



Deutsche Gesellschaft für
Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GmbH

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Summary of the Evaluation
**”Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in El Chaco -
Sudamericano”**

on behalf of

Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development

- Evaluationdivision -

This report entirely reflects the observations of the consultants and does not commit any of the institutions involved in the cooperation partnership.

German Development Cooperation with South America

Summary of the Evaluation of the project

”Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in El Chaco Sudamericano”

Summary

Environmental protection and conservation of natural resources is a priority area of German development cooperation, with the countries of the Latin American subcontinent as in other regions. In Bolivia, Paraguay and Argentina there are – or have been in the past – numerous bilateral measures in this sector. Parts of these three countries constitute what – from a natural environmental and geographical point of view – is known as El Gran Chaco Sudamericano. In its totality, the Gran Chaco region is rich in natural resources, yet it plays no major part in the national policies of the individual countries concerned. There is consequently a significant danger that these resources may be stripped – possibly even within a matter of just a few years.

The tri-national project under evaluation is based on the findings that sustainable use of El Chaco resources can only be achieved if the three governments adopt a co-ordinated approach and actively integrate into this process the stakeholder groups affected by the issue.

The project sees itself as a catalyst to develop a specific “Chaco identity”, something that has not existed to date. One reason for this is the fact that the groups living in El Chaco (*indígenas*, i.e. Indians, and *criollos*, i.e. mestizos) are marginalised in socio-political terms and unable to fight to prevent the destruction of the resources on which they depend. Dedicated non-governmental organisations are helping them to protect their systems of use (for the most part, resource-saving) by legal means and at political level, and to provide economic stability for their small-holding models of production.

This is the background to the project “Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in El Chaco Sudamericano.” Since it is still in the first three-year phase of implementation (this phase comes to an end in November 2005), the evaluation has focused on two sets of questions:

- How should one evaluate the institutional design of the project based on what it aims to achieve?
- What will be the project's value-added in terms of development policy? Is it appropriate to bring about firm, sustainable effects as the sum of measures anchored only nationally?

The evaluation team assesses the project as being sustainably effective, since key conditions for long-term successful work have been put in place.

Findings

The tri-national project “Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in El Chaco Sudamericano” complements the bilateral projects in Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay and focuses on the natural environment of El Chaco, which is made up of parts of each of these three countries. The project approach is based on the findings that a sustainable use of natural resources in El Chaco is only possible if there is greater coordination between the governments involved and more active integration of the stakeholder groups affected by this issue. The project see itself as a catalyst in this process. It is still at present in its first phase of implementation of three years (this phase comes to an end in November 2005).

The **framework conditions** for this project can be deemed positive in only certain aspects, since although environmental policies in the three countries exist on paper (incl. the ratification of international conventions), there often remains an enormous gulf between that position and

reality. The current boom in soya bean cultivation in Argentina, for example, must be seen as a threat to the existence of the El Chaco dry forest. This in turn will not only destroy biodiversity, it will also rob the already marginalised population groups (the indigenous peoples) of the basis for their livelihood.

From the institutional perspective it is clear that the project cannot build on any existing system of coordination between the three states; in as far as any such system exists it can at best be described as embryonic (PAS Chaco). Much the same is true for non-governmental organisations, which possess considerable weight at national level, and are now increasingly forming networks at supranational level. The GTZ project is the only development cooperation project that places a comprehensive and cross-border focus on conservation in El Chaco.

With the delayed start to its activities in Bolivia and Paraguay, the project has fallen slightly behind schedule; however, over recent months it has been making ground again thanks to a number of individual measures that have been put in place. These include the development of an independent organisational structure (Consejo Asesor, Comité de Coordinación). This can now be described as operational.

As far as the **objective structure** and **planning** of the project are concerned, these are in line both with the guidelines set down by German development policy and with the environmental policy declarations of intent of the countries concerned. A key line of approach is the provision of support in implementing the ratified conventions and, in particular, concerning the fight to control desertification.

Taken as a whole, however, it is evident that the project is too broad-based and that consideration has not always been given to where the limits of its capacity for action would lie.

These problems are revealed in the **quality of implementation** and **steering** of the project. Although to date approx. 40 activities have been carried out as part of the project's two lines of intervention (network-building with NGOs, and environmental education and communication), it is questionable whether in a number of cases these will prove to be effective. Without doubt, however, one important asset is the setting up of the CeDeTeMa in Machagai, Argentina (an integrated PPP project for timber technology), since here it is already evident that positive effects will be achieved in terms of the sustainable use of timber. The tri-national dissemination of innovations is already underway.

Under the heading of "steering" it was found that the project is making no attempt to minimise problems that have arisen during the first phase, but instead calls upon the competencies and experience available at the GTZ. The BMZ has also taken a lively interest in the project and for example – in association with the embassy in Buenos Aires – has advocated greater courage in environmental policy dialogue with the governments.

Development-policy effectiveness of the project: In spite of the not entirely positive framework conditions and the delays that have occurred, it should nevertheless be stated that the project will substantially reach its planned objectives. This expectation is justified not least because the (NGO) partners are now extremely competent. The project is impressive for its array of activities in all areas and versatile network-building in the El Chaco region. Nevertheless, it is not always easy to speak in the present about guaranteed effects for the future; this applies first and foremost perhaps to the CeDeTeMa.

Overall, however, there is much justification for the strong supposition that – on condition that it focuses on the essentials – the project can provide proof over a further three-year phase that it has the potential to reach the desired "tri-national added value."

Recommendations

On the basis of the evaluation findings, the independent experts' key **recommendations** for the strategic orientation of the project over a second phase read as follows:

1. Support for the three governments in implementing the “PAS Chaco” project, the tri-national state programme to combat desertification and promote sustainable forest management;
2. Concentration on the areas of “sustainable forest resource management” and “alternative types of use”; knowledge management and environmental education will be used as instruments in both these areas.
3. Strategic use of small-scale projects: Finding examples of good practice and disseminating them.

This strategic orientation presupposes continued improvements in the partner structure and executing agency structure – in particular, the desired interlinking of NGOs and governments, including the regional and local level. All things considered, the chosen executing agency structure should be retained (there are no alternatives), even though it entails high coordination inputs on the part of the project.

General conclusions

In terms of **general conclusions** the project may offer medium and long-term incentives for similar supraregional projects at the following levels:

- Cooperation management with state and non-state partners
- Process design at a tri-national level
- Management of “tri-national value added”

However, long-term positive effects at the target group level are to be attained only if two conditions are met:

- The national governments involved commit to a coherent policy of natural resource management and enforce this;
- Progress is made on capacity building within the non-governmental organisations involved, enabling them to devise independent measures in coordination with the governments and to implement such measures.

Basic data

Project title:	Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in El Chaco Sudamericano
Project start:	November 2002
Project end:	November 2008
Total sum pledged:	EUR 2.7 million
Project-managing division at BMZ:	224
Evaluation conducted:	from 02 to 23 March 2005

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