

Non-Governmental Organizations and Natural Resources Management:

Synthesis Assessment of Capacity-Building Issues in Africa

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By Michael Brown

Based on contributions from:

Sam Bagabo, Jean Dakouo, Edmond Dembele, Cornelius Kazoora, Jeanne Koopman, Sina Maiga, Rebecca Mukyala Makiika, Dr. Moyini, Susan A. Mubbala, Ada Ndeso-Atanga, Mopoi Nuwanyakpa, Haingo Rajaofara, William Ramaroharinosy, Jill Rizika, Charles Sebukeera, Issa Sidibe, Michael French Smith, Moustapha Soumare, Enoh Tanjong, and Frank Taryatunga

Edited by:

JoEllen McGann and Diana K. Myers

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PVO-NGO/NRMS Project

1250 24th Street, N. W.

Suite 500

Washington, D.C. 20037

202-293-4800 (phone)

202-293-9211 (fax)

Michael.Brown@wwfus.org (e-mail)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The PVO-NGO/NRMS Analytical Assessment (AA) reviews the experience of a project funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to conduct PVO/NGO capacity building in natural resources management (NRM) in sub-Saharan Africa from 1989 through 1995.¹ The Project operated in four Focal Countries — Cameroon, Madagascar, Mali, and Uganda — and supported innovative initiatives of broad interest through a Regional Program.

The objectives of the AA were to determine whether capacity was enhanced through Project training, technical assistance (TA), and information support activities and, if so, whether strengthened capacities led to improved NRM. A methodology was established by NGOs from the four Focal Countries, together with U.S.-based Project staff, in November 1993. Eight themes were identified and formulated as hypotheses to be tested by the AA. *NGO capacity building in NRM* refers in the AA to the systematic attempt to transfer skills, information, methods, and tools to NGO beneficiaries to enable them to design and implement appropriate and feasible NRM actions.

The AA's major finding is that, based solely on Project experience, NGO capacity building is a necessary but not sufficient condition to promote sustainable NRM. Data demonstrate that capacity building leads to *improved NRM* practices among NGOs, communities and other stakeholders who participate in a broad-based initiative. At the same time, a nucleus of factors clearly is necessary to achieve increased NRM capacity, and ultimately, sustainable biophysical impacts. Training in itself is not enough; nor is strict adherence to a bottom-up approach. In some instances the two may suffice, but more likely than not sustained follow-up and/or TA are also required to enable these efforts to blossom into improved NRM. Where these three

inputs came together under PVO-NGO/NRMS, improvements in NRM were achieved. Assuming that enabling conditions can be maintained, sustainability can be an eventual outcome.

The distinction between *sustainable* NRM and *improved* NRM is absolutely crucial. Most who use the term sustainable NRM are referring to improved NRM, which could under the right conditions become sustainable. Project experience demonstrates that these conditions, which comprehend donor and government policies as well as NGO rivalries and politics, are pivotal in enabling or inhibiting sustainability. Projects like PVO-NGO/NRMS can only promote sustainability in conjunction with complementary initiatives. A single project can catalyze discussion of constraints, but ultimately cannot change them.

The AA results correspond well with four of the original Project objectives. In the four Focal Countries, NGOs are: 1) working on a wider scope and on more NRM issues; 2) devoting a greater proportion of their human resources to NRM-related issues; 3) improving the technical quality of their operations; and 4) demonstrating improved staff skills in NRM. While these outputs cannot guarantee that sustainable NRM is occurring on a national level in Cameroon, Madagascar, Mali, and Uganda, NGOs in those countries are clearly in a stronger position today to contribute to this end than they were seven years ago. Also, institutional capacity now exists at a national consortium level in three of the four countries where it had not previously existed, should donors choose to work with that capacity. These were two major accomplishments of the Project's capacity building efforts.

At this point, it would be possible (if not useful) to test the hypothesis that, in the Focal Countries, the minimum NGO capacities now exist for widely

¹This assessment covers the operational phase of PVO-NGO/NRMS through 1995. The Project is still ongoing in 1996, albeit with different foci.

employing improved methods, approaches, and technologies that can lead to more effective NRM. That said, NGOs in those countries can still profit from appropriate capacity building activities.

The major findings of the AA include the following:²

- For gains in capacity through programs such as PVO-NGO/NRMS (to be consolidated), it is imperative that coordinated programming among donors, governments, service providing NGOs (SPNGOs), and national NGOs be accentuated. Without better integration, capacity building achievements are likely to be *ad hoc* and, therefore, unable to systematically foster reversals in environmental degradation in sub-Saharan Africa.
- Strategic planning for NGO capacity building must involve a balance between activities to identify appropriate NRM strategies and ventures to test methodologies that may be effective in reducing environmental degradation. Pilot programs must promote taking intelligent risks and tackling NRM issues at degrees of complexity and scale that will lead to lessons and capacities that promote NRM impacts and sustainability at, and beyond, the village level.
- Programmatic sustainability in NRM depends on local NGOs achieving institutional and technical credibility. International NGOs working on capacity building and/or action-research NRM initiatives are urged to negotiate flexible programs with donors that will enable local NGO credibility to develop to this end.
- To promote local NGO capacity, donors must increasingly assume a posture of selective risk taking and flexible accountability vis-à-vis NGO grant recipients. This will enable NGOs to obtain the hands-on experience they need to increase their credibility and promote sustainable NRM. Without innovative programming, achievement of both goals will be limited.
- NGOs and donors should be more realistic about what collaboration and partnership *should* and *can* accomplish. Certain situations require significant delegation of authority and responsibility to NGO partners; others call for far closer planning and implementation between Northern and Southern colleagues.
- North-South NGO relationships should be conceived and developed on a continuum: from working relationships, which (if effective) evolve into collaborative relationships, which (again, *if effective*) evolve into partnerships. This process involves increasing the quality and depth of the relationship.
- The terms and qualities of initial relationships between Northern and Southern NGOs should entail negotiation of mutual objectives and consider all the assumptions and constraints (including funding pressures) that the parties bring to the table. This will help avoid the recent phenomenon of "overempowerment," where Northern NGOs assume that Southern NGO implementation capacity exists if Southern colleagues can identify needs and eloquently express a vision. In this case, political correctness may be substituted for objective realities, to the detriment of all partners as well as sustainable NRM.

² Annexes 3 and 4 on pages 47-52 summarize the full set of Project findings for this Analytical Assessment.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Private Voluntary Organizations and Non-Governmental Organizations in Natural Resources Management Support (PVO-NGO/ NRMS) Project was managed by a consortium of three U.S. PVOs — World Learning Inc. (WLI), CARE, and World Wildlife Fund (WWF). Through core funding from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Project worked with NGO consortia in sub-Saharan Africa from 1989 - 95. Cameroon, Madagascar, Mali, and Uganda were the Focal Countries for Project activities, which also included special initiatives under a Regional Program.

This document summarizes an *ex post facto* analytical assessment (AA) prepared over the last two years by partners in the Project.³ Several consultants contributed to the assessment, which also benefitted greatly from the input of the Project's Advisory Board.⁴ This type of collaborative documentary effort by Northern and Southern NGOs appears to be unique for an international NGO-natural resources management (NRM) capacity building activity.

The expectation of the team was that the data generated through Focal Country and Regional Program assessments would lead to definitive conclusions relating to eight themes identified at the PVO-NGO/NRMS Analytical Methods and Strategic Planning Workshop (1993). While the assessment methodology was not quantitatively rigorous (see 4-B), the team's efforts nonetheless yielded data of sufficient quality to enable articulation of conclusions, lessons learned, and recommendations. The individual AAs that are the foundation for this document can be interpreted in different ways. This summary,

by one team member drawing on the team's collective analysis, is one such interpretation, and is, therefore, open to discussion. Section 5-B, for instance, attempts to synthesize findings across four countries to reach some judgment on the relationships between the eight hypotheses tested in the AAs. As the results abstract and compress considerable data, as well as considerable gaps in data, across years of Project experience, they will hopefully generate discussion and debate.

This Project-wide AA extends the discussion of NGO capacity building issues in NRM in Africa to touch on generic concerns related to strengthening NGO capability. These concerns include: 1) contextual issues, such as donor and government enabling environments and how these impact capacity building activities and sustainability in NRM; 2) means to achieve South-South and South-North partnerships while working on NRM; 3) threshold criteria for determining at what point capacities have been sufficiently strengthened so that hands-on NRM can proceed; and 4) types of appraisal methodologies and when they should be undertaken with community groups and NGOs to promote sustainability in NRM.

A number of interesting facts and perspectives emerged from the assessment. Some of these reinforce the central role of NGO capacity building as a strategy to promote improved NRM, while others are less conclusive. What is striking in all of the country AAs is that, despite the many preconditions and pitfalls in NRM, successful capacity building is judged a worthwhile intermediate objective on the pathway to sustainable NRM.

³ *The PVO-NGO/NRMS Analytical Assessment of Capacity Building Issues Involving Non-Governmental Organizations in Natural Resources Management in Africa*, cited here as *The PVO-NGO/NRMS AA*, is available through the PVO-NGO/NRMS Project, 1250 24th Street, NW, 5th Floor, Washington, DC 20037.

⁴ Advisory Board members since 1995 have included: Joan Atherton, Curt Grimm, Josette Lewis, Jim Graham, and Tim Resch, USAID; Bonnie Ricci and William Salmond, WLI; Marshall Burke, CARE; Richard Carroll, Danyelle O'Hara, and Patty Larson, WWF; Kate Newman, John Magistro, and Richard Margoluis, Biodiversity Support Program; Ibrahima Cheick Diong, consultant; Peter Veit, World Resources Institute; Mark Buccowich and Bill Helin, U.S. Department of Agriculture/Forest Service, Forestry Support Program; Lisa Freund-Rosenblatt, InterAction; Caroline Njuki, formerly of CODEL; Jerry Martin, Abt Associates; and Nathalie Johnson, The World Bank.

The major conclusion of the AA is that NGO technical and institutional capacity building (through training, TA, and information support) contributes to improved NRM among NGOs and other participating stakeholders. If we cannot

conclude that capacity building in itself definitely leads to sustainable NRM, we can state that in most African contexts this effort is an essential component of NRM programming for the foreseeable future.

II. CONTEXT FOR NGOs AND NRM IN AFRICA

Throughout the developing world, governments are being forced for fiscal as well as political reasons to assume a different stance than heretofore in facilitating their countries' development. This is the result of changing attitudes among donors about the role that government should play, based on thirty years of by and large disappointing development outcomes, and to new donor attitudes in the post-cold-war era.

The end of the cold war, coupled with expanding international trade and the burgeoning information age, has led to broad recognition of the role that civil society has to play in international development. In many countries still dependent largely on foreign assistance to initiate and sustain development initiatives, the trend is now to encourage decentralization of government activities, and greater provision of what were once exclusively public services by alternative, private entities. As the state is no longer seen as sole planner and service provider, the role of NGOs has come increasingly to the fore over the past five to ten years.

There is now a significant body of literature on NGOs in development (e.g., Micou 1995; FAO 1994; Farrington and Bebbington et al 1993; Wellard and Copestake 1993; Carroll 1992; Fowler, Campbell, and Pratt 1992; Clark 1991; Cernea 1988). A number of publications on NGOs in NRM have appeared over the past decade (e.g., Brown and McGann 1996; Brown et al. 1993; Booth, Njuki, and Otto 1993). There is also voluminous literature on issues pertaining to development/NRM and farmer organizations (e.g., Diagne and Pesche 1995; Blanc-Pamard and Pamrézy 1995; Ouedraogo 1990).

Concurrently, concern with capacity building and the crucial role of NGOs in achieving NRM has become *de rigueur* in international fora. Many development actors can claim involvement in this sector because it covers such a broad range of activities, in both technical and organizational development. On the technical side, activities include: professional conservationists acquiring skills in conducting biodiversity surveys; facilitating participatory rural appraisals (PRA) in buffer zones, or in rural areas where biodiversity values are low but where NRM is critical; and working on-farm with local resource users to identify food crop options that are resistant to predation and acceptable to cultural consumption criteria and/or technologies to safeguard production. On the organizational development front, capacity building embraces training in project design, proposal writing, fund-raising, and financial management, as well as training in participatory forms of management and how to stimulate fundamental changes in the way an organization functions.

On a rhetorical level at least, donors are almost uniformly supportive of NGO capacity building to achieve development ends. A recent USAID study went so far as to recommend that "USAID senior managers...encourage project officers to consider capacity building as an explicit policy objective, and...include appropriate human and financial resources for this purpose in activity budgets" (USAID 1995c, 55).⁵

The World Bank, too, is placing increased emphasis on helping NGOs play a more effective role in development activities (Clark 1996). It does so principally by encouraging governments to engage in

⁵ On the NGO side, under USAID's Central African Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE), implemented by World Wildlife Fund and other NGO partners, WWF has proposed that work with the African Forest Action Network (AFAN) focus on organizational development and process-oriented community participation, the better to promote the conservation and sustainable use of forest resources in nine Central African countries.

dialogue with NGOs and using its influence to promote policies and legal environments favorable to NGOs. In fact, the Bank is currently engaged in identifying global standards and best practices for the NGO policy environment.⁶ It also attempts to include NGOs in research and analyses of economic and other policy issues, and sometimes conducts poverty assessments collaboratively with NGOs.⁷

Northern PVOs and NGOs commonly claim that their activities contribute to capacity building, even when that is not a central programmatic concern. In a recent survey in eight European countries, Canada, and the United States, well over ninety percent of the respondents said they engaged in activities specifically designed to "build up the organizational capacity" of Southern NGO partners (James 1994, 1:11). Of those not claiming capacity building efforts, most were relatively small NGOs or had no field offices.

Further, some Northern NGOs advocate and pursue the creation of national or regional networks of Southern NGOs as a form of capacity building through information exchange. In this vein, for the past several years, InterAction has invited representatives of national NGO networks to its annual Forum. This said, few NGOs have the specific mandate to strengthen NGO capacities in NRM *per se*.

The intent of this document is to build on past efforts, literature, and experience to examine whether there is in fact — as opposed to in theory — a link between strengthened NGO capacity and improved NRM. While drawing principally on the experience of the PVO-NGO/NRMS Project, the document refers to other NGO and donor approaches where relevant. So, too, this assessment explores the notion that improved NRM leads to sustainable NRM.

Current conventional wisdom is that NGO capacity building is both appropriate and necessary to achieve NRM in Africa. Yet important questions remain unanswered: Based on empirical data and analysis, is NGO capacity building mandatory to achieve sustainable NRM? If so, what types of capacity building are required, among whom, when, and at what levels? Finally, can a blanket statement be made about the benefits of NGO capacity building, or must one qualify under what conditions capacity building should be employed as a strategy to achieve and sustain NRM? Answers to these questions will hopefully help readers determine under what conditions NGO capacity building must occur, or conversely, when capacity building may be subsidiary to, or bypassed in favor of, implementing activities with resource-user communities.

⁶ Like the World Bank, USAID, United Nations agencies, and other donors speak of the need to help create enabling environments for NGO activity by, for example, encouraging developing-country governments to create more favorable regulatory and tax climates for their operation and support (Clark 1996; Fowler, Campbell, and Pratt 1992, 27; USAID 1995b, 9-15; cf. Cernea 1988, 50-51).

⁷ For example, one PVO-NGO/NRMS partner, the Conseil Malgache des Organisations de Développement et l'Environnement (COMODE), undertook a study for the World Bank on how partnerships are approached in the agriculture, forestry, livestock, and rural infrastructure sectors of Madagascar. In Mali, Harmonie du Développement au Sahel (HDS), a member of the national consortium Comité de Coordination des Actions des Organisations Non-Gouvernementales (CCA/ONG), undertook an assessment of hunger in greater Mopti for the World Bank. Several spin-off consultancies with other donors have arisen for HDS from this work.

III. THE PVO-NGO/NRMS PROJECT

An omnibus Natural Resources Management Support (NRMS) Project was authorized by USAID in August 1987 as the primary vehicle for the Africa Bureau to support the expansion of NRM programming in accordance with Congressional guidance under the Development Fund for Africa. Priority technical areas in the Bureau's strategy included: soil erosion/loss of soil fertility; loss of vegetation; conservation; and biological diversity. The NRMS Project included a modest component of assistance to encourage U.S. PVOs and host country NGOs to design and implement NRM activities in Africa, which subsequently became the PVO-NGO/NRMS Project.

