

## ***Public participation and public consultations In OAS-administered basin projects***

The OAS (Organization of American States) OSDE (Office for Sustainable Development and Environment) is committed to ensure broad participation of civil society in sustainable development. It understands that the decision-making process must be open, transparent, inclusive and that it is fundamental to achieve universal development goals such as good governance<sup>1</sup>.

Good governance is a concept that has been increasingly used in development literature: Governance is the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented (or not implemented). Good governance means that this process is participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective, efficient, equitable inclusive and that follows the rule of law. It assures that corruption is minimized, the views of affected groups are taken into account and that the voices of the most vulnerable in society are heard in decision-making. Good governance is also responsive to the present and future needs of society and the concepts of sustainable development. Lately major donors and international financial institutions have based their aid and loans on the condition that a country undertake reforms that ensure "good governance"

Public participation refers to all kinds of interactions between government and civil society, and includes the process by which these two dialogue, establish partnerships, share information, and interact in order to design, implement, and evaluate development policies and programs. Public participation is a key component of good governance. Participation can be either direct or indirect through legitimate intermediate institutions or representatives. Representative democracy does not necessarily mean that the concerns of the most vulnerable in society would be taken into consideration in decision making. Hence, mechanisms of participation are needed to fill this void and ensure the active involvement of the population in policy-making. Participation has to be informed and organized. This means freedom of association and expression on one hand, and an organized civil society on the other<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Principle 10 of the 1992 Rio Declaration states that "environmental issues are best handled with the participation of all concerned citizens at the relevant level." In Agenda 21, the plan of action accompanying the Rio Declaration, governments pledged to pursue broader public participation in decision-making processes and policy formulation for sustainable development, understood as development that meets our present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Human Settlements, in: <http://www.unescap.org/huset/gg/governance.htm>

In order to achieve these development goals, The OAS Democratic Charter, declaration and statement for the member states, establishes the public participation as a key issue for the development of the countries and the strengthening of democracy: Article one says that *“The peoples of the Americas have a right to democracy and their governments have an obligation to promote and defend it. Democracy is essential for the social, political, and economic development of the peoples of the Americas”*. Along these lines Article 6 declares that *“it is the right and responsibility of all citizens to participate in decisions relating to their own development. This is also a necessary condition for the full and effective exercise of democracy. Promoting and fostering diverse forms of participation strengthens democracy”*. The OAS, thus, seeks to strengthen both the governance and the participation of the population in the American countries.

In addition, the democratic charter is also concerned about environmental issues, declaring in article 15 that *“The exercise of democracy promotes the preservation and good stewardship of the environment. It is essential that the states of the Hemisphere implement policies and strategies to protect the environment, including application of various treaties and conventions, to achieve sustainable development for the benefit of future generations”*.

Following these statements from the Democratic Charter, it can be concluded that public participation in environmental issues is not just a right of the people, but also a duty that the OAS is willing to implement through its projects and initiatives. The key challenge for OSDE is to stimulate and ensure the participation of local communities in the formulation and implementation stages of the projects,

Along these lines the OAS/OSDE, in partnership with participating member states, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Global Environment Facility (GEF), and local representatives is supporting the implementation of participatory and decentralized projects for the integrated management of water resources in the transboundary river basins in the Americas. Following, the purpose of this brief paper is to highlight some of the lessons learned from public participation, especially with the consultation process, in some of the OAS/OSDE water management projects such as Bermejo River Binational Basin Project, Guarani Aquifer System, San Francisco River Basin Project, San Juan River Transboundary Basin Project, and Pantanal Upper Paraguay River Basin Project. First, it will look at the structure of the public participation and consultation processes within the different projects. Second, it will describe which groups were consulted and how. Third, it will analyze what has happened with the consultations examining if it was an inclusive and representative process. Finally, some general conclusions will be formulated.

## **STRUCTURE OF THE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESSES**

- The public participation process represents a hallmark of San Francisco, Pantanal-Upper Paraguay, San Juan, Bermejo and Guarani River Basin Projects. A comprehensive approach and a wide range of modalities were used to achieve high levels of public involvement and commitment from basin stakeholders, including:
  - direct participation in the project design phase;
  - coordination and execution of demonstration projects and feasibility studies;
  - recruitment of local experts for the project activities;
  - organization of thematic events and technical meetings, education and training activities;
  - public consultations and validation of the Strategic Action Program (SAP) process;
  - dissemination of information and project results through video documentaries, printed material, and publications;
  - promotion of public-private and government-community dialogues and partnerships; and
  - establishment of permanent public participation mechanisms in the basins.

At the same time, the projects recognized the specific characteristics of the social, economic, and cultural groups in the basins, adopting different approaches to involve and promote their participation in the projects and in the management of the basin.

