

Country Name	Project for Promoting Participatory Biodiversity Conservation
Republic of Costa Rica	

I. Project Outline

Background	<p>The forest coverage ratio of Costa Rica decreased to 21% by 1987 from 75% of total land of the country in 1940. The Government of Costa Rica implemented policies and activities for pioneering forest and biodiversity conservation since the latter half of the 1980's. As a result of these efforts, the forest area recovered to approximately 52% of the total land by 2010. On the other hand, the management system of the nature conservation areas focused to control illegal activities within Conservation Areas and their vicinities, as a management model based on elimination of human activities. . Due to such circumstance, there were some cases of conflicts between residents within the Conservation Areas and their vicinities and the government authorities in charge of administration of the Conservation Areas. In that situation, JICA conducted the "Project for Participatory Management of the Barra del Colorado National Wildlife Refuge" (2008-2011), and it brought about outcomes such as establishing a basic system of participatory management and the Barra del Colorado National Wildlife Refuge was deemed as a kind of model Conservation Area with implementation of the participatory management. It was also hoped that the Costa Rican experience could be used effectively as knowledge to promote effective biodiversity conservation in the world, especially in the Mesoamerican hotspot of Central America. This project was requested in order to diffuse Costa Rica's experiences on biodiversity conservation to other countries in Central America and make international contributions.</p>												
Objectives of the Project	<p>Through improved the implementation and verification of the participatory management method in wildlife refuges, preparation of the manuals and guidelines on the participatory biodiversity conservation, recommendation of the policies and tools, and sharing the knowledge¹ in and outside the country, the project aimed at establishing a mechanism to share the knowledge of the participatory approach of Costa Rica, thereby contributing to strengthening of the policy and systems of participatory biodiversity conservation.</p> <p>1. Overall Goal: The policy and systems of participatory biodiversity conservation will be strengthened by making good use of knowledge in Costa Rica and Central American countries 2. Project Purpose: A mechanism to share the knowledge of the participatory approach of Costa Rica is established in and outside Costa Rica.</p>												
Activities of the project	<p>1. Project site: Barra del Colorado National Wildlife Refuge, the Conservation Areas, and neighboring areas. 2. Main activities: implementation and verification of the participatory management method in wildlife refuges, preparation of the manuals and guidelines on the participatory biodiversity conservation, recommendation of the policies and tools, and sharing the knowledge in and outside the country, etc. 3. Inputs (to carry out above activities)</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Japanese Side</td> <td>Costa Rican Side</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1) Experts from Japan: 10 persons</td> <td>1) Staff allocated: 85 persons</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2) Training in Japan: 41 persons</td> <td>2) Land and facilities: Office space, etc.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3) Equipment: Vehicles, environment monitoring equipment, etc.</td> <td>3) Local cost: travel expenses, maintenance costs of the offices, etc.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4) Local cost: cost for hiring local consultants, seminar expenses, etc.</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>			Japanese Side	Costa Rican Side	1) Experts from Japan: 10 persons	1) Staff allocated: 85 persons	2) Training in Japan: 41 persons	2) Land and facilities: Office space, etc.	3) Equipment: Vehicles, environment monitoring equipment, etc.	3) Local cost: travel expenses, maintenance costs of the offices, etc.	4) Local cost: cost for hiring local consultants, seminar expenses, etc.	
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Project Period	April 2013 to March 2018	Project Cost	(ex-ante) 457 million yen, (actual) 517 million yen										
Implementing Agency	National System of Conservation Areas (Sistema Nacional de Área de Conservación: SINAC)												
Cooperation Agency in Japan	None.												
Related Project	<p>Technical cooperation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participatory Management Project in National Refuge Barra Del Colorado (2008-2011) - Capacity Development on Integrated Management and Conservation of Biodiversity at regional level in SICA Region (2019-2024) 												

II. Result of the Evaluation

< Special Perspectives Considered in the Ex-Post Evaluation >

- Indicator 2 of the Project Purpose was the same as Indicator 2 of the Overall Goal. In the ex-post evaluation, it was used for verifying not the continuation of the Project Purpose but the achievement status of the Overall Goal.

1 Relevance

<Consistency with the Development Policy of Costa Rica at the time of Ex-ante Evaluation>

In Costa Rica's "National Development Plan" (2010-2014), one of the priority issues was the "environment and sustainable development," and biodiversity conservation was included as the target. In the "National Biodiversity Strategy" (2000), collaboration among relevant institutions and sectors, information exchange, and capacity development in biodiversity management were included in

¹ In this project, knowledge was defined as "a systematic organization of the background to the implementation of policies and frameworks for biodiversity conservation, the subsequent implementation process, the status of implementation and its results, biological, social and economic effects and impacts, challenges, lessons learned, and directions for future improvement."

the basic strategy. Thus, the project was consistent with the development policy of Costa Rica at the time of ex-ante evaluation.

