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EVALUATION REPORT



**UDF- CHI-08- 273 Empowering Communities to Strengthen Citizen Participation in
Chile**

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Disclaimer

The evaluators are solely responsible for the content of this publication, which in no case can be considered to reflect the views of UNDEF, Transtec, or other institutions and/or individuals mentioned in the report.

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

i. Project Data

This report presents the findings from the evaluation of the project “Empowering Communities to Strengthen Citizen Participation in Chile,” carried out by the NGO *Acción por la Tierra/ Earth Action Santiago (EAN)*, from October 1, 2009 to December 31, 2011¹. UNDEF provided a grant of US\$230,000.

Given the negligible community involvement in finding solutions to environmental problems, the project launched capacity-building initiatives. It lent support to citizen participation initiatives in vulnerable communities struggling with conflicts of interest and the need to defend their lands and natural resources such as soil and water. Many of these communities knew little about their rights and had few opportunities to engage in dialogue and influence policy. The particular focus of the project was youth and women in the beneficiary population.

The project strategy was centered on promoting democratic governance and political dialogue in Chile and was organized around four outcomes: (i) The communication of specific knowledge to optimize citizen participation in the environmental impact assessment system (SEIA²) through information, education, and the training of local leaders; (ii) Support for creating and strengthening civil society synergies to develop a network that promotes citizen participation and environmental rights in the three intervention regions; (iii) An informed general public, knowledgeable about its right to participate in the SEIA process and conflict resolution; (iv) Greater community capacity to participate as a result of the methodologies and tools provided to navigate the SEIA process. The project operated in three regions of Chile: in the North, in the Coquimbo region, Monte Patria Commune; in the Central Region, in the O’Higgins region, Pichidegua Commune, and the South, in the Maule Region, Constitución and Chanco Communes.

ii. Evaluation Findings

The strategic option of prioritizing political empowerment as the fundamental approach to community development and transformation was highly **relevant** to the profile of the beneficiary groups, which for the most part were vulnerable rural communities that often did not know their rights. These communities rarely had a voice in public affairs and had little access to channels of influence. The beneficiary groups were involved in all phases of the project, including identification of the problems and issues to tackle in each community. The quality of the information produced on environmental issues improved the way citizens participated and gave them cogent arguments, better enabling them to influence decision-making. An important indicator of the project’s relevance was its consistency with country’s new legal framework for citizen participation, environmental institutions, and the right to access public information. It also employed the gender approach, promoting equitable participation by men and women, young and old.

The project was very **effective** in achieving the intended outcomes and objectives. The investigational phase was devoted to determining the baseline and learn (i) the beneficiaries’ views and understanding of the environmental problems affecting their communities; (ii) what they knew about their rights and ability to obtain public information; (iii) what formal and informal forums and actors can move citizens to get involved in environmental issues; and (iv) the quality and type of citizen participation activities carried out as part of the

¹ On October 26, 2011, UNDEF approved a two-month extension of the project (until December 2011).

² Sistema de Evaluación del Impacto Ambiental

environmental impact assessment process in the three intervention regions. The second phase of the project was devoted to empowering stakeholders through public awareness and information dissemination activities, as well as the Citizen Empowerment Program. Local communities and beneficiary populations (women and youth, for the most part) gained a better knowledge of their rights and improved their ability to participate in the protection of their environment and way of life. Leadership capacity and coordination among CSOs were strengthened, improving participation and monitoring processes, as well negotiation and conflict resolution skills. Two of the three intervention regions created an environmental network (*Red Ambiental*) to protect the environment.

The evaluators found very good levels of project **efficiency**, since with a modest and reasonable budget, it had been able to meet very different needs in three regions of the country, covering a highly diverse and representative beneficiary population. *Acción por la Tierra* opted for well-organized strategic management that relied on three regional coordinators working in close collaboration with the partner organizations. These organizations have a reputation in the region for their competence and professional track record and coordinated the activities responsibly and competently. Though in the beginning, the project had difficulty meeting deadlines due to contextual and external factors, these problems were solved without affecting the intended outcomes.

The project had a concrete, visible **impact** on the beneficiary populations, which was facilitated by its emphasis on strengthening the capacity of citizens to organize to solve environmental problems. The project provided technical assistance, which improved autonomy and coordination among the beneficiaries. The result was the creation of territorial environmental protection networks made up of numerous social and environmental organizations, political figures, teachers, students, educational institutions, and youth groups. Several members of the network participate in local political and government forums, giving them a voice in their territories and access to public information. Many community leaders (women and youth) made a commitment to ensuring the continuity of the initiatives and to promoting the development of new opportunities for citizen participation. Taking advantage of new, unstructured civic movements, the project succeeded in informing, motivating, and training citizens and improving local governance, sparking efforts to defend and protect environmental rights.