### **BERMEJO RIVER BINATIONAL BASIN PROJECT**

The Bermejo River Basin, located in southern South America, extends over 123,000 km<sup>2</sup>, originating in the Andes Mountains of Northwestern Argentina and southern Bolivia. The river, which flows for 1,300 Km, links the Andean Cordillera and the Paraguay Parana Rivers. This project, financed by the Global Environment facility (GEF), provides technical and financial assistance to the governments of Argentina and Bolivia to formulate and implement a Strategic Action Program (SAP) for the Binational Basin of the Bermejo River. The objective of the project is to promote sustainable development, and to help alleviate the main environmental problems affecting the basin, particularly the degradation of soil and water resources.



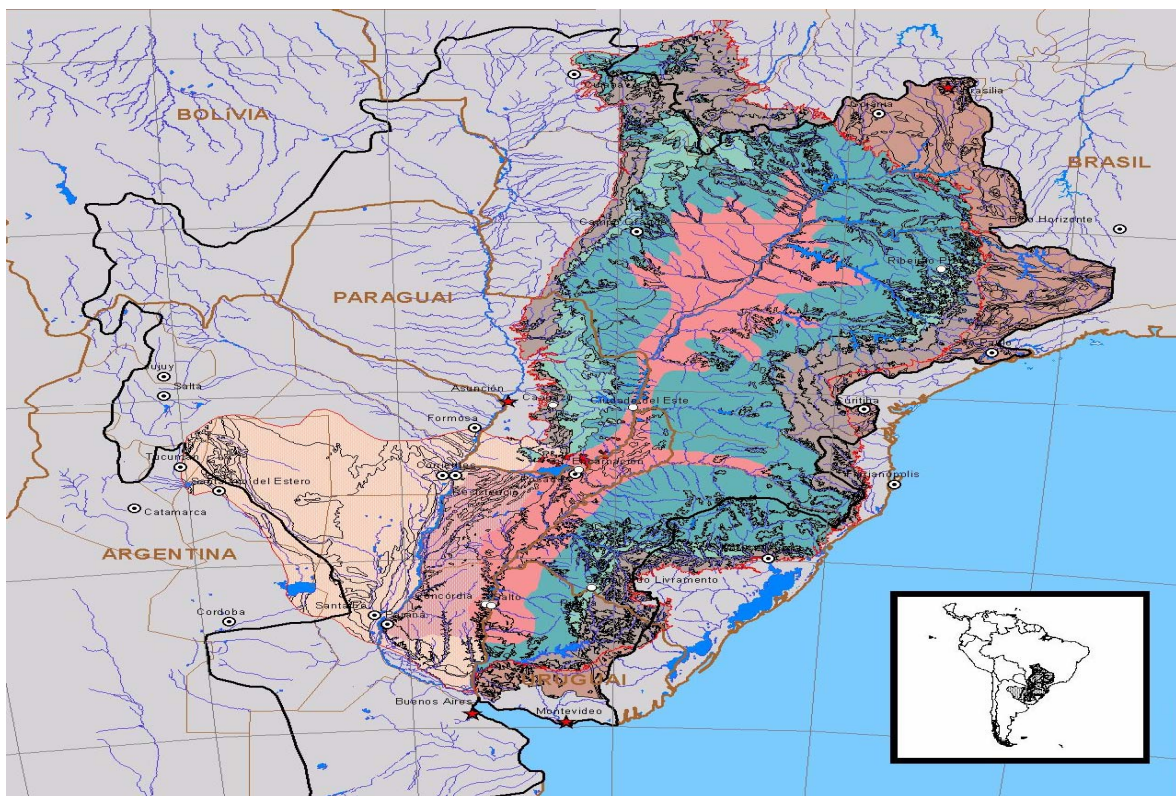
A great variety of public participation mechanisms were used during the SAP formulation phase. These included seminars and workshops, working groups, working meetings, modern communication media (email, mailing lists and the Internet), interviews with key individuals, surveys, meetings with institutions, and direct participation in pilot demonstration projects and community activities. The implementation of these mechanisms varied depending on the objective, the issues under consideration, and the context. They differed according to its application: defining priorities and proposals, validating results, demonstration projects, or public consultation on specific issues.

As an example, the third regional Workshop for the formulation of the SAP supported two forms of public consultation: Governmental and non governmental. The first consisted basically in the execution of a meeting with governmental authorities of the Provinces (Chaco, Formosa and Salta), in which they analyzed the possibilities to foster active participation of the Provinces of the Basin in the process of the SAP.

The second, promoted the "Representative Mechanism of Communication of the Rio Bermejo Basin NGOs". The outputs of the second workshop identified the main NGOs and emphasized the necessity of building a network to share the efforts and interests of the Bermejo Basin Stakeholders and NGOs. The recommendations led to the conformation of NGOs working groups meant to work together, and gather information useful to the project. Later it was found that this network did not follow the SAP recommendation, paying attention to individual issues. However, without the people's participation the formulation of the SAP can not be the same due to the importance of direct requests, comments, and expression of needs of the community living around the basin.

