on behalf of environment and democratic strengthening in the region.(Rojas, A., 2011)

69 % of the organizations executed their advocacy processes with inhabitants in the areas of influence. This number reveals the democratic vocation of action by the civil society organizations carrying out advocacy in environmental policy. They don't just seek to influence or create favorable currents of opinion for their advocacy work. Their focus is also on making people who are part of the political community and benefit from the advocacy, actual participants in these actions.

In the exercise of democracy, strengthening of institutionality is also a vital crosscutting theme. This is understood as the decision-making dynamic that occurs between government, parliamentary and political entities associated or not with civil society organizations. The project also strengthened this dynamic with actions to improve or innovate that process, whether based on proposals and discussions or through the formation or reactivation of entities with government-civil society participation.

62% of the projects contributed directly to institutionality through a) the design and discussion of national agendas on environment with the different political parties; b) fostering spaces for inter-institutional work and dialogue that strengthen the protagonism and legitimacy of the organizations; c) creating or reactivating environmental units or commissions with citizen participation in municipalities (municipal environmental entities and commissions); d) creating roundtables for joint work (mixed work entities); and e) promoting spaces of dialogue and training with the municipalities.

With participation and knowledge as the foundation, processes of dialogue were proposed between local governments, with national States or with several governments. The government-citizen encounter enabled by the projects allowed populations to attend municipal councils and present their proposals, or technicians and authorities to approach populations and communities.

FCD (Fundación Amigos por la Conservación) brings together nine mayors of Guatemala, authorities of Belize and community leaders in both countries to agree on a protection plan for the Belize River.

Strengthening of civil society organizations was also promoted through institutional support resources that improved their management and performance of environmental advocacy. The Fund's regulations stipulated that:

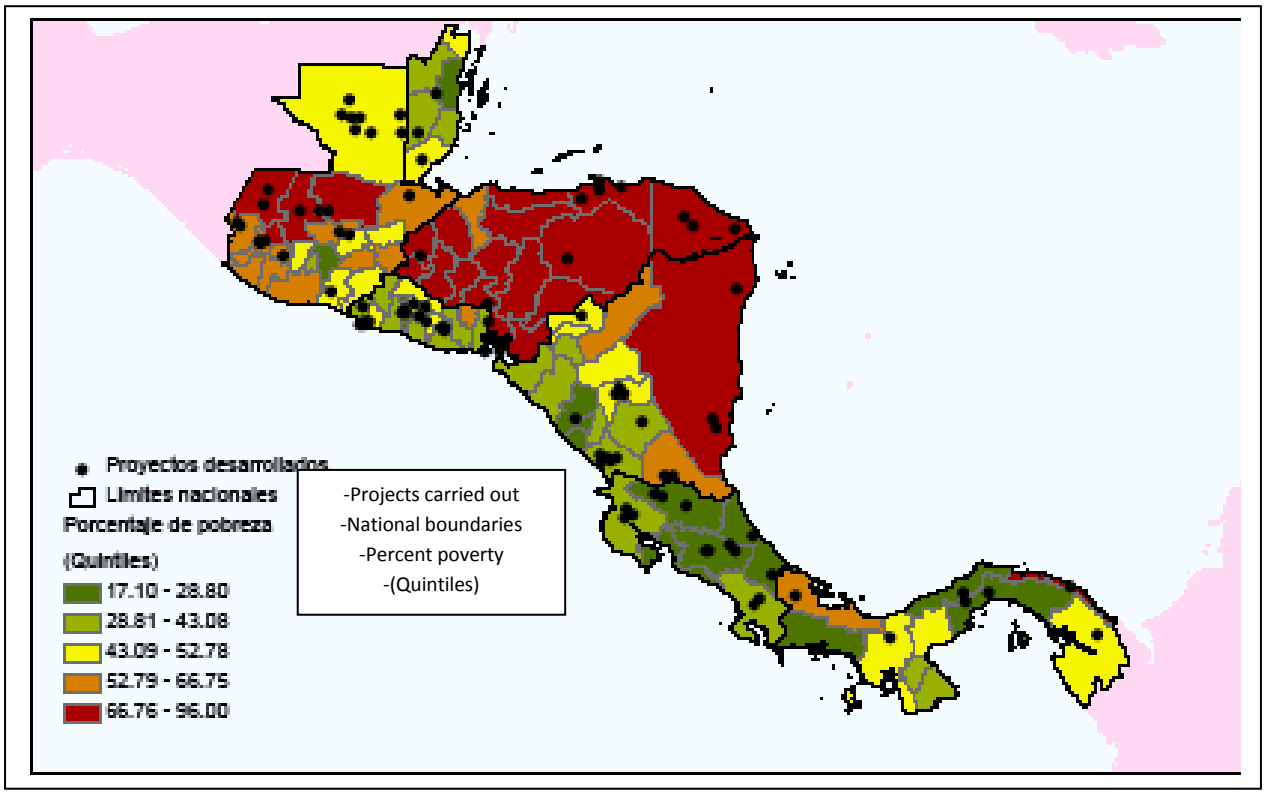
"…Overall institutional support will be aimed at strengthening institutions as such, as long as it can be demonstrated that this will allow them to obtain tangible results in the field of advocacy and research in environmental policy …"

Under this modality, organizations used resources to plan advocacy strategy, generate trust and institutional credibility and train their teams in advocacy, legislation and other areas.

Contributions in Relation to Poverty and Environment

As shown in Map 1, most of the advocacy projects were implemented in areas with poverty rates of 43% to 96%.

On average, institutional strengthening represented at least 30% of the organizations' projects.



Map 1: Advocacy projects implemented in areas with poverty rates

Conservation is essential to maintain and diversify livelihoods. In developing countries maintaining natural resources can be particularly important for security in times of crisis. Natural resource conservation is necessary to provide environmental services (such as clean air and water) for all humans, rural and urban, affluent or poor, making this important insurance against risks, including crop loss, market failure and natural disaster.

PREMACA's development objective aimed at an environmental management strategy that links conservation with poverty reduction, wherein the challenge is to find ways of improving environmental management, but in a way that effectively helps reduce poverty.

Environmental protection involves generating economic alternatives for family reproduction that remove or neutralize the pressure populations place on natural resources. In this sense, it is important to observe how organizations work in the productive economic area to create sources of income for families, as part of strategy to make results sustainable over time.

Fundación para la Promoción de las Cooperativas, in El Salvador, offers an example of conservation options linked with genuine alternatives for reducing poverty:

"We met to assess the little projects being implemented at the local level. People need to be brought income generation initiatives with lower environmental impact and environmentally friendly. We have designed the bee-keeping part in order to engage and train them, and so this can become an option for generating income. Farms with native poultry.

The other way is to give them an option. For example, there is a great deal of hunting, a lot of it out of need. Initiatives are needed for generating income without having to go out and hunt. We have proposed setting up a breeding farm, which is going to be done. With this initiative we hope to strengthen women heads of household so they get engaged. Right now there's an arrangement with FIADES approved this year; we hope to leave that at the level of the communities, with school-model initiatives, because a good part of those project initiatives are teaching and giving them some support so they get started … So that people can do bee-keeping we have a fund for small financing like a kind of micro credit, not so they can do just anything, it has to be aimed at these actions for things that are new, the theme of organic agriculture that we handle at the educational level, at the level of the farm school and they're trying out varieties of creole corn with the people … we're trying to give people options so they don't see it as just a matter of legal restriction, but instead that we give them support to solve their income problems. That way they improve their standard of living. This zone is very rich in water but a strategy is needed so that these people diversify their production and do it with environmentally-friendly technology." (Edwin Cortés, Elmer López FUNPROCOOP, May 24, 2011).

B A New Environmental Agreement

Mainstreaming Environment through Public-Private Partnerships

Central America now has a strengthened social force that advocates for influencing and sustainability of activities. This force includes organizations, private sector institutions, youth groups, Afrodescendents, Indigenous women and local governments that drive environmental dialogue on critical issues such as water resources, climate change, territorial and cultural rights, pollution, solid waste management, the social economy, construction and sustainable transportation.

The Pact for Life arose as a strategy to revamp the environmental agenda, turning it into a movement of diverse sectors of society in which government, social organizations (youth, art, culture, Indigenous, women, and Afrodescendents) and economic organizations (social economy, banking, transportation, and construction) participate, reach agreements, set up action plans, execute advocacy processes and carry out actions that foster sustainable economic development, protect resources, and prevent or reduce damage to the environment.

Some of the most important initiatives and alliances achieved:

Social Economy

Empresa AQ´AB´AL

After the first Regional Meeting of the Social and Solidarity-based Economy at the end of 2008, AQ`AB`AL was formed in November 2010 as an enterprise assembling *six organizations in the social economy of Central America,* with more than 50 thousand small and medium producers affiliated*:*

- *Red de Comercialización Comunitaria Alternativa -RED COMAL- Honduras*
- *COOPEAGRI - Costa Rica*
- *Comercio y Comunicación Alternativa – COKOMAL - Costa Rica*
- *CONEXO Soluciones Empresariales - Costa Rica*
- *CONGES - Costa Rica*
- *Cooperativa Agroindustrial Unión de Cuatro Pinos – Guatemala*

AQ´AB´AL has decided to become a regional actor recognized as referent in sustainable development, capable of continually constructing an environmental and development agenda on behalf of the most vulnerable sectors of Central American society. This is achieved through consolidating productive chains; inserting their products in fair and solidarity-based markets; and promoting good environmental management practices expressed through protecting water, watersheds and soils and promoting use of *cleaner energies*.

Creation of the Social Economy Fund for Solidarity-based Development in Central America and the Caribbean Aq´ab´al-Civil Society, with contributions from members, is another important step in the sustainability of the enterprise and its development plans in the region.

Sustainable Transportation

The first fruits are being harvested from an agreement signed with the Costa Rica National Chamber of Transportation and Ministry of Environment, Energy and Telecommunications, under which 50 businesspersons and managers were trained to analyze the theme of emissions reduction and learn efficient driving methodologies in order to incorporate them in their businesses; 200 drivers were trained in efficient driving and 20 chamber members adopted environmental management plans.

Results: A sample of 22% of the businesses revealed average savings of 15.6% in fuel consumption by trained drivers, with some of them even saving 32.1%. Certain companies that trained their entire staff achieved far more significant savings, such as LARED and TAPACHULA. Respectively, they saved two and even four million colons a month (approximately USD 8000) and a monthly decrease in carbon footprint of approximately 10 and 18 tons of CO_2.

Sustainable Construction

Competition in Sustainable Housing for the Costa Rican Middle Class: In the frame of the Pact for Life, IUCN and Banco Popular y de Desarrollo Comunal, with the participation of the Ministry of Housing and Ministry of Environment, Energy and Telecommunications, organized the first competition in Sustainable Housing for the Costa Rican Middle Class. Support and advising were provided by the Costa Rican Chamber of Construction, the Association of Architects of Costa Rica, the Council on Sustainable Construction in Costa Rica (AFODESOS) and the Foundation for Urban Development (FUDEU).

The purpose of the competition was to promote a change in the construction culture by proposing innovative, comfortable and sustainable vertical designs with spaces for collective use, located in the Greater Metropolitan Area.

Proposals incorporated efficient use of materials, energy, water and waste, and took into consideration spaces for social interaction and integration such as parks, green areas, access to public transportation services and other elements. Direct results of the competition:

-A sustainable middle class housing project to be constructed in 2014, for which the Banco Popular has committed financing

-A set of sustainable construction standards for Central America promoted with the support of the Green Construction Councils in each country and the Secretariat of the Central American Council of Sustainable Architecture and Construction (CCACS), formed in the frame of the Pact for Life
-A financial instrument that will be used at the Banco Popular to finance this type of housing

Congruent with Costa Rica's objective of becoming carbon-neutral by 2021, measures for developing sustainable habitational projects were a key aspect of the competition to promote their use as a customary practice in the national construction sector, benefiting the environmental performance of the country and its inhabitants' quality of life.

The 200-apartment project is slated for construction in 2014-2015 under a concept of sustainability and aimed at the middle class, with an accessible and different system of financing.

Combine creativity, innovation and environmental responsibility to build a friendly home on a moderate budget: that was the objective of the First Competition in Sustainable Housing for the Costa Rican Middle Class.

