

PI External Reviews: Summary of Report
Managing Natural Resources in
Latin America and the Caribbean (Minga)

Report to IDRC Board of Governors
March 2004

Reviewers:

Dr. Bernardo Reyes
Ecological Economics Programme, Chile

Dr. Dario Pulgar
Universal Management Group, Canada

Summary prepared by Evaluation Unit

PI Aims

1. MINGA seeks to enhance, through research, the capacity of societies in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) to define, develop, and implement equitable and sustainable natural resource management strategies in representative areas of selected ecoregions.
2. MINGA's **specific objectives**, as laid out in the 2000 Prospectus, are:
 - 2.1. To synthesize lessons learned about multi-stakeholder approaches to the sustainable and equitable management of natural resources, including organizational principles and ways to manage conflicts over natural resources.
 - 2.2. To identify and generate effective tools and methodologies to support multi-stakeholder approaches to natural resource management.
 - 2.3. To develop strategies to apply lessons learned from multi-stakeholder natural resource management to new situations.
 - 2.4. To promote the adoption and integration of multi-stakeholder approaches to natural resource management in organizations by analysing and demonstrating their effectiveness and benefits.

Review Methodology

3. To understand the program as a whole, the reviewers consulted numerous program documents, including previously completed program and project evaluations, as well as other relevant reports. The reviewers also conducted interviews of team members, project leaders, and resource persons.
4. In order to observe program delivery at the project level, the reviewers also conducted in-depth reviews of eight selected projects. The projects selected were ones that have advanced to an appropriate level of maturity (2nd and 3rd phases), and which, taken together, represent the range of approaches and intended results that the program seeks to bring about.
5. In-depth project reviews were conducted through a mixture of document reviews and visits to project sites. Reviewers visited Bolivia, Peru, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Chile, and held meetings with Program Officers and evaluation staff in Ottawa. They also participated in a workshop held in Mérida, Mexico as part of the CBNRM (Caribbean) Phase II project, the Consortium for the Sustainable Development of the Andean Ecoregion (CONDESAN) Board of Directors meeting in Cochabamba, Bolivia, and a workshop held by CGIAB in La Paz. A site visit to the CAMP-Lab III project in Pearl Lagoon, Nicaragua and El Angel, Ecuador allowed reviewers to

interview project stakeholders, including local authorities. Two of the Small Grants Programs and gender-related activities were also reviewed.

Review Findings

6. MINGA's strategies and choice of research projects are **consistent with its objectives**. Its main research projects and strategies are aimed at supporting multidisciplinary and multi-stakeholder approaches (MSA) to sustainable and equitable natural resources management (NRM), including organizational principles and approaches to managing conflicts.
7. **The MINGA program has extensive reach**, extending to community and local stakeholders such as NGO's, local governments, government agencies, academic and research centres, regional development consortia, national coalitions, policy makers, and international development institutions.
8. Innovative approaches to program delivery have allowed **the influence of MINGA to extend beyond MINGA's direct partner institutions**.
 - 8.1. MINGA's use of Small Grant Programs (SGPs) is a strong example of an approach that extends the program's influence. In particular, SGPs have proven to be a very useful way of improving synthesis of research and contributing to the transfer of monitoring and evaluation tools beyond immediate partners. The reviewers report that another benefit of SGPs is that they allow for training and capacity building at the same time integrating a variety of the experiences of MINGA's partners.
9. MINGA has generated a **"well-balanced" set of outputs**, including:
 - 9.1. State-of-the-art work on resource management strategies and advanced comparative research on conflict resolution and institutional learning;
 - 9.2. Lessons and training materials that are appropriate for rural audiences in several countries, produced through work that integrated biodiversity, traditional knowledge, improved agro-processing technology, and local markets; and
 - 9.3. Participatory action research has been introduced into many of the projects. In keeping with the program's goals, this has helped ensure that research incorporates the knowledge of local social actors. This has been most apparent in the work on water management and water rights, mining, community forestry, and coastal resources.
10. MINGA has developed a **dissemination and communication** strategy that identifies the degree of engagement with various strategic audiences

(including peers, IDRC senior management, general audience in the field, research and academic community, international community, research partners, as well as governments and communities). The synthesis of new methods, tools, and social learning systems is an integral part of dissemination efforts. Outputs include books, essays, conference papers, seminars, workshops, websites, electronic conferences, and training courses. There is adequate use and dissemination of the information that is being generated.

10.1. The *Centro de Promocion Minera* (CEPROMIN), in Bolivia, is a good example of the use of results and an excellent showcase of well-documented activities, including the translation of researchers' complex language into educational materials.

11. **Gender mainstreaming** has become an integral part of MINGA's programming. This can be seen in MINGA's project selection criteria and its priority on research that addresses gender equity and access to natural resources. Internal project and program reviews have been integrated into MINGA's programming in order to build in-house capacity and involve partners in research efforts on gender equity in NRM. Activities such as mentoring, supporting research theses, documentation of experiences, methodology sharing, case studies and networking have contributed to partners' (as well as MINGA's own) capacity to support gender programming.
12. MINGA is playing a key role in **research capacity building in LAC**. Of particular note is the effectiveness that the promotion of participatory research approaches is playing in contributing to local capacities and the development of social capital. It is worth underscoring the relevance of these capacities because these can be drawn upon to influence decision-making on NRM at the local level and thereby support recent decentralization efforts. Because support for research for development is a rare activity in LAC, MINGA's contributions are highly valued by its counterparts, local governments, and international development institutions.
13. MINGA-supported programs that are currently in their second and third phases are able to **capitalize on lessons learned and are able to scale-up their activities**. This has been particularly strong in the MANRECUR project in Ecuador, as well as the IDRC-CIDA collaborative project *Pro-Mesas*, which includes training programs on social information systems and the development of "Learning Alliances" that are integrated into project strategies.
14. MINGA is playing an **important catalytic role** by supporting processes for the comparison and assessment of analytical tools and research methodologies. It does this by supporting projects that involve more than one country or locality, as well as convening research exchanges and debates such as international seminars, workshops, and conferences. These provide

opportunities for sharing lessons and discussing strategies for applying tools and methods in different contexts.