In September 1989, USAID signed a \$1.8 million Cooperative Agreement⁸ with The Experiment in International Living (IEIL, now WLI) and its partners, CARE and WWF, to carry out a two-year program to support the involvement of PVOs/NGOs in NRM in sub-Saharan Africa. In September 1991, a \$1.4 million amendment and extension was negotiated. Two years later, \$1 million was added to the Project for analytical assessments, transition and linkage to other funding sources, and a small grants program.

The goal of the PVO-NGO/NRMS Project was to strengthen the operational and organizational capabilities of local and international PVOs/NGOs to support actions that would reverse environmental degradation in sub-Saharan Africa — that is, capacity building. **NGO capacity building in NRM** refers specifically to the systematic attempt to transfer skills, information, methods, and tools to NGO beneficiaries to enable them to design and implement appropriate and feasible NRM actions.

The principal objectives of the Project were to provide training, technical assistance (TA), and information support services. These would lead to: 1)

broader awareness among PVOs/NGOs of NRM needs and priorities, and increased organizational commitment to effective NRM action; 2) enhanced PVO/NGO technical capabilities in NRM (emphasizing soil fertility and conservation, and vegetative cover and biodiversity conservation); and 3) strengthened PVO/NGO capacities in project design, management, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) (see Annex 1).

Through its Focal Country Program, the Project worked with NGO consortia in four countries: Cameroon (PVO-NGO/NRMS/Cameroon and subsequently the Joint Environment Unit [JEU]), Madagascar (Conseil Malgache des Organisations de Développement et l'Environnement [COMODE]), Mali (Comité de Coordination des Actions Non-Gouvernementales [the CCA/ONG]), and Uganda (PVO-NGO/NRMS/Uganda and subsequently the Natural Resources Management [NARM] Forum). The countries were selected because of their agro-ecological diversity, which represents the range of sub-Saharan African environments and challenges, and their different levels of NGO empowerment. Through its Regional Program, the Project participated in activities in another twenty-five countries, including several in Asia and the South Pacific.

The Project's purpose was to strengthen the technical and organizational capacity of NGOs to design and implement both proven and innovative approaches to NRM. This entailed increasing their interest in and commitment to NRM concerns at regional, national, and local levels. The purpose was realized through TA, training, information services, pilot and demonstration projects, and subproject mechanisms to support activities related to (among others) soil fertility and conservation, agroforestry, and integrating conservation and development (chiefly through buffer zone management [BZM]).

⁸ AFR-0467-A-00-9057-00.

The Cooperative Agreement was carried out under the direction of a U.S.-based Management Consortium consisting of WLI, CARE, and WWF coordinators as well as a full-time project director and program associate. The original Project provided a role for PVO Associates, which in theory were on call to provide program guidance and advice to the Management Consortium. Some Associates were involved in special and regional activities.

Success was to be measured at the end of the Project's initial two years (September 1991) by the following indicators:

- PVOs/NGOs working on a wider scope and on more NRM issues;
- PVOs/NGOs devoting a greater proportion of their resources to NRM-related issues;
- PVOs/NGOs having greater outreach to resource users per share of resources allocated to NRM issues;
- PVOs/NGOs improving the technical quality of their operations;
- PVOs/NGOs demonstrating improved staff skills in NRM; and
- PVOs/NGOs showing greater credibility with the donor community, as expressed in an increased number of funding requests granted.

An evaluation of the Project conducted by Chemonics International (1992) noted that:

At mid-term, the project is successfully achieving its stated objectives....in the four countries in which it operates.... Together these countries encompass a wide range of ecological and environmental diversity, have appropriate PVO/NGO and USAID representation, and reflect a broad geographic and linguistic spread.

[The project] has been receptive to the variations in each country. As a result, the project's activities have evolved differently in each country.

The Country Working Groups (CWGs) have generally operated in a highly participatory manner, providing a way to reflect wide regional variations within countries, and promoting concepts of self-governance and popular participation. Over time the CWGs are becoming increasingly effective advocacy organizations, able to partici-

pate in and positively influence national NRM policy-making processes.

Project mechanisms such as workshops, seminars, and small pilot projects have increased the environmental consciousness of members of the CWGs, along with their technical and institutional effectiveness to address environmental issues.

The integration of women into the project is significant at all levels.

The complementary experience and skills of the three Management Consortium members — WLI, CARE, and WWF — helped create an "internal project enabling environment." No single NRM technical or institutional development concern thus predominated in developing either the Focal Country or Regional Program portfolios.

Emphasis on either institutional and/or technical capacity building as defined by the beneficiaries (in this case, the NGOs within each CWG) was a fundamental Project objective. The project director provided information and advice to Project partners so that they could make decisions about addressing present and future NRM needs. This meant helping the NGO community first to prioritize needs, and then to develop action plans with specific subgrant or subcontract activities to address the priorities.

Over time, each Focal Country Program assumed a unique character. In the early years, Cameroon and Madagascar focused on institution building and creating links between the capital-based CWG and outlying regions. Mali and Uganda, in contrast, chose to emphasize hands-on NRM activities through grants programming. This bifurcation had nothing to do with the Management Consortium.

The role of the Focal Country CWGs (or consortia) varied in style and substance. While the original Project assumption had been that a Management Consortium member agency would likely be involved in country program management, in Madagascar and Mali the NGO communities nominated a national NGO consortium to serve as the country lead agency (CLA) for the Project. In Madagascar, that consortium (COMODE) was formed over the course of the Project's first year. This reflected the local priority of promoting effective NRM by establishing a forum for information

exchange among NGOs and coordination of NGOs vis-à-vis government and donors. Malagasy NGOs recognized the need for coherence and identity as a community as a precursor to expanding their NRM activities on the ground. Only once COMODE's membership had defined the consortium's institutional nature and operational *raison d'être* did member NGOs turn to hands-on ventures.

The 100-member CCA/ONG was nominated by its peers (including CCA/ONG members and others) as Mali's lead agency. Whereas in Madagascar there was no precedent for NGO coordination in NRM, the CCA/ONG had six years of experience in this capacity. Emphasis in Mali was therefore placed on microproject activities. The same was true in Uganda, where NGOs sought to avoid potentially divisive discussions about NGO leadership in 1989, because the country was just emerging from protracted civil strife. Similarly, in 1989 Cameroonian

NGOs were content to focus more on project activities than on the politics of management, allowing WLI, CARE, and WWF to assume lead agency responsibilities.

The Project's Regional Program complemented the Focal Country Programs. For example, it funded workshops on BZM, PRA, and land use management. It was hoped that by creating high profile regional fora around key thematic issues in the Focal Countries, awareness would be raised and activities catalyzed.

Finally, the style and substance of the programs in Cameroon and Uganda were strongly influenced by the fact that the country coordinators throughout the Project were women. Women as natural resource users were highlighted in both these countries. It is also noteworthy that COMODE's president for three years was a woman, although most NGOs in Madagascar are managed by men.

IV. THE ANALYTICAL ASSESSMENT

A. Why an Analytical Assessment?

This assessment was undertaken for three practical and programmatic reasons: to gauge the likelihood of sustaining Project impacts, to complement USAID's research agenda, and to help shape future NRM efforts through an understanding of lessons learned.

In the post-United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) (1992) era, discussion of NRM is usually framed in terms of sustainability. However, when the PVO-NGO/NRMS Project was designed and negotiated in 1988-89, sustainability was only starting to be introduced into the development dialogue. Indeed, neither the Project's goal nor objectives mention this issue (see section 3). Throughout Project implementation, as the spirit and politics of sustainability have engaged development practitioners worldwide, Project partners became increasingly concerned with this question as well and felt that an assessment of the Project could yield important data.

Changes within USAID complemented this new focus. By 1991, the office with which the Project had been most closely associated (Africa Technical Resources Division, subsequently Analysis, Research and Technical Support [ARTS/FARA]) was changing its mandate. No longer would ARTS/FARA support operational activities; rather, it became oriented to a research and analytical agenda, seeking to understand the context and conditions under which NRM interventions do or do not work in sub-Saharan Africa (USAID 1991). As USAID considered the Project primarily operational, there did not appear to be justification to continue the initiative under ARTS/FARA. Nor was it apparent, given USAID's restructuring, that another division could pick up the Project, despite an evaluation that strongly urged Project expansion into other African countries (Chemonics 1992).

Lengthy discussions between USAID staff and the Management Consortium explored how the Project could continue while it sought further funding to replicate its activities in other countries. The ARTS/FARA project manager and PVO-NGO/NRMS project director eventually agreed on an intriguing possibility. Consistent with concerns about sustainability and ARTS/FARA's new agenda, why not assess what was productive in the training, TA, and information support the Project provided? Project actors themselves would undertake the assessment, which USAID and others could use to refine strategies and methodologies in the future, so that PVO-NGO/NRMS (and other projects like it) could offer better products.

Thus the AA came to be the primary activity in the current phase of the Project. The AA was coupled with a transition and linkages component, whose objective was to establish relations with other donor sources, and with a small grants program for innovative Collaborative Analytical and Dissemination Activities (CADA).

B. Methodology

The methodology for the AA was designed to deal with several major challenges, including a lack of baseline data and the Project's complex scope. As unfortunately is the case with many projects, NGO or otherwise, adequate baselines against which to monitor progress over time were not a priority of PVO-NGO/NRMS at its outset. While Project documents referred to M&E, they did *not* indicate what kinds of systems *were to be* put in place, presumably because the Project originally was a two-year pilot activity, focused on implementation to generate momentum so that activities would attract additional funding and be sustained. Given these circumstances, the AA team adopted *ex post facto* assessment techniques, while not ideal, as the

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most practical and expedient option. The reader is left to judge how well these techniques actually worked.

Another significant challenge involved trying to assess the impact of a multitude of activities implemented over an extended period of time, at numerous levels, involving many actors, from the dual perspectives of capacity building and NRM. Over the years, the Project had become a technical and organizational development initiative reflected in four distinct country programs, each with myriad project-level activities, plus a Regional Program and briefly, a Special Situations Fund (see Annex 2). Given the capacity building nature of PVO-NGO/NRMS, many of the Project's most interesting impacts may arguably have been at process levels — where the type and quality of interactions is crucial in enabling certain activities and results to occur and be positively reinforced over time. Attempts to quantify process-level impacts are always difficult, and often frustrating, as they must delve into the subjective areas of the quality of relationships, communication, shared perception, vision, and so on, between both individuals and institutions.

Since the purpose of the AA was not to rigorously demonstrate anything particular about the Project, but rather to offer insights into the implications of NGO capacity building and different ways of achieving it, the methodology falls under the category of *ex post facto nonexperimental* designs familiar in social science research. This approach, which emphasizes changes at a cognitive level (attitudes and knowledge) translated into changes at a behavioral level as measured by "expert" judgments, is consistent with social science methods of evaluating the impact of training activities (Weiss 1972).

To be effective, an *ex post facto* assessment must take into account all factors that might have affected the status quo, as it estimates what the situation would be had particular services not been provided. The main limitation of such assessments is that observations are confounded by a range of variables. The multiple interactions to which NGOs participating in PVO-NGO/NRMS activities have been exposed complicated attempts to associate any measure of increased capacity directly with a Project-supported activity. For instance,

how could we attribute an apparent increase in NGO capacity to a particular Project training program when we knew that the NGO attended other, similar training sessions? Because many NGOs were involved in activities supported by a number of donors, the probability of mutual reinforcement could not be excluded.

Further, the link between any increases in NGO capacity in the short term and longer-term impacts on a biophysical level may take years to fully materialize. Attempts to assess anything beyond the Project's proximate goal — increased NGO capacity as indicated by any cognitive or behavioral gains — would miss the point, as biophysical impacts were not intended to be the primary Project outputs.

Given the lack of experimental controls that would have been needed to establish firm causal relationships between a Project-supported activity and a particular result, this assessment settled for proximate measures to assess short-term impact: was the Project successful in setting in motion certain processes that will create the conditions that lead to improved NRM, if not sustainable NRM? Were participants in Project activities better off because of those activities than they were before? The assessment of eight hypotheses, taken cumulatively, attempts to answer this question.

A caveat necessarily applies to any consideration of the results. While we chose to address Project impact through an *ex post facto* assessment of eight hypotheses, no single hypothesis can realistically be expected to indicate that capacity building in and of itself will lead to improved or sustainable NRM. Considerable, subjective interpretation of the data on each hypothesis is required, and assertion of any synergy between or among hypotheses is even trickier to gauge. This, however, was the challenge faced by the AA team, the adequacy of whose interpretation is left up to the reader to judge.

A full explanation of the methodology employed in the AA appears in the report on *The PVO-NGO/NRMS Analytical Methods and Strategic Planning Workshop* (PVO-NGO/NRMS 1993).⁹ A summary of the methodology's process and techniques follows.

⁹ The report, is available through PVO-NGO/NRMS.

Teams from the four Focal Countries worked intermittently over almost two years on the AAs.¹⁰ They assessed the Project's hypotheses, assumptions, strategies, methods, and activities, trying to determine if these had strengthened NGO capacities and, if so, whether that in turn had enabled more effective NRM to occur. Attribution of any changes observed had to consider the role that non-Project variables could have played.

The following tables illustrate the categories of information the AA teams collected to assess

Project hypotheses relating to *cognitive, behavioral, biophysical, and human welfare impact indicators*. Table 1 regroups the major categories of indicators, illustrating the kinds of impact information the teams attempted to identify for each of the eight hypotheses. Table 2 reflects the indicators established for one hypothesis, in this case, *Emphasizing bottom-up approaches led to strengthening NGO capacities and better, more sustainable NRM*.

¹⁰ See Mubbala, Sebukeera, and Makiika 1995; and Tanjong, Atanga, and Nuwanyakpa 1995; COMODE, 1996. Partners in Cameroon and Uganda finished their first drafts of the assessments within the original timeframe. Although they subsequently revised their texts, both were able to adhere to the terms of reference consensually agreed upon. In Madagascar, COMODE completed the AA with an additional one-and-a-half years of time; a reading of its AA illustrates the seriousness with which it took on the task. The CCA/ONG was unable to finalize Mali's AA. This is particularly unfortunate because PVO-NGO/NRMS/Mali undertook a broad range of activities, many of which arguably contributed to NRM and, moreover, to lessons learned. References to Project work in Mali are based primarily on the author's experience with the Focal Country Program.

Table 1 Analytical Framework

Categories of Indicators			
Cognitive	Behavioral	Biophysical/Human Welfare	
		Cognitive or Measurable	
		Qualitative	Quantitative
<p>Information disseminated →</p> <p>Writing/documentation;</p> <p>Knowledge: do people understand the issues? →</p> <p>Has the information been assimilated? →</p>	<p>Increased use of functional skills: →</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project proposals written; - Attending international fora; - training others; - Public interaction; - Letters to editor, etc. <p>Appropriate actions taken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Projects: Soil and water conservation, BZM, PRA, etc. → <p>Advocacy activities →</p>	<p>People note environmental trends and impacts as a function of information received.</p> <p>People note biophysical change and/or human welfare (can we attribute any biophysical change, which in turn were results of any or all of the eight themes?)</p> <p>People note improved human welfare by citing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Less disease Less hunger Less environmental depletion More literacy More awareness Reduced conflict More security (land tenure, economic) Increased economic welfare 	<p>To Be Determined over time</p> <p>To Be Determined over time</p>

Table 1 Analytical Framework (Continued)

Categories of Indicators			
Cognitive	Behavioral	Biophysical/Human Welfare	
		Cognitive or Measurable	
		Qualitative	Quantitative
<p>Is the information appropriately acted upon? →</p>	<p>Changes in strategic approach: →</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NGOs niche Comparative advantage realized Testing methodology (working with new techniques, for example: PRA with CBOs, improved tavy [slash and burn agriculture], NGO/CBO collaboration) 	<p>People note biophysical change and/or human welfare (can we attribute any biophysical change to behavioral or cognitive change, which in turn were results of any or all of the eight themes or approaches?)</p> <p>People note improved human welfare by citing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Less disease Less hunger Less environmental depletion More literacy More awareness Reduced conflict More security (land tenure, economic) Increased economic welfare 	<p>To be Determined</p>

Table 2 - Hypothesis 5: Emphasizing Bottom-up Approaches Contributed to Strengthening NGO Capacity and Better, More Sustainable NRM.