<Consistency with the Development Needs of Costa Rica at the time of Ex-ante Evaluation>

In Costa Rica, while progress was made for biodiversity conservation in national parks, there were conflicts between residents and government authorities over the use and management of natural resources in conservation areas where human habitation and production activities were allowed. There was a need for systematization and documentation of knowledge so that the participatory and collaborative management system in conservation areas established in the previous project could be shared both domestically and internationally. In this regard, the project was consistent with the development needs of Costa Rica at the time of ex-ante evaluation.

<Consistency with Japan’s ODA Policy at the time of Ex-ante Evaluation>

In the “Country Assistance Policy for Costa Rica” (2012), the basic policy included “support for sustainable development especially in the environment sector,” and one of the priority areas was the environment. Thus, the project was consistent with Japan’s ODA policy at the time of ex-ante evaluation.

<Evaluation Result>

In light of the above, the relevance of the project is high.

2 Effectiveness/Impact

<Status of Achievement for the Project Purpose at the time of Project Completion>

The Project Purpose was partially achieved by the time of project completion. The knowledge consolidated by the project was utilized in all of the target Conservation Areas (Indicator 1), and the network for exchanging and discussion was established (Indicator 2). The network had participation from the counterpart organization, NGOs, universities, the officers of environmental ministries from other countries. On the other hand, the responsible section was not officially designated at SINAC (Indicator 3), and the mechanism for regional knowledge sharing was not established (Indicator 4).

<Continuation Status of Project Effects at the time of Ex-post Evaluation>

The project effects have continued. SINAC has been engaged in systematization for the knowledge sharing as a part of their tasks. In 2019, the knowledge management program for promoting knowledge sharing and positioning it in the organization (Gestión del Conocimiento en el SINAC: GECOS) has started. In this program, a working group was established and it is expected to update related data for knowledge sharing. Three of the former counterpart personnel of the project have worked as Directors of SINAC Conservation Area offices, and other personnel has been in other managerial posts for Conservation Area offices. They have been a driving force for participatory biodiversity management. It has been also expected that the experiences and knowledge in each conservation area would be reviewed and shared and fed back in order to improve operations. Regarding the implementation of the action plan developed by the Citizen’s Participation and Governance Department of SINAC during the project period, SINAC has planned to implement the plan, since the number of staff has increased again to five, though it had decreased after the project completion.

<Status of Achievement for Overall Goal at the time of Ex-post Evaluation>

The Overall Goal has been achieved. The knowledge accumulated in this project has been inherited to the national program and donor projects (Indicator 1). In addition, "citizen’s participation and governance" has been positioned as an important policy in the “National Development Plan” (2018-2022). Although other Central American countries have not yet developed specific policies and projects, they have shared the project outputs and knowledge. For example, SINAC has conducted four JICA Local Training Programs on "Ecosystem Conservation through Collaborative Management of Protected Areas" since 2016. The majority of the trainers are former counterpart personnel of the Project, and they have contributed to the dissemination of knowledge and methods of participatory biodiversity conservation in the region. In addition, Costa Rica's knowledge has been shared with other Central American countries in the "Capacity Development on Integrated Management and Conservation of Biodiversity at regional level in SICA Region" (2019-2024).

<Other Impacts at the time of Ex-post Evaluation>

Several positive impacts have been confirmed in the ex-post evaluation. First, collaboration with other ministries in the country has been strengthened for participatory environmental management. The Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock has promoted agriculture and livestock programs from the perspective of participatory environmental management and recognized the significance of collaboration with SINAC. In the Ministry of Education, environmental education has been mainstreamed. The knowledge accumulated in the project has been compiled as educational materials for environmental education which have been used in some schools. In addition, SINAC has implemented the action plan on the matters stipulated in the Biodiversity Law, in collaboration with the National Commission for Biodiversity Management (CONAGEBIO). Second, as mentioned above, the knowledge and outputs obtained from the project have utilized in JICA's overseas supplementary training program of the training course, "Ecosystem Conservation through Collaborative Management of Protected Areas" as well as in the projects of SINAC and the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ). Thirdly, community cooperatives were established and led by female leaders. They have continued participatory biodiversity conservation activities and contributed to more participation of local women. This has been realized because many of the counterpart personnel have continuously supported women’s entrepreneurship and got involved in establishing cooperatives.

<Evaluation Result>

Therefore, the effectiveness/impact of the Project is high.