The preliminary design by the "50 al Este" team under the coordination of architect Rodrigo Carazo took first prize. The project is situated in Quebrada Los Negritos, Barrio Escalante, and uses runoff and gray water treated with passive technologies. The project proposes to use materials produced in the country and is accompanied by a realistic cost-benefit study, making this a viable option for Costa Rica's middle class.

At: http://ekaenlinea.com/primer-concurso-de-vivienda-sostenible-para-clase-media-ya-tiene-ganador/

Finance and Banking Sector

A Green Bank in Costa Rica

Banco Popular y de Desarrollo Comunal was the first bank in Central America with an ecological and sustainable orientation, a commitment assumed in the framework of the Pact for Life.

- Banco Popular has incorporated environmental management in is institutional culture, in its transactions and in its products and services, becoming the region's first "green bank" with: a pathway to carbon neutrality in 2015, investment reducing environmental impact in its transactions, $38 million in products such as "eco-credits" aimed at small and medium companies whose line of business aims at sustainable natural resource use (Clean Energy Generation - Solid Waste Management and Disposal, Reduction of CO2 Emissions – Energy Efficiency, Environmental Conservation, Water Resource Management), as well as eco-saving, which consists of a green savings account in colons and dollars wherein 100% of the resources captured are assigned to environmentally friendly projects. Two million dollars will be set aside to support rural aqueducts for water resource protection.

Finally, the culture toward environmental sustainability encompasses 3200 collaborators and more than 10,000 suppliers engaged in the environmental management plan adopted by this banking institution.

"Our institution's commitment to the Pact for Life arose from an assembly of Banco Popular employees and we started an open campaign with all of the social sectors in order to carry out advocacy about the importance of taking care of the environment."
Olga Barrantes, Assembly of Banco Popular Employees

"Banco Popular decided to go into environment, not as a business or end in itself, but as part of its commitment to life, so that the social wellbeing referred to in our organization's mission statement turns into a sustainable reality for future generations."
Gerardo Porras, Corporate General Manager of Banco Popular

Youth, Culture and Local Governments

Reforesting Central America: More than Planting a Tree

The campaign, "Reforesting Central America: More than Planting a Tree" is a regional effort that promotes reforestation and cultural encounters to reduce and mitigate the impacts of climate change in Central American territory. Every year since 2009, the Aj Tzuk Youth Movement with more than 10,000 young people has promoted the "Reforesting Guatemala" campaign to help reduce the carbon footprint. Asociación Pro Integración Centroamericana y República Dominicana (PROICA-RD) has joined the initiative in coordination with Aj Tzuk to replicate the project throughout the Central American region.

The "Reforesting Central America" campaign was first launched in 2011, the International Year of Forests, helping with ecosystem restoration on around 17000 ha by planting 6,233,326 trees of native species in Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama and capturing 60,599 tons of CO2. (Each hectare captures 3.59 tons; there are 360 trees in a hectare, planted five meters apart.)

http://eco-book.net/pg/blog/Pacto/read/61903/
reforestando-centroamérica-ms-que-sembra-un-rbol

Construction of the Social Force to Influence

To achieve the project's end, a two-pronged methodological approach was required: direct advocacy by IUCN-ORMA, and advocacy by civil society organizations. The huge challenge of combining the two and their many activities, actors and issues was tackled under the optic of a broad-based social construction.

This required breaking out of the narrow parameters of the environmental movement and its NGOs. It was necessary to move forward with other civil society sectors and provide tools enabling them to insert environmental variables in their programs and lines of action, expanding the social base of actions to further conservation and environment. This entailed preference (from the Fund for Environmental Advocacy and Research) for organizations with roots in the territory and an effective social base, and the construction of platforms with private actors and non-environment public institutions, but without abandoning the environmental sectors. All in all some 250 organizations were directly or indirectly connected with the processes undertaken for Component 2 of PREMACA.

- 35 organizations making up the youth network Red de Jóvenes en Centroamérica
- 19 organizations comprising the Women's Network on Biodiversity
- More than 200 organizations forming part of the social base IUCN now has to mobilize resources for environment
- Eco-book: 7,000 users interacting in 65 thematic groups
- 5 sectors: the social economy, transportation, construction, banking, youth/art and culture linked with the IUCN, establish agreements and take specific actions to incorporate environmental management in their agendas

C IUCN Support in Processes to Create Regional Policies

The Central American Integration System has been establishing an array of policies, strategies and plans—some sectoral, others integrated—through which the region's development vision has been profiled. IUCN-ORMA has contributed to this process by generating knowledge, facilitating spaces for dialogue, and promoting and supporting multi-stakeholder platforms.

PROCESSES SUPPORTED BY IUCN IN THE REGION
• Strategic Plan of the Central American Commission on Environment and Development (CCAD), whose result was the Regional Environmental Plan for Central America (PARCA)
• Pluriannual Plan of the Central American Integration System in which the Environmental Subsystem (CCAD-CRRH-CEPREDENAC) agreed on a common agenda prioritizing risk-water-environment actions
• CC-SICA Technical Advisor in relation to the Central America/European Union Association Agreement (ACAUE) and organization of the civil society forum on environment in AACAUE
• Strategic plans of the Ministries of Environment and Natural Resources of Guatemala (MARN); Ministry of Environment, Energy and Telecommunications (MINAET) and Ministry of Housing and Human Settlements

(MIVAH)
• Training in environmental damage assessment instruments for legal and environmental operators of the environmental ministries of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala and Panama
• Climate change and renewable energies: the ORMA-formulated orienting framework of the regional energy panorama, policies and supply assisted with prioritizing specific themes for work: hydraulic energy, biomass and biofuels
• Support for the Regional Climate Change Strategy (ERCC) through the construction of guidelines
• Proposals for COP15 in Denmark: At the Presidential Summit on Climate Change in 2008, IUCN participated in two directions, as co-writer of the document presidents were signing and as organizer of the parallel civil society summit with 500 representatives of Indigenous, Afrodescendent and civil society organizations
• Collaboration agreements established with the Consultative Council of SICA (Climate Change, Pact for Life and Association Agreement) and FOSCAD (with the strategic and restructuring plan, and thematically in Climate Change , Pact for Life and the Regional Agro-environmental and Health Strategy)
• Water resources: Action Plan for Integrated Water Management in the Central American Isthmus (PACADIRH) and the Central American Strategy for Integrated Water Resource Management (ECAGIRH)
• Territorial Planning and Ordering: Central American Strategy for Rural Territorial Development (ECADERT)
• Risk management: Central American Policy on Comprehensive Disaster Risk Management (PCGIR)
• Protected areas: Technical support for approval of policy on co-management of protected areas in Panama and Honduras
• From the SICA Protected Areas Technical Committee: negotiation of the proposal for Central American policy on shared management of protected areas
• Facilitation of the participation of Central American base organizations in the Protected Areas Pre-Congress and Congress

D

Strengthening the Advocacy Capacity of Civil Society Organizations

D.1 Technical and Strategic Learning to Practice Political Advocacy

Through organizations' participation in the Fund for Environmental Advocacy and Research, technical and strategic learning was generated on how to do environmental advocacy and how to influence public decision-making in both municipal and national spheres. With this learning, organizations could make changes in their strategies to better position themselves in political scenarios of decision-making on environment, and improve the effectiveness of their demands and fights.

Advocacy now enables more than 200 organizations to draw together and forge alliances between communities and authorities, based on a new way of influencing public policy and negotiating public resources for environmental protection, and to enable a more participatory democracy in political and technical decision-making processes about environment.

Another important legacy for the region is a participation style incorporating technically supported proposals. This combination of citizen empowerment and technical backing gave the organizations added credibility and positioning. The project also strengthened a perspective of advocacy linked with democratic exercise, knowledge and solid arguments.

"… we learned that our objectives could be achieved without having to create laws, which would have been very long and complicated, especially if you had to work in three countries. We understood that you can work through decrees consensuated with mid-level technicians, promoted through dialogue and lobbying with high-level authorities of the governments." (Luis Furlán, coordinator of TRIGOH)

The strategic importance of producing or managing information and knowledge to obtain politically favorable results remained very clear to the organizations. This way of negotiating their interests and position more forcefully by combining the political and the technical was implanted or reinforced in the organizations. Their leadership was strengthened because recommendations and proposals were based on studies and appraisals made by qualified technicians.

"The awareness-raising work was done with other resources like video, radio broadcasting and a dramatic presentation supported by research, which presented the problem and raised populations' awareness, and we collected signatures to request an ordinance. These actions finalized with a municipal forum in which the leaders, practically the entire municipal council, teachers and MARENA participated, when the proposed ordinance was presented. This was done in September and broadcast over the radio. 468 signatures were collected." (Focal Group, Saúl Obregón, Teresa Mariscal, Gabriel Jaime, Alfredo Figueroa, Fundación del Río. San Carlos, Nicaragua)

A responsible and proactive style of participation was generated to influence authorities' decisions. The organizations did not so much demand as present proposals, for the most part constructed with the populations and using compelling technical studies.

Now communication and information is very important, that people talk about wetlands on the radio, the broadcasters, the water company officials, on television programs, the investors. A favorable opinion has gradually been generated in the officials. The issue is still in the public eye, and thanks to this there are sites that probably wouldn't exist

otherwise. There have been conversations and participation with municipalities, canal authorities, the national congress, productive sectors with infrastructure projects, with MIDA. Key concepts are set out, like the ecosystem approach and wise use, but in language accessible to decision-makers, like use zones and conservation. This has all been achieved thanks to the Committee and the advocacy still being done, but now as partners with the State. This has served from the inside so that protected areas are maintained and wetlands have been given some degree of protection. The policy gives a basic framework for doing advocacy, it provides inputs; it gives more political and legal stability to influence." (Rosa Montañez, Director of Fundación Natura)

The organizations recognize that advocacy is a continuous and dynamic process; an achievement leads to a new demand or to a new political scenario with a different correlation of forces. It is recognized that what was obtained is important, but that it opens windows to look out and see what still needs to be done. In some cases that means reinforcing the legal aspect or creating regulations to operationalize an ordinance, in others, continuing to activate and follow up on entities created in the municipalities or communities, or maybe establishing a new strategy because companies indiscriminately exploiting a resource now have new political allies with a great deal of power to influence, or the fight may need to be expanded from the local to the national or regional arena, and in that way extend the advocacy into new dynamics.

D.2 Leadership in the Construction and Implementation of Environmental Policies

> Environmental advocacy went from being done by a group of mostly intellectuals, to the Indigenous, housewives and grassroots community movements that now feel empowered to make their voice heard. (Marco Vinicio Cerezo, Fundación para el Ecodesarrollo y la Conservación, Guatemala, FUNDAECO)

In accordance with the acceptance of the advocacy used by UICN-ORMA, this is clearly done in an interrelation between civil society and the State. Advocacy strives to modify State behaviors and decisions, and in this process an organization's political influence is inevitably modified as well. This capacity for greater influence is one of the ways that social organizations participating in the project manifest their leadership in the region.

All in all, through 185 projects 116 organizations spearheaded influencing processes at three different levels: 1) modification and drafting of new and local legislation; 2) support and advocacy for the passage of environmental legislation; and 3) implementation and citizen auditing of laws.

These organizations attained a position of influence in local and national public agencies in many different themes. The organizations were able to convoke, train, converge and mobilize different population sectors around the causes they drove. Based on this, an array of proposals, spaces of dialogue and negotiations were generated that successfully influenced decision-making processes.

The organizations developed a new way of doing advocacy and contributed to the exercise of democracy, leadership and participation in public policy formation. Many improved their conceptual frameworks and situated their influencing actions within a strategic frame, enabling them to reformulate their activities and have a strategy for influencing, between communication and clash, consensus and negotiation, and fostering learning among the organizations.

"Many of the advocacy technicians we know through other projects helped out the Board of Directors and staff. Project intervention and meetings with unions in the municipality were facilitated. Local authorities thought the water agenda shouldn't come from civil society. There was intervention by the media and that put pressure on the authorities. The mayor didn't accept the agenda, but the unions and councilmen did." (Mario Alejandro Méndez, Director of Fundación de Defensa Del Medio Ambiente de Baja Verapaz, FUNDEMABV)

In many cases, an organization's profile and way it is perceived actually changed. The advocacy generated a new organizational identity and relations with public institutions and the community transformed for the better, with positive impacts on the organization's leadership and on the sustainability of the project's results.