Issues	Indicators
Empowering country institutional structures	Increased lobbying Increased advocacy activities Inclusiveness (membership)
Targeting CBOs as a priority	Increased advocacy Increased solidarity
Empowering zones	Broad-based participation (across class, gender) Program, plan implemented
Empowering NGOs/CBOs	Funding provided Communication between levels (CBOs, NGOs, Government, Donors) Newspapers, radios, TV, official workshops Breadth of communication: rural areas -> capital -> DC Volume and type of correspondence

C. Notable Features of the Assessment

- The assessment was a joint effort between NGO representatives from four African countries and American colleagues working under the umbrella of the Project. This type of collaborative, analytical documentary undertaking appears to be unique for an international NGO/NRM capacity building activity.
- The assessment reflects the best effort of the team to be faithful to the methodology that was established to analyze Project impact vis-à-vis initial objectives.
- To maximize the integrity of the data and preserve personal voice, the assessment in each individual *PVO-NGO/NRMS AA* is as the analysts wrote it, albeit with minor editing.
- The *PVO-NGO/NRMS AA*, along with this synthesis, are internally critical. While the analysts present their assessments of the impact of NGO capacity building activities on NRM in their respective nations, the job of the author as project

(and AA) director has been to assess, and synthesize, the assessments.

- The approach builds empirically and inductively from project-level details to generate broader conclusions about the relevance of NGO/NRM capacity building in Africa.
- The AA is not an evaluation — and this distinction is not semantic. Its intent was to go beyond reporting inputs and outputs and to address issues that evaluations normally do not cover: namely, the implications and relevance of capacity building strategies, approaches, and tools to promote NRM. Project experience is used to articulate lessons on broader theoretical issues related to NRM and on the role that capacity building plays. The future of the Project did not depend on the results of this assessment, as is traditionally the case with an evaluation.
- The AA also yielded important information, presented in section 5-C, on a number of issues that fell outside the themes of the eight hypotheses.

V. HYPOTHESES AND FINDINGS

A. Hypotheses

The AA gathered evidence on the extent to which eight key features of the PVO-NGO/NRMS Project contributed to strengthening NGO capacity, leading to more effective and potentially sustainable NRM. The assumption that these features *did* so contribute provided the AA team, *ex post facto*, with its working hypotheses:

1. The structure of national consortia and regional chapters (zones) contributed to strengthening NGO capacity and better, more sustainable NRM.
2. Training programs contributed to strengthening NGO capacity and better, more sustainable NRM.
3. Regional Program activities contributed to strengthening NGO capacity and better, more sustainable NRM.
4. Efforts to foster NGO collaboration and networking contributed to strengthening NGO capacity and better, more sustainable NRM.
5. Emphasizing bottom-up approaches contributed to strengthening NGO capacity and better, more sustainable NRM.
6. Using service providing NGOs (SPNGOs) contributed to strengthening NGO capacity and better, more sustainable NRM.
7. Information support activities contributed to strengthening NGO capacity and better, more sustainable NRM.
8. Technical assistance contributed to strengthening NGO capacity and better, more sustainable NRM.

Section B below presents findings on each hypothesis. Many of the lessons learned can readily be converted into recommendations for various parties concerned with NGOs and NRM.

Annex 3 presents findings for the eight program features, or hypotheses, and strengthened NGO capacity leading to improved NRM. Six other sets of issues and findings considered relevant to the Project which had not been formulated as hypotheses are presented in Annex 4.

B. Findings

1. National Consortia and Regional Chapters (Hypothesis 1)

Finding 1-1: National consortia, and in a number of instances regional chapters, proved very effective in facilitating information exchange and, to a lesser extent, training. National consortia were more effective vehicles for hands-on grant funding than regional chapters.

The data for this theme are equivocal. Information exchange was generally enhanced through the consortium/chapter structure, while training services were only occasionally facilitated by this construct. Hands-on grant funding was not increased through regional chapters, as chapter identity vis-à-vis the respective national consortia was often weak. While certain cognitive and behavioral changes may be attributed to the roles that consortia and chapters had, biophysical impacts are difficult to ascribe to these structures.

In the one country where an existing NGO consortium was functioning well — Mali, and the case of the CCA/ONG in 1989 — the operational capacity of the consortium allowed the Project to focus primarily on pilot NRM activities. As a broad spectrum of activities was undertaken, a number of

which had to do with field testing technologies and village-level resource management methods, it is not unreasonable to assume that the existence of the consortium enabled more biophysical impact than may have been the case in other countries.

The PVO-NGO/NRMS partnership with national NGO consortia in Cameroon, Madagascar, Mali, and Uganda went beyond what was envisioned in the Management Consortium's original 1989 proposal, which conceived of the CWGs as consultative bodies, "recommending to the Consortium mechanisms for coordination and decision making, NRM action plan priorities, and the organizations and activities to be supported with the project funds". Instead, it became evident early on that certain economies of scale could be realized by working more closely with consortia rather than targeting individual NGOs. Thus, empowering the CWGs as institutions became a key objective over time in three of the four countries. The CWGs, and the CLAs they designated to manage Project activities, were given the authority as well as the responsibility for making all programming decisions. Project management accepted the risks that this implied, holding true to the original concept of a decentralized Project "with the majority of activities and programming decisions taking place in-country." Enhanced CWG/CLA roles would also help assure that most Project funds were spent in Africa, given that the administrative structure of the Project was to be sparse and efficient (EIL 1989).

The Management Consortium added value to this decentralized approach by developing with its partners the criteria for establishing in-country NRM priorities and the steps for addressing priorities. Rather than mandate activities for short-term NRM gains, Project staff felt it was preferable strategically to establish a potentially sustainable institutional framework for NRM planning and decision making. Furthermore, the first years of success in working with national consortia demonstrated that these bodies could serve as coordinating mechanisms for NGO participation in ambitious action-research initiatives. Clearly, the Project could also capitalize on consortia capacity to disseminate information, organize trainings, and mobilize other collaborative efforts among member NGOs.

In 1996, each consortium supported by PVO-NGO/NRMS is functioning to some degree. Although the body in Uganda underwent a series of frustrated attempts to secure long-term funding through the USAID Mission and is now largely moribund, in all four Focal Countries the national entity that the Project worked with remains a viable mechanism for structuring future NGO/NRM programs.

Finding 1-2: The national consortia worked best when they devolved authority to the regions. Lack of technical capacity and professional staff (who could devote more time and resources than volunteers) in the regions were apparent obstacles to increased decentralization. Reluctance on the part of national consortium coordinators to dilute their authority probably also played a part.

A national consortium/regional chapter model can work well in information and training service provision if the regional nodes have the capacity and will to disseminate the knowledge and materials they receive. Also, local NGOs need to buy into the structure and believe that the regions are serving them. For this to be achieved, the center must decentralize authority, particularly in terms of financing. This, however, is easier said than done.

In the case of COMODE, the NARM Forum, and PVO-NGO/NRMS/Cameroon, regional devolution (or empowerment) cannot be said to have been satisfactorily achieved. The extreme northern chapter representative in Cameroon felt, along with other chapter members, that much potential was not realized due to devolutionary bottlenecks. Also, in none of these cases was the regional focal point a professional, that is, being paid for her/his services. This naturally constrained the amount of effort invested in the position.

In Mali, regional chapters did not exist. Equitable geographic spread of activities thus depended on the CCA/ONG. The apparent, relative underrepresentation of NGOs from Region 1 of Mali in the CCA/ONG, and civil unrest in the north that inhibited south-north travel from 1991-95, meant that the national body may not have fully met the gamut of NGO NRM opportunities and needs which could have been addressed.

Some NGOs felt reliance on a national focal point was advantageous. For example, as politics can be played at local as well as national levels, certain NGOs in Uganda believed funding opportunities would be greater if they worked directly with PVO-NGO/NRMS/Kampala rather than through a regional chapter representative.

Perceived lack of structural capacity in the regions, as well as the desire of national consortium leaders not to relinquish too much authority to NGOs in the regions, both apparently hindered financial decentralization.

2. Training Programs (Hypothesis 2)

Finding 2-1: Some training programs — notably, in project design, financial management, accounting, and certain technical topics — had significant cognitive and behavioral effects.

Data are unequivocal that selected trainings had major cognitive and behavioral impacts. Training in project design and/or proposal preparation proved one of the thorniest yet most necessary services sponsored by PVO-NGO/NRMS. NGOs very often see a positive correlation between learning proposal writing skills and receiving project funding. They are thus eager for training as a means to an end and tend to focus on the *form* of proposal preparation, rather than seeing good proposal content coming out of a strong design. Where the distinction between the mechanics of design (including all aspects of technical and social feasibility) and the mechanics of writing and packaging was emphasized, cognitive benefits from the trainings were greatest.

Even when proposals met the selection criteria negotiated between the Project and the national consortium in a given Focal Country, surprises sometimes followed funding. Several seemingly solid proposals submitted by well-respected NGOs or community-based organizations (CBOs) with strong structure and leadership, for ostensibly suitable activities, proved less straightforward during implementation. In the first example, funding was approved in part because the NGO was perceived as a strong service provider (see Hypothesis 6). In all cases, the national consortium project selection committee believed the activity would succeed because the proposing NGO was credible and presumably had assessed project feasibility.

In Mali, an apparently sound live fencing venture ran into problems because project designers had not adequately considered the social feasibility of planting and sustaining the fence at a women's agricultural cooperative. Half of the women believed the live fence would grow, while the other half did not. The result was that about half the fence was maintained and therefore grew, while the other half did not.

This project was very appealing because it was a pilot effort testing an innovative NRM technology with high replication potential in south central Mali. The activity had more to do with that experimentation, and with supporting the collaboration between a Northern and a Southern NGO (Africare and Groupe de Recherche et d'Applications Techniques [GRAT]), than with probing social feasibility. Whether the women *wanted* the project, and/or believed that it was *technically feasible*, was never at issue during project selection. Whether the two NGOs possessed the design skills required to maximize the probability of successful implementation also was not questioned, as they both were well respected. However, the inability of the proposers to identify constraints along with mitigation measures — that is, TA or extension services to address the fact that half the women did not believe the live fence would work (which, in fact, was false) — affected success. *Had PVO-NGO/NRMS mandated that all NGOs in Mali participate in project design training workshops that emphasized feasibility analysis prior to implementing Project-funded field activities, would this have made a difference in the results of this pilot project?*

In Cameroon's Northern Province, the establishment of a public garden in the city of Garoua proved far more complex than expected for similar reasons. The idea of a public garden in a dry Sahelian town, which had broad support from the mayor and representatives of a well-placed local NGO, Association Ecologique du Cameroun (AEC), seemed like a sure winner for the people of Garoua. All that was needed was the land, to be given by the city council; funds, to be provided from PVO/NGO-NRMS; and the know-how, labor, and some other contributions from AEC.

The land to host the garden was obtained from the town council, albeit with no formal transaction to

legalize the transfer. A barbed wire fence was erected around the site. Trees were planted.

Drainage trenches and a well were dug. PVO-NGO/NRMS disbursed half the funds allocated. Then, although the town had long enjoyed government favor as the home of Cameroon's late president, activities were stopped abruptly by the state. The reason? Numerous parties were claiming tenure rights or ownership of the garden land, including the state (through the divisional officer), the city council (through the mayor and AEC), and a private individual (the son of the late president).

Thus, while this project appeared ecologically and conceptually sound and feasible, it could not be fully executed because of the land tenure situation. Had land tenure been examined during project design, it is unlikely that the proposal would have moved forward. But an analysis was not done expressly because the project seemed so eminently feasible: it had the full support of local authorities, in particular the mayor, so how could it possibly not have been viable?

The Project learned that, when land issues are introduced in project proposals, the social feasibility of even the most seemingly innocuous initiative must not be taken for granted. The ability to assess feasibility is, however, a skill that generally can only be obtained through training. *Had PVO-NGO/NRMS mandated that all NGOs in Cameroon participate in project design training workshops that emphasized feasibility analysis prior to implementing Project-funded field activities, would this have made a difference in the results of this project?*

Our final example involves a Ugandan CBO that had gone through Project trainings in project design, financial management and accounting, and agroforestry. It designed an initiative that appeared, on the surface, to represent the priorities of a local women's association (Kawoko Kikaawa cf. Annex 2) near Masaka: establishing an agroforestry activity on a parcel of land allocated to the women's group by men. During a later site visit, it was clear that the integration of trees into a field of food crops had succeeded; the trees were growing nicely, as were the food crops. The women claimed that productivity on agroforestry fields was higher than on fields that did

not integrate tree crops, and all seemed very happy.

On closer questioning, however, it emerged that the agroforested field area had in fact previously been a forest patch. The women had cleared the natural forest, then planted tree saplings and food crops. In the process of clearing, moreover, two women had been bitten by snakes and died.

Several lessons sprang from this experience. While the women's group had secured funding for an agroforestry activity at a time when agroforestry was being hailed by many in Uganda as a development panacea (1990 - 91), the need to consider feasibility for even this popular kind of undertaking apparently had not been fully impressed upon the group. The women assumed that as long as they proposed agroforestry, their proposal would be approved. Had they fully described their plan in their proposal, the activity would not have been funded, because cutting down a natural forest to replant tree species integrated with food crops could not be considered appropriate from a NRM perspective. The point is that the women's group had learned the proposal writing skills necessary to present a project successfully. *Had PVO-NGO/NRMS mandated that all NGOs in Uganda participate in project design training workshops that emphasized feasibility analysis prior to implementing Project-funded field activities, would this have made a difference in the results of this project?*

All this said, however, NGOs that do not undergo project design training can and sometimes do have the capacity to design appropriate and feasible activities. One example from Cameroon involved addressing serious soil erosion exacerbated by hilly terrain, population growth, and cultural beliefs. In the project area, most of the valleys and lowlands are occupied by coffee plantations, so food crop farms are established on slopes that have been over-cultivated as the land:people ratio has declined over time. Pregnant women are not allowed to plough across the slopes, out of a belief that a breech birth will result. Hence, the traditional practice of farming along the slope, a practice that encourages rapid surface run-off. The area has experienced high rates of soil erosion, reduced soil fertility, and, in recent years, a rapid, continuous decline in annual crop yields.

To address this situation, the Centre de Développement des Communautés Villageoises (CDCV) prepared a soil conservation initiative. The focus was to encourage farmers to change their cultural attitudes and develop more appropriate soil conservation techniques, thereby enabling more intensive land-use systems in the face of increasing population pressure. The main objectives were to introduce ridging across the slope and the application of agroforestry technology as soil conservation measures.

After five training workshops in each of five villages, five demonstration plots were established. Ninety percent of the 638 farmers trained adopted the new techniques fully or partially on their personal farms. Older women tended to embrace the new techniques more readily than younger women, indicating that fear of breech births was still an issue, although participants tended to cite labor intensiveness as the chief constraint to change. Nonetheless, adoptees interviewed all agreed that yields from improved plots were higher than from plots managed by traditional methods.

The lesson from all these examples is that even the most straightforward project concept may present unexpected implementation challenges rendering the activity potentially inappropriate and unfeasible. NRM programs that support field activities will greatly benefit from incorporating project design training, stressing feasibility analysis and mitigation measures, before projects are implemented. This lesson holds equally for Northern and Southern NGOs. Also, as is argued below (Findings 5-4, 9-2, and 13-2), one cannot assume social feasibility simply because a community-based NGO is the proposer. If NRM is the issue, and sustainable NRM at that, social and technical feasibility must be demonstrated along with empowerment through bottom-up approaches for sustainable NRM, versus just participatory development, to be achieved.

Finding 2-2: Training individuals did not necessarily strengthen their organizations. In several cases, individuals trained did not convey what they had learned to others. In others, it appeared

that training increased the market value of individuals, making it possible for them to leave their organizations. It is important to address how skills and knowledge acquired through training actually will be used.

