

## Lessons-learned on Project Management Structure: Rio São Francisco



**Abstract:** In order to execute the project, ANA made special institutional arrangements and cooperation agreements with the main federal, state and municipal institutions as well as NGOs involved in the project thus providing a strong institutional framework for the project. In order to overcome the previous lack of integration among subprojects, the Technical Coordination established a program of meetings for clusters of subprojects working in similar thematic areas. The management structure adopted for the São Francisco Project could be replicated in single-country projects or used for the national level management structures in multi-country projects. In the Brazilian case, the national executing agency was a strong institution both politically and technically and was able to establish a solid institutional framework for the execution of project activities. At the same time, the Basin was rapidly placed at the top governmental agenda and received priority for the implementation of the national policy instruments.

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**Integrated Management of Land-Based Activities in the São Francisco  
Basin**

# Lessons-learned on Project Management Structure: Rio São Francisco

Experience of the GEF sponsored

## Integrated Management of Land-Based Activities in the São Francisco Basin GEF Project ID: 586

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The main objective of the São Francisco full size project was to promote sustainable development of the São Francisco River Basin (SFRB) and its coastal zone and address the physical, biological, chemical, and institutional root causes of progressive degradation affecting the basin, by developing a Strategic Action Program (SAP) for the integrated management of the São Francisco River Basin and its coastal zone. The project focused on the identification and implementation of appropriate economic instruments and the incorporation of land-based environmental concerns affecting the coastal zone into the future federal and state development policies, plans, and programs.

The project served as a demonstration project for the implementation of the Global Plan of Action for the Protection Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities in Latin America.

The project developed through extensive public consultation carried out through regional workshops, includes four components: (i) River basin and coastal zone environmental analysis; (ii) Public and stakeholder participation; (iii) Organizational structure development; and (iv) Watershed Management Program formulation. The following crosscutting issues were also addressed during the project execution: information sharing and dissemination; quantification of water use, use conflicts, and hydrological management; and financial mechanisms. The project has been executed in Brazil in direct partnership with 4 Federal institutions, 3 State bodies, 4 Universities, and 4 NGOs, and with the participation of more than 450 institutions.

The activities of this US\$4.77 million GEF-funded project were coordinated by the National Water Agency-ANA (National Executing Agency)

at the local level in close consultation with the OAS as the International Executing Agency and with UNEP as the GEF Implementing Agency, together the seven basin states, and various organizations of civil society. The project started in September 1999 and concluded its activities in June 2005.

### ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

The project was implemented in the SFRB with great social and economic importance to a vast and diverse region, providing water for a range of uses, including water supply, hydropower generation, cattle-raising, agro-industrial production, fisheries production, and tourism. The intensive economic activity typical for the basin exerts increased pressure on both natural and water resources that not only affects the estuary by altering flooding cycles, but also impacts the near-shore marine environment by modifying the nutrient and sediment content of the river water. Water-use conflicts are common in the basin.

During project execution, the SFRB was placed on the top government agenda for implementation of the National Water Resource Policy. At the same time, the process of negotiating the highly polemic and politically sensitive project for inter-basin transfer was initiated.

### DESCRIPTION OF THE ORIGINAL DESIGN

According to the original design, all project activities were steered by the Project Steering Committee composed of representatives of the Secretariat of Water Resources<sup>1</sup>/Ministry of

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<sup>1</sup> The Ministry of Environment, Water Resources and Legal Amazon (MMA) of the Government of Brazil is responsible for the implementation of the National Water Resources Policy and the National Environmental Policy. At the time of the project conception, within the MMA, the SRH

Environment of Brazil (SRH/MMA); OAS as the Executing Agency and UNEP as the Implementing Agency. The Steering Committee was chaired by the Secretary for Water Resources of Brazil, who acted as an Executive Director of the Project, in consultation with UNEP and the GS/OAS. The Steering Committee members met periodically every six months. At least once in the year, SC members made field visits prior to the official meeting.

A technical coordination unit, comprised by a Technical Coordinator (TC), an Assistant to the TC, and administrative-financial officer, was established and contracted by OAS on behalf of the project. The technical unit was responsible for coordinating all project activities with the sub-project coordinators from the different participating institutions and organizations. The OAS as executing agency established a specific project management unit within its office in Brasilia, which coordinated project activities at the technical and political level with the national institutions and supervised the work of the Technical Coordination Unit.

Participation of the national, state and municipal agencies of Brazil with competence in the region, scientific and academic institutions, and concerned civil organizations (NGOs) was contemplated by way of sub-committees of the Steering Committee. Nevertheless, these were not established as formal structures, but operated on an ad hoc basis, structured around relevant thematic and geographic issues.

