



Natural Resources Information Clearinghouse

Progress Report for First Quarter, FY 2004
October - December 2003

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ACRONYMS

EGAT	Economic Growth, Agriculture, and Trade (EGAT) Bureau
FY	fiscal year
GCP	Global Conservation Program
NRIC	Natural Resources Information Clearinghouse
NRM	natural resources management
STTA	short-term technical assistance
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development

SUMMARY

This document serves as the Natural Resources Information Clearinghouse's (NRIC) progress report for the fifth quarter of operation (the first quarter of FY 2004 – October through December 2003). Following this summary of accomplishments, the report presents a narrative discussion of the project's accomplishments and the quarterly financial report.

Two tasks in particular dominated NRIC's work in this reporting period. First, we invested substantial effort in helping research and write the NRM Office component of the USAID Annual Report. Second, we made significant progress in adding information about NRM USAID natural resources projects and documents to the databases. NRIC staff specialists continued to regularly attend Team meetings, conduct research, produce materials and provide other support to the Teams and the NRM Office.

Specific accomplishments included:

Reports and publications

- Helped NRM Office staff complete the NRM Office's component of USAID's Annual Report and write the NRM Office's Congressional Notification;
- Produced 1,000 copies of two Congressional water reports;
- Wrote six news articles about the NRM Office and Team activities for posting on the "What's New" section of EGAT's Intranet;

Web

- Added or revised more than 30 pages and 16 navigation modules on the public Web site (www.usaid.gov) or the development site where they are awaiting final approval by the USAID Teams;
- The development site for the NRM Internal pages grew to 34 pages and 13 navigation modules describing the NRM Office, Teams, programs and contract mechanisms;
- Expanded the online tools used to manage and access the NRM databases to nearly 50 pages written with ColdFusion code;
- Web interface for searching databases was redesigned to accommodate geographic searches based on clickable maps;

Build Information Resources

- Added 138 project records and 728 documents to the database on NRM databases, largely completing baseline data for the Latin American and Caribbean Region and 35 percent of the Africa Region based on readily available information;
- Implemented systematic process to quality control information in the databases;
- Began beta testing the on-line database in the field through presentations to USAID staff in the Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Bureau, Panama Mission, Guatemala and Central America Program, and contractors in Panama;

Conference support

- Helped to write and produce NRM materials for the Mission Director's Conference;

- Assisted the Biodiversity Team and Water Team staff to prepare PowerPoint presentations; and
- Provided logistic support to the Land Team-sponsored seminar on Global Security and Food Systems activities.

Other support to the NRM Office and Teams

- Regularly participated in meetings of the NRM Office and all four Teams;
- Represented the NRM Office on the EGAT Knowledge Management and Communications Team and shared information on making documents 508-compliant with the team.
- Drafted talking points on HIV/AIDS and conservation for a speech that USAID Administrator Andrew Natsios gave;
- Helped the Land Team develop its Intermediate Result and framework; and
- Participated in the Executive Meeting of the Mesoamerican and Caribbean Geospatial Alliance.

Next quarter

In the second quarter of FY 2004, NRIC will focus on five major activities: 1) assisting the Biodiversity and Forestry teams with research and writing of the **118 and 119 reports**, 2) producing NRM pages on the **Intranet** of USAID, 3) designing and developing a new Web site – **nrlic.net** – for the NRM databases, and 4) completing the **database** records on USAID NRM projects and available documents for Africa and 25% of the projects in Asia and the Near East and Europe and Eurasia regions, and 5) acquiring information and reporting on USAID **sustainable tourism** activities. Short term technical assistance will be needed to continue acquiring baseline information for the NRM databases and to complete the anticipated work on sustainable tourism.

TASK 1. REPORTS, BROCHURES, OTHER PUBLICATIONS

NRIC's technical specialists worked closely with NRM Office staff to complete the NRM Office's component for USAID's Annual Report. This intensive effort occupied a substantial portion of NRIC staff from November through mid December. The two NRIC specialists worked with representatives from the NRM teams to provide overview information for the four sectors, detailed program narratives and data sheets, and performance summaries. In addition, they analyzed and reported on performance indicators and value-added data, and developed an Office-level roll-up of the information for the Annual Report submission.