While Project training seems to have been of high quality, it remains difficult to discern the long-term institutional impact of trainings. That said, training often appeared to have major cognitive and behavioral impacts on individual participants.

The major problem is "information recycling," or how trainees share their new skills with others. A clear lesson from both PVO-NGO/NRMS/Uganda and COMODE is that achieving an eventual spread effect within organizations was not sufficiently addressed when selecting trainees for different programs. A widespread finding was that even those attending NGO staff meetings seldom report back to their colleagues on what transpired. It is essential that a plan for information recycling exist and be monitored both internally and externally. NGOs proposing training participants should be asked in advance how information recycling will occur, and how the training will be applied practically. Expectations about what the training will and won't be should be clarified in advance, on paper, for both the sponsoring organization and the trainees' parent organizations.

Cameroon, Madagascar, and Uganda noted the issue of trained personnel moving on to other employment because their marketability was enhanced. In the case of Madagascar, we can say that the PRA training may have still been beneficial, as the individual in question continued working within the NGO community.

3. Regional Program Activities (Hypothesis 3)

Finding 3-1: Many Regional Program initiatives catalyzed significant, collaborative, follow-up NRM activities.¹¹ These often complemented Focal Country Programs, bringing a broader set of issues and methods into the purview of those programs, impacting also on the Project agenda itself.

¹¹ See Koopman (1995) for further information.

The PVO-NGO/NRMS Regional Program can be assessed in two ways: by examining the quality and integrity of each activity independently, and by looking at the contribution of Regional Program activities as a whole to the Project.

Individual regional events had clear catalytic effects. As examples, the BZM Workshop, the Community Based Natural Resources Management (CBNRM) Workshop, the Land Use Management Courses, the PRA Training Workshop, the Pastoral Sector Workshop, and the Integrated Pest Management Workshop all led to significant follow-up activities on a country and subregional basis.

The BZM, CBNRM, Pastoral Sector, and PRA Workshops in particular focused on methods for increasing effective community management of natural resources. The content and discussions at each event were, to a degree, mutually reinforcing. Further, publications were produced out of each activity, which in turn influenced and were influenced by similar workshops and conferences held under other sponsorship. Project workshops thus helped convince at least some participants (NGO and government) of the advantages of strong community-based approaches to NRM, BZM, or pastoral sector activities. Where this attitude was already present, Regional Program activities offered participants opportunities to share experiences and methods of problem solving, along with techniques for devolving decision making, conflict resolution, and management to community levels.

In the case of the BZM Workshop, for example, staff of Uganda's Makerere University Biological Field Station (MUBFS) noted that the event was pivotal in changing their approach to involving local stakeholders in the planning and management of Kibale Forest conservation efforts. Earlier methods had not been effective in mobilizing community support, and the workshop introduced new ideas for how park staff could work with the gamut of stakeholders.

More broadly, key issues raised during the BZM Workshop anticipated how conservation planning in Uganda, with its heavy investment in multi-stakeholder involvement in conservation planning, eventually evolved. The fact that key decision makers, such as the Director of National Parks, the Senior Nature Conservation Officer of the Uganda

Forest Department, the Chief Environment Officer of the Ministry of Environment, and even the Minister of Environment, participated could only have been helpful. The workshop explored ideas expressed through BZM that were consistent with work being supported by major conservation agencies like the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the National Environment Action Planning (NEAP) — ideas that were ultimately incorporated on a national scale in Uganda.

Other Regional Program activities that initially appeared promising became one-time opportunities to showcase cutting-edge ideas, theories, and activities in the end. The Okavango Ecosystems Project, the Sustainable Agriculture Conference, and the Local Policies Influences in NRM Conference in Kenya appear to fall into this category. The Okavango Ecosystems Project did succeed in raising awareness about the need to address regional resource management issues in a collaborative and participatory manner, particularly with regard to community involvement. It also heightened recognition of how difficult it is to achieve progress on regional resource management issues that are highly politicized, as most of its original objectives were not implemented, arguably through lack of government and donor buy-in across the range of countries.

Regional Program activities impacted the Project as well. For example, the BZM Workshop motivated staff to undertake theoretical work on integrated conservation and development projects (ICDPs), and then to collaborate with WWF on designing an ICDP in Bangassou, Central African Republic, (which is pending implementation through the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Global Environment Facility). The Pastoral Sector Workshop led to the Project's increasing involvement with desertification issues. In mid-1996, this resulted in a project to be designed jointly with a number of European and African NGO colleagues, with funding from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). Similarly, collaboration with IUCN, the World Bank, WWF, USAID's Biodiversity Support Program (BSP), the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), and Intercooperation on a resource book about social sustainability in conservation led to closer part-

nership between PVO-NGO/ NRMS and Intercooperation (Switzerland) on desertification issues.

In sum, the Regional Program appears to have generated considerable synergy with the Focal Country Programs, so that NGO capacities on a cognitive level in many instances, and a behavioral level in a number of instances, were positively impacted (Koopman 1995). For a project like PVO-NGO/NRMS that wishes to act on a regional and national level and to maintain broad credibility in the field, a diversified portfolio is essential. The Project's regional credibility was enhanced by supporting activities that addressed major thematic or methodological issues that either had not been addressed on a regional basis, or that, if they had, had not yet found satisfactory resolution.

Finding 3-2: Regional Program activities that were developed or required follow-up from a local institutional base were most effective.

An indigenous African base for planning and implementing Regional Program activities and identifying participants increases the relevance of the activity to participants. This was particularly evident in the Kenya Energy and Environmental Organizations (KENGO) and PRA training programs. On the other hand, the Pesticide Action Network (PAN) Workshop, largely organized by the U.S.-based PAN North America Center, was also highly successful in stimulating follow-up activities. This may well have been due to collaborative planning with the informal Francophone and Anglophone PAN offices housed in international NGOs in Dakar (at Environnement et Développement Action-Tiers Monde [ENDA-TM]) and Nairobi (at the Environment Liaison Centre International [ELCI]). The African PAN staff were already committed to the development of a pesticide action network for Africa, and were able to identify African studies on pesticide regulation and misuse and on alternative methods of pest control used by African NGOs involved in sustainable agriculture.

Having an indigenous institution as the base for a regular training activity or workshop that is attempting to stimulate follow-up contributes strongly to participant efforts at that follow-up. Several participants in Regional Program activities

mentioned the need to turn subsequently to the sponsoring organization for further information and other forms of support. Egerton University (in the case of PRA) and KENGO (for the Land Use Management Course) provided this type of base. That said, their financial ability to support participants in conducting follow-up PRAs — or even in helping villagers implement projects developed during an Egerton-sponsored PRA — has been very limited.

The chief lesson of the Regional Program is that linking key institutions and individuals around a common issue or theme to identify convergences in approaches and potential for networking is an effective means of stimulating NGOs to collaborate with one another, with government, and with communities. Additionally, the most effective regional activities have a local institutional base for planning and follow-up.

4. NGO Collaboration (Hypothesis 4)

Finding 4-1: The Project stimulated a number of collaborative efforts, many of which led to improved NRM.

Collaboration in NRM activities occurred at a number of levels: the CWGs or national consortia in Cameroon, Madagascar, Mali, and Uganda; regional chapter meetings in three of the four Focal Countries; organizational development or NRM training sessions in all four Focal Countries; and the Regional Program. While it is certain that this collaboration led to improved NRM more often than not, it is less clear whether different forms of collaboration have led, or are systematically leading, to sustainable NRM.

Most of the findings already cited demonstrate that improvements in NRM have been generated through NGOs collaborating in Regional Program activities, or through other kinds of training. Indicators do not exist yet, however, for improvements in NRM leading to sustainability. Understandably, it will take a number of years of accumulated institutional functioning in NRM by the organizations involved in the Project before sustainable NRM can be confirmed. For the time being, proxy indicators like collaboration in activities promoting improvements in NRM are the only available "evidence" of the potential for sustainability.

Finding 4-2: Collaboration in itself does not necessarily promote skill transfer from stronger to weaker organizations.

None of the Focal Country AAs addresses the implications of the Project supporting wholly heterogeneous CWGs (or consortia) from the perspective of productivity or efficiency. Each CWG was comprised of NGOs from different technical sectors with varying capacities to participate in NRM initiatives at different levels of scale. In some ways, this facilitated development of the CWG and the PVO-NGO/NRMS program in-country. In other ways, the character of the CWGs was a constraint.

In Madagascar, for example, COMODE made the express policy decision that strong NGOs would partner with weaker ones — and the latter did benefit. In one case in Ankazamborana, the relatively “strong” FIKRIFAMA partnered with the relatively “weaker” ASE. The collaboration did strengthen ASE’s technical capacity in the participatory development of water delivery systems, and at the same time furthered FIKRIFAMA’s NRM agenda of transferring water delivery technology to the poorest of Madagascar’s poor. Elsewhere, too, the embryonic NRM capacities of many NGOs participating in CWG/consortium activities were clearly strengthened through collaboration and training.

For collaboration to succeed, however, both — or all — parties need to believe in the value of the partnership from the perspectives of institution building and quality of service delivery. Thus, some “strong” NGOs refused to participate in COMODE. CARITAS and Catholic Relief Services were among those that felt their capacities were already fully committed and did not see the COMODE agenda enabling them to better fulfill their mandates.

In Uganda, where the NARM Forum evolved from the PVO-NGO/NRMS CWG, and in Cameroon where the JEU evolved from PVO-NGO/NRMS/Cameroon, the involvement of diverse NGOs with varying sectoral strengths and capacities in the CWG, and subsequently in a country forum, did not constrain development of the national-level institution.

It is not possible to conclude that NGO capacities to promote sustainable NRM have been strength-

ened solely by virtue of the collaborative approach that the Project promoted. What we can say is that while collaboration may not be a sufficient condition for either improving NRM or achieving sustainability, it is a *necessary* condition for both.

Finding 4-3: Networking in itself often does not have significant beneficial effects. Many organizations are not equipped to take advantage of the opportunities networking affords.

Improvements in NRM resulted from networking for the same reasons they resulted from the collaboration facilitated by Regional and Focal Country Program activities. However, it is impossible to say that networking alone has strongly contributed to sustainability in NRM. The potential folding of the NARM Forum in Uganda, slowdowns in COMODE’s activities, institutional problems within the CCA/ONG during the past two years — these developments all point out the limitations of collaboration and networking.

While it is clear that information circulation increased through PVO-NGO/NRMS, it is not clear if NGO productivity was actually improved by information exchange through networking. The old assumption that good things will happen if people meet and exchange information is not verified by Project data. PVO-NGO/NRMS experience indicates that organizations must have a certain internal structuring or “critical mass” to really capitalize on opportunities that arise through networking. Therefore, like collaboration, networks alone do not improve or sustain NRM but rather appear to be a helpful component for accomplishing this goal in some instances.

5. Bottom-Up Approaches (Hypothesis 5)

Finding 5-1: Some of the most effective NRM improvements occurred where bottom-up approaches were strongest.

In the Project context, *bottom-up approach* refers to a range of activities and mechanisms designed to maximize participation and empower project collaborators to as great a degree as possible in identifying needs, setting priorities, and managing initiatives.

The results of using bottom-up approaches appear unequivocal. Significant momentum was engen-

dered through adherence to a strong bottom-up approach to NRM planning and activity implementation. This in turn, in Cameroon and Madagascar in particular, has enabled NGO participation in NRM sector activities to be sustained through 1996. In all the Focal Countries, the bottom-up approach found expression in CWG and NRM awareness activities, trainings, and occasional hands-on ventures.

Finding 5-2: The bottom-up approach at national and local levels by itself cannot improve NRM, nor lead to sustainability. It must be accompanied by appropriate technical complements.

An example from Mali indicates how a bottom-up approach to planning, coupled with appropriate TA, can lead potentially to promotion of sustainable NRM. Project experience with Harmonie du Développement au Sahel (HDS), an NGO in Bandiagara, showed that TA can achieve short-term, capacity building objectives that in turn may enable biophysical impact at higher levels of scale over time.

HDS's success in testing soil and water conservation technologies, and especially in coordinating that testing among farming communities, government services, farmer associations, and NGOs, illustrates the positive role that NGOs can play in what in the Sahel is known as *aménagement de terroir*, or community-based land use management. HDS's work led to a series of activities with positive NRM impacts at cognitive, behavioral, biophysical, and human welfare levels. Hence it is possible within several years to help local NGOs design increasingly sophisticated and appropriate NRM activities that also serve as entrypoints for significant, measurable, biophysical impact at levels of scale beyond localized pilot efforts.

Two comparable examples come from Northwest Province in Cameroon. The first involves the CDCV, which identified a priority NRM issue to tackle within the framework of the Focal Country Program. CDCV's success in persuading Bamiliké women to plant horizontally across slopes, as opposed to vertically down slopes for sociocultural reasons (see Finding 2-1), epitomizes the kind of NRM issue about which NGOs can raise awareness and for which they can offer alternatives. If

successful in transferring the information, knowledge, and technical know-how, NGOs can be responsible for improved NRM which will, on a local basis, lead to decreased environmental degradation.

Heifer Project International (HPI) succeeded in bridging the cultural gap between Fulani agropastoralists and farmers, demonstrating that local people can identify NRM issues and potentially feasible ways to address them. The fact that the two communities can now sit and discuss common issues where heretofore they could not represents an important step in the management of natural resources in Northwest Province. This did not principally require technical solutions. Instead, social and cultural factors were recognized primarily so that effective communication could take place between the groups.

The reason why NRM practices could be improved upon in the three examples cited — HDS, CDCV, and HPI — had to do with the comparative advantage local NGOs have in understanding the cultural origins of ineffective NRM practices. When linked with a viable extension strategy, this led to resource-user behavior changes in Dogon villages in Mali's Bandiagara Plateau and in Bamiliké villages and Fulani camps and villages in Northwest Province, Cameroon. Whether localized behavior changes can be scaled up sufficiently across Bamiliké to warrant speaking of sustainable hillside agricultural practices will be ascertained by a follow-on activity. Indications in the Bandiagara Plateau are that replication of the effective soil and water conservation technologies identified and promoted by HDS through PVO-NGO/NRMS is occurring spontaneously across similar agro-ecological zones with similar sociocultural characteristics.

In the Malian example of HDS, the bottom-up approach to NRM would not have had the same impact had it not been accompanied by strong TA from the Project. In Cameroon, it is still to be determined whether CDCV's success can be replicated and broadened. Here, given adoption trends to date, CDCV could likely benefit from TA to determine how adoption rates of new agricultural practices can best be further encouraged. In the third example, HPI clearly possessed the technical capacity to identify problems and propose culturally appropriate solutions, so that outside TA was not needed.

Finding 5-3: The ability of national NGOs and local private sector entities to provide services in many capacity building situations obviated the necessity to rely on Northern organizations, reinforcing the bottom-up approach of the Project.

The expectations that PVO Associates would act as service providers on contract to the Project and that this would be a major operational mechanism were never realized.

The lesson learned is that it is not necessary to have significant concentrations of Northern NGO capacity to jumpstart a pilot project like PVO-NGO/NRMS. In 1996, there is considerable in-country technical capacity to tap for many activities that similar projects may promote. On the other hand, the right balance of Northern and Southern NGO collaboration is crucial in any NRM capacity building activity.

Finding 5-4: Promoting an approach emphasizing local participation does not obviate the need to pay close attention to questions of social and technical feasibility.

Promoting a bottom-up agenda has both political and potentially practical implications. Project experience indicates that participation can be maximized by putting decision-making responsibility in the hands of local NGOs and communities. Data are not clear, however, that this strategy always leads to more effective NRM, nor to sustainable NRM. At times it has; at times it has not; and at other times results are unclear. This is because, all rhetoric aside, many local NGOs are low on the NRM learning curve. Skill levels and commitments to provide appropriate inputs to communities to catalyze sustainable NRM also vary widely.

The Project brought about improved NRM where it pursued a bottom-up approach that *at the same time* sought technical and social feasibility. Cases include: anti-erosion activities in Bamiliké villages in Cameroon; soil and water conservation activities in Mali; improved methodologies for working with communities in the buffer zone of Kibale Forest, Uganda leading to more effective action-research programming; and implementation of a water delivery system in Ankazamborana, Madagascar.