## **GUARANI AQUIFER SYSTEM**

The Guarani Aquifer System is perhaps the biggest underground water transboundary reservoir of fresh water on Earth, extending from the Sedimentaria River basin from Parana to the Chaco-Paranaense River basin. It is located in the center of South America, between 12° and 35° of South latitude and 47° and 65° of west longitude, underlying four countries: Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay. It has an approximated extension of 1.2 million of km<sup>2</sup>, of which 840,000 km<sup>2</sup> are in Brazil, 225,500 km<sup>2</sup> in territory of Argentina, 71,700 km<sup>2</sup> in Paraguay and 58,500 km<sup>2</sup> in Uruguay. The present population within the dominion of occurrence of the Water-bearing aquifer is considered to be around 15 million habitants.



The main objective of this project is to support Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay in the elaboration and joint implementation of a technical, legal and institutional model for the management and preservation of the Guarani Aquifer System (SAG). The Project seeks to support the four countries in the elaboration of an institutional, legal and technical frame in order to handle and preserve the SAG for the present and future generations. The project has seven components:

1. Expansion and consolidation of the present base of the scientific and technical knowledge about the SAG;

2. Development and joint instrumentation of a frame of management for the SAG, based on a Strategic Program of decided Action;
3. Fostering of the public participation and of the interested actors;
4. Evaluation and pursuit of the Project and dissemination of its results;
5. Development of measures for the management of underground waters and for the mitigation of damages;
6. of the potential for the use of the geothermal energy of the SAG; and
7. Coordination and management of the Project.

Different levels of participation and public consultations took place during the project. Among some agencies involved were the Superior Council of Direction of Project conformed by three representatives by country of the areas of Environment, Hydric Resources and Outer Relations; the "Colegiada Coordination" conformed by the National Coordinators in the countries involved in the Project (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay); the National Units of Execution of Project (UNEP) of each one of the countries.

### ***SAN FRANCISCO RIVER BASIN***

The San Francisco River Basin (SFRB) extends over approximately 640,000 km<sup>2</sup>, area comparable to the drainage basins of the Colorado or Columbia rivers in North America, and discharges across the North East Brazil Shelf to the Southwest Atlantic Large Marine Ecosystem (LME) and Brazil Current. The river covers a large portion of the area known as the "Drought Polygon of Brazil", traversing climatic zones ranging from humid to arid, and flowing through five states in Northeastern Brazil (the States of Alagoas, Bahia, Minas Gerais, Pernambuco, and Sergipe, plus the Federal District and State of Goias at the headwaters of tributary streams). Land-based activities in these states includes mining, agricultural, urban and industrial industries, delivering contaminants to the river and hence to the coastal zone.



Figura 1. Localização da Bacia do rio São Francisco

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The basin is divided into the upper, middle, lower middle, and lower sub-basins, plus the oceanic end point, each with distinct environmental and socioeconomic characteristics. The estuarine wetlands located at the South West Atlantic form a particularly important and environmentally sensitive habitat. The ecological structure and function of this habitat, as well as its physical integrity, are currently under threat due to unsustainable hydrological management and land use practices within the basin. Some 13 million people are resident in this basin, principally concentrated in the upper sub-basin. The primary objective of this project is to conduct planning and feasibility studies required to formulate a Watershed Management Program (WMP) that will promote environmentally sustainable development of the basin as a means of managing environmental degradation of the coastal zone. The WMP will include the identification and implementation of appropriate economic instruments required to incorporate land-based environmental concerns affecting the coastal zone in order to develop future policies, plans and programs.

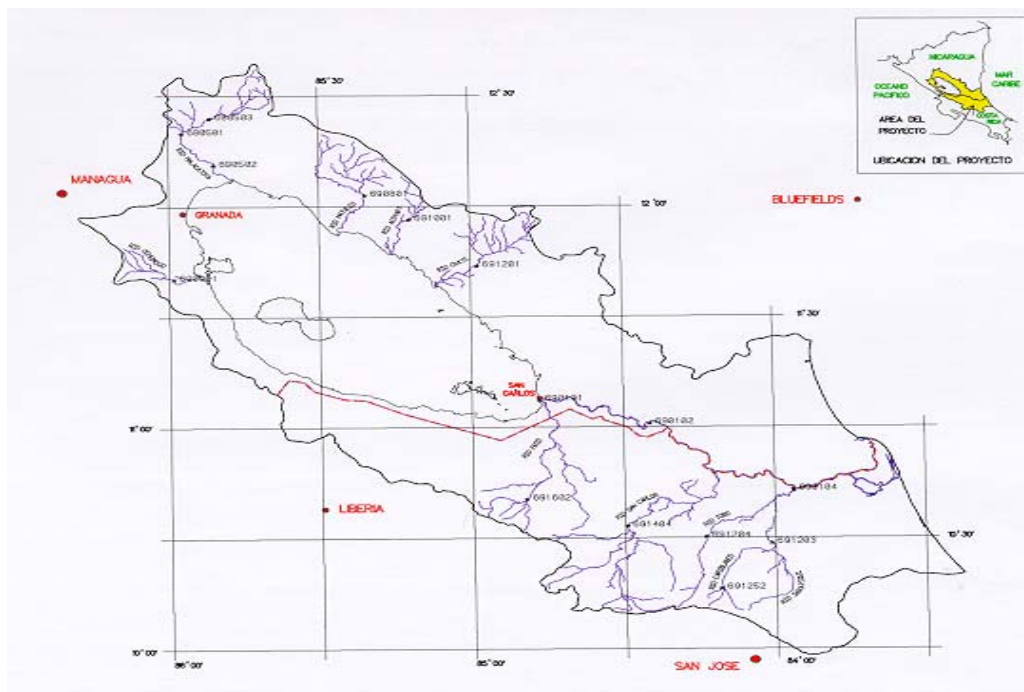
The **San Francisco** project supported the establishment of the San Francisco River Basin Committee<sup>3</sup> (CBH-SF), a participative organism that promotes public participation and helped involve the community and civil