The Biodiversity and Forestry Specialist collaborated with NRM leadership to complete the NRM Office's Congressional Notification regarding their revised Strategic Objective.

NRIC worked with the Water Team to produce and distribute 1,000 copies of two Congressional water reports: *USAID's Investments in Drinking Water Supply and Related Activities (A Report to the U.S. House and Senate Appropriations Committees)*, and *USAID's Water Portfolio: Promoting Clean Water and Efficient Use of Freshwater and Coastal Resources*. The Biodiversity and Forestry Specialist and other NRIC staff also helped the Biodiversity Team mail the Section 119 Biodiversity Report to USAID missions.

Ken Creighton, a short term technical expert in forestry, completed a research paper on illegal logging and protected areas. The paper was reviewed and edited by the NRIC Biodiversity and Forestry Specialist and sent to the Forestry Team for review.

NRIC supported the NRM Office and Teams with research and writing in support of the Office's communication work. Six news articles about the NRM Office and Team activities were posted on the EGAT Daily News page this quarter: USAID's participation at the World Forestry Congress, Announcement of 2003 Water Documents, USAID/Mexico Kudos to the Water Team, Sustainable Forest Products Global Alliance efforts to combat illegal logging in Africa and Indonesia, the Biodiversity GCP awards, and an introduction to David Hess, the new Director of the NRM Office. The Biodiversity and Forestry Specialist assisted the Biodiversity Team by drafting talking points on HIV/AIDS and conservation for a speech that USAID Administrator Andrew Natsios gave. While progress was made on writing the NRM Ambassador's package, completion of the work was deferred as the NRIC team focused on the Annual Report and content for project Web sites. NRIC helped the NRM Office and Land Team write and produce two marketing pieces for dissemination at the Mission Directors' Conference in October.

TASK 2. COLLECT AND MANAGE INFORMATION FOR THE NRM OFFICE AND COMPONENT TEAMS

The Biodiversity and Forestry Specialist continued tracking Forestry Team member activities. The activity log tracks conferences attended, services provided to Missions and/or other Bureaus within USAID, and other important accomplishments.

NRIC's Technical Specialists worked with NRM Office staff on collecting and analyzing data for USAID's Annual Report.

TASK 3. DESIGN, PRODUCE, AND MAINTAIN WEB SITES

In this quarter, more than 30 pages and 16 navigation modules were revised or newly added to the public Web site (www.usaid.gov) or are on the development site awaiting final approval by the USAID Teams. Seven existing lobby pages and eight associated modules were revised. Seventeen new Biodiversity sub-pages were written, produced, and posted on the development site for Biodiversity Team review and, once approved, will be posted live on the site. In addition, 3 new Forestry pages as well as 3 associated modules were produced and a Section 508-compliant PDF version of the Forestry 118 report was posted. Photos were inserted for the Water sub-pages and one new module containing 2 Section 508-compliant congressional reports was also done this quarter.

At the close of the quarter there were 34 pages and 13 navigation modules on the development site for the NRM internal site. These include pages introducing the NRM Office and Teams, and 28 pages describing contract mechanisms and other support agreements managed by the Office. The database components described below are in addition to these components of the Intranet development site.

The online NRM databases are accessed by close to 50 pages written with ColdFusion code. Ten pages allow NRIC staff to enter new records and retrieve existing records for editing, while nine others process the information. Eighteen pages present the public search options, and another twelve pages return results and allow users to view information stored in the databases. This quarter, the ColdFusion pages for searching and retrieving information from the databases were redesigned to include clickable maps for searching within a USAID region or a particular country for information about projects or documents. Navigation between project, document and image search pages was improved. Database queries now ignore diacritical marks, thereby improving searches in multiple languages.

The NRIC Web team met with EGAT personnel coordinating the redesign of the EGAT Intranet to discuss the production of NRM pages on the EGAT Intranet. The group resolved to integrate NRM text pages (html-based pages) to the existing EGAT intranet pages as soon as possible. The database component of the NRM pages will most likely be added to the redesigned EGAT Intranet later this year. In the interim, the databases will be made accessible from an NRIC-hosted site.