Achievement of the Project Purpose and Overall Goal

Aim	Indicators	Results
(Project Purpose) A mechanism to share the knowledge of participatory approach of Costa Rica is established in and outside Costa Rica.	1. In each Conservation Area, at least one case of utilizing the knowledge consolidated by the Project.	<u>Status of achievement: Achieved (Continued).</u> (Project Completion) - In all of the Conservation Areas, there was at least one case of utilizing the knowledge. (Ex-post evaluation) - The knowledge on the citizen’s participation and governance, environmental monitoring, environmental education, and zoning has been utilized in all Conservation Areas.
	2. At least 50 persons in relevant	<u>Status of achievement: Achieved.</u>

	<p>agencies to biodiversity participated in network established by the Project, exchanging the knowledge and discussing the issues on participatory biodiversity conservation.</p>	<p>(Project Completion) - The Facebook group page “Systematizing the Participatory Biodiversity Conservation Management (Sistematizando la Gestión Participativa de la Conservación de la Biodiversidad)” was established, and active information sharing and discussion were conducted. There were 175 members (March 2018). (Ex-post evaluation) - Verified as the achievement of Indicator of the Overall Goal.</p>
	<p>3. A responsible section of SINAC for knowledge sharing is determined and develops a mechanism (e.g. homepage) to keep updating relevant data.</p>	<p><u>Status of achievement: Partially achieved (Continued).</u> (Project Completion) - It was agreed that the technical director of the SINAC Executive Secretariat would be responsible for sharing information, but the formalities were not completed by the time of project completion. (Ex-post evaluation) - Any Department of SINAC has not yet designated as responsible for sharing information at SINAC, but instead, the working group consisting of six members has been established for information sharing. The working group has planned to update the relevant data as part of the knowledge management activities.</p>
	<p>4. The responsible section for SINAC for knowledge sharing with foreign countries develops a partnership and establishes a mechanism (e.g. homepage) to share knowledge with regional initiatives such as CCAD.</p>	<p><u>Status of achievement: Partially achieved (Partially continued).</u> (Project Completion) - The partnership among SINAC, the Central American Commission for Environment and Development (CCAD) and other organizations was developed through organizing international events and information sharing activities. It was agreed that the link to the page featuring the project outputs in the SINAC web site is created in the CCAD website, but it was not completed by the time of project completion. (Ex-post evaluation) - All of the project outputs have been uploaded in the SINAC website, but it has not been linked to the CCAD website. - SINAC has implemented information-sharing activities for knowledge sharing by participating in international events, conducting training, and receiving visitors.</p>
<p>(Overall goal) The policy and systems of participatory biodiversity conservation will be strengthened making good use of knowledge in Costa Rica and Central American countries.</p>	<p>1. Existence of projects and/or policies in Costa Rica and Central American countries that contributed to participatory biodiversity conservation.</p>	<p><u>Status of achievement: Achieved.</u> (Ex-post evaluation) - In Costa Rica, projects related to participatory biodiversity conservation have been implemented based on the project outputs and experiences, with support of donors including GIZ. Also, the knowledge and methodologies for participatory environmental monitoring promoted by the project have been sustained in the National Program of Ecological Monitoring.” - In Central American countries, no project or policy for participatory biodiversity conservation which reflects the project outputs has not been formulated. However, the project outputs and experiences have been shared in international meetings and training.</p>
	<p>2. Network established by the project in and outside Costa Rica will be sustained, with 50 participants and more and introduction of new issues on participatory biodiversity conservation.</p>	<p><u>Status of achievement: Achieved.</u> (Ex-post evaluation) - The Network established by the project, “Systematizing the Participatory Biodiversity Conservation Management,” has been sustained, where latest efforts for participatory biodiversity conservation in each country have been shared. There were 177 members (April 2021).</p>

Source: Project Completion Report and information provided by SINAC (Executive Secretariat and Conservation Areas Offices).

3 Efficiency

Although the project cost exceeded the plan (ratio against the plan: 113%), the project period was as planned (ratio against the plan: 100%). Outputs were produced as planned. Therefore, the project efficiency is fair.

4 Sustainability

<Policy Aspect>

The importance of citizen’s involvement in participatory biodiversity conservation is mentioned in the “National Development Plan” (2018-2022). Also, the “National Biodiversity Policy” (2015-2030) includes the promotion of economically, socially, inclusively, and environmentally sustainable development and social participation in biodiversity management.