<sup>3</sup> Federal law 4331/97 created the National Policy on Water Resources and established public institutions such as basin committees for the insurance of water rights and implementation for water use payment systems.

society groups to the basin legislation. In addition, it allows a permanent mechanism for public participation in the Basin. The CBH-SF, charged under the National Policy on Water Resources (NPRW) with regulating water rights and water charges, currently represents the concerns and expectations of 503 municipalities in seven states having an approximate population of 13.3 million people.

## SAN JUAN

The **San Juan** River Basin project area covers some 38,500 km<sup>2</sup> in the basin itself, plus its associated coastal zone on the Caribbean Sea. Of the land area, 64% is in southern Nicaragua and 36% in northern Costa Rica. The planning area covers the sub basins of Lake Nicaragua and of the San Juan River, plus four smaller sub basins with natural links to this system, the Indio and Maiz river basins in Nicaragua and the Colorado and Tortuguero river basins in Costa Rica. The project recognizes the need to promote and strengthen civil society, increase participation of women, and involve more people in making decisions on the sustainable development of the region.



An initial evaluation of the situation highlighted the need to define common objectives in the management of natural resources, and to reach agreements on the access to and use of water resources. The main objective of the Strategic Action Plan (SAP) is to ensure that water resource goods and services are available to satisfy



present and future needs. It also seeks to guarantee the conservation of as agreed by all the parties involved. Proposed activities for the formulation of the SAP rely on the findings of the Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA) that was carried out during preparation of the Project Brief.

Workshops and face-to-face consultations enabled the multidisciplinary project team to collect the stakeholders' thoughts, ideas, and perceptions on water-related issues in the Basin for inclusion in the Transboundary Diagnosis Analysis (TDA). These initial findings were presented to the stakeholders as the basis for a dialogue on the main water-related issues, their root causes, and identification of the causal chain linking the stakeholders' concerns to the regulatory, social, and natural environment of the Basin. These presentations moved through a series of iterations to integrate stakeholders' perceptions and knowledge into the TDA, and, in turn, to provide the stakeholders with scientific data and analytical results to assist them in refining their discussions.

A Steering Committee was established for the project, composed by the ministers of MINAE (Costa Rica) and MARENA (Nicaragua), a representative of each country's Foreign Ministry, representatives of associations of municipalities, the Director of OSDE/OAS, the Director of the Division of Environmental Information Assessment and Early Warning of UNEP, and the project's two national directors. A Consultative Committee was set up in each country as well, including national institutions involved in the management of the SJRB, private organizations taking part in the project and academic institutions. Its role was to promote the active participation of the institutions and to advise on the orientations of the project. It was co-chaired by the national directors and was also very important as a mechanism for the coordination of national actions.

Binational coordination was promoted at various levels and through the exchange of information. Six binational workshops are planned for the next three years in order to make progress on the studies and the preparation of the SAP.

More than 100 institutions, government agencies, and civil society organizations took part in preparing the SAP, contributing with their experience and knowledge in order to identify the elements needed to formulate, validate and identify the strategy for the formulation of the San Juan SAP. In addition, more than 40 technical proposals, pilot project proposals, and recommendations for action were received. Studies carried out by consultants and technical reports and other government documentation from both countries constituted important sources as well. Share of information was thus an important element in the process of complementing the Diagnostic Study of the San Juan River Basin and Guidelines for a Plan of Action, and to discover any gaps in knowledge and understanding of current emerging transboundary environmental problems.

In addition to the public participation, fourteen consultants worked on this proposal, four from Costa Rica, five from Nicaragua, and five from other countries. The proposal is consistent with the environmental policies of Costa Rica and Nicaragua. Both MINAE and MARENA were regularly consulted. Two meetings with the operating agencies were organized, to open the doors of the project even wider and to make it a catalyst for generating other sources of financing for activities identified as priorities for the sustainable development of the SJRB. They proved very useful not only to learn about current and planned activities, but also in seeking mechanisms for coordination.