Activities undertaken by the national staff, with the support of the international agencies, were based upon Terms of Reference developed and agreed jointly by a SRH/MMA, in consultation with UNEP and OAS. All Components were executed by national agencies of Brazil and/or by consultants from Brazil under the direct supervision of the SRH/MMA and UNEP-OAS. The SRH/MMA and UNEP-OAS coordinated field activities and were responsible for the overall management of the project, as directed by the Steering Committee, through coordinators appointed from their staff. The main coordination

activities were directed from Brasilia, Brazil; while all project activities were conducted within the basin.

In all Sub-projects, the Activities' Coordinators and other core staff salaries costs were covered by the national counterpart with GEF funding being used solely for activity costs. All consultants working directly with sub-projects were recruited in Brazil.

## EXPERIENCE

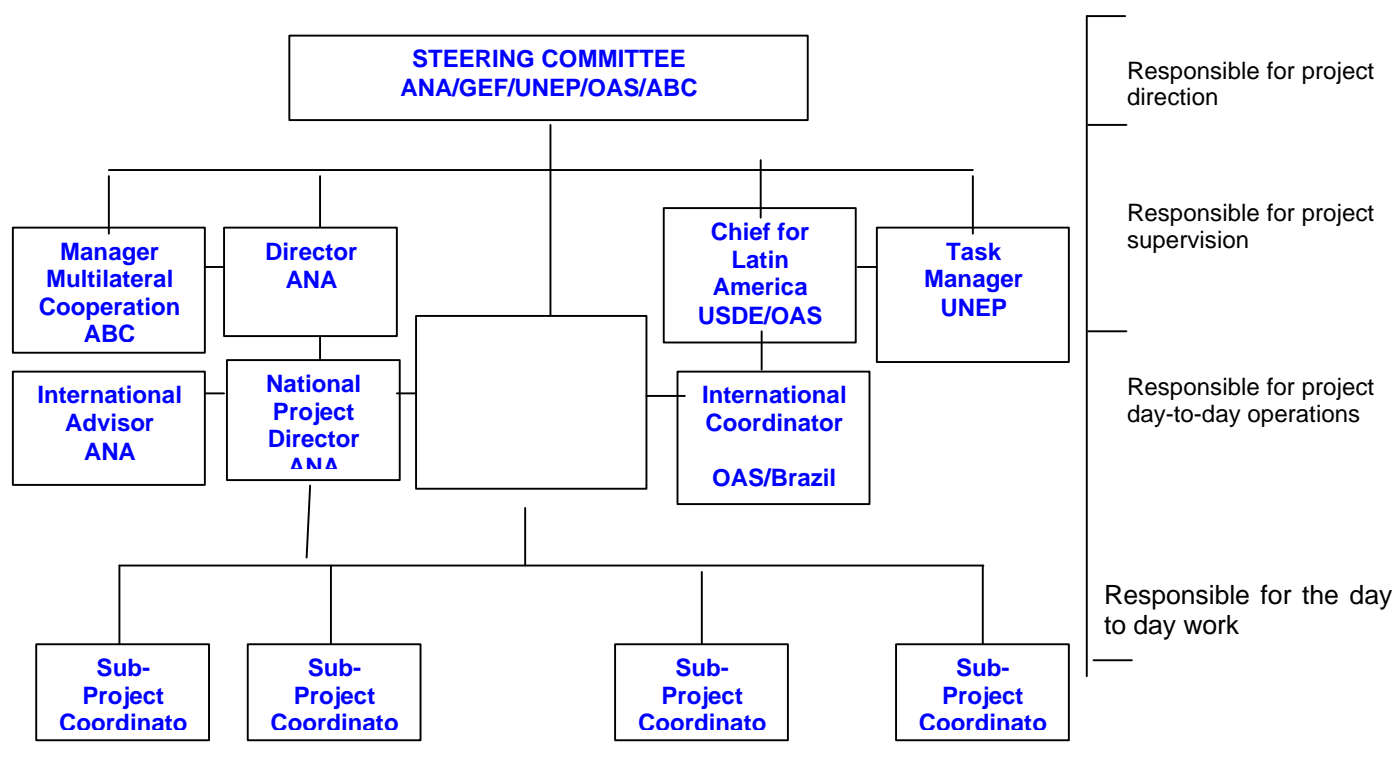
Upon the creation in 2001 of the National Water Agency-ANA, in charge of the implementation of the National Water Resources Policy in Brazil, the Brazilian Government decided to assign the national responsibility for the project execution to this new agency (ANA). At the project level, UNEP-OAS called for a steering group meeting to determine how to institutionalize the project into ANA's policies. At the same time, a workshop involving ANA, UNEP-OAS, the Technical Unit and the sub-project coordinators was held in order to jointly review project progress and decide on new execution modalities.

After the joint "re-programming" exercise, the Project management structure was defined as follows:

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was the institution responsible for the general implementation of the National Water Resources Policy established by Law No. 9433, from January 8, 1997, and, therefore, for programming in the basin, and the organization responsible for regional cooperation and coordination of development activities related to water resources management.