E FORMULATION, MODIFICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES

One hundred sixteen organizations were able to influence the formulation, modification and implementation of laws and policies.

Graphic 4: Laws and policies influenced at regional, national and local level

47 laws and decrees and eight plans and agreements at the national level
7 plans, policies and agreements at the regional level
24 local ordinances
33 local plans and agreements on policy

To comprehend the reach of these advocacy processes on the formulation, modification and implementation of environmental policies, they must be examined within the Central American context and different stages in the enforcement of a law (national) or ordinance (local).

Legislative processes, especially those aimed at the passage of laws, require long periods for maturing ideas and completing procedures, so much so that it can take up to five years or even decades before a new legal framework is approved.

Once this is accomplished, actual implementation can take just as long because the legislation is not explained to those who must apply it, much less those who can enforce it, and the process of learning premises, scope, active and passive subjects and exceptions require long periods. Regulatory processes should thus be accompanied by a training and dissemination agenda aimed at those in charge of application and enforcement (lawyers, judges, prosecutors, public officials, members of collegiate professional associations, civil society, etc.) and by capacity-building to audit compliance with the particular legislation.

To illustrate, during the project it took three to eight years from the moment bills ware admitted on the legislative agenda, to their official declaration as laws once approved, and eight to thirteen years in the case of ordinances. This also applies to draft legislation that was successfully admitted for parliamentary consideration and since then has lain in wait for one to five years—periods that will inevitably continue to extend over time until it is finally approved or rejected. (Peña, M., 2011)

Another important clarification is that in processes of legislative approval, alliances are formed of organizations and institutions that influence at different stages. For example, the FIE has supported various organizations (Centro de Derecho Ambiental y Recursos Naturales-CEDARENA, Asociación Voces Nuestras, Asociación pro Desarrollo y Ecología and Red Centroamericana de Acción del Agua-FANCA) in advocacy for water resource laws, a constitutional reform to declare water a good of public dominion and recognize the human right of access to water and two legislative projects: the Law for Integrated Water Resource Management and Law on Associations Administering Aqueducts. In turn, these organizations form part of an alliance (Alianza para la Defensa del Agua-ANDA)

Public policy at the local level is generated by defining municipal agreements or ordinances aimed at municipalities' genuine application of national legislation in force, or through the construction of regulations which—always anchored in the state of law—seek to reduce, mitigate or prevent the adverse impacts of certain policies.

Revista Pilares, p. 83 (in Spanish)

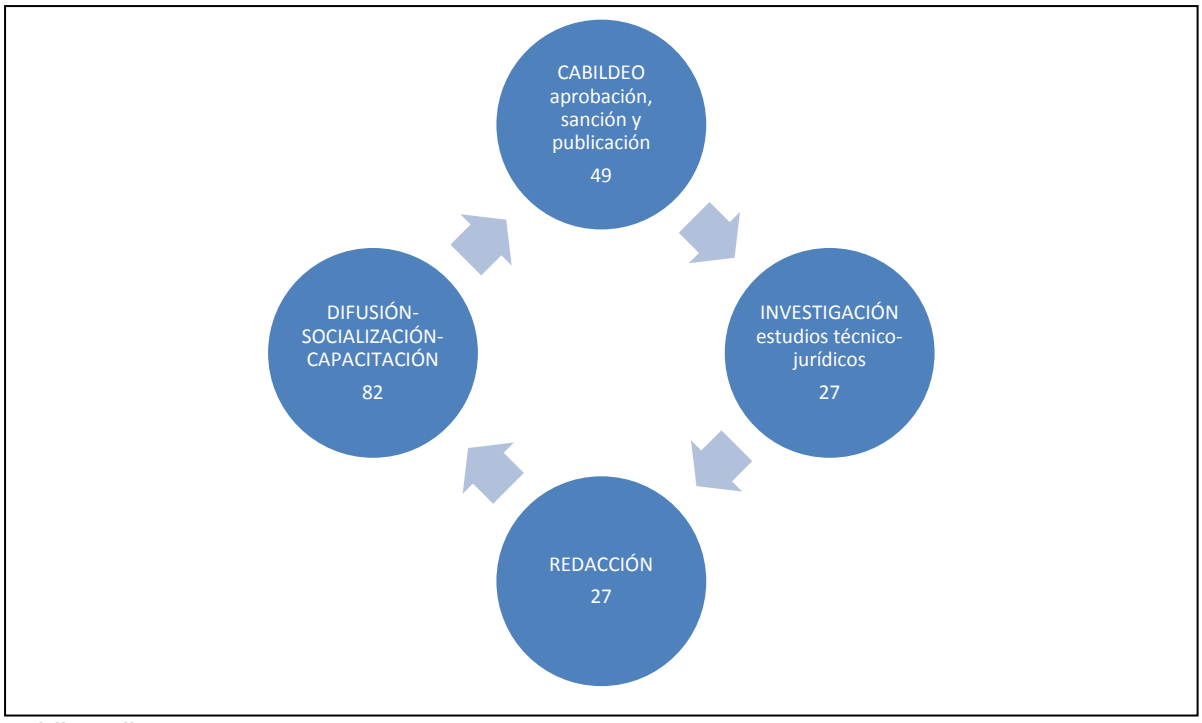
that links social actors (civil society and institutions) promoting passage of these three legislative projects. Hence, it is the sum of efforts, alliance, linkage and support at different stages in the creation of a law that will ultimately enable it to be approved.

Organizations lobbied at different stages in the creation of a policy. For example, Asociación Terra Nostra and other organizations lobbied for passage of the Law on Comprehensive Management of Solid Waste in the understanding that the bill was already drafted and undergoing procedures in the parliament when the FIE approved financing for the project. The association also participated actively in publicizing the prospective law and training key actors.

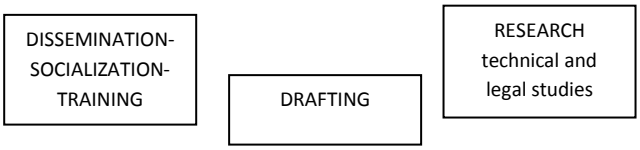
In a similar experience, in pushing the proposed Law on Forest, Wildlife and Protected Areas of Honduras, the initial objective of Movimiento Ambientalista de Olancho (MAO) was to achieve the publication of a law Congress had already passed; the organization had already participated in the final drafting of the text published in the official State gazette, and in its dissemination and training. Fundación Vida subsequently contributed to compliance with the law through the formation of local forestry councils responsible for overseeing its application.

Organizations such as Fundación para el Desarrollo de los Municipios de Rivas, Nicaragua (FUNDEMUR), Asociación Ecológica de San Marcos Ocotepeque, Honduras (AESMO), Asociación de Mujeres Indígenas de la Costa Atlántica de Nicaragua (AMICA) and Fundación Promotora de Cooperativas (FUNPROCOOP) accompanied the regulatory process from conception (technical studies, drafting, lobbying) to passage, and then stayed active after reaching the goal by implementing informational campaigns and training for key stakeholders and those targeted by the law.

The diagram 5 below shows the participation of the projects at different phases in the creation of



public policy.


DISSEMINATION-
SOCIALIZATION-
TRAINING
DRAFTING
RESEARCH
technical and
legal studies

E.1 Achievements in Rights Protection

> The main objective of the rights-based approach to conservation of nature is that natural resource conservation activities recognize people's rights as the fundamental pillars of sustainable development. Incorporating this approach in projects, programs, policies and legislation can be an effective way of fighting poverty and achieving a sustainable natural resource management.
>
> **Grethel Aguilar, Regional Director of IUCN-ORMA-IC. Article on natural resources and rights in Central America (2012)**

Component 2 emphasizes protection of the rights of:

- Populations whose livelihoods are linked with natural resource management
- Populations whose rights are threatened
- Populations traditionally excluded from public policymaking, but with potential to be change agents in natural resource conservation
  - *Campesino* communities
  - Indigenous peoples and Afrodescendents
  - Women and youth

A total of 96 projects impacted on rights protection: territorial rights and right to participation and information, cultural heritage, genetic resources and traditions.

CASE IN POINT:

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT TO MANAGE THEIR OWN RESOURCES

Executing Organization:

Las Dignas, Asociación de Mujeres por la Dignidad y la Vida

Established 20 years ago, Las Dignas is an association formed by women who promote women's leadership in the defense of water resources in four municipalities, promoting political advocacy actions aimed at the executive branch of national and local governments.

Project: Strengthening of environmental management in the municipalities of Alegría and Berlín, by building women's policy proposal capacity

Implementation: Local level, municipalities of Berlín and Alegría, Usulután, El Salvador

Problem and response

The sub-basin of the San Simón River is formed by the municipalities of Berlín, Mercedes Umaña and Alegría, over an extension of 58.7 km2, and located in the country's central mountain range, of volcanic origin and prone to

landslides.

Two situations worsen threat to the area:

- Impacts on the communities from the activities of the LaGeo company which produces electric energy through the extraction of water vapor. The primary implications are air and water pollution (as well as its intensification), crop loss and new landslide threats.
- Deforestation and change in soil use in the mid- and upper parts of the sub-basin

To contribute toward a solution, Las Dignas carried out a strengthening process for the Water Coordination body in its role as linking civil society entity, and approval of a joint municipal ordinance in the Berlín and Alegría municipalities that contributed to:

- ✓ Regulating the action of LaGeo
- ✓ Generating municipal revenues by charging the company a canon for strengthening and monitoring to regulate deforestation and illegal urbanizations

Results

Environmental policy: Approved in the municipality of Berlín, presented to the mayoralty of Alegría. Among other things, this ordinance places a ban on opening more wells and limits the installation of water bottlers, deforestation, perforations to extract water, and cutting trees along river banks.

The ordinance has a special legal feature in that once approved, no other municipal council may repeal it without consulting the community.

The ordinance recognizes the coordination body as actor that must be consulted and authorizes the community to make decisions about the territory and its resources, including permission for any water resource use taking place. The local government is required to take part in the environmental theme and tools are provided for the delegate of the environmental unit to make decisions together with the community.

E.2 Territorial Management and Sustainable Economic Development

Political advocacy is an instrument for managing and developing territories and the quality of life of their inhabitants. It aims at the creation of social capital with proposals constructed in participatory form under the principle of sustainable use of natural, cultural, social, physical, political, human and economic resources to improve quality of life for the people inhabiting these spaces.(Acuña, K., 2009).

Negotiating needs and aspirations involves tension between economically and politically powerful sectors and those less powerful. It is therefore necessary to create spaces of dialogue and social participation permitting different interests to be included in construction of the common good.

Sixty-three projects contributed to territorial management in such themes as sustainable tourism, comprehensive management of residues, water resource management, risk management, reduction of vulnerability and climate change.

Community Rural Tourism (CRT) as Development Instrument in Rural Communities

LINKING ECONOMIC ALTERNATIVES WITH RESOURCE CONSERVATION

Executing Organizations: Alianza TRC, comprised of:

ACEPESA Asociación Centroamericana para la Economía, la Salud y el Ambiente
ACTUAR Asociación Costarricense de Turismo Rural Comunitario
COPRENA Red Ecoturística Nacional

ACEPESA: Technical organization constituted 20 years ago, which contributes to quality of life for the Central American population by strengthening local capacities in sanitation and sustainable tourism, organizational development and promotion of public policies.

Project: Toward the design and implementation of a advocacy strategy proposal concerning public policy to strengthen community rural tourism as development instrument in Costa Rican rural communities

Implementation: national level, Costa Rica

The alliance promotes conditions for wise natural resource use in relation to the development of rural communities. Alternately, it facilitates fulfillment of the vision, principles, guidelines and goals of the National Strategy on Environment and the General Plan on Sustainable Tourism Development 2002-2012.

Alianza TRC generated the minimum conditions in the public-private sphere to define and promote a State policy encouraging local investment and sustainable development in community rural tourism, culminating in passage of the Law on Rural Tourism and accompanying regulations as development instrument for Costa Rican rural communities.