When improved NRM was not achieved — the would-be public park in Garoua, Cameroon, or the half-completed live fence initiative in Soké, Mali — the assumption that social feasibility analysis was unnecessary led to that failure, mooted the potential gains of a bottom-up approach. Even where there are seemingly applicable technical packages to be transferred, they *must* be adapted to the sociocultural milieu, an effort requiring significant technical capacity.

When it is unclear whether more effective NRM was achieved — as with the *Faribolana* quarterly review in Madagascar; the Kawoko Kikaawa Integrated Agroforestry Project in Uganda; the Nyabashozi, Uganda PRA; or the leadership training in Fianarantsoa, Madagascar — we are left wondering whether technical and socioeconomic feasibility was sufficiently considered prior to undertaking these ventures.

From all these experiences, we learn that while many factors promote success or failure, technical feasibility is as important as bottom-up participation. If improved NRM is the objective, adequate emphasis on technical skills is crucial. This may necessitate less of a pure bottom-up approach and more of a horizontal approach negotiated between Southern and Northern colleagues. It also may require that projects budget for staff or other TA to accompany otherwise demand-driven initiatives. While not originally programmed to do so, PVO-NGO/NRMS/Uganda and COMODE hired technical staff primarily for this purpose.

While popular trends in the donor community place the participation agenda at the fore, PVO-NGO/NRMS experience is that technical feasibility cannot be assumed nor overlooked. Strategies and methodologies to promote NRM that balance bottom-up process with technical skill building can be successful at national and local levels.

Finding 5-5: Participation is necessary to capacity building, but it is not the same thing.

Engendering participation was a Project objective from the outset. While participation is a precondition for capacity building as well as for achieving sustainability, it is not itself an indi-

cator of increased capacity. Moreover, participation cannot be mandated but must be induced through appropriate incentive structures. While PVO-NGO/NRMS had adequate structures to promote participation, given its limited administrative resources, from a quality-control perspective it could not have operated a larger grants program. Supervision from Washington to the Focal Countries, and from Project Coordinators in the Focal Country CLAs to individual NGOs, was stretched to the limit.

Finding 5-6: Simply using PRA does not ensure participation. Nor is PRA equally appropriate and effective in all situations. We need to know more about determining where PRA can be effective, and NGOs need training in applying that knowledge.

PRA and rapid rural appraisal (RRA) are methods for promoting appropriate levels of participation. However, proponents of these tools should not assume that simply by doing RRA or PRA genuine community participation in NRM will result, or that sustainability will be achieved. Used appropriately, these methods can establish effective processes, along with concrete outcomes, to promote improved NRM. Used inappropriately (for example, without a technical feasibility analysis) they can, in fact, set the sustainable development process back.

Determining what skills are needed to assess different situations in terms of opportunity, appropriateness, and feasibility has not been systematically addressed in the NRM sector. PRA has become *de rigueur* on the assumption that it will lead to sustainable development and NRM. This trend is based on the postulate that communities are in some ways homogeneous, and that participatory approaches build nicely on this character.

Communities are, however, not homogeneous. Cultural, social, historical, and political factors all influence how effectively communities, in their full complexity, participate in NRM initiatives. Real differences create a range of opportunities and constraints. The divergence in two PRA experiences in Uganda — one in politically weak, economically poor Iteso villages, and the other in politically strong, relatively

wealthy Banyankole villages — attests to the need to determine where investment in PRA will offer the greatest potential returns in terms of generating short-term NRM outputs that prove sustainable. Ironically, these experiences show that PRA may have greater impact in situations where political leverage has least opportunity to sway the PRA process.

Donors and international NGOs collaborating with national NGOs should insist on the articulation of minimum RRA/PRA skill standards and how they will be attained. PVO-NGO/NRMS experience indicates that agreement on the quality and depth of needed skills would be most useful. Given consensus on what those analytical and facilitation skills are, RRA/PRA skills packages for NGOs working in the field should be developed. Data show, for example, that NGOs need more RRA skills to help them identify where PRA has the greatest opportunity of succeeding, and support in analyzing the feasibility of NRM options on an as-needed basis as they evolve from the PRA. Donors should coordinate to facilitate transfer of these and other required skills to NRM NGOs.

6. Service Providing NGOs (SPNGOs) (Hypothesis 6)

Finding 6-1: Using SPNGOs was most effective when they had the clear capacity to deliver services. Results were often disappointing when SPNGO capacities were not carefully assessed beforehand.

None of the Focal Country AAs dealt adequately with this topic. Nonetheless, in retrospect, certain SPNGO activities undertaken through grants, such as the FIKRIFAMA-ASE collaboration in Madagascar (see Finding 4-2), led to strengthened NGO capacities and impacts on a biophysical level. The results of other ventures are inconclusive as to whether capacities were strengthened or biophysical impacts achieved.

SPNGOs that already possessed the capacity to deliver services often did so well. Where SPNGOs were willing to have their capacities strengthened because they recognized deficiencies, capacities were strengthened. Where SPNGOs presumed they had certain capacities,

and where the Project, in support of bottom-up approaches, did not demand proof of capacity, NRM results were not always positive (see Hypothesis 2).

7. Information Support Activities (Hypothesis 7)

Finding 7-1: Although the Project produced many publications, we are not sure what effect these had on awareness and action.

Results of information support activities are among the hardest to identify objectively and the most difficult about which to generalize. The Project printed a number of publications and disseminated high-quality quarterly newspapers and magazines. Anecdotal evidence aside, however, it is unclear whether this investment in environmental education and awareness-raising materials led to cognitive changes and, with them, appropriate behavioral changes. Lower-cost printings in local languages (aside from the Malagasy case of *Faribolana*, which was a higher cost publication) and the use of rural radio (which the Panos Institute was exploring throughout the Sahel under the Regional Program) were promising directions.

The work of Naturama in Burkina Faso under the Project's CADA component should be interesting to monitor. Naturama is looking to design materials through its environmental education program that resource users themselves believe will be helpful in promoting improved NRM. Thus, for example, Naturama will provide wood cutters with information about what tree species are most appropriate to cut at different times of the year so that regeneration will be boosted. While the NGO has undertaken preliminary work to determine if its approach seems feasible, and to determine what information is most wanted by resource users, we do not yet know if this bottom-up approach to environmental education will result in changed behaviors.

In general, an understanding of what people receiving information support actually do with the information they receive — whether it is assimilated and thereafter appropriately acted upon — remains by and large elusive. A lesson

learned from the Project's publication experience is that it would be very useful to monitor and assess the value that different information vehicles add to promoting NRM.

Finding 7-2: In providing information support, whether through media or training, it is important to address the question of how organizations will use the information conveyed.

The Project embraced, but its experience did not validate, the common assumption in the development community that dispensing information is valuable in and of itself. This presupposes that the information is relevant to recipients, and that, if it is, recipients will be able to assimilate and use it. The ability to use information involves not just the capacity to understand it as an individual, but also to see that the information is put to wider service. If these conditions are met, information may in fact contribute to increasing capacity.

Not surprisingly, information often dies with the recipient. It is filed away in a cabinet, tossed into the trash can, put on a shelf, or stored in an individual's computer directory. How information is assimilated and used to benefit an organization was not systematically addressed by NGOs working with the Project.

Before other projects engage in widespread information dissemination initiatives to strengthen capacity either through distribution of newsletters, journals, and special publications or through training, they should explore how information recycling and assimilation within NGOs may best occur, as well as what information is worth assimilating. The former requires that dissemination procedures within recipient organizations be articulated and monitored both internally and externally. The latter suggests that promoters of information exchange not assume that writing books and articles on thorny topics such as slash-and-burn agriculture, bush fire, land use management, or biodiversity conservation automatically promotes awareness and, hence, will change behaviors. Strategies that consider what changes are *appropriate and feasible* are crucial to help determine what information to package

and share. This in turn will influence the success or failure of any awareness-raising venture.

Based on the *laissez faire* attitude that NGOs participating in PVO-NGO/NRMS activities often appeared to take vis-à-vis information recycling, similar observations apply to the planning and delivery of training (see Finding 2-2).

8. Technical Assistance (Hypothesis 8)

Finding 8-1: Programming TA into a bottom-up, NRM capacity building initiative is essential to enable the fruits of capacity building to be realized.

Data are clear that high levels of TA are not always necessary to generate momentum in NRM capacity building and implementation of activities that will have positive biophysical impact. All four Focal Countries implemented complex programs without significant outside TA. Periodic TA and supervision from Project headquarters was sufficient to help launch and sustain those efforts.

If the goal is to generate momentum for NRM programming in a given country, a bottom-up approach with limited TA and supervision can, if negotiated well at the outset, suffice. The principal issue is establishing a broad-based, participatory, capacity building process leading to empowerment of local NGOs and other actors in NRM. This is not to say that such a strategy will generate sustainable NRM products and processes in the short term.

TA can be very helpful in achieving increased NGO capacity as reflected in improved approaches to NRM and impacts at a biophysical level. Project success working with HDS in Mali is one example (see Finding 5-2). In Uganda, TA helped the Project *avoid* funding potentially unfeasible NRM activities that lacked social soundness — one elegantly proposed NRM activity was discovered, through TA provided to the Uganda CLA, to be neither technically nor socially remotely feasible. Other evidence of the positive relationship between TA and strengthened NGO capacity is that in Uganda and Madagascar staffing additions were made specifically to meet NGO demand for TA in

NRM. Conversely, while Project TA helped the CCA/ONG and CARE/Mali identify and initiate a project using participatory methodologies in land use management — *Intégration des ONG dans l'Aménagement de Terroir* — the TA did not assure that implementation would proceed as planned.

C. Additional Findings

9. The State of NGO Capacity

Finding 9-1: NGO capacity is generally weak across Africa. That said, there is a critical mass of capacity in a number of countries to support NGO/NRM capacity building at a national level. Based on the Project's success in catalyzing pilot activities from 1989 - 95, improved NGO/NRM capacity can be anticipated given certain conditions and inputs.

Despite the overall weakness of the NGO sector, pockets of NGO strength exist at national and local levels in many African countries. National NGOs also increasingly recognize that capacity building is a necessary and desirable effort, though this view is by no means uniform. This situation bodes well, based on PVO-NGO/NRMS experience, for engaging in the institutional and technical capacity building needed for improved NRM leading to sustainable NRM.

Finding 9-2: The flip side of Finding 9-1 is that the limited capacities of many NGOs not only impede NRM activities but also capacity building initiatives, particularly those heavily grounded in rapid empowerment and bottom-up approaches.

Northern NGO partners of and donors to Southern NGOs, particularly Southern consortia, must be careful to neither overestimate nor underestimate Southern capacities. In the desire to promote bottom-up approaches for philosophical and political reasons, objective assessment of partner capacities prior to undertaking NRM initiatives is often overlooked.

Northern and Southern partners in NRM should accept the need to mutually assess

capacities to deliver services and products before entering into agreements and starting joint ventures. Assessment is also imperative during implementation of NRM activities to allow for adaptive management to occur. When NGO rhetoric is permitted to dominate, it is to the detriment of NRM and sustainable development. Further, the blind commitment to a bottom-up approach often distorts partner capacity to deliver NRM products, as well as partner accountability. More rigor and accountability at all levels is urged. Far greater objectivity in assessing partner capacities is required (on both sides), and Northern partners in particular should not overempower Southern partners.

Project success at fostering momentum in NGO/NRM planning and implementation illustrates how important it is to find the right balance between a bottom-up approach and capacity building. Achieving momentum is quite possible, but fostering NRM activities with outputs that are appropriate and feasible is much more difficult. There is a growing need to not be satisfied with activities that simply engender participation, and to increasingly factor into planning the appropriateness, feasibility, and quality of NRM products.

Project experience supports the view that NGOs are often weak in analysis. Rhetoric is such, however, that the major constraint identified by NGOs (less and less so within the group of Project-supported NGOs) is usually lack of funding. While this is clearly often so, weak technical capacity is a prevalent limitation. Skills in rapid social and ecological assessment need to be complemented by skills that facilitate participatory planning. Both types of skills are still nascent among NGOs, even in Project Focal Countries.

Confusion over geographic advantage and capacity is also an issue. There is an assumption that if NGOs are local, they somehow know what is happening at even more local levels and/or can find out if they do not. Project experience is otherwise. While the CDCV example (Finding 2-1) illustrated the comparative advantage local NGOs may capitalize on in implementing NRM activities, this is not

always the case. Most local NGOs tend to disdain systematic analysis of situations, believing that they already grasp the nuances because they are from somewhere near the site or people in question. In fact, the term *local* is relative. What are local NGOs to someone from Washington may be no more than briefcase visitors to the communities those NGOs work with in Mbarara, Uganda, or Esse, Cameroon.

The international development community together with local partners should attempt to reach consensus about how much information on local conditions is needed prior to undertaking effective action. We need to agree on what constitutes acceptable understanding, and, with that understanding, how action planning should proceed. How is understanding to be obtained? Through PRA? Through a mix of PRA and RRA?

We suggest that if NGOs are to justify the considerable resources now being invested in them, they need to demonstrate rather than assert their credentials.¹² They must show greater knowledge of the places in which they work and reflect this through participation in national policy debates. They must gather information that will allow a more rigorous definition of objectives and effective progress monitoring. Donors need to push NGOs to demonstrate their capacity to design and implement effective NRM initiatives. Similarly, donors need to provide systematic capacity building support to NGOs over sufficient time to enable them to live up to their potential and become full and effective implementation agents in NRM.

A related constraint cited in the Madagascar AA is the absence of NGO "professionalism" — that is, the ability to deliver high-quality products within given timeframes. One factor in this situation is that few NGOs receive remuneration for their work. This clearly hampers the potential impact of NRM activities, as voluntary contributions do not seem able to generate a consistently high level of participation and product.

A final question: How cost-effective are NGO initiatives, compared to bilateral, government,

¹² This point is argued persuasively by Toulmin and Moorehead (1993)

or multilateral programs? PVO-NGO/NRMS has no definitive answer. To our knowledge, few people (if any) have looked into the issue. Farrington and Bebbington (1993) state:

The evidence suggests that some innovations devised or promoted by NGOs...have had wide economic impact. However comparisons of costs and benefits could be made only in a few cases, and only in [one case] was it possible to draw comparisons between the cost-effectiveness of the national agricultural research system (NARS) and of NGOs. **Limited evidence in these areas is attributable to the fact that benefit:cost comparisons cannot easily be made because of the exploratory nature of most NGO efforts¹³, and because of the high proportion of intended qualitative benefits, such as enhancement of local knowledge or capacity for experimentation among farmers.**

This issue deserves far more attention from NGOs and donors alike.

10. Balancing Capacity Building and Experimentation with Pursuing Immediate NRM Goals

Finding 10-1: Capacity building requires a mix of training, TA, and information support, linked to on-the-ground testing, to be consolidated.

Donors and NGOs speak of the bottom-up implementation of NRM activities in one breath, and the need for capacity building in the next. Yet the issue of when implementation versus capacity building is warranted remains ambiguous. Strategic planning to integrate capacity building on the one hand and field activities on the other has not occurred at any level — NGO/community, donor, or government. Donors should help link NRM strategic planning processes that include all stakeholders with NGO capacity building activities at a national level, aiming for a balance between the two. Careful attention must be paid to identifying indicators that signal when adequate capacities are in place to justify accelerated NRM implementation.

Components of a balanced NGO capacity building portfolio in NRM may include: strategic planning, negotiation and applied research, financial man-

agement and accounting, project design, project management, and technical NRM skill area trainings (PRA, RRA, agroforestry, soil and water conservation, improved beekeeping, etc.).

International NGOs in the NRM sector should take care that capacity building initiatives are consistent with, if not embedded in, planning and implementation mechanisms that operate at levels of scale where NRM impacts may be greatest. Targeting NGOs versus community-level groups is therefore not an either/or question. SPNGOs have an important role to play in facilitation, training, and M&E work with communities.

Finding 10-2: Building NGO capacity requires experimental initiatives, but to make this possible donors must be flexible in their expectations for what defines success.