## ORGANOGRAM OF THE SÃO FRANCISCO PROJECT



The Brazilian Government had assigned the coordination of the execution of the project to the highest level of federal authority in the Water Sector (ANA). The President of ANA was directly involved and was regularly attending project steering group meetings or else meeting with UNEP-OAS team at each of their visits. ANA also ensured support to the project through the direct involvement of one of its Directors. In addition, the project was inserted in the different Directorates (Engineering, Projects and Programs, Fiscalization, Institutional strengthening, and Planning) at ANA with the National Director of the project being one of the Directorate's Director. Furthermore, the project was inserted into the relevant departments of ANA. In order to execute the project, ANA made special institutional arrangements and cooperation agreements with the main federal, state and municipal institutions as well as NGOs involved in the project thus providing a strong institutional framework for the project

The revised project management structure reflected a stronger national commitment for the

execution of the project, which translated into stronger national ownership of the project and its direct relation to the implementation of the National Water Resources Policy in Brazil. In addition, the national institutional framework for the project implementation was strengthened.

The "Re-Programming" Workshop of the São Francisco Project, held in January of 2002, assessed and presented an overview of all project activities<sup>2</sup> and discussed management procedures and instruments, recommending adjustments in order to incorporate changes in operational policies, approval and enforcement of the passing of new water resources laws, and the creation of ANA and the São Francisco Basin Committee.

In order to overcome the previous lack of integration among subprojects, the Technical Coordination established a program of meetings for clusters of subprojects working in similar

<sup>2</sup> All sub-projects were assessed in terms of objectives' coherence with the overall project goals, quality of products, performance, and needs.

thematic areas. The objective was to promote a spirit of “GEF family” discussing common problems and jointly searching for more cost-effective solutions. The Subprojects were divided into groups working in the following areas: Groundwater (5 Sub-projects); Association of water users (6 Sub-projects); Concession of water rights (6 Sub-projects); Soil use and conservation practices (4 Sub-projects); Erosion, sedimentation and Ichthyofauna (5 Sub-projects); and Hydrologic information systems (5 Sub-projects).

In terms of management, quarterly operational plans were introduced, and budgetary and deadlines adjustments were made.

In addition, a Guide for Project Administrative Procedures to orient all project management processes was formulated. The document contains the description and agreed forms for all necessary procedures, including the request, approval, and disbursement of funds; selection and hiring of consultants; equipment purchases, and travel authorizations and reporting; standard forms for all requisitions, reports, and financial reporting, as well as levels of approval. The Guide was largely discussed at all five levels of actors directly involved in the execution of project activities (institutions executing subprojects, technical coordination, national executing agency-ANA, UNEP-OAS), before being approved by the Steering Committee Group. Prior to its official implementation, the guidelines were further explained and disseminated at a specially convened Coordination Workshop, attended by all sub-project coordinators. The tool proved its immediate effect in terms of administrative efficiency, transparency and availability of information, and clear definition of responsibilities.

As project activities progressed and the preparation of the Final Reports approached, the need for a common reporting was established. A Guide for the Preparation of Consultancy Reports was produced and made available to all consultants and sub-project coordinators. The effect was immediate in terms of harmonization of reports presentation and formats, as well as ensuring technical quality of their content.

*(ii) At the END of the project.*

The project management structure remained without significant changes throughout the rest of the project duration. The only adjustments made in the last phase were related to organizational changes within the national executing agency-ANA, in terms of Departments’ restructuring and distribution of competences.

Although not reflected in the project management organogram, it is important to mention that the newly established São Francisco Basin Committee was directly involved in the TDA/SAP process. The Committee formed a special Working Group to support the SAP formulation and validated the final SAP at a Plenary Session.

## REPLICATION

The management structure adopted for the São Francisco Project could be replicated in single-country projects or used for the national level management structures in multi-country projects. In the Brazilian case, the national executing agency was a strong institution both politically and technically and was able to establish a solid institutional framework for the execution of project activities. At the same time, the Basin was rapidly placed at the top governmental agenda and received priority for the implementation of the national policy instruments.

The main challenges with the adopted structure were to secure coherent and unified project implementation, while benefiting from the highly decentralized project execution, and to guarantee the implementation of all prior GEF commitments, mainly in terms of global benefits, in the context of a highly ‘nationalized’ and internalized project.

The harmonization and codification of administrative procedures and reporting standards together with periodic coordination workshops with the participation of all actors involved proved essential in the context of the highly decentralized São Francisco project. As the project was structured in 29 sub-projects (distributed throughout the almost 640 thousand km<sup>2</sup> basin) and was executed in direct partnership with 4 Federal institutions, 3 State bodies, 4 Universities, and 4 NGOs, in the context of institutional participation of more than 450 institutions, 200 consultants, and 1,260

collaborators, it was a clear necessity to discipline and unify all project procedures, focusing on the attainment of all project objectives defined in the Project document.

## REFERENCES

Website: [www.ana.gov.br/gefsf](http://www.ana.gov.br/gefsf)

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## KEYWORDS

- ◆ Project management
- ◆ Project design

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