•

E.3 Environmental Protection

The organizations' advocacy action contributed to protection of a great diversity of natural resources in Central America at both the community and regional level. Fifty projects directly impacted resource protection through environmental agendas, plans, comprehensive solid

residue management, protection from extractive industry risk and productive contamination and biodiversity.

FCG
Fundación para la Conservación de los Recursos Naturales y Ambiente en Guatemala

Situation appraisal of the Motagua River basin, stakeholder assessment, work plan of the interinstitutional group and project proposal as advocacy tools for the establishment of the authority for sustainable management of the Motagua River basin

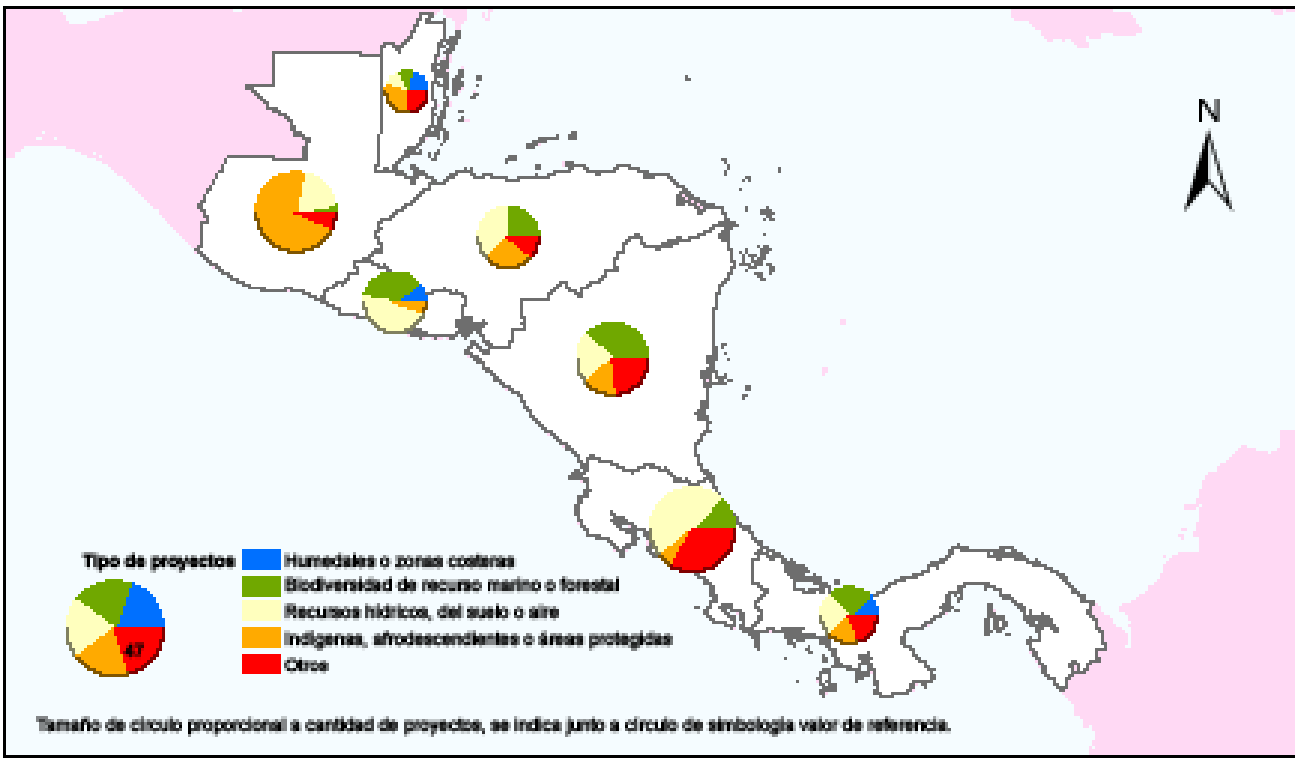
The Motagua River is the largest in Guatemala, extending 486.55 km. Its watershed spans 13 of the country's departments and 95 municipalities, harboring a population of approximately 9 million people, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous. The watershed has serious problems of pollution and accelerated deforestation, giving its rescue national urgency. There is a vital need to create an authority in charge of the rescue, conservation and maintenance of this ecosystem and its tributaries.

On June 17, 2008, the Guatemalan Congress heard the initiative of the Law on the Creation of the Authority for Sustainable Management of the Watershed of the Motagua River, and on February 4, 2009, the respective commission issued a favorable ruling. However, this was not followed up with enough influencing to get the law passed, so the FCG project was designed to help generate political conditions for approval. During the project, in 2011-2012 a situation appraisal was conducted, gathering valuable information about the river basin. Relevant stakeholders were identified, and an assessment and stakeholder mapping were done to form the interinstitutional group, whose purpose is to support the establishment of the authority for sustainable management of the Motagua river basin.

The final version of the proposal was formulated in a participatory process with communities, institutions and authorities. The law was presented and delivered to the congressional commissions on water resources, environment, ecology and natural resources.

MAP 1: PROTECTION OF COUNTRY RESOURCES BY PROJECTS FINANCED BY THE FUND FOR ADVOCACY AND RESEARCH IN ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

CAMBIAR POR CIRCULITOS COMO VERSION ESPAÑOL



Source: Prepared by Eduardo Pérez, researcher at the University of Costa Rica, based on statistics of the Advocacy Fund

Type of projects:	Wetlands or coastal zones
	Biodiversity marine or forest resources
	Water, soil or air resources
	Indigenous, Afrodescendents or protected areas
	Other
Size of circle in proportion to number of projects, reference value indicated next to symbology circle	

4

A LOOK AT TWO PROCESSES

IUCN promoted Line 1 of the Project of Advocacy and Research on Environmental Policy with the clear intention of transforming specific practices and the living conditions of the Central American people. This line of work sought to construct the conditions and suitable political climate so that civil society advocacy would have greater impact. For this, IUCN carried out work directly with the Central American governments and their institutions, and with local government, businesses, cooperation agencies, regional bodies, trade associations and political and economic sectors.

The task of improving the impact of environmental advocacy in the Central American region entailed work in two complementary directions: on one hand promoting IUCN's capacity to do research and advocacy (Line 1), and on the other, strengthening the advocacy capacity of civil society organizations (Line 2).

This chapter explains how the main processes arose and were developed, and lessons derived from them.

The first step consisted of preparing the **Strategic Plan for IUCN Advocacy in Central America (2005-2010)**. For this, previous work experience and the regional context were reviewed. The conditions necessary for strengthening the Central American environmental agenda were defined, and strategic lines were drawn for work in the following years. From this plan arose the initiative called "Pact for Life," described below.

An Environmental Agreement
PACT FOR LIFE IN THE REGION

WHAT IS THE PACT FOR LIFE? *(in Eco-book.net)*

The Pact for Life is a great civil society movement to drive sustainable development in the region through personal and collective commitment, wherein each one contributes their vision, makes their own agenda and shares it with the others.

In the Pact for Life there are no gurus telling what needs to be done. Each participant, organization and social sector chooses for themselves their own commitments and goals and their allies for achieving them. It is the sum of commitments and actions of the different sectors that make up society toward development that contemplates sustainability and environmental, economic and social equity.

HOW DID IT ARISE?

The idea of the Pact for Life took force in 2006. It began with the drafting of the advocacy plan and the context analysis. Based on this analysis, it was then proposed to strengthen the environmental agenda and help recover spaces lost to the economic agenda and the social agenda, taking advantage of the fact that Central America now had with a certain democratic stability making it possible to think about new challenges.

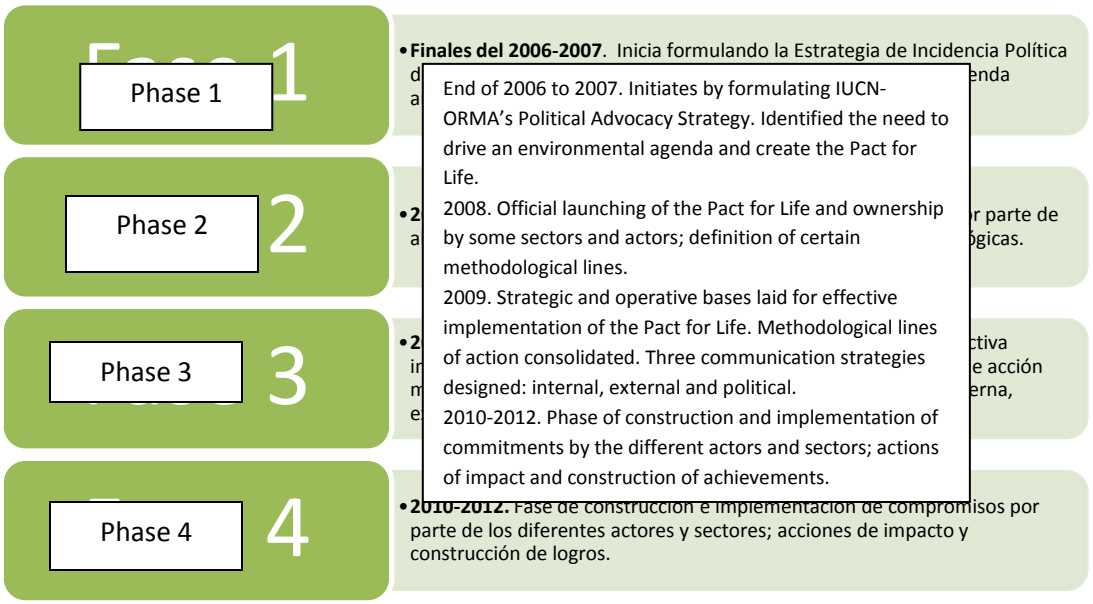
The proposed Pact for Life:

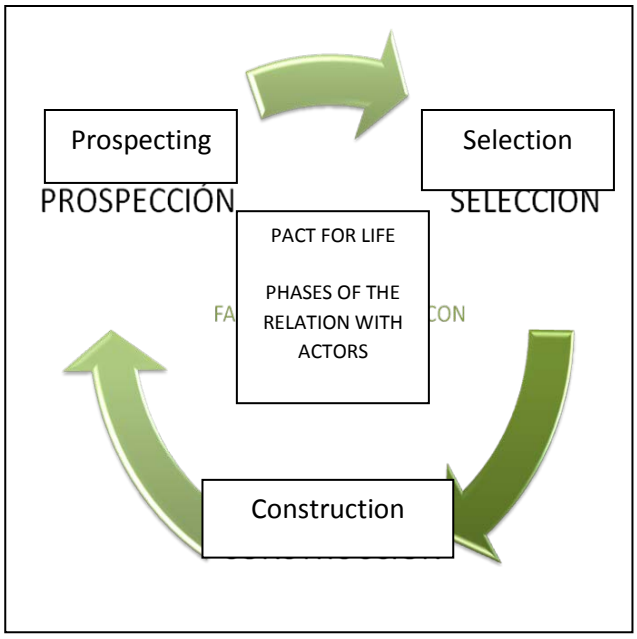
"The region urgently needs an open, frank, serious and responsible dialogue for life. An exercise that reappraises political commitment and triggers the start of a change that leads to greater balances in the course of regional development."

HOW DID IT OPERATE?

The process of approaching different actors in the region was carried out in four phases.