In terms of **sustainability**, the project enhanced the technical and institutional capabilities of the beneficiaries, who are aware of the role that they must play in guaranteeing continuity of the incipient local organizing process. The partner organizations are known in the communities, and their commitment is recognized. However, they are aware that they will need strategic and financial support if they are to organize informational and training events and possess relevant communications materials to distribute. *Acción por la Tierra's* response capacity and ability to offer assistance suffers from its lack of financial sustainability, a looming challenge for the vast majority of civil society organizations in Chile.

In addition to its support for developing a dynamic to empower citizens in three rural regions hardly supported by international donors and with serious environmental issues, the project also contributed **value added** to UNDEF, confirming the relevance and direct benefits of its strategic priority of organizing communities and emerging groups that work with highly vulnerable, defenseless populations whose rights have been violated.

iii. Conclusions

- *Acción por la Tierra's management of the project was excellent.* Its high degree of professionalism and responsibility created a **strong sense of project ownership** in beneficiary communities.

- *The commitment it elicited among women and young people*, who, by organizing, came to understand the problems that afflict their communities, has enabled them **to become more proactive citizens** and move from social commitment to political participation that can lead to conflict resolution and problem solving.

- The **aftereffects of dictatorship** in the country are still visible in the priority accorded to economic development over a political and institutional approach aimed at strengthening democracy. **Participation levels vary**, with informational forums and/or citizen consultations prevailing over activities that stress deliberative participation in which decisions reflect citizen input.

- The **country still lacks consensus-based local and national environmental policies**, although it has signed the international agreements currently in force.

- *The rights approach prioritized by the project contributed very important value added, encouraging empowerment processes* that helped create democratic awareness among citizens, who every day are getting more involved in demanding their rights and defending their lands.

- *The project addressed a real need, intervening just when environmental institutions in the country were changing.* The quality of the information, messages, and products it offered empowered beneficiary groups to exercise transparent management and gain access to public information. However, they are requesting technical assistance so that they can continue producing up-to-date, quality information.

- Empowering local leaders and mobilizing community and civil society stakeholders **improved their ability to interact with their communities and participate in policy discussions at the regional, provincial, and commune level**. These positive developments require support to sustainably consolidate and capitalize on achievements.

- The sense of ownership that was achieved led stakeholders to recognize that **more time is necessary to consolidate the work begun. They are conscious of the need to strengthen regional networks**, motivate citizens and members of the coordinating bodies involved in the process to take responsibility, **empower agents of the justice** system to defend and protect the basic rights of citizens, and have relevant communications materials at their disposal.

iv. Recommendations

In order to capitalize on the outcomes of the intervention, the evaluation mission recommends:

- **Offering support to local networks to improve their ability to represent the community.** This would require ensuring continued support for training leaders, preparing visual aids, and systematizing relevant knowledge, adapting it to the community's ability to understand it. (See Conclusions iii and vii).

- ***Promoting and reinforcing a culture of positive conflict management***, stressing the sociopolitical perspective and improving stakeholders' ability to negotiate, listen, and dialogue to improve the quality of citizen participation. (See Conclusion viii).

- ***Supporting the promotion of relevant, consensus-based public policies, creating synergies*** that intensify efforts and actions to preserve the environment and improve the quality of life in communities. ***Increasing opportunities for joint environmental education activities with the Ministries of Education, Social Development, and the Environment.*** (See Conclusion iv).

- ***Offering legal counsel*** that fosters adoption of the rights approach, ***helping citizens learn about their rights*** and know how to distinguish between administrative and/or judicial action and decisions that are more political in nature. (See Conclusion v).

- ***Intensifying the search for financial resources, using diversified means and alternatives***, to maximize *Acción por la Tierra*'s institutional capacity to support local citizen participation. (See Conclusion i).

II. INTRODUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

i. The project and evaluation objectives

This report presents the findings from the evaluation of the project “Empowering Communities to Strengthen Citizen Participation in Chile,” carried out by the NGO *Acción por la Tierra/ Earth Action Santiago (EAN)*, from October 1, 2009 to December 31, 2011³. UNDEF provided a grant of US\$230,000, of which US\$23,000 was retained for monitoring and evaluation purposes.

The purpose of the project was to strengthen democratic governance and political dialogue in Chile by supporting and promoting citizen participation in environmental issues.