15. MINGA provides opportunities for partners to **explore and adopt new methodologies**. This can be seen in partners' experimentation with Outcome Mapping, which was adopted by CONDESAN, the Arrow-root project, CIDA's Pro-Mesas Project in Honduras, MANRECUR III and the Management of Natural Resources in the Southern Highlands of Peru project (MARENASS).
16. MINGA's work in **expanding opportunities to influence policies** is reflected in its evolving dialogue and coordinated efforts with CIDA and other members of the "powerful international community" of donors such as UNEP, GTZ, IFAD and World Bank, and in its work with policy makers and local governments.
 - 16.1. The Ecuador *Carchi* Program provides an example of how MINGA support has helped influence policy. The two phases of the watershed management program have helped to create an emerging inter-institutional and multi-stakeholder watershed management body. This body works closely with government departments and authorities which in turn, has spread to several other national agencies. Through this body, several municipalities and associations have joined and expanded the project's coverage over several watersheds. CONDESAN has noted the project's success and has negotiated the expansion of the approach to several dozens of watersheds in several different countries in collaboration with other funding agencies.
 - 16.2. Fourteen municipal governments played an active role in mobilising local and regional resources in order to promote poverty eradication programs, which led to the creation of the "productive municipalities" program. Using a MINGA grant for "Systematising the Bolivian Experience in Productive Municipalities", the *Federacion de Asociaciones Municipales de Bolivia*, Government of Bolivia, and the Atlantic Community Economic Development Institute organised workshops and debates on municipal government's role in promoting economic activities at local and community levels. Both national and municipal governments are currently evaluating opportunities for enhancing the potential of productive municipalities and community participation in poverty eradication.
 - 16.3. In Bolivia, up-scaling of local conflicts resulted in what was referred to as a "water war". The application of multi-stakeholder analysis to the negotiating process has resulted in the creation of a coordinating body that brings together government officials and civil society organizations. This coordinating body is influencing the creation of a "New Water Law"

in Bolivia and is influencing members of parliament and other experts. The involvement of other social actors has created new challenges to existing hierarchies as the scale and scope of the project is expanded.

17. MINGA has made use of a number of valuable **Canadian partnerships** in its projects.
 - 17.1. Jacques Chevalier of Carleton University has developed a tool for analysing power relations among interest groups and organisations (stakeholder analysis) that is being used in several projects, and has created a support system for several MINGA projects integrating multi-stakeholder analysis with conflict and collaboration research. In one case, a training workshop involving several partners and institutions led to the creation of distance learning courses at the University for Peace in Central America and has attracted the interest of various donors, including CIDA, the FAO, and World Bank Institute.
18. The PI is providing support to the NRM decentralisation process by participating in the development of new social learning systems and the validation of local knowledge, which has **changed the relationships between stakeholders and government institutions** in many project contexts.
19. The review team was able to ascertain the **relevance** of IDRC's support to its LAC partners. Many academics feel that IDRC's research support and orientations provide exceptional and unique leadership and promote independent thinking, and has helped them approach key issues from a multidisciplinary perspective. Given the current context in LAC, the PI is relevant to stakeholders involved in conflict management situations, policy makers at central and local levels, and other development agencies. MINGA has developed a very specific **niche** in the development research agenda.
20. MINGA has acted on many of the recommendations in the 1999 external review, and has commissioned several project and program **evaluations**, the results of which have been discussed within the team.

Issues for Consideration

21. There is a need for additional evaluation work to look into MINGA's influence on specific policies.
22. There are a number of activities that MINGA might consider to strengthen its gender mainstreaming efforts. Among these are:
 - 22.1. Expanding the use of the Gender Monitoring Tool to include more IDRC staff, thereby broadening the range of experiences that are captured;

- 22.2. Doing assessments of partners' capacities to undertake gender analysis prior to project approval.
 - 22.3. Developing a strategy for assessing partner institutions' readiness to mainstream gender, and identifying entry points to support this process with partner institutions.
 - 22.4. Developing an annotated bibliography of gender tools and methods;
 - 22.5. Promoting more networking and exchanges to link partners with gender resource persons;
23. With respect to strategies articulated in project documents, MINGA may wish to use more precise terms to describe the actors with whom it works. An example is the undifferentiated way in which the term "policy makers" is used in project documentation. The way that MINGA's documents refer to diverse officials as policy makers, its strategies may not adequately represent the dynamic and vibrant interactions that are emerging between social movements, NGO's and members of parliament in LAC.
24. Owing to the expansion of the potential work in LAC, especially in light of the blossoming partnership opportunities with other development donors, IDRC might consider expanding MINGA's staffing capacity. Due to the complexity of demands on program staff in their support of NRM research, not the least of which are the challenges of promoting multidisciplinary and gender-sensitivity in research, additional staff capacity may be required to ensure that projects receive the support they need.