PHASES OF THE PACT FOR LIFE

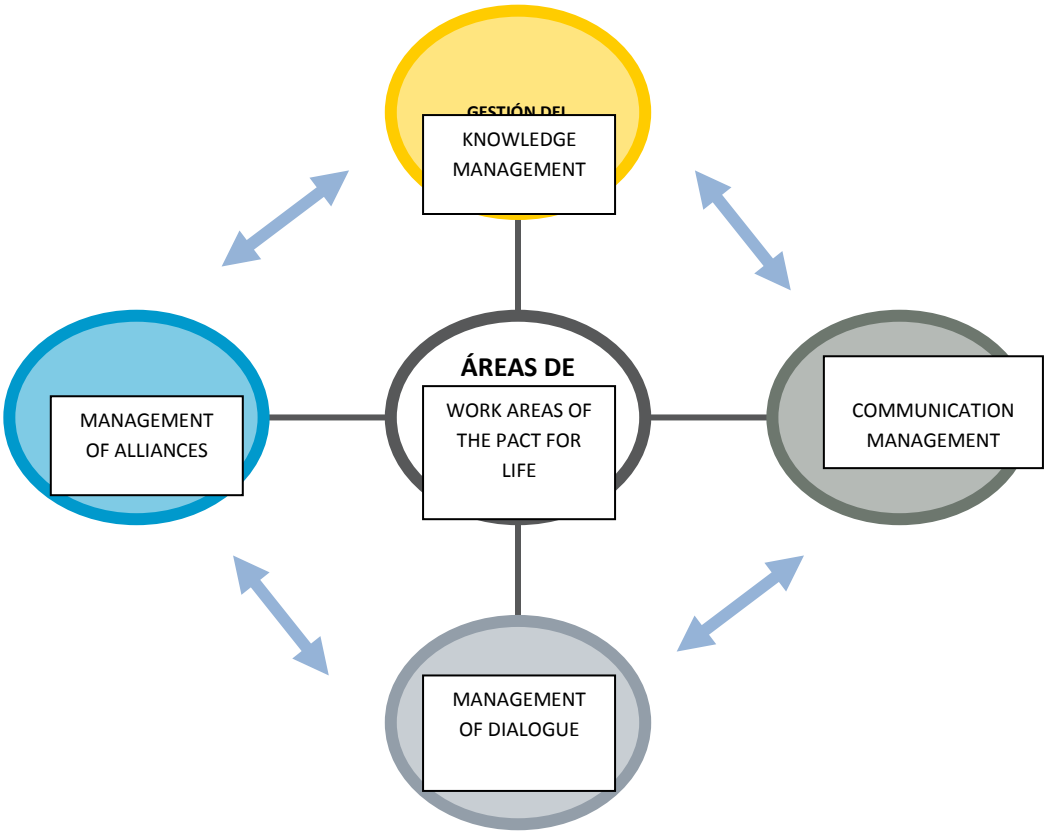




The temporal phases of the Pact's development coincide with a three-pronged strategy in relation to actors. The first involved **prospecting**, in the sense of exploration and sounding out, and analysis of the setting, possible sectors, contacts and potential opportunities. The second involved **selection:** defining the sectors that would be worked with. The third was **construction**, when pacts were developed with the sectors, agreements and networks were set up, and commitments were made about specific actions.

AREAS OF WORK

The Pact was organized in four large areas of work which interacted, supported one another and were mutually reinforcing.



- **Knowledge management.** Continuous support to actors participating in the Pact for Life to generate, distribute and analyze knowledge for increasing capacity of interrelation and action in their particular themes of work
- **Communication management.** Development of communication contributing in three complementary processes: information, participation and comprehension. **"The Pact was itself a communication strategy."**
- **Management of dialogue.** Process to foster the construction of social platforms
- **Management of alliances.** Move from dialogue to commitment in order to reach agreements and construct networks and coalitions enabling better environmental management

METHODOLOGICAL STRATEGY

The Pact was a strategically thought out process whose methodology was constructed step by step during the process. Free and open work was proposed, which was "new," and creative solutions; with conceptual orientations, objectives and large goals, but with enough space for giving way to the ideas of those who participated in it.

Beyond the Environmental Sector

At the beginning the Pact was characterized by intense activism. The initial approach to the sectors was open; meetings, cultural activities and encounters with different political parties, academicians, artists, social organizations, youth, local governments.

The team recalls that time: *"Everything was going to be done and we never finished, because there was always one more pact, one more sector and activity, because they wanted to make a pact, an advising session or it was necessary to talk to the media. We didn't know how to draw a line, because the idea was that the Pact would grow and grow and that the additions would expand."*

The process was funneled to those who were more interested and sectors that were more strategic: the social and solidarity-based economy, youth, banking, local governments, construction and transportation.

Then came a more intersectoral stage linking themes and sectors like financial services with energy and construction, negotiating the support of public institutions or joining agreements with ministries. It was a new type of alliances and of structuring the relation with them. These alliances were not pre-defined; they were made through a reading of the moment and analysis of the particular juncture.

Role of the Operators

Operators are key people that dynamize a sector internally. To implement the Pact for Life it was important to locate these people, mainly in sectors that had never been worked with.

Both operators directly contracted by the Pact to accompany some sectors and those that joined in along the way facilitated a more direct means of generating trust and establishing commitments with each sector.

Mechanisms of Sustainability

At least 3 variables were considered so that the process would be sustainable: a) leadership by important actors; b) incorporation of the Pact for Life and the agenda in the internal structure of the key organizations; and c) the interest shown by other actors in taking on principles of the Pact for Life on their own.

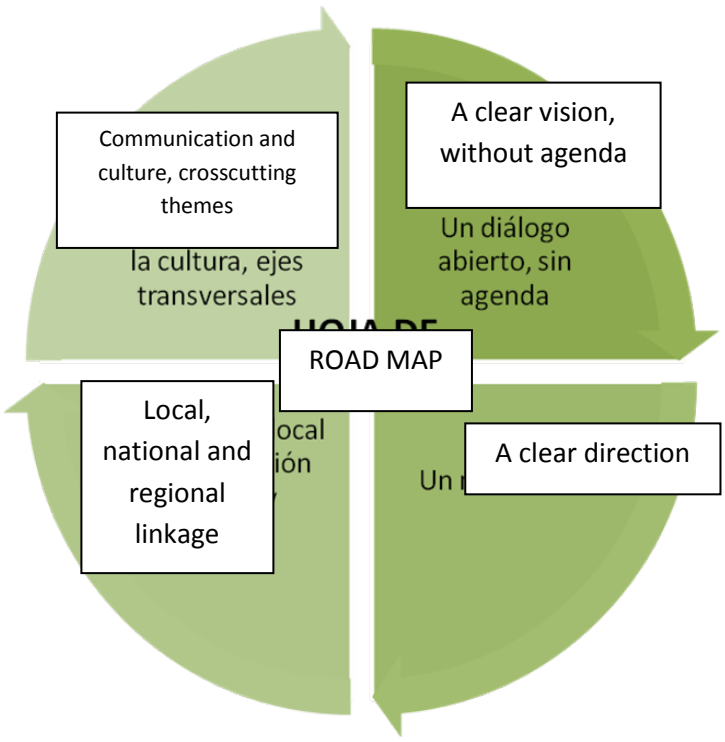
ROAD MAP

It is difficult to express how to draw closer to sectors and actors, convince them of the idea, get them to commit to and carry out their pacts, but we have tried to organize this dynamic by identifying some steps and basic methodological

COMMITMENTS TO CHANGE

What commitments are we willing to take on?
This could have to do with very simple points, like initiating a recycling plan or calculating and reducing energy consumption in our homes and workplaces. Or we could put more difficult goals on the agenda: ensure water access in a municipality or region, halt deforestation in forests and in our river basins, sustainable natural resource management that benefits more vulnerable populations, organize to tackle climate change or natural disasters or get new socio-environmental laws passed and monitor their compliance.
No matter how modest or ambitious our objectives, what is important is that carrying out our agenda contributes effectively to bringing about a change in our social and environmental situation.
(In Eco-book.net)

orientations as a road map. These are not presented in chronological order or in order of importance.



An Open Dialogue

In an open dialogue, all sectors are heard and their agendas are known, along with the conditions for carrying out agreements and commitments to environment. Principles of progressiveness, horizontality, diversity and inclusion were adopted in relation to the sectors' needs, and guided the process from the start.

There was a recognition that other people also have interests, and among other aspects, it was very pertinent to generate trust and obtain real commitment from the sectors around an agenda that they would define according to their interests, possibilities and conditions.

- ## A Clear Vision

The objective was to strengthen the environmental agenda in Central America. This required a revitalized environmental movement, with new actors, new strategies and new ways of influencing.

- ## Local, National and Regional Linkage

The project targeted first, second and third-level entities working with the sectors and with their broadest organizational platforms, for example chambers, in the case of the private sector, and with networks of women, youth, different political parties, artists and local governments.

- **Communication and Culture, Crosscutting Themes**

Working on the basis of culture was an important methodological approach: getting local powers into dialogue with local artists and publicizing the theme in a more attractive way for different sectors. Art and culture have had a dual role: as communication media or instrument and as a new actor in environmental advocacy.
Communication has been a crosscutting theme, a very valuable instrument for advocacy with new actors. Two levels were identified:

"Feeling was important, and the personal characteristics to be able to work with youth, for example; and of course tolerance and respect for their values, in order to be open enough to understand them, to comprehend what's important for each one."

Vaniah Foglesong, coordinator of the youth sector, Pact for Life

a) Personal communication with each actor and sector

The value of subjectivity in order to dialogue can be found here: a sincere and warm approach, transparency and respect, a genuine intention of dialoguing and transmitting that the "other" matters.

"From the start the Pact for Life seemed like a super interesting and new proposal, because of the idea of talking about environment from our point of view. I think that was definitely what clicked."

Marvin García, director of the cultural group Metáfora, Quetzaltenango, Guatemala

This also includes sharing leadership, allowing actors to take the lead themselves in each process and opening the way to innovative leaders who drive and sustain actions after the project ends, and recognizing the potential of each sector and their interests, needs and pace of operation.

b) Generation of knowledge, mass media and alternative communication

The generation of knowledge and management of the processes is closely connected with communication resources, ranging from videos, forums, publications, spaces of dialogue and exchange, to the Eco-book social network, a window for disseminating knowledge, and for communication with the world.

An attempt was made to open up fun ways to become informed, understand, learn, participate and act by working on the basis of culture as a strategy for drawing closer to different populations.

Hundreds of cultural organizations now form part of the regional youth network promoted by the Pact. Asociación Metáfora alone held more than 20 children's workshops for drawing and painting about environment in 2011, with approximately 1500 people participating.

5

ADVOCACY IN ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY
A Reality in Central America

FUND FOR ADVOCACY AND RESEARCH ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY (FIE)

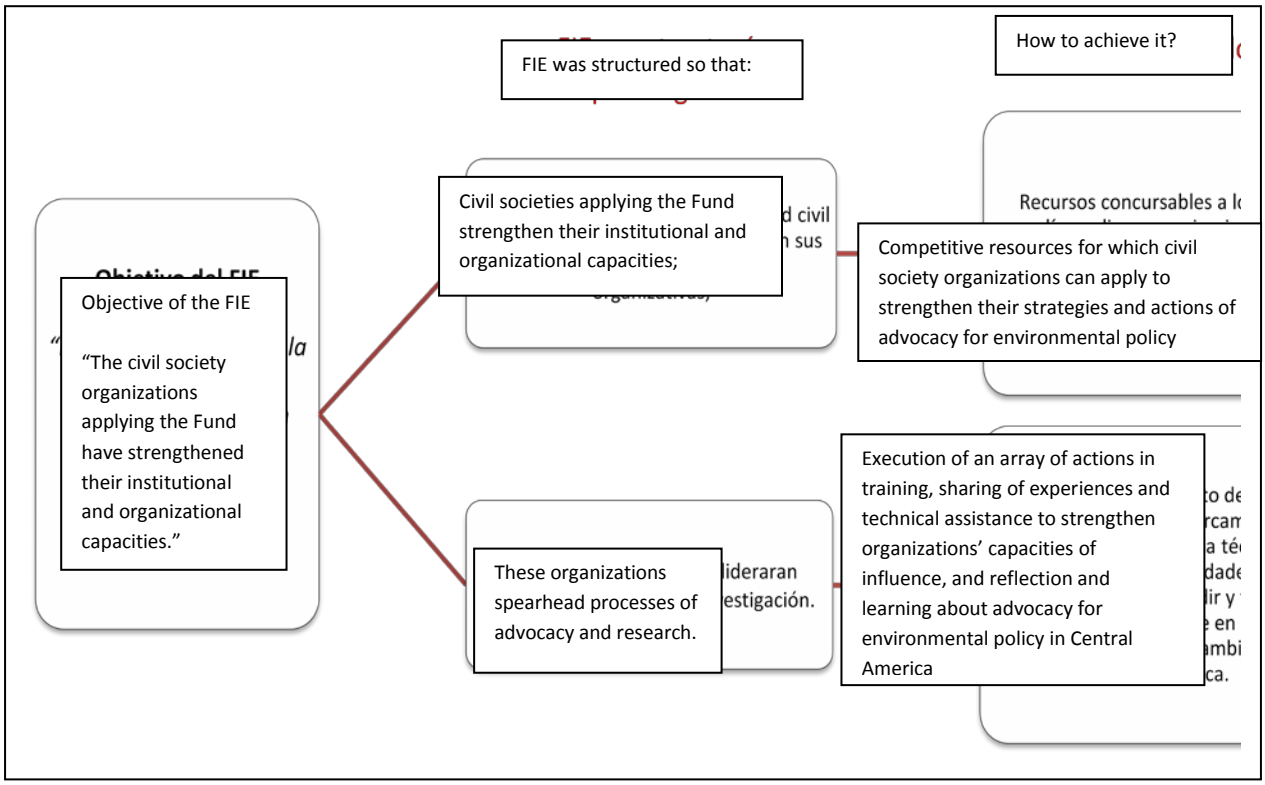
The FIE was created to strengthen and promote advocacy capacity in civil society organizations. It was executed from 2006 to 2012, and supported the participation of Central American social organizations in the construction and implementation of local, national and regional policies, legal frameworks and environmental regulations linked with policies of sustainable development.