Following on Finding 10-1, as the scale of NRM activities increases in geographic complexity, and as donors mandate decentralized, bottom-up approaches to NRM more and more, the need to develop pilot programs that test and develop effective strategies and methodologies increases. Testing can profitably occur on various scales, and designing and implementing feasible activities at even low levels of scale is challenging.

Programmatic sustainability in NRM depends on local NGOs achieving institutional and technical credibility. International NGOs working on pilot capacity building and/or action-research NRM initiatives are urged to negotiate flexible programs with donors that will enable local credibility to be enhanced so that sustainability can be achieved.

Conversely, donors must increasingly assume a posture of intelligent risk-taking coupled with realistic evaluation criteria vis-à-vis NGO grant recipients. This will enable NGOs to get the hands-on experience required to increase their credibility and promote sustainable NRM. The absence of such innovative programming will limit progress in both capacity building and sustainable NRM. Creating an environment for NGOs to *experiment*, by designing and implementing NRM activities using their new skills, *must* increasingly be considered in NGO/NRM capacity building programs.

¹³ Our emphasis.

Importantly, donors must differentiate between ventures that will strengthen capacity and *perhaps* succeed, and ventures that have a high probability of success. Most experimental NRM activities probably fall into the first category.

11. Planning and Coordination

Finding 11-1: Planning and coordination in NRM are inadequate at all levels. Many NGOs lack planning capacity and donors do not engage in coordinated planning.

Planning processes that incorporate bottom-up approaches and operate at levels of scale where aggregate impacts to reduce environmental degradation will be significant have yet to be developed by NGOs or others.¹⁴ Given the scope of most problems in watershed management, biodiversity conservation, and desertification in Africa and elsewhere, developing coordinated planning and implementation capacity is increasingly critical.

The lack of integrated planning among donors, and even *within* single donor organizations, prevents much capacity building potential from being realized. Because of this, NGO initiatives such as PVO-NGO/NRMS may accomplish their objective (i.e., running a pilot NRM/NGO program in capacity building), yet ultimately remain less relevant than they might have been if they were integral to multi-lateral or national planning processes.

This lesson led PVO-NGO/NRMS to collaboratively design two major projects that approach capacity building and NRM in innovative ways. The first, in collaboration with WWF, reflects a highly decentralized approach to conserving biodiversity in Bangassou, Central African Republic, and was submitted to UNDP's Global Environment Facility and is pending final approval. The second, through IFAD, is the design of a eight country coalition to combat desertification in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, in collaboration with NGO partners in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Europe. Both involve balanced portfolios of capacity building and hypothesis testing with NGOs and CBOs, and focus

on developing effective strategies, methodologies, and technologies to sustainably manage biodiversity and dryland resources. A third such program — the Central African Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE) — in which PVO-NGO/NRMS, seven Northern institutions, and numerous central African partners are involved, focuses on integrated strategic planning and coordination in a large part of the Congo Basin.

For gains in capacity building that are achieved through programs like PVO-NGO/NRMS to be consolidated, it is imperative that coordinated programming between donors, governments, SPNGOs, and national NGOs take place. Otherwise, gains are likely to be ad hoc and, therefore, unable to foster reversals in environmental degradation in sub-Saharan Africa systematically, or to initiate sustainable NRM.

Finding 11-2: Planning should recognize the need for pilot activities to test strategies and methods.

As in Finding 10-1, strategic planning must incorporate pilot activities to test and identify appropriate NRM strategies, methodologies, and practices. Pilot programs should promote intelligent risk taking. They should tackle NRM issues at degrees of complexity and scale that will lead to learning lessons and generating capacities that promote impacts and sustainability in NRM at supra-village levels.

12. Monitoring and Evaluation

Finding 12-1: Better M&E would improve implementation of capacity building and NRM initiatives, as well as make it possible to measure progress more accurately.

Projects whose objective is to support diversified NGO capacity building portfolios are useful. Unless, however, these projects are clearly linked to a long-term strategy for promotion of sustainable NRM at a national level, the NRM impacts of such programs are likely to be highly diffuse and, in the end, difficult to measure. This is not to say that reversals in environmental degradation may not be

¹⁴ The Convention to Combat Desertification is a potential exception, being an international mechanism to promote this type of planning. Various community-based NRM activities also offer localized models for how collaborative planning and management may be approached. The CCA-ONG/CARE-Mali PVO Pivot Project, funded by USAID, testing strategies and methods in NRM through *aménagement de terroir* approaches, was designed specifically to determine the roles and responsibilities of different community-level actors in NRM.

achieved, but contributions to this end, implying macro-level changes in sub-Saharan African, are difficult to quantify in initiatives like this Project.

To reduce the structural ambiguity in NGO capacity building activities that operate at international, national, and local levels, consistent M&E is essential. While PVO-NGO/NRMS did not carry out a rigorous baseline survey, similar efforts, particularly if they are pilot initiatives, should not fail to develop minimum baseline data so that improved capacities can be better assessed and appreciated. This will help in guiding adaptive management decisions and in gauging assertions that capacity building is occurring.

PVO-NGO/NRMS was marketed to all participants as a project offering a range of opportunities to raise awareness, strengthen capacities, test methodologies, implement NRM activities, and so on. Because of its pilot nature, the Project was a vehicle to take on worthwhile risks with the aim of enabling all partners to better understand at the Project's end what strategies and approaches were most effective in NGO capacity building in Africa. It nonetheless remained difficult for participants to view the Project as an action-research initiative. It is not in the development community's culture to be constructively self-critical, as criticism implies wrongdoing and thereby threatens future cashflows. Hence attempts to avoid critique were more the rule than the exception.

In the course of monitoring, it became clear that several PVO-NGO/NRMS pilot activities underway were not developing in line with initial expectations. Because there was no M&E plan designed to accommodate critical self-reflection, the learning potential that pilot efforts offered was not fully capitalized on. It was more through word of mouth that lessons learned were shared. This was certainly the case with the early realization from experiences in Uganda and Mali, for example, that even reputedly strong NGOs could have design and implementation problems with seemingly straightforward NRM activities.

Finding 12-2: Capacity building efforts should include M&E using baseline data on NGO capacities and productivity indicators determined collaboratively by the participants.

M&E of NGO productivity needs to be incorporated into NRM programs. Both quantifiable and non-quantifiable indices of productivity should be tracked so that an objective measure of NRM achievements can be made. Appropriate indicators must be identified early and should be *mutually negotiated and agreed upon* by key stakeholders to a NRM program.

PVO-NGO/NRMS did not have any pre-project productivity targets. Yet even within a capacity building effort, productivity is a concern. It cannot simply be assessed on the basis of numbers of workshops held, acreage of unproductive soils rehabilitated, or numbers of species temporarily protected within a given biodiversity rich area. Productivity also encompasses nonquantifiable factors. These include: getting the most out of available human resources; engendering attitudes to foster participation and collaboration; and readiness to promote voluntarism in the NGO's mission.

One example of this comes from Madagascar. Both the time and quality of effort that the Secrétaire Général of COMODE put into helping start up the consortium, on a voluntary basis, and during a difficult political period in Madagascar, contributed to COMODE's early success at defining itself as an institution, along with the quantity and quality of the services it was able to provide its membership. This productivity, however, does not show up on any reports and cannot readily be quantified, as no records were kept of the Secretary's time. There is no way to value that time or effort, but much of what COMODE achieved was because of this intangible commitment. Similarly in Mali, the active interest that the then-President and Secrétaire Permanent of CCA/ONG displayed in the start-up years of the Project in Mali, also on a voluntary basis, facilitated the strong implementation program the Project realized.

Pilot projects must also identify process indicators for success. One such indicator may be termed *logical continuity*, a progressively consistent evolution of activities based on existing NRM and capacity building needs and on capacities to address those needs. Logical continuity results from reinforcement of successful lessons learned, along with adaptive management of any failures. Under this definition, has logical continuity been achieved within,

say, a Focal Country program? Through capacity building, do member NGOs in the CWG demonstrate greater logical continuity within their respective programs?

On a CWG/national consortium level, the early post-Project phase was positive — logical continuity in programming was achieved through timely shifts in donor support. Nonetheless, it is possible to conclude one of two things: either donors who provided funds in the Focal Countries were convinced of the value of PVO-NGO/NRMS NGO activities; or donors did not perceive that they had many options, and continued to support NGOs in NRM.

13. Partnership

Finding 13-1: As the Project's associations with Southern organizations demonstrate, working relationships that evolve into collaborative relationships, and ultimately into partnerships, can be facilitated by working through NGO consortia. These can serve as springboards for creating broad-based momentum to raise awareness about NRM issues, and to tackle implementation of NRM issues on the ground.

PVO-NGO/NRMS collaboration with African NGO consortia was extremely positive. The ability to extend NGO/NRM capacity building activities beyond the initial two years of funding into four more years of field activities ultimately was due largely to the strength of the relationship the Project could maintain with African consortium partners.

Where partnership may have been most suspect was in the Project's effort to continually reaffirm its commitment to bottom-up, field-driven decision making, without systematically evaluating local decisions. While this reinforced the partnership, it may not always have contributed to sustainability in NRM on a case-by-case basis (see Finding 1-1). Still, the existence and functioning to date of national consortium NRM activities in at least three of the four Focal Countries attests to the potential that consortia have in setting the NRM/NGO agenda, thus enabling with "logical continuity."

Finding 13-2: Overestimating a partner organization's capacities can be a serious obstacle to establishing an effective partnership, or can detract from one already established.

As a complement to Finding 9-2, Northern NGO partners of and donors to Southern NGOs must not over- or underestimate Southern NGO capacities. Another example comes from this very Analytical Assessment. After years of strong collaboration between the CCA/ONG and the Project, in which a strong partnership had been established, the inability of the CCA/ONG to complete its Focal Country AA was in some measure due to years of PVO-NGO/NRMS overempowering its Malian partner, taking on faith verbal declarations that the work would get done. Accepting the CCA/ONG team's assurances at a time when the Malian institution was going through numerous personnel changes and management issues could in retrospect have been approached differently.

To some extent, PVO-NGO/NRMS accepted the risk associated with "overempowerment" of partner capacities from the outset, as the need to generate momentum in awareness raising, capacity building and pilot NRM activities took precedence over funding proven, "highly likely to succeed" activities. In this regard, consortium partners' capacities were generally, and in the aggregate, correctly perceived. Overestimation leading to overempowerment occurred only occasionally. In these individual cases of overempowerment, it is hard to say that effective partnerships were promoted.

Overempowerment does a disservice to all involved and distorts partners' capacities to deliver NRM products and account for outcomes. Negotiation of what will be delivered when, with financial accountability highlighted, is preferable. This should be the *modus operandi* particularly in instances where Northern partners are anticipating high-quality NRM products. To do otherwise is to simply encourage misunderstandings and disappointments. Clearly, a balance needs to be struck between empowering partners so as to initiate effective processes, and consistently encouraging accountability so that processes are sustained and NRM products achieved.

Finding 13-3: Effective partnerships require that respective roles and responsibilities be clearly stipulated on the basis of negotiations among the partners. Given that, it is also important to allow roles and relationships to evolve. Keeping track of this process can be an important part of M&E.

The position of PVO-NGO/NRMS/Washington as donor and technical partner led to occasional structural dilemmas, notably in Uganda. As the Uganda country coordinator was employed by WLI (the co-CLA in Uganda), other co-CLA members never felt comfortable with the authority invested in them. The coordinator herself was never fully clear on the balance in her moral allegiance, being answerable to PVO-NGO/NRMS/ Washington, WLI/Uganda, other CLA members, and the CWG.

In Mali and Madagascar, this ambiguity did not arise because the Project and the CWG in each country signed agreements clarifying the responsibilities of each partner, along with the roles of individual staff. This was not done in Uganda, largely because WLI was the co-CLA and such an agreement appeared superfluous. Ironically, this led to the very ambiguous relationship between the coordinator and other CLA members.

The lesson learned is that structural ambiguity is inevitable and should be anticipated in complex projects when multiple partners are involved. Furthermore, those with ultimate project authority should take it upon themselves to clarify everyone's respective roles and responsibilities. While this was for the most part done in Mali, Cameroon, and Madagascar, it was not done satisfactorily in Uganda. Those experiencing ambiguity must signal it to those with the potential to clarify matters, and the latter must take on this responsibility.

It is recommended that overly detailed program designs specifying partners' roles be avoided in a pilot project such as PVO-NGO/NRMS. Processes and roles should be allowed to unfold and be negotiated between beneficiaries and service providers, preferably as the beneficiaries identify what services they need. Here Northern NGOs can be proactive in constructive ways, offering *options* for their partners, rather than blueprint formulas. This will promote a bottom-up approach and truly empower beneficiaries to take the lead in their activity. Southern colleagues, like their Northern counterparts, do not *always* have the best ideas. Contingency planning and adaptive management must therefore be integral components of pilot NRM programming.

Finding 13-4: It may take more time than most donors normally allot for a Southern organization to achieve parity with a Northern partner.

This calls for flexibility on the part of Northern partners and donors if the objective of building partnerships to enable achieving improved NRM is to occur.

Like *sustainability*, *partnership* is an abused term. The tendency is to overstate the strength of collaborative relationships, to the detriment of sustainable development, because one needs to achieve rapid results to sustain donor funding flows. The word *partner* has already been used repeatedly throughout this AA. Based on the Project's experience, what constitutes a working definition of *partnership*?

The Project established working relationships with various organizations. The latter employed staff with PVO-NGO/NRMS funding. Over time, the quality of these working relationships evolved into collaborative relationships, which after a number of years warranted being called *partnerships*. Here, *partnership* refers to the mutual fulfillment, in as predictable a way as possible, of roles and responsibilities agreed upon by the parties. However, when the funding that sustains such partnerships ceases, the *raison d'être* of the partnership is also threatened.

The lesson learned in Madagascar, Mali, and Uganda is that partnership, even over a five-year period, may not be sufficient to enable Southern NGOs to establish full autonomy and sustainability by the end of a project. Lack of opportunities for coordinated planning with other potential partners in the NRM sector becomes a great constraint to the Southerners' capacity to sustain activities. The present paucity of intergovernmental, governmental, or non-governmental mechanisms to foster joint planning may be the biggest constraint to enabling the maturation of partnerships from which sustainable NRM ensues.

Donors and international NGO partners must delegate maximum authority to local partners *over time*, simultaneously reclarifying respective roles and responsibilities, if NRM is to be achieved and sustained. In most cases, this will require phased planning, with emphasis on M&E progress indicators at a process level. Success here is *not* simply measured by biophysical outputs.

This means that donors and NGO partners should avoid what subtly may be manipulative approaches to NGO capacity building in NRM. M&E should

determine if authority and responsibilities are clearly perceived and if progress is taking place against the baseline. This is the only way to promote responsible empowerment through a capacity building program in NRM.

The development community should therefore try to promote NRM through provision of incentive structures that are increasingly empowering and decreasingly cooptive. *Empowering* in NRM means providing authority and responsibility frameworks to natural resource stewards, coupled to incentives, in such a way that participation in NRM activities is promoted in an accountable manner. *Cooptive* means presenting natural resource stewards with opportunities to participate in activities that conform to the strategies and needs of donors and/or their grantees, rather than to local NGO or community interests.

NGOs and donors should be more realistic about what truly *should* and *can* be achieved through collaboration and partnership. Some situations require significant delegation of authority and responsibility to NGO partners at a national consortium or more local NGO level. Others require far closer bonding between Northern and Southern colleagues during planning and implementation.

Before prematurely using language that is unrealistic, it is preferable at the onset of North-South dialogues to speak of working relationships, which (if effective) evolve into collaborative relationships, which (again, if effective) evolve into partnerships:

working relationship → **collaborative relationship**
→ **partnership**

This continuum should be characterized by increasing strength in the quality and depth of the relationship. Colleagues can identify the indicators of each stage of relationship.

The terms and qualities of initial relationships should be defined through a negotiation of objectives that incorporates all assumptions by and constraints on the respective parties. In contrast, Northern organizations traditionally tend to impose relational terms and substantive objectives. The pressure of funding realities notwithstanding, this deters the establishment of functional partnerships. Northern and Southern colleagues should also use agreement language that reflects the *reality* of their

relationship, rather than falling back on rhetoric and hyperbole.