In October, NRIC participated in the EGAT Communication Task Force meeting by giving a presentation on issues involved in making Section 508(c)(3)-compliant PDFs. The presentation included a demonstration of what a blind person hears when s/he uses a screen reader to navigate through a PDF document. The NRIC Webmaster attended the 2003 IDEAS Section 508 compliance 3-day conference in November.

TASK 4. ACQUIRE, ORGANIZE, AND ARCHIVE INFORMATION RESOURCES

This quarter, NRIC continued to build up the NRM Office's online document and project databases. USAID activities over the last 3 years and associated documents have been compiled for the Latin America and the Caribbean Region and about 35 percent of Africa. The projects component of the database was greatly expanded, adding 138 projects, which brings the total number of projects in the database to 165. For the third consecutive quarter, the library database approximately doubled in size. 727 documents were added to the NRIC library; this brings the total holdings to 1521 documents. The images component of the database grew slightly to 287, with 5 images added this quarter. Biographies of members of the Forestry Team were added to the database component that supports the on-line staff directory.

The Information Management Specialist further refined the databases by specifying formatting guidelines for a subset of data fields and including code in the editing pages that would automatically update the USAID Region and funding mechanism fields of the document database. The Operations Manual was updated to reflect changes that occurred over the quarter in the online search pages, the database structure and quality control process.

NRIC implemented a quality control system to ensure accuracy and completeness of data being added. Project records are systematically reviewed by NRIC technical specialists to ensure quality and completeness.

NRIC's Director field-tested the databases with 3 groups while attending a GIS conference in Panama: a) USAID/Panama staff, b) USAID contractors and NGO partners in Panama, and c) regional environment staff from Guatemala and Central America Program. All parties were enthusiastic and offered suggestions to refine the data system and increase access to the resource.

TASK 5. PLANNING

The Land and Water Specialist worked with members of the Land Team to develop new Intermediate Result and indicators for the Land Team. The Biodiversity and Forestry Specialist also attended a one-day Biodiversity Team retreat.

The Land and Water Specialist helped the Land Team draft a sustainable tourism plan, and initiated discussions with sustainable tourism specialists at George Washington University regarding synergistic support to database development activities, and strategic planning and pilot field project development activities within USAID.

TASK 6. ASSISTING WITH CONFERENCES, WORKSHOPS, AND MEETINGS

NRIC helped the NRM Office write and print two marketing pieces (2-pages each) for dissemination at the Mission Directors' Conference in October. NRIC staff also gathered other publications for distribution at the conference and helped to set up displays for NRM programs.

The NRIC Biodiversity and Forestry Specialist helped the NRM Office's Wildlife and Biodiversity Advisor prepare a PowerPoint presentation on USAID's Biodiversity Conservation activities given at the University of Michigan.

The Land and Water Specialist helped the Water Team's Water Resources Advisor prepare a PowerPoint presentation on "Mobilizing Solutions for Adaptation: Enhancing Resilience" workshop sponsored by the USAID Global Climate Change Team.

The Land and Water Specialist also provided logistical support to the Land Team on a seminar addressing Global Food Security and Food Systems research activities in Indo-Gangetic Plain, Southern Africa and the Caribbean.

The NRIC Director participated in the Executive Meeting of the Mesoamerican and Caribbean Geospatial Alliance, an initiative supported by the Land Team.

TASK 7. NRIC PROJECT PLANNING, MONITORING, AND REPORTING

This report details the anticipated schedule of products and activities for last quarter, October - December 2003, and briefly outlines the work plan for the current quarter. See the section "Changes to the NRIC Annual Work Plan" for specific changes to the NRIC work plan.

NRIC wrote an Annual Report for FY03 and Annual Plan for FY04 and submitted these to USAID. NRIC also prepared an analysis of its time/LOE and expenditures in FY03, as well as projections for FY04.

CHANGES TO NRIC AND THE NRIC ANNUAL WORK PLAN

This section identifies changes made to the NRIC Annual Work Plan during the previous quarter, discusses reasons for these changes and impacts on operations.

In the first quarter FY04, there were no changes to the full-time staff in NRIC. Sixty-seven days of level of effort in STTA were invested in development of the on-line databases, including compilation of information on USAID NRM projects and associated documents and photographs.