For IUCN, the Fund was a completely new instrument. There was no other fund for advocating environmental policy in the region that could provide a point of reference. Nor did IUCN have experience managing funds that transferred resources directly to organizations.

Staking on an instrument of this nature, administering funds for which IUCN had to be strictly accountable was a new and risky experience requiring a great deal of analysis, dialogue and research in the region to determine viability and the risk being assumed.

What is FIE?

The Fund for Advocacy and Research on Environmental Policy was established as a competitive fund to finance projects in these areas, and governed by a structure, operating mechanisms and formal regulations and rating instruments aimed at operating under criteria of efficiency, transparency and inclusiveness.



WHY WAS IT CREATED?

The Fund is based on an analysis of the Central American situation, which determined two things. First, the participation of civil society organizations with capacity to conduct research and influence regional and national environmental policies was considered essential for regional and national commitments to be implemented effectively. Second, despite the large number of organizations influencing different spaces, there were few conceived and identifiable as dedicated to advocacy. Those that did exist exhibit limitations in terms of both technical and financial aspects and representativeness, which hampers effectiveness in and already inherently complex context such as political advocacy. (PREMACA document, 2005)

Importance of Influencing Public Policies

Public policies are a way of regulating social life, recognizing rights and obligations and enabling society's internalization of rules of behavior, forms of action, crimes and sanctions in order to solve problems or regulate their effects. Policy is also an instrument for social planning and territorial management (of tangible and intangible resources) in pursuit of the common good, solving problems that individuals on their own could not. Societies can also be guided toward desired situations through the use of public policy.

Adapted from: Kathia Acuña (2008)

The Fund thus arose as part of a broader strategy to improve State environmental management with civil society participation. From the onset, it responded to planning and a broad-spectrum vision that included medium- and long-term actions and proposals for Central America.

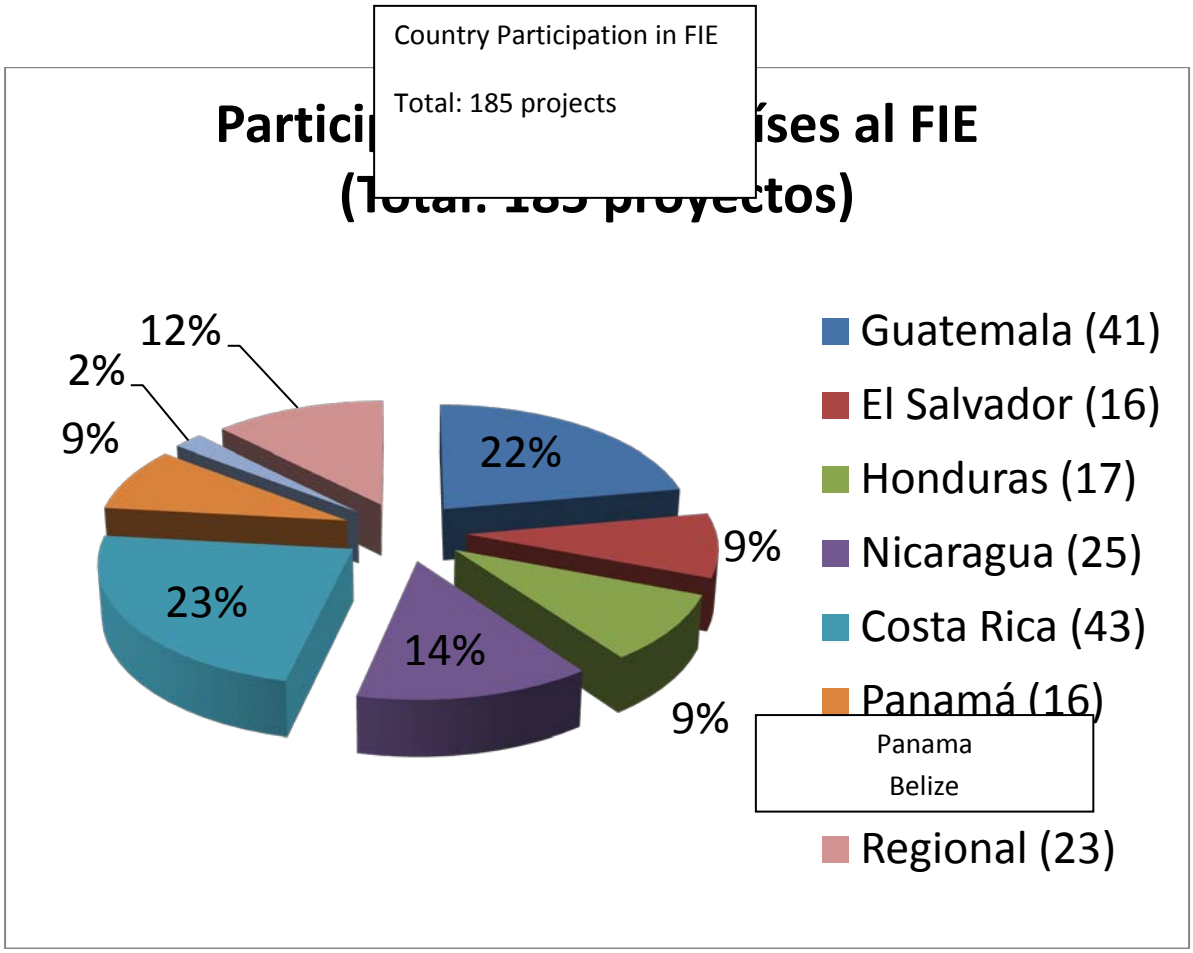
PUTTING IT IN MOTION

A Central Debate: Who Are the Beneficiaries?

Getting the Fund up and running required key decisions about themes, amounts and financing modalities, but it was the debate about beneficiaries that marked its course most forcefully. This discussion revolved around democratizing use of the resources, a fundamental pillar for a revamped strategy. In the question of whether to finance consolidated and experienced organizations or a broad base of beneficiaries, thinking inclined to the latter given the current Central American situation, with the environmental movement losing social force and the environmental agenda no longer a priority in the regional political agenda. Not only did the environmental agenda need to be repositioned, but the composition of the base of support, or social force necessary for positioning environmental themes and objectives, had to be different.

No organization was left out of the call for proposals. The process was aimed at action and strengthening of both experienced organizations and those with less or even no experience, but whose voices and actions in political advocacy urgently required a boost.

All of the Central American countries, plus Belize and Panama, had the opportunity to participate in the six calls for proposals. Graphic 3 shows project distribution by country.



ELIGIBLE ORGANIZATIONS

Democratic exercise refers to the active participation of the population and its organizations in decision making on public matters that affect them, or in the orientation of decisions by government authorities (local or national) or by institutions and their officials.

[Traductora: OJO 1) último es repetido; 2) no se debe poner punto al final en el inglés]

- *Approximately 30% of the projects were implemented in Indigenous territories or related to the Indigenous theme.*
- *13 projects carried out actions on behalf of women and youth.*

Working with a broad base of beneficiaries entailed significant challenges for the technical team. The entire process from the call for proposals to their evaluation had to be managed efficiently, and a great deal of creativity was required to generate opportunities, from the different phases of execution, for strengthening the organizations' capacities, technical assistance and sharing of experiences.

The gambit of constructing a social base and strengthening as many organizations as possible resulted in wide-ranging organizational capital and entities with different levels of experience in environmental advocacy, as shown in the five categories described below:

	Previous Experience of Organizations Participating in the FIE
A	Organizations that may not have worked with political advocacy *per se* in their tasks or mission, but did so in practice, carrying out actions in that line
B	Organizations with the awareness that they exert political influence and whose concept of "advocacy" is different from the definition of the FIE
C	Organizations with prior experience in advocacy, but not environmental advocacy, or not in the local sphere
D	Organizations with prior experience in advocacy under a concept similar to that of the FIE, and which have participated in some phase of advocacy initiatives
E	Organizations with no advocacy experience of any type

Source: Adapted from: Kathia Acuña (2008), p. 26

The widely varying organizational capital and experience of the participating organizations is evident. Some had no experience in environmental advocacy, others had experience in some phase, and still others had done advocacy but never conceptualized it as such. Based on this diversity of prior experience, organizations ventured into more challenging realms, taking on bigger projects where they had to use all of their capacities and acquire new ones.

Priority Themes

To achieve the objective of expanding and deepening equitable and sustainable natural resource access, use and management as a means to reduce poverty, FIE regulations set out emerging and priority themes for the region:

- Environmental management: urban pollution, waste, pesticides

- Trade and environment: free trade treaties; Puebla-Panama Plan
- Environmental protection: mining, dams and others
- Poverty-environment: policies for economic development and monitoring of Millennium Development Goals
- Reduction of vulnerability: generation of information on reduction of vulnerability to influence local, national and regional risk management policies

With the additional project financing from the Ford Foundation in 2008, the new themes of sustainable tourism, territorial management and forest management were added.

OPERATING STRATEGY

IUCN-ORMA created an entire scaffolding of accompaniment and technical and administrative support required for the Fund's functioning.

From 2006 to 2012 the FIE operated as a competitive fund, placing both financial and technical resources and recognition at the service of civil society organizations in order to strengthen their advocacy capacities.

Projects financed	**185**
Funds disbursed	**$4,805,645**

Technical assistance in formulating advocacy projects:
251 organizations

National workshops, sharing of knowledge about political advocacy, methodologies, concepts and strategies of communication 43

Regional thematic workshops on rural tourism, territorial planning, forest management, solid waste, climate change and risk management and women's leadership 7