### ***PANTANAL UPPER PARAGUAY RIVER BASIN PROJECT***

The Upper Paraguay River Basin is a 496,000 km<sup>2</sup> transboundary river basin shared by Brazil, Bolivia, and Paraguay. The Basin is one of the main components of the Plata Basin System, which drains almost 20 percent of the South American continent. 396,000km<sup>2</sup> of UPRB are located in the States of Mato Grosso and Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil, two interdependent ecosystems: upper sub-basin (or Rim) (256,000km<sup>2</sup>) and lower sub-basin (or Pantanal) (140,000km<sup>2</sup>).

The Integrated Watershed Management Practices for the Pantanal and Upper Paraguay River Basin project is being developed to assist the Government of Brazil in the implementation of a comprehensive and detailed watershed management program for the Pantanal and Upper Paraguay River Basin. The project activities seek to enhance and restore the environmental functioning of the system, provide protection to endemic species within the wetland, and implement strategic activities to address the root causes of degradation.



The project in the **Pantanal-Upper Paraguay**, seeks to organize and empower local fisherman communities, and promote the recognition of the professional category of the live bait collectors. Approximately 100 families were involved in the process. Their participation focused in the re-formulation of the State Law regulating capture and transport of live baits in the State of Mato Grosso do Sul. The project seeks to ensure their representation as members of the State Fishing Council as well. The project was also catalytic in promoting the involvement of NGOs in the execution of some of the key project activities related to eco-regional planning, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable tourism. As an example, the NGO Foundation Ecotropica coordinated and executed the Program of Management for the Development of Zone-drain Plug in the Neighborhoods of the National Reserves of Acurizal, Penha and Dorochê - TM.

### **Who and how was consulted?**

In the first stage of the **Bermejo Project** 12 workshops were held, 4 en Argentina and 8 in Bolivia for a total of 1.069 participants. 80 consultants and experts were involved plus 260 specialists. In the second stage of the SAP formulation 18 workshops were held with the participation of 914 stakeholders, along with the participation of 774 representatives of peasants' communities. Bermejo can be considered as an inclusive project, having involved a big portion of the community, not only in workshops and meetings, but also in educational programs. However, every pilot project was different, causing that the number of participants varied depending on the topic of the workshop or the meeting. (See table 1)

In the particular case of the Projects Pilots during the **Guarani Project**, Local Commissions have been constituted. Launching and planning meetings for the pilot of Ribeirao Preto had a participation of 500 people. The most recent meeting occurred in between the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> of November 2004 in Concordia, Argentina.

In the case of **San Francisco**, a total of 217 public events, involving the participation of 190 consultants, 1.248 collaborators, 12.097 citizens and interested parties, representing a total of 404 federal, state, and municipal institutions, NGOs, and the private sector, integrated the DAB/SAP process. As the process was held in parallel with the establishment of the Basin Committee and the definition of its rules of operation, election procedures, and composition, the project contributed to and benefited from the studies held in order to identify all basin actors and mobilize them for the process leading to the inauguration of the Basin Committee and the election of its members.

Regarding the **San Juan project**, during the SAP-formulation phase alone, 4 Binational and 10 national workshops (5 in each country) were held with an average attendance of 60 participants. In addition, 3

technical workshops/seminars were held with the participation of experts and scientists from the universities and institutions responsible for the execution of the basic studies from all over Central America, and in collaboration with key regional organizations such as the Regional Committee on Water Resources (CRRH). Several workshops, festivals and meetings were held. About 200 people participated in the diagnostic on gender over 61 events, including workshops, meetings and interviews.

In the **Pantanal project**, the public participation process involved, beside the government sector at all levels, the private sector (mainly tourism, fish, cattle and agriculture production) represented by 45 private companies and a total of 66 NGOs. The project also worked with indigenous and local communities. The project made special efforts to capture the interest and involvement of local indigenous communities, by promoting innovative environmental education programs based on local mythology and knowledge. The Upper Paraguay project has made exceptional efforts to capture the interest and participation of local (particularly indigenous) communities in order to understand how their own actions could worsen or lessen environmental damage.

The project supported the indigenous people of the Ishua Island in creating means of alternative income related to the ethno and eco-tourism, such as revitalizing traditional handicrafts – basket weaving – and encouraging the local indigenous groups to retain their cultural distinctions. In order to reach and involve local basin communities, the project closely collaborated with NGO's active in the basin, such as Ecotropica, TNC, AMEC, ECOA, and the Rios Vivos Coalition. As part of the public participation strategy, the Pantanal project promoted and held 116 public events with 4,533 participants, representing a total of 258 organizations and institutions.