14. The Project and Sustainable NRM

Finding 14-1: Improving NGO capacity to conduct effective NRM doesn't necessarily lead to sustainable NRM. Projects such as this one can only promote sustainability in conjunction with similar, mutually reinforcing initiatives.

The distinction between sustainable NRM and improved NRM is absolutely crucial. Many people who refer to *sustainable* NRM are more likely than not referring to *improved* NRM, which could under the right conditions become sustainable. The PVO-NGO/NRMS experience demonstrates that these conditions (certain donor and government policies vis-à-vis NGO status and NRM activities, inter-NGO rivalries and politics, etc.) are critical in enabling or obstructing sustainability. Moreover, a single initiative can only promote sustainability as part of a critical mass of effort; it can catalyze discussion and reflection on constraining conditions, but ultimately cannot change them.

One example of these limitations involves COMODE's lengthy, high-caliber assessment of and recommendations for the legal framework of development and environment NGOs in Madagascar. The study involved canvassing over 1,000 NGOs/CBOs across the island, as well as including government in the dialogue. In the end, no product resulted from several years of effort. Political inertia, lack of government agency commitment to change the status quo, and the inability of major donors to influence government policies were responsible for stalling the revised legislation. Development and environment NGOs in Madagascar thus still operate today under the 1901 colonial laws for all "associations", which contain few incentives for the formation of NGOs and impose numerous controls on them. Institutional sustainability is therefore not really the issue, as constraints exist even prior to Malagasy environmental NGOs' formation. While COMODE tried its best to change what many felt were very frustrating conditions, it could not achieve this in a short period of time given the constraints. Achieving *more effective* NRM through local initiatives remains hampered in Madagascar, without allusion to sustainability.

Finding 14-2: Components of sustainability may fortuitously have been established as objectives under the initial PVO-NGO/NRMS design without having been considered expressly in terms of sustainability.

Four of the Project's original objectives, now accomplished, may help enable sustainability to occur at the Focal Country level. PVOs/NGOs are:

- Working on a wider scope and on more NRM issues;
- Devoting a greater proportion of their (human) resources to NRM-related issues;
- Improving the technical quality of their operations; and
- Demonstrating improved staff skills in NRM.

While achievement of these outputs cannot guarantee that sustainable NRM is occurring nationally, NGOs in Cameroon, Madagascar, Mali, and Uganda are clearly in a stronger position today to contribute to sustainable NRM than they were seven years ago. Institutional capacity now exists at a national consortium level in three of the four countries where it did not exist before, should donors choose to work with those fora. In the fourth, the pre-existing national consortium is a stronger organization — and it can be demonstrated that PVO-NGO/NRMS contributed to its growth.

While capacity building continues to be needed, it would be reasonable at present for the Project (or others) to test a new hypothesis: that, in the Focal Countries, the minimum NGO capacities now exist for widely employing improved methods, approaches, and technologies that can lead to more effective, if not sustainable, NRM.

Multiple factors are involved in attaining sustainability. A variety of short-term gains can be achieved at intermediate points, and create excitement for those providing services as well as those whose capacities are being strengthened. While these success points are necessary, they are insufficient to attain sustainable NRM at national and local levels unless supported over a protracted period. PVO-NGO/NRMS has learned that it is virtually impossible to move from the current situation at local levels to sustainability.

A possible model for approaching sustainability in terms of intermediate stages is:

current NRM situation —> more effective NRM achieved —> effective NRM consolidated —> sustainability in NRM achieved

This approach obviates the unrealistic attempt to promote sustainability prior even to achieving more effective NRM. The latter is difficult enough to bring about, let alone trying to accomplish and sustain it in one fell swoop.

Finding 14-3: Some Project accomplishments appear to be steps in the direction of sustainable NRM, in particular, the voluntary creation of structures and bodies intended to endure beyond the life of the Project, and the achievement of logical continuity by some Project-supported initiatives.

PVO-NGO/NRMS's role in helping create national consortia that have been able to maintain their activities over a seven-year period, particularly in Cameroon and Madagascar, supports this finding. While seven years does not infer sustainability, the voluntary creation and reinforcement of these entities is significant. Their long-term future will depend on myriad factors beyond the Project's (and in instances the consortia's) control.

Logical continuity, defined earlier as a progressively consistent evolution of activities based on existing NRM, capacity building needs, and capacities to address those needs, may be a step toward sustainability. Logical continuity within the Project is evident in:

Focal Country Programs

- **Cameroon:** USAID/Cameroon provided one year of bridge funding to PVO-NGO/NRMS/Cameroon. PRO-NGO/NRMS/Cameroon merged with the Global Environment Facility small grants program (1994). USAID's Africa Bureau funded PVO-NGO/NRMS/Cameroon for another year in anticipation of a role for the consortium under CARPE.
- **Madagascar:** COMODE received funding from the World Bank to prepare a study on participatory approaches that are promoted in agricultural sector

projects. PVO-NGO/NRMS hired COMODE to do a comparative study on slash-and-burn agriculture (*tavy*). Under USAID/ Madagascar's Sustainable Approached to Viable Environmental Management (SAVEM) Project, Private Agencies Collaborating Together (PACT) engaged COMODE to carry out NGO capacity building.

- **Mali:** CARE collaborated with the CCA/ONG in 1993 on an action-research project in *aménagement de terroir* funded under USAID/Mali's PVO Pivot Project. The latter was eventually suspended due to administrative problems.
- **Uganda:** USAID/Uganda provided PVO-NGO/NRMS/Uganda with three bridge funding grants, anticipating that an eventual grant under the new Action Program for the Environment (APE) initiative would support capacity building for the fledgling NARM Forum. This grant never materialized, despite seven proposal reformulations. Nonetheless, in mid-1996, the NARM Forum is still participating in Uganda's National Environment Action Program planning process, with rumors that some in Uganda foresee a parasitical role for it in the future.

Regional Program, Special Situations Fund, and Collaborative Analytical and Dissemination Activities (CADA)

- **Pesticide Action Network/ENDA-TM:** A workshop on integrated pest management (IPM) led to the formation of a regional IPM center in West Africa through USAID/Washington core funding.
- **KENGO NRM and Land Use Training Courses:** Multiple donors funded three consecutive years of NRM courses for East and Southern African NGO and government representatives.
- **Buffer Zone Management (BZM) Workshop:** The regional workshop in 1990 led to a follow-up workshop in Uganda in 1992, and to co-publication with BSP of Designing Integrated Conservation and Development Projects.
- **Improved Collaboration Between Sahelian Journalists and NGOs:** This workshop led the Panos Institute to revise its strategy for working with NGOs, targeting journalists more and NGOs relatively less.

- **Dogon Traditional NRM Systems:** This CADA grant resulted in improved contacts between HDS and various donors, including IFAD in the context of IFAD's NGO program.

Finding 14-4: Adaptive management skills appear to be a prerequisite to achieving sustainability.

Focusing on process issues is simply not enough to guarantee institutional and programmatic sustainability. The inability of PVO-NGO/NRMS/Uganda and PVO-NGO/NRMS/Mali to sustain their programs after seven years is arguably due to adaptive management skills not being sufficiently present in these bodies housing the project, or of the parent PVO-NGO/NAMS strategy to help these partners achieve programmatic sustainability. In fact, none of the national consortia PVO-NGO/NRMS worked with currently can be said to *fully* possess these skills. *Adaptive management* — the ability to strategically adjust programs according to evolving opportunities — demands skills in strategic planning, design, and negotiation. Unless this focus is emphasized more systematically in future capacity building efforts, programmatic sustainability may not be achieved.

Finding 14-5: For the time being, sustainability depends on a steady flow of donor funds. Donor funding depends on many unpredictable factors, including the donors themselves.

NGO capacity building is an extremely long process. Episodic improvements in NRM at the level of single NGOs can, if properly phased, lead to sustainability for individual NGOs' programs. However, no Project activities, taken individually or collectively, would in 1996 warrant the label of sustainable NRM activities.

Consistent donor support during initial capacity building is crucial to achieving NRM sustainability on the ground. It is not impossible to strengthen capacities under initiatives such as PVO-NGO/NRMS where staffing is minimal and project timelines are continually on a two-year horizon. It is preferable, however, to build in greater time and staffing depth to allow development of the minimum core complement of required skills in a broad NGO/NRM capacity building initiative.

A major lesson reinforced in the Project is that it is naive to think that sustainable NRM can be achieved through isolated capacity building programs in a context where donor programming trends are uncertain at best, and subject to major change. For the foreseeable future, NGOs will continue to depend on donors for most funding to work on NRM activities.

Finding 14-6: The free market approach to buy-ins is simply not realistic for bilateral donor agencies to assume vis-à-vis their field missions.

NGO strategic planning, under this or other projects, cannot be optimal given the uncertainty that underlies many major donor funding programs, particularly USAID's. Throughout the seven years that USAID has supported this Project, the agency has been undergoing structural reorganizations and internal crises that directly impact projects like PVO-NGO/NRMS. In 1996, USAID is in many ways fighting for its life as an agency. This major donor, which has championed NGO development, now finds itself defending the cause of development of any kind. During the Project's last phase of funding, one component, Transition and Linkages, was premised on

what proved to be the false assumption that USAID Missions would purchase PVO-NGO/NRMS services through bilateral agreements or other mechanisms, based on the quality of product that the Project had to offer, a free market exchange of ideas, and inherent value matched to need. This was prior to subsequent policy changes regarding development assistance on the part of the U.S. government. However, centrally-funded initiatives are not always consistent with Mission interests, and Missions are fighting for their own survival, making portfolio decisions sometimes based on programming logic and priorities different from those in Washington. The fact that USAID/Washington strongly supported PVO-NGO/NRMS ultimately had little impact on Mission decision making.

In conclusion, the PVO-NGO/NRMS experience demonstrates that if *sustainability* is the issue, donors and NGOs must take a more serious approach to its achievement. NGOs, together with donor and government partners, should initiate a *collaborative dialogue and negotiate* amongst themselves so that NRM programming can continue and sustainable NRM can become a potential reality, rather than simple rhetoric.

ANNEX I

PVO-NGO/NRMS PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES MATRIX

SERVICES	OBJECTIVES		
	<i>Create PVO/NGO Awareness of NRMs Needs and Priorities</i>	<i>Enhance PVO/NGO NRM Technical Capacities</i>	<i>Strengthen PVO/NGO Organizational Capacities</i>
1. Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Country NRM consultations • NRM issue identification • Support NGO NRM Action Plans at national levels • Sponsor NRM/development workshops • Organize/Contribute to NRM fora in Africa and the U.S. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Country NRM consultations • Subcontracts/subgrants for NRM training in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - microwatershed management - agroforestry design, management, and extension - soil conservation techniques- protected area management issues, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Country NRM consultations • Subcontracts/subgrants in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - management training - project design and evaluation - NRM needs assessments - Financial management - Fund-raising/proposal writing - NRM input/output assessment, etc.
2. Technical Assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide orientation/advice to PVO/NGOs exploring/initiating NRM projects and programs • Activate PVO Consortium Associates • Assist USAID Missions and other implementing agencies in design of new NRM initiatives with PVO/NGOs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subcontracts/grants for technical assistance in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - soil conservation - agroforestry - water resources management - biodiversity, etc. • Small grants for technical exchanges and site visits • Subgrants for NRMS technical consultancies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subcontracts and subgrants in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - organizational diagnosis/ development - staff development - project design and evaluation - financial management - strategic planning, etc. • Support transfer of PVO/NGO management expertise

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PVO-NGO/NRMS Project Objectives and Activities Matrix (Continued)

SERVICES	OBJECTIVES		
<i>Create PVO/NGO Awareness of NRMs Needs and Priorities</i>	<i>Enhance PVO/NGO NRM Technical Capacities</i>	<i>Strengthen PVO/NGO Organizational Capacities</i>	
3. Information Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compile/collect data on NRM projects and networks • Produce and distribute Project case studies • Circulate occasional Project updates • Assess NRM communications technologies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation and distribution of NRM technical manuals and other informational materials • Compile/collect information and directories of PVO/NGO NRM experience and expertise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce and distribute Project case studies • NRM information support needs • Contracts to produce/distribute management manuals for NGOs • Compile/collect information on PVO/NGO management development resources • Produce and distribute project case studies

ANNEX 2

LIST OF ACTIVITIES FUNDED OR LEVERAGED UNDER THE PVO-NGO/NRMS PROJECT¹

A. Focal Country Activities

Mali/Uganda/Cameroon/Madagascar

Start-up Workshops, PVO-NGO/NRMS, 1990

Cameroon

Working in NRM in the Sudano-Sahelian Zone in Cameroon, AFVP, September 1990

Establishment of a Documentation Center in Maroua, CARE/Mokolo and CEDC, May 1991

Meeting of Association of Organizations Involved in NRM in the Dense Forest Zone of Cameroon, CERFAP, June 1991

Agroforestry/Ethnoveterinary Medicine and Improved Pasture, HPI, June 1991 - March 1993

Participatory Rural Appraisal Training Workshop, SASH/DETMAC Association/BVCP, June - July 1991

Quarterly Newsletter of PVO/NRMS giving information on areas of interest to NRM and environmental protection and related areas, 1991-95

Formation à la Lutte Anti-Erosive, CDCV, February - October 1992

Sensibilisation Formation des Paysans d'Esse en Matière de Gestion des Ressources Naturelles, UGCE, February - October 1992

Survey on Environmental Degradation and Reduction of Soil Fertility, SNV/IRA, March - August 1992

Establishment of Public Park in Garoua, AEC, July 1992 - June 1993

Pilot HPI/Cameroon Paraveterinary Animal Health Control and Environmental Protection Project, HPI/Bamenda, August 1993 - March 1994

Madagascar

"Who does What?" Introductory Workshop, COMODE-PVO-NGO/NRMS/Washington, 1990

Project Design Training Workshops, COMODE-PVO-NGO/NRMS/Washington, 1990-91

Village Leadership Training, CEDID/CAPR, 1992

Participatory Village Water Management Systems, FIKRIFAMA/ASE, 1992

NGO Legal Framework Meetings and Proposed Legislative Revision, COMODE, 1993-95

Environment Day Information Support, Madagascar, COMODE, 1990, 1991
Faribolana Publications, 1991-95

Mali

Irrigated Perimeters and Their Impact, ACORD, 1990

Live Fencing Technical Experiments, GRAT/Africare, 1990

¹ For further information on any of these activities, contact PVO-NGO/NRMS at 1250 24th Street, NW, Suite 500, Washington, DC 20037, USA. Ph: 1-202-293-4800. Fax: 1-202-293-9211. E-mail: Michael Brown@wwfus.org Dates refer to when activities were initiated.

