

Térraba Sierpe & Golfo Dulce Osa region

Factsheet Osa Region, Costa Rica



Responsible partner:



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*The capacity of civil society organisations
and their networks in community based
environmental management*

www.civinet.eu

Introduction to case studies in the CiVi.net project

One of the main aims of the CiVi.net project is to identify 'success stories' of local communities where solution strategies have been developed for the effective management of commonly used natural resources. Therefore the project has taken an action research and case study approach, selecting a number of 'original' case study regions, i.e. communities where solution strategies have already been worked out. For each of the selected original case study regions possible 'transfer' regions are discussed, though the final selection of transfer regions will be made upon the start of the project after conferring with the local stakeholders of the original region, the project's advisory board and the Commission.

More information on the CiVi.net project and the Spanish and Portuguese version of this file can be found on the website of the project: www.civinet.eu. Information on the case studies and transfer regions is available via www.civinet.eu/english/79277/5/0/100

Térraba Sierpe & Golfo Dulce Osa region

Wetlands are an important component of Costa Rican ecosystems due to their significant environmental service contributions. These include services that are crucial for climate change adaptation and to comply with the country's goals of carbon neutrality. Yet, their protection has been acknowledged by its Minister of the Environment as one of the areas of "blue policy" where the country needs to improve.

About the region

The Térraba-Sierpe and Golfo Dulce regions are part of the Osa Conservation Area (ACOSA) in the South Pacific region of Costa Rica. As the pacific coast is a popular region for mass sea tourism, the Osa region has increasingly become under pressure from real estate and tourism infrastructure development. The government plans to build one of the largest hydroelectric dams in Central America upstream from the Térraba-Sierpe National Wetland and an international airport to strengthen the tourism and real estate development. Even if legally protected, wetlands have not been adequately conserved in Costa Rica. They have lacked management guidelines and funding for effective state run conservation. Their public property status prevents enhancing conservation efforts through typical market based mechanisms. The main challenge to be faced is to steer development in a way to promote sustainability in the local communities and keep the region from suffering the undesirable socio-ecological effects of mass tourism and illegal development at the cost of ecosystem services from wetlands like it has happened in other regions along the pacific coastline.



Illegal Real estate development next to the Sierpe Lagoon in the Térraba-Sierpe National Wetland. Photo: Azur Moulart-ECOTICOS.



The Golfo Dulce mangroves are affected by excessive erosion and other threats and lack an adequate management plan for their protection. Photo: CAVU.

The solution strategy

Against this background, effective community engagement in conservation was needed in this area to supplement public and private efforts for wetland conservation. This engagement came in two levels: community advocacy and direct community conservation actions. A major framework was provided by two projects, ECOTICOS and MANGLE-BENIN, launched in August 2008 and August 2009 respectively, with the aim to mediate in the environmental management conflicts of the area with a clear participatory approach.

In the Térraba Sierpe region, ECOTICOS strengthened the empowerment of local communities to implement a Management Plan for the Térraba-Sierpe National Wetland in order to suggest fields of activities for future planning and allow for a coherent planning of development propositions. This approach was first initiated by local conservation authorities and later fostered by the ECOTICOS project. A permanent working group was created, composed of 25 members, of which 10 work directly for ACOSA and 15 are representatives of local stakeholders of the region such as representatives of local governments, businesses, NGOs, academia and local leaders. The Plan, approved in 2010, is valid for a period of 10 years. ECOTICOS supported this



In the Térraba-Sierpe region the porocess of Social Multicriteria Analysis allowed to elicit the community's support for the Management Plan under discussion at the time. Photo: Ecoticos Project.



The strategy in the Golfo Dulce included local school children in community reforestation activities as an awareness raising activity. Photo: Mangle-Benin Project.

participatory approach through the enhancement of the importance of the ecosystem services produced by the wetland. This was done through a combination of ecosystem valuation and social multicriteria methodologies, that allowed to internalize the notion of the economic benefits of the wetland and to elicit the preferences of stakeholder groups toward scenarios that included the existence and non-existence of the management plan. The preferences supported the approval of the management plan in the Regional Conservation Council.

In contrast to Térraba-Sierpe, important wetland areas in the Golfo Dulce area are not yet covered by a similar plan. Therefore, under the MANGLE-BENIN project, communities engaged directly in conservation activities of awareness, education and community reforestation and monitoring. They committed to the conservation of this resource in order to elicit the inclusion of these areas under the jurisdiction of protected area management plans for the conservation area from policy makers. Both projects were locally led and their processes were facilitated by the local presence of FUNDACION NEOTROPICA with its Center for Studies and Community Empowerment (CEEC) Alvaro Wille Trejos.

ECOTICOS framework

The ECOTICOS framework is based on the work of Donella Meadows referring to twelve leverage points for changing complex systems. The ECOTICOS project adapts these principles into a practical framework entitled i) technical, ii) institutional and iii) conceptual lever and proposes that to promote sustainability it is imperative to work within and across all three levels. The technical lever (i) includes all information on the tools at hand needed to find solutions for a concrete problem. The institutional lever (ii) refers to the need for the right institutional arrangements that have to be in place to implement the different tools, and, finally, the

conceptual lever (iii) implies that there must also be a common understanding of the whole, an overarching concept that holds everything together and tells about where we are now so a decision can be made about where we want to go from here. Embedded in these three levers are the two most important pieces of the puzzle: education and communication among all involved parties.

MANGLE-BENIN framework

MANGLE-BENIN's framework introduces the notion of Units of Local Implementation (ULI). These are local execution units that combine the best skills of local organizations, NGO technical experience and local conservation authorities to effectively implement a conservation strategy in the field composed of three prongs: community education and awareness, community reforestation and monitoring and community advocacy.

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The CiVi.net project aims to analyse, transfer and disseminate successful and sustainable community based solutions with regard to ecosystem service management in Latin America. The role of civil society organizations (CSOs) within these governance models is thereby at the core of the research.