Protected Areas at Local Government Level

Supporting cities and municipalities in Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru in conserving biodiversity

Context

The biological diversity found in Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru is of global significance. That there is a clear political will on the part of these four countries to preserve this diversity is evident in their ratification of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and in their designation and management of protected areas, mainly at national level. These countries have placed between 10 and 25 per cent of their respective national territories under protection.

As part of a comprehensive system, protected areas and other area-based conservation measures at local government level help to preserve natural habitats on a sustainable basis.

Local governments in these four countries have already implemented site-based conservation mechanisms. However, the legal status of local protected areas varies from country to country. In Brazil and Ecuador, protected areas that are designated and managed by the local governments can be recognised as part of the national protected area system. In Peru and Colombia, this is not yet the case.

The contribution made by cities and municipalities to biodiversity conservation is often not readily apparent. Financial resources for the conservation of biodiversity are limited. The initiatives are rarely integrated into planning processes or spatial development strategies. There is also a lack of knowledge and awareness of the importance of protected areas and conservation mechanisms for local sustainable development. This is particularly true for the provision of key ecosystem services such as drinking water, recreation and protection against disasters arising from climate change.

Objective

Better conditions are in place for local governments in Brazil, Ecuador, Colombia and Peru to conserve biodiversity through the effective and equitable management of protected areas and other area-based conservation measures.

Approach

The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH is implementing the project in partnership with ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability, a global network of cities, towns and regions committed to building a sustainable future, and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), an international non-governmental environmental network comprising numerous international government and civil society organisations. The environment ministries in the project countries are the political counterparts. The project is being implemented in close cooperation with the local governments and their associations and networks in the countries.
The measures build on the experience gained from existing initiatives and they entail a multilevel approach:

- **Developing local government capacities**

  Lessons-learned and existing management and funding instruments are being systematised and used as a basis for developing, adapting and applying appropriate training tools for local governments.

- **Embedding local governments’ role in biodiversity conservation more firmly in legal and institutional frameworks**

  Appropriate policy recommendations are prepared, based on an analysis of institutional frameworks. Local government representatives and their associations participate actively in the national working groups, giving them an opportunity to become involved in the planning and implementation of project measures.

- **Communicating the challenges and benefits of local protected areas and other conservation mechanisms**

  The importance of the local governments’ conservation action is communicated to specific target groups. Lessons learned are disseminated at national and international events and key sector forums.

**Results and Impacts**

**Regional conferences** have been held in São Paulo, Quito and Lima on the status of local protected areas in the four countries. The conferences were used to exchange ideas and experience across borders. They provide a forum for highlighting the activities that municipalities are carrying out to conserve biodiversity and for acknowledging what the environment ministries are doing to improve the legal and institutional framework.

In **Brazil**, as part of a pilot workshop six municipalities received training in methods that they can use to integrate ecosystem services into the management of local protected areas. The city of Florianópolis drew on these methods when drafting its municipal plan for the protection and sustainable use of the Atlantic coastal rainforest.

In **Colombia**, the project working group and representatives from local governments provided contributions to support the recognition of ‘complementary nature conservation strategies’ and backed the publication ‘Voces de la gestión territorial’. The municipalities were involved for the first time in discussions on designing regional protected area systems. Existing urban protected area systems were catalogued. The lessons learned were shared with the Ministry of Environment, which is drawing up a new protected areas policy.

In **Ecuador**, the provisions of the new environmental legislation have been prepared. These govern the legal status of local protected areas and other area-based conservation measures. The Decentralised Autonomous Governments now have better conditions for setting up and managing their own sub-national protected area systems. The municipalities report that official recognition of the Chocó Andino de Pichincha Biosphere Reserve – a process supported by the project – has made it possible to foster dialogue between different interest groups and also to establish alliances and cooperation with them. These activities preserve biodiversity and benefit the local population.

In **Peru**, guidelines have been produced on identifying area-based protection measures at municipal level as part of sustainable land-use planning. A Task Force of the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas is incorporating the lessons learned into CBD discussions on the systematisation and recognition of other effective conservation measures.