Agroforestry, KILABO, 1992
Selection of Indigenous Tree Species for
Outplanting, Veterinaires Sans Frontières, 1990

Training in NGO Management of NRM
Programs, ADAK/GAD/AMRAD, 1990

Training in Cartographic Analysis, Near East
Foundation/GUAMINA, 1990

Strengthening NRM Capacities in Kolodieba,
SCF/USA, 1991

Soil and Water Technology Testing in
Bandiagara, Harmonie du Développement au
Sahel (HDS), 1993

Uganda

Nambale Agroforestry Project, Toka Farmer's
Association, 1990

Agroforestry Project, Atabu Development
Association, 1990

Namanze Forest Reserve Tree Planting,
UWTPM, 1990

Fuel/Pole Supply and Environmental
Protection, Mid-Eastern Rural Development
Association, 1990

Numulu Family Agroforestry Project, Interaid
International, 1990

Increase Water for Domestic and Livestock use,
Nyabushozi Sylvo Pastoral Project, 1990

Kibale Forest Buffer Zone Establishment,
Interaid International, 1990

Kawoko Integrated Agroforestry Pilot Project,
Kawoko-Kikaawa Women's Community, 1991

Tororo Participatory Rural Appraisal, 1991-94

B. Regional Program

Assessment and Design for Elephant
Conservation Program

(Cameroon/CAR/Congo), WWF/WCI/WLI,
1990

Workshop on PRA (Kenya), WRI, 1990

Land Use Management and Extension Training
(Kenya), KENGO, 1990

Natural Regeneration in the Sahel (Mali/Niger)
CARE, 1990

Buffer Zone Management Workshop (Uganda),
PVO-NGO/NRMS, 1990

Sustainable Agriculture Conference (Kenya),
Winrock International, 1991

Okavango Ecosystem Community Stewardship
Project (Botswana), DTI, 1992

Atelier de Formation a l'Information sur
l'Environnement (Mali/Niger/Chad/Burkina
Faso), Panos Institute, 1992

Local Policy Influences in NRM in Kenya
(Kenya), IDR/WRI/KENGO, 1992

Workshop on Building Skills: Practical
Approaches to Implementing Community-Based
Conservation in Southern Africa, WWF, 1992

Pastoral Sector Workshop (Africa-wide), PVO-
NGO/NRMS, 1992

C. Special Situations Fund

Niger Needs Assessment, PVO-NGO/NRMS,
1990

Buffer Zone Workshop Video (Uganda) PVO-
NGO/NRMS, 1990

Forestry Utilization (Dzanga-Sanga, CAR),
WWF/Telesis, 1990

Women and NRM Workshop (Mali), FSP and
CCA/ONG, 1990

Pastoral Sector Assessment
(Ethiopia/Kenya/Mali), IIED/Consultant, 1991

D. Miscellaneous

Conservation Needs Assessment (Papua New Guinea), PVO-NGO/NRMS and BSP, 1992

Eighteen-Country Assessment, PVO-NGO/NRMS, 1992

Buffer Zone Management Workshop II, PVO-NGO/NRMS and GRET, 1993

Co-authorship and publication of "Designing Integrated Conservation and Development Projects," (By M. Brown and B. Wyckoff-Baird) with the Biodiversity Support Program and the Wildland and Human Needs Program (WWF).

E. Collaborative Analytical Dissemination Activities (CADA)

Sustainable Agriculture Workshop (West Africa), Pesticide Action Network, 1994

Study on Indigenous NRM Institutions (Mali), Harmonie du Développement au Sahel, 1994

PRA Study (Uganda/Africa-wide), PVO-NGO/NRMS/Uganda, 1994

Social Sustainability Publication (global), PVO-NGO/NRMS and IUCN/WWF/World Bank, 1994

Study of NRM Activities (Mali), Veterinaires Sans Frontières, 1994

Study of Combatting Slash and Burn Initiatives Practices (Madagascar), COMODE, 1994

Development of Ethnoveterinary Training Materials (Cameroon/Africa-wide), Heifer Project International, 1994

Environmental Communication Workshop (Burkina Faso), Naturama, 1994

F. Leveraged Funds Secured or Sought

PVO-NGO NRMS/Washington

1. USAID/Botswana
Purchase Order (\$18,809)
April 1994
Help BNRMP identify appropriate NGO support activities.
2. WWF/St. Lucia
Consulting Agreement (\$6,581)
May 1994
Participate in teaching a course on NGOs and NRM, sustainable development, PRA, mobilizing public participation.
3. World Resources Institute
Subagreement (\$13,219)
July 1994
Assist the Network for Environment and Sustainable Development in Africa (NESDA) in becoming a functioning and legal institution with a governing structure that reflects its mission and its supporters.
4. USDA/Forestry Support Program
Grant (\$20,000)
September 1994
Support for a practical guide on establishing and sustaining more competent organizations, with a view to enhancing the management of African natural resources.
5. Africare/Benin and Guinea
Concept paper/Letter of interest
Submitted March 1995
Assist Africare in the implementation of a capacity building project for NRM NGOs in Benin and Guinea. While Africare expressed interest in both ideas, no specific agreements were reached.
6. USAID/Initiative for Southern Africa
Concept paper
Submitted May 1995
18-month assessment of the NGO/CBO NRM climate in each of the participating countries; environmental portion of project put on hold.
7. USAID/Botswana
Proposal
Not awarded May 1995

- World Learning, with WWF and CARE, in response to USAID/Botswana's RFA to implement the NGO/CBO component of the Mission's BNRMP.
8. USAID/Biodiversity Support Program Agreement (\$12,121)
July - August 1995
To participate in an UNDP/GEF project design mission for the Bangassou Conservation Project in the Central African Republic.
 9. InterAction Grant (\$13,000)
August - October 1995
For direct expenses incurred in the development of the NGO Sourcebook.
 10. Natural Heritage Institute Agreement (\$2,200)
October - November 1995
For technical support to NHI's migration activities.
 11. USAID/Biodiversity Support Program Agreement (\$122,803)
To provide services under CARPE.
 12. Secretariat for the Convention to Combat Desertification
Pending agreement (\$25,000)
March - October 1996
For NHI and PVO-NGO/NRMS to design activities that ensure the awareness and participation of American groups in implementation of the CCD.
 13. IFAD (\$69,675)
September - December 1996
For formulation of an eight country coalition under the CCD to combat desertification in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.
 14. USAID/Washington (\$375,000)
September 1996 - September 1998
For implementation of activities under CARPE.
 15. Other (approximately \$13,000)
 - UNEP: Expenses and airfare to Bamako and Geneva to participate in the International NGO Conference on Desertification.
 - MacArthur Foundation: Expenses and travel to Bangkok for project director to lead a workshop on ICDPs and community forestry for a local organization, RECOFT.
 - MacArthur Foundation: Air fare to Chicago to attend meeting on Madagascar's environmental priorities.
 - IFAD: Expenses and travel to Rome to attend NGO consultative meeting.
 - International Snow Leopard Trust: Expenses and airfare to Pakistan to speak at International Snow Leopard Trust's annual meeting.
 - IFAD: Expenses and airfare to Brussels to attend IFAD Poverty and Hunger meeting.
 - IFAD: Per diem and airfare to Geneva to attend CCD meeting.
 - Secretariat for the Convention to Combat Desertification: expenses and airfare to attend INCD-9 in New York.
- PVO-NGO/NRMS/Cameroon**
16. USAID/Cameroon Grant (\$150,000)
April 1993 - March 1994
 17. UNDP/Global Environment Facility Grant (\$200,000) to complement #16 and #18
 18. USAID/Cameroon Grant (\$200,000)
September 1994 - September 1995; no-cost extension through December 1995.
In-country oversight and backstopping for #16 and #18 provided by CARE/Cameroon. TA and international backstopping by PVO-NGO/NRMS/Washington.

PVO-NGO/NRMS/Uganda

19. USAID/Uganda
Local currency grant (\$92,000)
April - September 1993
NRMS Valley Dams.
20. USAID/Uganda
Local currency grants (\$145,914 and \$163,930)
October 1993 - June 1994; September 1994 - December 1995
General operations bridging support.
21. USAID/Uganda
Proposal (\$600,000)
Not awarded December 1995
Capacity building for NARM Forum.
22. Makerere University
Grant (\$11,000)
1994 - 1995
For activities for the Forest, Trees, and People Network.

PVO-NGO/NRMS/Madagascar

23. World Bank
Contract (\$20,000)
1994
To conduct a study on NGO participatory methods.
24. MacArthur Foundation
Proposal (\$170,000)
Not awarded 1995
"A Study for the Establishing of the Amenities Plan for the Tsimanampetsotsa Integral Natural Reserve."
25. MacArthur Foundation
Proposal (\$60,000)
Not awarded 1995
"Tavy Management Systems, Analytical Collaborative and Comparative Study, Extension."

PVO-NGO/NRMS/Mali

No pending proposals.

ANNEX 3

FINDINGS FOR EIGHT PROGRAM FEATURES OR HYPOTHESES

Hypothesis 1: The structure of national consortia and regional chapters (zones) contributed to strengthening NGO capacity and better, more sustainable NRM.

Findings

- National consortia, and in a number of instances regional chapters, proved very effective in facilitating information exchange and, to a lesser extent, training. National consortia were more effective vehicles for hands-on grant funding than regional chapters.
- The national consortia worked best when they devolved authority to the regions. Lack of technical capacity and professional staff (who could devote more time and resources than volunteers) in the regions were apparent obstacles to increased decentralization. Reluctance on the part of national consortium coordinators to dilute their authority probably also played a part.

Hypothesis 2: Training programs contributed to strengthening NGO capacity and better, more sustainable NRM.

Findings

- Some training programs — notably, in financial management, accounting, and certain technical topics — had significant cognitive and behavioral effects.
- Training individuals did not necessarily strengthen their organizations. In several cases, individuals trained did not convey what they had learned to others. In others, it appeared that training increased the market value of individuals, making it possible for them to leave their organizations. It is important to address how skills and knowledge acquired through training actually will be used.

Hypothesis 3: Regional Program activities contributed to strengthening NGO capacity and better, more sustainable NRM.

Findings

- Many Regional Program initiatives catalyzed significant, collaborative, follow-up NRM activities. These often complemented Focal Country Programs, bringing a broader set of issues and methods into the purview of those programs, impacting also on the Project agenda itself.
- Regional Program activities that were developed or required follow-up from a local institutional base were most effective.

Hypothesis 4: Efforts to foster NGO collaboration and networking contributed to strengthening NGO capacity and better, more sustainable NRM.

Findings

- The Project stimulated a number of collaborative efforts, many of which led to improved NRM.
- Collaboration in itself does not necessarily promote skill transfer from stronger to weaker organizations.
- Networking in itself often does not have significant beneficial effects. Many organizations are not equipped to take advantage of the opportunities networking affords.

Hypothesis 5: Emphasizing bottom-up approaches contributed to strengthening NGO capacity and better, more sustainable NRM.

Findings

- Some of the most effective NRM improvements occurred where bottom-up approaches were strongest.
- The bottom-up approach at national and local levels by itself cannot improve NRM, nor lead to sustainability. It must be accompanied by appropriate technical complements.
- The ability of national NGOs and local private sector entities to provide services in many capacity building situations obviated the necessity to rely on Northern organizations, reinforcing the bottom-up approach of the Project.
- Promoting an approach emphasizing local participation does not obviate the need to pay close attention to questions of social and technical feasibility.
- Participation is necessary to capacity building, but it is not the same thing.
- Simply using participatory rural appraisal (PRA) does not ensure participation. Nor is PRA equally appropriate and effective in all situations. We need to know more about determining where PRA can be effective, and NGOs need training in applying that knowledge.

Hypothesis 6: Using service providing NGOs (SPNGOs) contributed to strengthening NGO capacity and better, more sustainable NRM.

Findings

- Using SPNGOs was most effective when they had the clear capacity to deliver services. Results were often disappointing when SPNGO capacities were not carefully assessed beforehand.

Hypothesis 7: Information support activities contributed to strengthening NGO capacity and better, more sustainable NRM.

Findings

- Although the project produced many publications, we are not sure what effect these had on awareness and action.
- In providing information support, whether through media or training, it is important to address the question of how organizations will use the information conveyed.

Hypothesis 8: Technical assistance contributed to strengthening NGO capacity and better, more sustainable NRM.

Findings

- Programming technical assistance into a bottom-up, NRM capacity building initiative is essential to enable the fruits of capacity building to be realized.

ANNEX 4

ADDITIONAL PROJECT ISSUES AND FINDINGS

Issue: The State of NGO Capacity

- Findings**
- NGO capacity is generally weak across Africa. That said, there is a critical mass of capacity in many countries to support NGO/NRM capacity at a national level. Based on the Project's success in catalyzing pilot activities from 1989 - 1995, improved NGO/NRM capacity can be anticipated given certain conditions and inputs.
 - The flip side of the above is that the limited capacities of many NGOs not only impede NRM activities but also capacity building initiatives, particularly those heavily grounded in rapid empowerment and bottom-up approaches.

Issue: Balancing Capacity Building and Experimentation with Pursuing Immediate NRM Goals

- Findings**
- Capacity building requires a mix of training, technical assistance, and information support, linked to on-the-ground testing, to be consolidated.
 - Building NGO capacity requires experimental initiatives, but to make this possible donors must be flexible in their evaluation criteria and demands for accountability.

Issue: Planning and Coordination

- Findings**
- Planning and coordination in NRM are inadequate at all levels. Many NGOs lack planning capacity and donors do not engage in coordinated planning.
 - Planning should recognize the need for pilot activities to test strategies and methods.

Issue: Monitoring and Evaluation

- Findings**
- Better monitoring and evaluation would improve implementation of capacity building and NRM initiatives, as well as make it possible to measure progress more accurately.
 - capacity building efforts should include monitoring and evaluation using baseline data on NGO capacities and productivity indicators determined collaboratively by the participants.

Findings	Issue: Partnership
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As the Project's association with Southern organizations demonstrate, working relationships that evolve into collaborative relationships, and ultimately into partnerships, can be facilitated by working through NGO consortia. These can serve as springboards for creating broad-based momentum to raise awareness about NRM issues, and to tackle implementation of NRM issues on the ground. • Overestimating a partner organization's capacities can be a serious obstacle to establishing an effective partnership. • Effective partnerships require that respective roles and responsibilities be clearly stipulated on the basis of negotiations among the partners. Given that, it is also important to allow roles and relationships to evolve. Keeping track of this process can be an important part of monitoring and evaluation. • It may take more time than most donors normally allot for a Southern organization to achieve parity with a Northern partner. This calls for flexibility on the part of Northern partners and donor if the objective of building partnerships to enable achieving improved NRM is to occur.

Findings	Issue: The Project and Sustainable NRM
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving NGO capacity to conduct effective NRM doesn't necessarily lead to sustainable NRM. Projects such as this one can only promote sustainability in conjunction with similar, mutually reinforcing initiatives. • Components of sustainability may fortuitously have been established as objectives under the initial PVO-NGO/NRMS design without having been considered expressly in terms of sustainability. • Some Project accomplishments appear to be steps in the direction of sustainable NRM, in particular, the voluntary creation of structures and bodies intended to endure beyond the life of the Project, and the achievement of logical continuity by some Project-supported initiatives. • Adaptive management skills appear to be a prerequisite to achieving sustainability. • For the time being, sustainability depends on a steady flow of donor funds. Donor funding depends on many unpredictable factors, including the donors themselves. • The free market approach to buy-ins is simply not realistic for bilateral donor agencies to assume vis-à-vis their field missions, particularly in the case of USAID.

ANNEX 5

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ANNEX 7

LIST OF ACRONYMS

A

AA	analytical assessment
AEC	Association Ecologique du Cameroun
APE	Action Program for the Environment
ARTS/FARA	Africa Technical Resources Division, subsequently Analysis, Research and Technical Support of USAID

B

BSP	Biodiversity Support Program
BZM	buffer zone management

C

CIFOR	Center for International Forestry Research
CADA	Collaborative Analytical Dissemination Activities
CARPE	Central African Regional Program on the Environment
CBNRM	community based natural resources management
CBO	community based organization
CCA/ONG	Comité de Coordination des Actions des ONG au Mali
CDCV	Centre de Développement des Communautés Villageoises
CLA	country lead agency
COMODE	Conseil Malgache des Organisations de Développement et l'Environnement
CWG	country working group

E

EIL	Experiment in International Living
ELCI	Environment Liaison Centre International
ENDA-TM	Environnement et Développement Action-Tiers Monde

G

GRAT	Groupe de Recherche et d'Applications Techniques
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H

HDS	Harmonie du Développement au Sahel
HPI	Heifer Project International

I

ICDP	integrated conservation and development project
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INCD	Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on the Convention to Combat Desertification
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IPM	integrated pest management
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
J	
JEU	Joint Environment Unit
K	
KENGO	Kenya Energy and Environmental Organizations
M	
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MUBFS	Makerere University Biological Field Station
N	
NARM Forum	Natural Resources Management Forum
NRM	natural resources management
P	
PACT	Private Agencies Collaborating Together
PAN	Pesticide Action Network
PRA	participatory rural appraisal
PVO	private voluntary organization
PVO-NGO/NRMS	Private Voluntary Organizations and Non-Governmental Organizations in Natural Resources Management Support Project
R	
RRA	rapid rural appraisal
S	
SAVEM	Sustainable Approaches to Viable Environmental Management Project
SPNGO	service providing NGOs
T	
TA	technical assistance
U	
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development

W

WLI
WWF

World Learning Inc.
World Wildlife Fund