## **What has happened with the consultations?**

### **Have they been Inclusive and Representative?**

In the **Bermejo River Project**, the consultation processes were useful to make it sustainable. The execution of Transboundary Diagnosis Studies objectives, methodology and work scale generated a new dialogue and integration between institutions and specialists regarding concrete works, which were essential by the way to achieve objectives. These processes were important to increase the sense of belonging in the basin. The final SAP product was the result of a wide participation and negotiation process with the authorities and users of the basin. In Bolivia, the process began with an initial workshop Seminar (July 1997) with the participation of the municipalities of the upper basin, local political institutions and local universities. This was followed by a regional workshop (may 1998) with the participation of stakeholders (governmental institutions, private sector, Universities, NGOs, Municipalities and baselines organizations) in which the objectives and scope of each work element, and the overall proposed SAP formulation process were presented and discussed. Albeit only a moderate reaction was obtained, the comments and recommendations were included as part of the

workshop conclusions, which were subsequently distributed among different institutions, together with a request for information on project ideas and proposals for the sustainable development of the binational basin.

In Argentina, the formulation phase included an initial workshop Seminar (December 1997) with the participation of local authorities, representatives of five Universities located in the Provinces of the Basin, the local institutions, and NGOs. Recommendations of this event were disseminated and its implementation was followed up. A second workshop (May 1998) was conducted to intensify a dialogue with all active NGOs in the Basin, helping to establish a permanent communication and participation mechanism with the SAP. In all cases documentation related to the SAP was distributed among participants. A third workshop (November 1998) focused on analyzing and summarizing the environmental concerns of the basin, mainly on their transboundary components. Additionally, a communication system by means of modern tools such as internet and e-mail was continuously used to share information among the different stakeholders of the basin.

Public participation varied depending on the objective, the issue involved, and the context of the program under consideration. Erosion control Studies of the Santa Ana and Camacho Rivers and Baritu-Tariquia Biological corridor implied an intense participation process of stakeholders including explanation, validation, pools, field works, interviews, inter-institutional coordination workshops and meetings.

In general, the interaction with local stakeholders generated important feedback information, which was included and/or adapted into the specific objectives and implementation plan of different work program elements, increasing their possibility to succeed. For example, in the Environmental Education Project component, actions of governmental authorities (provincial and municipal) and educational institutions were put together with inputs coming from agricultural stakeholders so as to develop a program for the sustainable use of native vegetation.

In the **Guarani Project**, the realization was very inclusive just from the beginning with the creation of the UNEP (National Units for the project's preparation), as well as in the formulation stage where it was possible to discuss the project with more than 200 institutions within the four countries. Within the areas where the consultations were made, the UNEP tried to include these needs into the pilot project, and to give it the factual solution that is needed. It is important to point out the effort made to constitute the "Fondo de Universidades" (University's Fund) and "Fondo de Ciudadanias" (Citizens Fund) that are mechanisms created to collect the people's initiatives and to make them happen. The Universities Fund has about 68 projects in revision, and the citizens' has 22 approved projects. In addition, the web page has a link that has the questions for the people interested in the project, so they can be reached for any person that is interested on them.

The community and the citizens interested can also be in permanent contact with the project through the “Comisiones Locales de Apoyo en los Pilotos” (local commissions to support the pilots), the UNEPs, and other National coordinators.

The **San Francisco** Project entailed ample involvement of society, with strong participation of the general public from the outset of the 29 activities. The results of this process culminated in the formulation of the Diagnostic Analysis of the San Francisco River Basin and its Coastal Zone (DAB), reaching its peak with the preparation of the Strategic Action Program for Integrated Management of the San Francisco Basin and its Coastal Zone (SAP). In preparing the SAP, an effort was made to encompass all of the integrated management activities focused on the San Francisco River Basin and its coastal zone. A process of consultation was launched to entail broad stakeholder participation, similar to that employed in the formulation of the DAB. Five sub-regional meetings were held in August-September 2003, including workshops in Brasilia, Belo Horizonte, Aracaju, Petrolina, and Barreiras. These venues correspond to the Upper, Lower, Lower-middle and Middle physiographic regions of the San Francisco River Basin, respectively. In addition, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Plenary Meeting of the CBH-SF took place in Penedo (AL), from 1 to 3 October 2003. Two further meetings were held by the Plans and Programs Work Group (GT-CBHSF), created by the CBHSF as a counterpart to the effort made by the GEF/ANA/UNEP/OAS during the SAP preparation process.

It is worth noting that the percentage participation by private entities, including both NGOs and private companies, increased from 36% in the DAB to 51% during the SAP process, demonstrating that such participation was significantly stronger in the second stage of the San Francisco project. This suggests that there was greater interest displayed by these entities during the phase of formulating actions than during the diagnostic phase.