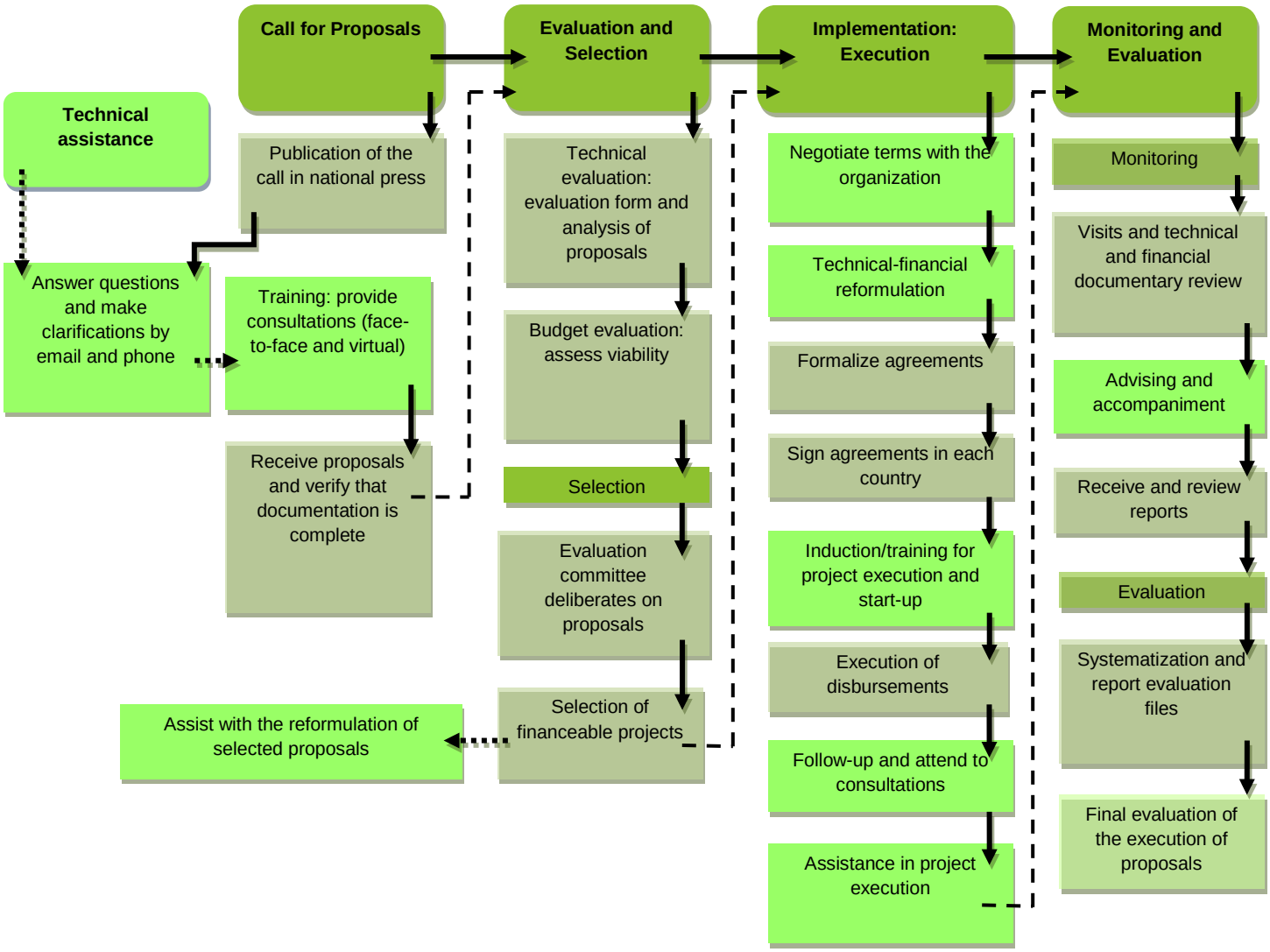
Six editions of the "Environmental Torch" award
18 organizations recognized for their achievements in advocacy

*The **definition of political advocacy** adopted for the Fund regulations met two main requirements:*

- *Permit broad participation of civil society organizations*
- *Help the beneficiary organization focus on results and prevent scattering of its advocacy process*

FIE regulations also established that advocacy could be exercised at any level (local, national and regional) and should be aimed at public institutions with the objective of modifying, establishing or eliminating a rule, law or public policy.

Diagram 3 summarizes how the Fund operates:


Call for Proposals
Evaluation and Selection
Implementation: Execution
Monitoring and Evaluation
Technical assistance
Publication of the call in national press
Technical evaluation: evaluation form and analysis of proposals
Negotiate terms with the organization
Monitoring
Answer questions and make clarifications by email and phone
Training: provide consultations (face-to-face and virtual)
Budget evaluation: assess viability
Technical-financial reformulation
Visits and technical and financial documentary review
Formalize agreements
Advising and accompaniment
Receive proposals and verify that documentation is complete
Selection
Sign agreements in each country
Receive and review reports
Evaluation committee deliberates on proposals
Induction/training for project execution and start-up
Evaluation
Execution of disbursements
Systematization and report evaluation files
Assist with the reformulation of selected proposals
Selection of financeable projects
Follow-up and attend to consultations
Final evaluation of the execution of proposals
Assistance in project execution

INCLUIR EN CUADRO
Financing Modalities:

Thematic Projects

Duration: up to two years
Maximum amount: US$75,000
Includes projects in advocacy, research and institutional strengthening for advocacy capacity

Research projects were expected to result in a research product aimed specifically at influencing environmental policy.
Institutional strengthening projects were directed at entities defined as political advocacy organizations due to their strategic framework and experience.

Urgent Advocacy Projects

Duration: up to 4 months
Maximum amount: US$10,000

"Urgent advocacy" was a line to fund advocacy and research actions arising unexpectedly and focused on influencing an immediate decision to either benefit environment or halt some threat to it.

Environmental Torch Award

The Environmental Torch Award was established to recognize successful achievements in environmental advocacy and research by Central American civil society organizations.

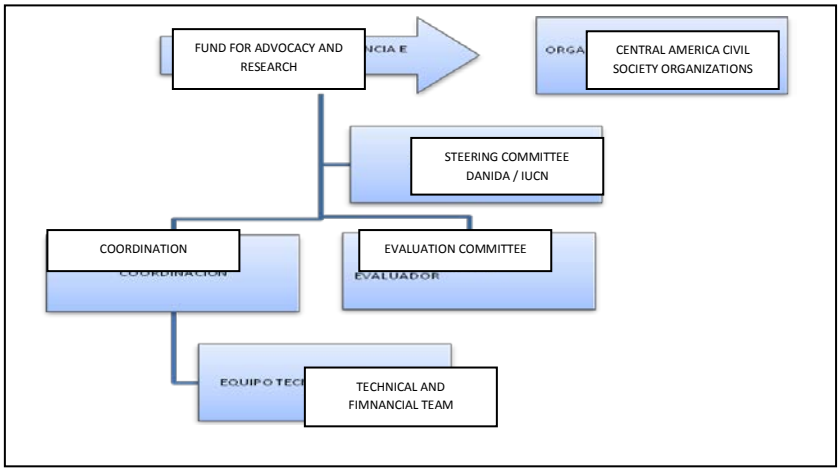
The winner and two honorable mentions are selected by a jury formed for this purpose. The award ceremony has been held in each country of Central America, starting out in Guatemala, in 2006, and culminating in Panama, in 2012, replicating the historic route of the Torch of Freedom 195 years ago as it was carried through the region to announce independence from Spain.

> On its journey, the modern-day Environmental Torch illuminated the path of sustainable development as exemplified by civil social organizations that have spearheaded advocacy processes and achieved the approval of policies or legislation benefitting the environment.
>
> The Environmental Torch represents harmonious fusion of society and nature and recognizes the merit of organizations able to carry out effective actions reflecting this balance.

The Fund designed instruments, guidelines and flexible, streamlined procedures that were continuously improved to ensure that organizations at any level could participate and learn in the process, without requiring a complicated internal administration to drain Fund resources for organizations and their projects.

This was accomplished through the **Fund Regulations** drafted by the IUCN technical team and approved by the Executive Committee. In response to a vision of continuous improvement, modifications were made throughout the six calls for entries. The Regulations laid out concepts of advocacy and research, conditions for participation, the operating structure and technical/ financial management of both the Fund and projects. These were complemented by other instruments for evaluating proposals, project monitoring and systematization and technical/financial supervision.

Another important element in the Fund's management was that decision-making tasks were divided up, with different specialized entities or bodies to exercise control and follow-up on decisions (Steering Committee, Evaluation Committee and Technical Team). The organizational chart in figure 2 shows how tasks were divided.



The Fund regulations govern these entities and their scope and limitations based on the principles underlying democratic decision-making: transparency, clearly defined jurisdictions and technical, financial and strategic capacity to make decisions.

All of the IUCN-ORMA thematic units supported technical evaluation as referents in specific themes and in evaluating proposals.

Figure 2

Steering Committee. Provided strategic orientation for the Fund; comprised of one IUCN representative and one from the Royal Embassy of Denmark

Evaluation Committee. Strategic evaluation of proposals to be financed and project selection; composed of:

- The Chair of the IUCN Mesoamerican Members Committee
- 1 representative of:
    - Organized private sector at the regional scale
    - The Royal Embassy of Denmark in the region
    - The Central American Commission on Environment and Development
    - Regional civil society organization
    - Other Fund donor agencies

Coordination. Consisted of a coordinator and technical/financial team (Fund officer, monitoring and evaluation officer, and financial officer), responsible for technical/financial evaluation of proposals and Fund operation

Description of Procedures

Call for Proposals

The principle of democratic access was applied from the moment of the call for proposals, which was publicized through announcements in the written press of each Central American country, in e-mails sent out using a database of civil society organizations and on the IUCN web page. Proposals were received under equal conditions and in strict compliance with all requirements, including formats, time and place.

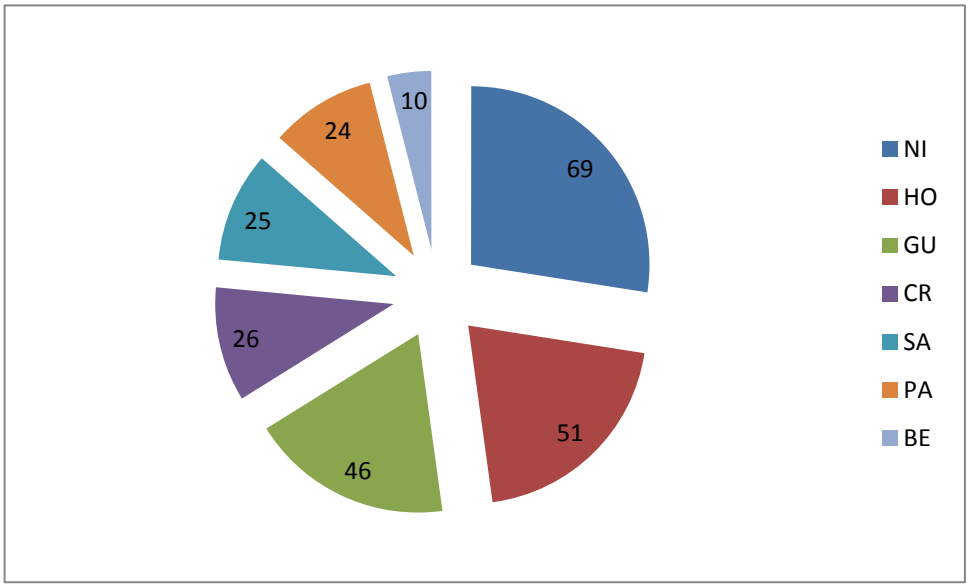
Technical Assistance

Assistance was provided at different stages, starting with the call for proposals when a period of technical assistance was opened. Organizations could choose assistance by phone or email or attend sessions offered for two days in each country for methodology consultations given on an individual basis for each organization. This helped entities strengthen their proposal capacities and provided opportunity to formulate technically and financially viable proposals complying with the regulations.

A second stage of assistance occurred at project start-up to provide orientation and explain required administrative procedures. These sessions were also used for training and sharing of experiences between Fund beneficiaries.

Technical assistance was continuously available to the organizations, either at their express request or because the technical team detected limitations in project execution or in monitoring sessions the organizations attended during the implementation of their project.

Assistance in Formulating Advocacy Projects, by Country



Evaluation and Selection of Proposals

Once again, transparency was applied through the use of independent technical and political/strategic evaluation. Technical and financial evaluation was performed by the IUCN technical team, supported by instruments available to the public. The Evaluation Committee responsible for political/strategic evaluation was comprised of individuals outside the IUCN from different sectors. This was a democratic decision-making process using inputs from the technical team, but with its own agendas of deliberation to choose projects: geographic balance, reading of the regional context, political circumstances and the strategic importance of the theme, and other factors.