<Institutional/Organizational Aspect>

In order to promote participatory biodiversity conservation, the Citizen’s Participation and Governance Department, which was established in SINAC during the project period, has been maintained. The department has been staffed with five personnel to conduct operations under the themes of biological corridors, environmental education and volunteer, indigenous people, inter-organizational collaboration, councils, and governance. According to SINAC, due to the trend of budget and staff reduction, the number of personnel has not been sufficient. The Department responsible for systematizing and sharing knowledge has not yet been determined. Liaison officers responsible for coordination between the executive secretariat and conservation area offices have been in place. In each conservation area office, there has not been sufficient personnel in charge of systematizing knowledge on biodiversity conservation. Due to budget cuts, it has been difficult to fill the positions that have been retired.

SINAC has used the “Citizen’s Participation and Governance Action Plan” developed by the Project to guide the planning of activities

of the Citizen's Participation and Governance Department. SINAC also has maintained the network with other donors: it has received support from GIZ in the areas of biological corridors, urban environmental improvement, and organizational reform of protected area councils, and collaborated with CCAD on ecosystem and landscape restoration projects.

<Technical Aspect>

Since there have been personnel transfer and retirements in the Citizen's Participation and Governance Department of SINAC, it has been necessary to impart the knowledge and skills necessary for promoting participatory biodiversity conservation to the newly assigned personnel. In the knowledge management program mentioned above (GECOS), 45 members have been involved in systematizing and sharing knowledge. In each Conservation Area office, the personnel trained by the Project have been able to train other personnel. The manuals and technical standards developed by this project have been utilized in each Conservation Area.

<Financial Aspect>

The budget of SINAC has been allocated from the Ministry of Environment and Energy. Besides this, there have been dividends from the National Parks Fund and environmental NGOs, as well as donor funding and the Environmental Swap Fund. The systematization of experience has been funded by the knowledge management program (GECOS), but according to SINAC, the budget for participatory environmental monitoring has not been sufficient. Each Conservation Area office has not necessarily secured a sufficient budget for biodiversity conservation. Due to budget cuts by ministries and agencies, there has been no significant prospect of an increase in the future.

<Evaluation Result>

In the light above, slight problems have been observed in terms of the institutional/organizational and financial aspects of the implementing agency. Therefore, the sustainability of the effectiveness through the project is fair.

5 Summary of the Evaluation

The Project Purpose was partially achieved by the time of project completion, but the project effects have continued, and the Overall Goal has been achieved. The knowledge accumulated by the project has been utilized in Conservation Areas, and the national and international networks have been developed. Also, the project experiences have been reflected in the Costa Rican policies and programs. Regarding sustainability, although the personnel and financial allocation have not been necessarily sufficient for promoting participatory biodiversity conservation, the coordination between the Executive Secretariat and Conservation Area offices and the network with other organizations has been a driving force for implementing activities. As for efficiency, the project budget exceeded the plan.

Considering all of the above points, this project is evaluated to be satisfactory.

III. Recommendations & Lessons Learned

Recommendations for Implementing agency:

- Conservation Area offices have not been staffed with sufficient personnel responsible for promoting participatory biodiversity conservation, and their understanding and practice have differed among the offices. It is recommended that the Citizen's Participation and Governance Department take the lead in further strengthening the capacity of existing personnel by sharing good practices among Conservation Area offices and encourage other sections to take on the role of participatory biodiversity conservation.
- Under the circumstances where it is difficult to expect an increase in budgets and the assignment of new personnel in the future, it is recommended to reflect opinions and requests of residents and the general public in biodiversity conservation by strengthening the functions of local councils. Another idea is to strengthen participatory environmental monitoring of SINAC by exchanging agreements with private corporations and recruiting citizen volunteers.

Lessons Learned for JICA:

- In the project, knowledge on participatory biodiversity conservation and management has been consolidated and utilized in the Conservation Area offices even since the time of the project completion. This is because a section in charge was established in SINAC during the project period and knowledge systematization activities have continued. This is also attributed to the fact that the counterpart personnel became familiar with the knowledge systematization methods and the contents of the manuals. These have been made possible because, in the project, the future vision of the implementing agency from the organizational, technical, and financial perspectives was analyzed and the project activities were planned in line with the long-term plan of the organization. Furthermore, in preparing manuals and other outputs, the counterpart personnel took the initiative in collecting and analyzing information and consolidating them. Based on these experiences, in technical cooperation projects implemented in countries such as Costa Rica that can play a leading role to neighboring countries, it is important to plan activities after thoroughly examining the long-term plans and capacities of the implementing agency. And, Japanese experts need to do the process management as facilitators so that counterpart personnel is proactively involved in producing outputs, rather than only transfer their expertise.



Participatory Environmental Monitoring



Information Sharing from ex trainees of JICA training at SINAC