The consultations and other modalities of public participation have allowed the design, planning, and execution of the projects, including coming back to basin stakeholders, communities, and institutions with the final project results. In the San Francisco Basin, the process leading to the establishment of the Basin Committee involved the organization and holding of 66 events and the mobilization of 6,600 basin stakeholders leading to a more committed and informed participation in the decentralization process. In the case of San Francisco, the project also triggered the establishment of a permanent collegiate body of consultative, deliberative and normative nature, composing the National System for Management of Water Resources and attached to the National Council for Water Resources. The San Francisco Basin Committee is composed by 60 members, which represent the Union, the Basin States and the Federal District, the municipalities, water users, and civil society organizations. Among its attributions are: to promote and debate

the matters related to water resources; to arbitrate, in first administrative instance, the conflicts related to water resources; to approve the Water Resources Plan for the Basin and follow its execution, to establish the mechanisms of water charges, to establish criteria and proceed to the parceling of costs for multiple use works of common or collective interest, to develop and support initiatives in environmental education. After its inauguration in December 2002, the Committee closely followed the preparation of the Basin Diagnostic Analysis and the formulation of the SAP through a special CBH-SF Work Group.

The public consultations were convened by the newly established Basin Committee and held in all the geographic regions of the basin. A specific workgroup within the Basin Committee, along with the team of SAP consultants, was in charge of incorporating public comments into the process, which culminated with the validation of the SAP at a Basin Committee Plenary Session. The consultations helped organize the basin actors leading to the constitution of committees in charge of taking into account all the stakeholders experiences, and thus leading to a more committed and informed participation in the decentralization of the basin management process.

In the San Francisco Basin, besides the Basin Committee, the project supported the implementation of Citizen-management Committees and User Councils, such as: Jazigo Reservoir Council, Pontal Creek Perennial System Water User Council, Salitre River Basin Users Association, as well as formulated a proposal for the Maranhão River Basin Agency and recommendations for strengthening the Para River Basin Committee.

At the same time, the public participation helped identify the main causes of environmental degradation, by asking the people living in the basins what their real needs were, achieving to formulate diagnosis and to educate the people for a sustainable and integrated water resources management, pointing towards long-term sustainability and efficacy of the public policies.

Public participation during the SAP in **San Juan** River Basin Project formulation phase advanced to a level of more direct involvement. Demonstration projects and baseline studies were carried out by universities, research institutes, NGOs, local governments, and governmental institutions. These organizations, in turn, signed letters of agreement and established other legal-administrative instruments with collaborating institutions and beneficiary organizations. About 221 institutions were registered as being directly involved in the execution of these activities, 97 of which were governmental, 29 non-governmental, 22 international organizations, 14 academic/research institutions, 3 cooperatives, 14 grass-root organizations, 14 private companies, 20 local governments and 8 media organizations. About 340 individuals, including government

officials, scientists, water experts, consultants, and members of the community have been directly involved in the execution of the Project. Forty legal-administrative instruments have been signed establishing the basis for the institutional arrangements for the execution of the SAP, as well as strategic alliances within the national territories and across the international border (24 memorandums of understanding, 12 letters of understanding, and 4 cooperation agreements).

The transfer of the responsibility among institutions, organizations, and communities to the local institutions has allowed a more effective “ownership” of the process and has empowered the participation of stakeholders in the management of the water resources of the San Juan River Basin Project. Collaboration creates the basis for institutional arrangements required to implement the SAP, and ensures the active and effective involvement of local stakeholders in the implementation process. In addition, these institutions can help to organize grass-root groups and other beneficiaries as they work with local communities.

Public participation workshops and consultations in San Juan Project are also being used in support of the process leading to the formulation of the SAP. Public participation workshops allow the exchange of information, experiences, and ideas among the various stakeholders. They also help to track and evaluate the progress of the different project components and to gather recommendations for inclusion in the SAP.

In the **Pantanal Project**, the NGO Foundation Ecotropica has coordinated and executed the “Program of Management for the Development of Zone-drain Plug in the Neighborhoods of the National Reserves of Acurizal, Penha and Dorochê”. The main outcome of this activity has been the elaboration of a participative and feasible plan for the management of the Particular Reserves of the Natural Patrimony (RPPN) located Acurizal, Penha and Dorochê around the National Park of the Pantanal, an indication of actions in order to guarantee the protection of flexible areas, and new scientific discoveries. The Particular Reserves of the Natural Patrimony represents one first step to involve the civil society in the conservation of the biological diversity. The preservation of the RPPN Acurizal, Penha and Dorochê contributes to the formation of an ecological corridor that enters the National Park of the Pantanal Mato-grossense and the Natural Area of Handling Supported of San Matias in Bolivia.