Selection Criteria

According to Fund regulations, eligibility requirements included at least three years of existence, legal identity and accounting systems. The basic criteria for proposals was contained in the evaluation form accessible to the public on the web page, and described in graphic 4:

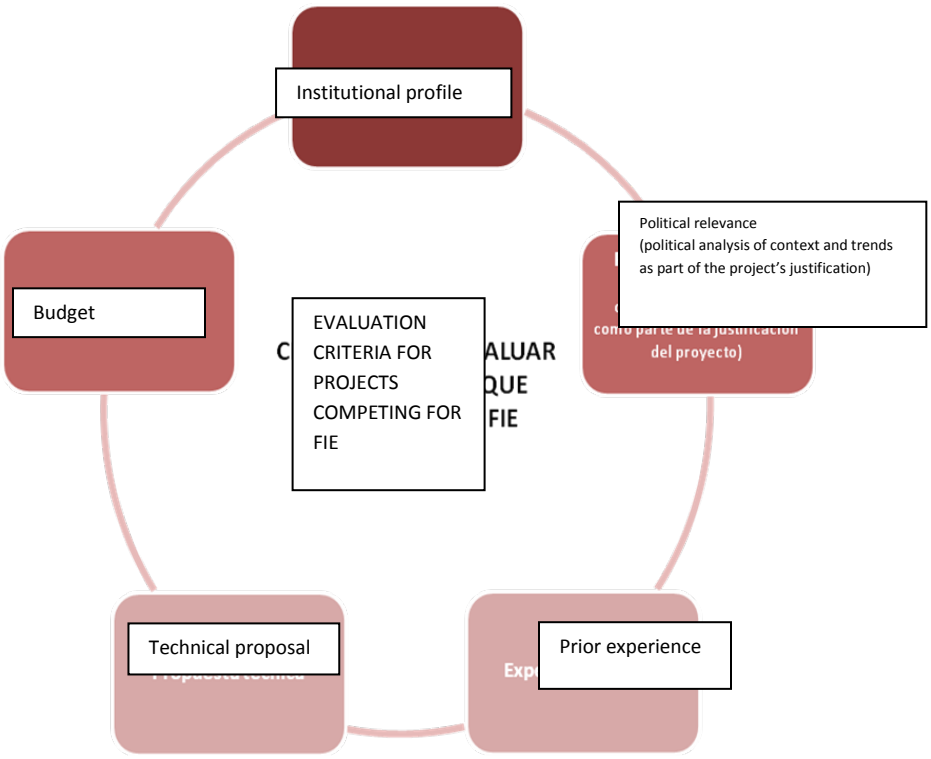


Gráfico 4 poner concursan para el fie al centro

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring[1] and evaluation started from the moment the agreement was signed to provide organizations with technical follow-up and support to reach their goals and results, as well as evaluate results and impacts at the project's end. This was done through periodic visits (generally one midway and the other at the end), written reports and follow-up by email or phone.

Systematization

Systematization was done alongside monitoring and evaluation, and completed when a project finalized. It includes a compilation of results and impacts, methodologies and positive and negative aspects that took place. Systematization also assessed the organization's execution capacity and fulfillment of commitments. Monitoring and systematization were interdependent processes inasmuch as monitoring information was a fundamental input for systematization.

[1] "This is conceived as an ongoing function that facilitates timely indications to those coordinating actions or projects underway about advances, setbacks and constraints to achieving the proposed objectives and results." Taken from the Project Monitoring Guide.

During the project period, six systematizations were done in crosscutting themes such as strengthening of the organizations' political advocacy, success factors, impact on environmental legislation and the sustainability of the advocacy processes.

Support to Strategic Themes

- *The FIE's operating and decision structure facilitated attention to a wide range of beneficiaries and growing demand for funding.*
- *683 proposals were evaluated (including 55 for urgent advocacy and 628 thematic proposals).*

Because of the complexity and strategic importance of themes such as water resources, Indigenous rights, women's participation, risk management and climate change, these areas warranted more prolonged backing to provide continuity for processes and were supported on more than one occasion. Thirty-one percent of the organizations received financing for more than one project.

6

SUCCESS FACTORS AND LESSONS

1. In Strategy and Operation

Transparent and Democratic Management of the Fund

For the social organizations this represented a guaranteed access to resources under equal conditions, and for its sponsors and the States involved, a factor generating trust and legitimacy for the FIE. It was demonstrated that capacity existed to manage competitive funding from the regional scale toward local-level implementation, with transparency, efficiency and effectiveness.

The vision that small and medium local organizations are unable to carry out advocacy with tangible results was utterly disproved. Through the processes and institutional configuration designed by the IUCN, it was demonstrated that carrying out local sustainable actions at the community scale and in work with civil society is indeed possible. Important challenges such as organizational and management capacity, availability of technology, accountability and linkage among actors and sectors were addressed successfully.

Combination of Resources and Strategies

The strategy of working under different mechanisms that complement and promote one another proved effective. Environmental policy advocacy involved:

- Incorporating and facilitating environmental agendas in platforms and sectors
- Generating dynamizing processes in strategic themes
- Fostering dialogue and generation of knowledge from and toward actors in the processes
- Providing technical and economic resources to strengthen capacities and conditions

In addition, the project worked simultaneously with a broad base of beneficiaries and alliances to influence regional environmental policy, including government institutions, key authorities, organizations, communities, social groups, private sectors and networks.

The right of individuals and communities to a healthy and sustainable environment can be nurtured through innovative mechanisms that incorporate economic sectors not traditionally connected with environment.

Alliances to Create Social Force

- Working with new sectors and actors and a critical mass of organizations broadens the spectrum of IUCN's action and the development of new work strategies

- Alliance with members and key actors in the region lends sustainability to the processes and facilitates work from the regional to the national and vice versa.

- Working with a broad base and nontraditional sectors generated mutual, on-the-ground learning about advocacy.

- Trust and respect for sectoral, institutional and organizational leaders, and recognition of the leading role civil society organizations play in negotiating environmental policy, facilitated dialogue, alliances, commitment and compliance with agreements.

Accompaniment

IUCN's accompaniment of institutions and sectors turned out to be very effective in ensuring the sustainability and leadership of the projects undertaken.

- **Political accompaniment:** Links sectors; helps reach consensus, alliances and agreement; energizes sectors' internal forces so that plans and agreements can be concretized; interconnects private business and the public sector
- **Technical accompaniment:** Supports sectors to design agendas; provides inputs; carries out knowledge management and strengthens leaderships
- **Reputational accompaniment**: Recognition of IUCN's global prestige and credibility facilitated negotiations with donors, advocacy with governments, accompaniment of organizations and public-impact actions.

Knowledge Management

Conceptualizing knowledge management and tools for communicating and transmitting knowledge as a crosscutting work theme from the start, was clearly the right decision.

The use of different means to generate and disseminate knowledge (Eco-book virtual network, publications, exchanges and videos) enabled organizations and citizens to access knowledge. This helped generate new wealth in the social and cultural capital of the Central American countries.

Communication and Dialogue

Trusting in social capacities for dialogue, and generating spaces so this could be done, reinforced trust and enabled agreement among very diverse social sectors.

Fostering dialogue (not a discussion) based on respect, listening, consideration of others' needs and mutual trust, and with people's wellbeing and protection of the resources that sustain life as the point of encounter, eased the way to agreements and common agendas.

2. Theory and Practice of Political Advocacy

Conditions for Advocacy by Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Environmental Policy

The experience generated in advocacy by the organizations pointed to certain basic conditions for operationalizing environmental public policies:

- ✓ Political will strategically oriented from a perspective of environmental sustainability
- ✓ Preparation of a technically and politically viable proposal constructed with the actors who actually experience the problem in their own lives and those involved in its solution
- ✓ Generation of a culture of technically- and politically-targeted participation to carry out the public policy in practice and give it social sustainability
- ✓ Institutional structure to provide follow-up and feedback on the policy and provide resources needed for its functioning

These four conditions are created through advocacy by civil society when linked with the populations and official bodies of local and national governments. In this way, proposals are institutionally sanctioned by the State and local governments, which create rules of the game to make them sustainable; contribute technical, financial and material resources for large works and programs; and finally, guide public policy over time. The CSOs in turn contribute strategic vision, capacity of technical construction, linkage of key actors, dynamizing of citizen participation in the solution of problems and generation of a environmental-political culture to give processes sustainability.

Advocacy Strategies of CSOs

Civil society participation in environmental policy is possible through the facilitation of dialogue, information and access to technical and economic resources.

To influence decisions, the organizations learned by carrying out projects in which they were required to do more than demand. Such advocacy involved study, making a proposal, raising awareness in different sectors, and above all, bringing in the community or population. A combination of technical and economic resources is needed to make this happen.

Another lesson was that it is precisely when the technical and the participatory come together that negotiation with the State becomes possible, but that this has its own possibilities and limitations. These resources make it possible to negotiate, just as long as

strong economic and political interests aren't touched upon. But when there are significant economic interests at play, advocacy and the organization require greater power resources. In addition to negotiating and lobbying, communication work is essential to get legislation implemented, along with coordinating and sensitizing key authorities, and building relations and networks to obtain power resources and influence the sustainability of the processes.

For a project's results to be sustainable, it is important to create a political-technical body that links civil society with public institutions in the sector and makes the expected results viable once the project ends. External factors involve a strategy for managing results and a communication strategy to keep the theme visible in important sectors, among the general population and in public agencies of the sector.

Along with negotiation, lobbying and communication, there is the cultural work without which the legislation generated fails to function. This is the only way to take advantage of all the work that has been done and of existing laws and interinstitutional coordination. In this sense, not only is it necessary to work with populations, but also with officials in government institutions, in order to foster new alliances and strengthen the themes and interests of civil society in environmental conservation.

So that organizations politically influence in a strategic way, it was also necessary to provide resources, the guide on formulating in proposals, technical assistance at different phases of the project and the learning resources fostered through sharing experiences and training. Along with this, knowledge and information from research were key inputs for the organizations' participation in decision-making or in actions aimed at constructing a media agenda or influencing public opinion. Introducing this scientific element in advocacy on environmental management in the region gave the CSOs a powerful instrument for participation.

The Fund generated a capacity-building dynamic from the moment projects were formulated. These projects were formally prepared, with clear objectives, products and results, and methodologies and actions targeted at achieving those results, manifested as management, negotiation, communication, awareness-raising and training strategies built on technical knowledge. They also had resources to sustain the process for 12 to 24 months. These elements generate beneficial effects allowing CSOs to have greater presence and empowerment in political scenarios where decisions affecting Central American environmental development are made.

To obtain sustainable results in advocacy processes there must be constancy and systematic work. Projects are thus more effective if organizations insert them in a longer-term process. Otherwise, if a project is a specific contribution unconnected to processes of greater scope, its effects will be marked by the immediate space and time.

Creation of Social Base: Empowerment and Participation of Social Organizations and Economic Sectors

In environmental advocacy it is essential to have and rely on a base of social support, and the broader the base, the better the results. Laws and ordinances generate an institutional umbrella, but do not create the culture and technical capacity for public policy to operate and be sustainable.

One advocacy strategy used was to empower populations and create mechanisms and spaces from which citizens could become familiar with and make themselves heard in different entities. The organizations created legal and organizational conditions and relations between institutions and communities that enabled participation and decision-making favorable to environment.

CSOs' leadership in policymaking should be recognized. They work by generating problem-solving visions that are environmentally sustainable and within these visions, by facilitating processes that develop and strengthen participatory structures, technical and operational capacities and the social culture for laws and policies to materialize in the practical life of communities. They can do that precisely because of their positioning in society: near populations and knowledgeable about communities' interests and needs; due to their very mission and vision, interested in promoting citizen participation in a real solution of environmental problems and with the technical and human capital to know the context, causes and factors involved in problems and generate technically and politically viable solutions.

It is also important to recognize the role of the sectors as social and economic dynamizers with great potential to help reduce poverty, protect resources and decrease the environmental impact of their productive and commercial activities. For this, public-private partnerships have proven to be a potential mechanism.

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Revista Pilares 2012- IUCN

El siguiente texto ira al pie de las fotos:

Foto del Río y gente: Central American communities are highly dependent on rivers for their economic and day-to-day activities, raising serious conservation challenges. These are tackled through projects to create local protection policies and increase awareness about the importance of water resources and present and future threats.

Foto de jóvenes marchando. The youth group *Asociación Movimiento de Jóvenes de Ometepe* (AMOJO) organizes cultural and recycling activities to promote awareness and activism for resource conservation on Ometepe Island, Nicaragua.

Foto Mujeres indígenas. The disaster reduction organization *Coordinadora Local de mujeres para la Reducción de Desastres* (COLMRED), formed of women in the Guatemalan municipality of Huehuetenango, advocates with the mayor's office. They are supported by the women's collective, *Colectiva por la Defensa de las Mujeres* (CODEFEM).

Foto del cartel reciclando. The Salvadoran Association of Engineers and Architects is driving approval of an ordinance on comprehensive solid residue management in the Monte San Juan municipality.

Foto de la cascada. Fundación Parque Nacional Pico Bonito (Fupnapib) in La Ceiba, Honduras, successfully advocates for water resource protection through a land planning proposal for microwatersheds and an ordinance approved in 2012 by the municipal council.

AQAB´AL, an alliance of small and medium producers, represents an alternative for reducing poverty in economically depressed areas of the Central American region.