The Plan of Handling is a dynamic project that determines the zoning of the units of conservation, characterizing each one of its zones and considering its physical development in accordance with its purposes. It also establishes basic lines of direction for the handling of the Unit. The Plan can be regarded as integrative because its elaboration foresees the involvement of actors of the society throughout the planning process, throughout workshops. Moreover, its structure foresees action around the Units aiming to the cooperation of the neighboring populations and the improvement of its quality of life. ONG AMEC coordinated



the subproject Development of non governmental initiatives of conservation, involving the “Ninhal” Port of the Farm located to the left edge of the river Cuiabá, below of the city of Baron of Melgaço. Threatened, the “Ninhais” represents today in the Pantanal areas that represent significant niches for many species of the wild life in the Bioma Pantaneiro. AMEC (Associação Ecológica Melgassense) for way of this subproject considers a set of management lines of direction of the Ninhal Port of the Farm, as well as the training of “piloteiros”, guides of tourism and lectures for the marginal community. The subproject ended with the creation of a data base on aquatic birds of the region; a proposal of options of sustainable handling for the area of the proposal Unit of Conservation; the order and monitoring of the tourist activity in the Ninhal Port of the Farm for the reduction of the negative impacts; and tourist qualification of professional guides of tourism and piloteiros in the rescue of the cultural and natural importance of the “ninhal” in the life of the pantaneiro and visitor of the ecotourism. The activities also included the recovery of the ciliar bush around the “Ninhal” Port of the Farm and installation of the fishery of changes of native plants (1,400 planted changes); the elaboration and implantation of tourist signaling around the “Ninhal”; the establishment of tracks (540m) and observation towers (3 astroroofs) for the attendance of the visitors; and the involvement of the regional community by means of lectures, training and the definition of the content of the final document "Lines of direction of Handling of Ninhais of Head-dries with indicative of Colhereiro and great Garça".

### **CONCLUSIONS**

- The legal framework is a component of great importance in the shaping of the participation and consultation processes. The countries that have a strong legal framework, as in the case of San Francisco and Upper Paraguay had more comprehensive public participation processes. OAS Projects also assisted in the formulation and implementation of new legal frameworks within the countries that don't have a strong water law.
- When the community is organized it is easier to develop, monitor and evaluate the processes. The outcome and follow-up of the participation and consultation processes depends on the degree of cohesion and union of the communities consulted.
- The general context of poverty, and the absence of basic needs in most of the areas where the projects are being undertaken has a negative impact on the consultation and participation processes. The people of these communities are more worried of their basic human needs than on protecting the basin and the water resources.
- In some cases, the projects are so big and ambitious that is very difficult to keep track of them. Any project, but specially one dealing with consultations and participation process must have a proper

- and decentralized follow up of activities. The outcomes of the processes do not reflect what is supposed to be the essence of the project. That is, the interaction with the local communities.
- In most of the projects, consultation processes have been accomplished during the formulation and implementation stages, but not in the evaluation phase. In public participation and consultation process, there has to be a constant and efficient feedback between the communities and the evolution of the events. Unfortunately, this has not been the case in most of the projects.
  - For the OAS/OSDE it is a challenge to implement projects of this kind, that seek to create a new vision of policy making based on a decentralized structure, trying to build sustainable policies by making them a result of agreements with the local communities. These small pilot projects however present good practice on how to achieve “good governance”.

**TABLE 1**

**INDICATORS OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION DURING FORMULATION OF THE SAP**

INDICATOR DESCRIPTION AND CONTENT		VALUE
First regional working meeting, Argentina, December 1995	Participants	176
Second working meeting, Bolivia, 1996	Participants	84
First regional workshop, Chocloca, Bolivia, August 1997	Participants	23
First regional workshop on the SAP, Salta, Argentina, December 1997	Participants	178
	Documents and discussion materials handed out to each participant	14
	Assessment forms filled out by participants	82
Regional seminar-workshop for the formulation of the SAP, Tarija, Bolivia, May 1998	Participants	132
Second regional workshop on the SAP, Formosa, Argentina, May 1998	Participants	75
	Documents and discussion materials handed out to each participant	10
	Assessment forms filled out by participants	41
Seminar-workshop on environmental law, Tarija, Bolivia, September 1998	Participants	60
Third regional workshop on the SAP, Jujuy, Argentina, November 1998	Participants	102
	Documents and discussion materials handed out to each participant	13
	Assessment forms filled out by participants	65

INDICATOR DESCRIPTION AND CONTENT		VALUE
Seminar-workshop on erosion control experiences, Tarija, Bolivia, December 1998	Participants	52
IV regional seminar-workshop for the formulation of the SAP, Tarija, Bolivia, May 1999	Participants	79
V regional seminar-workshop for the formulation of the SAP, Tarija, Bolivia, June 1999	Participants	80
VI regional seminar-workshop for the formulation of the SAP, Tarija, Bolivia, July 1999	Participants	28
Contracts executed	Experts/consultants	80
	Institutions	20
	Contracted construction companies	4
	Orders for major equipment	10
Compilation of plans, programs, projects, and initiatives	Project description files distributed	700
	Projects and initiatives compiled	250
	Plans and programs compiled	103
Preliminary compilation document of distributed projects and initiatives	Printed format	45
	Diskette	120
Public communication	Electronic addresses	172
	Registered with SAP-NET as of 6/99	31
	Visits to website since 6/99	130
	Active records in the mailing	731
Institutions participating in program elements		30
Specialists and technicians participating in the SAP	Individual and institutional contracts included (approx.)	260
Reports produced	Final reports and progress reports submitted by consultants and executing agencies in charge of program elements	46
	Terms of reference	60

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