The project strategy was based on four outcomes: i) The communication of specific knowledge to optimize citizen participation in the environmental impact assessment system (SEIA⁴) through information, education, and the training of local leaders; (ii) Support for creating and strengthening civil society synergies to develop a network that promotes citizen participation and environmental rights in the three intervention regions; (iii) A general public informed and aware of its right to participate in the SEIA process and conflict resolution, (iv) Greater community capacity to participate as a result of the methodologies and tools provided to navigate the SEIA process.

The project operated in vulnerable communities in three areas of the country (Monte Patria in the North Region, Pichidegua in the Central Region, and Chanco in the South Region), targeting leaders and multiplier agents, civil society stakeholders, and citizens in the communities. Particular attention was paid to youth and women in the beneficiary population.

The evaluation mission is part of the post-project evaluations funded by the United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF). Its purpose is “to undertake an in-depth analysis of UNDEF-funded projects to gain a better understanding of what constitutes a successful project, which in turn helps UNDEF devise future project strategies. Evaluations also assist stakeholders in determining whether projects have been implemented according to the project document and whether the intended project outcomes have been achieved”⁵.

ii. Evaluation methodology

The evaluation was conducted by an international and a local expert hired under the Transtec contract with UNDEF. The evaluation methodology is presented in the contract’s Operational Manual and is further detailed in the Launch Note. Pursuant to the terms of the contract, the project documents were sent to the evaluators at the beginning of July 2012 (see Annex 2). After reading and analyzing them, the evaluation team prepared the Launch Note (UDF-CHI-08-273) describing the analytical methodology, techniques, and instruments used during the evaluation mission. This mission was conducted in Santiago, Chile and in the south of the country (Talca, Constitución, and Chanco) from July 30 to August 3, 2012. The evaluators interviewed project staff and members of the project coordinating teams. They also visited the towns of Talca, Constitución, and Chanco (Maule Region), where the activities had taken place and met with the beneficiaries and leaders of the groups that had worked in the communities, namely:

- The project management team;
- The consultants and personnel hired for the various activities;

³ On October 26, 2011, UNDEF approved a two-month extension of the project (until December 2011).

⁴ Sistema de Evaluación del Impacto Ambiental

⁵ Operational Manual setting Transtec evaluation methodology, page 6.

- Representatives of the partner organization, *Centro de Estudios Sociales y Promoción para el Desarrollo* (Sur Maule) ;
- Civil society stakeholders, environmental protection groups, and local authorities who had benefitted from the project's activities;
- CSOs outside the project working in the same sector.

iii. Development context

Chile is a highly centralized State, despite the regional political structure in place since the 1980s. It has a population of 16,572,475, with an average growth rate of 0.97% between 2002 and 2012.⁶ From the standpoint of macrosocial structure, it is a highly unequal country, with a Gini coefficient of 0.50 (the average for countries from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, OECD, is 0.31) and 18.9% of the population living in poverty, according to the OECD.⁷

Because it is a developing country growing at a rate of 4.4% this year, with 5.1% growth projected for next year, and a per capita income of US\$18,000, industrial and technology projects, both government-based (copper mining) and private (energy, forestry, fishing), easily obtain approval from the national government. However, such decisions have serious implications for the quality of life in communities located in the territories involved.

Macro decisions of this nature are made under a legal framework possessing advisory institutions. Input from government stakeholders and organized civil society is obtained through environmental committees in the communes, provinces, and central government, coordinated by the Ministry of the Environment's territorial structure.

Most of the time, decisions to construct large projects arouse stiff opposition from the affected communities, which every day are becoming more convinced of the importance of the environment and the need to protect it. When these communities organize and become one voice bearing solid arguments on behalf of civil society, a heated environmental conflict with the prevailing public opinion and government arises. Here, NGOs play a key role, helping articulate and provide sound justification for the specific demands.

In Chile there have been milestones in terms of society's reaction to major megaprojects and opposition from organized civil society. Notable in this regard have been the cases of Hidroaysen, an electrical generation project in Region XI; the Trillium logging project in Region XII; and recently, the Castilla plant, a highly polluting thermoelectric plant in Region III – a US\$4.5 million project pushed by Brazilian industrialist Batista, who tirelessly lobbied politicians of all ideological stripes but was defeated by a last-minute court injunction issued at the petition of civil society organizations.

What stands out is that these conflicts escalate from the local to the national level and become countrywide issues, achieving social and political support and representation across the board.

This situation reveals the tension between the government's argument for growth and development and civil society's argument for preserving the environment.

Today, the environmental crisis is global, and governments have created environmental institutions with the purpose of developing a more proactive and respectful relationship between society and nature.

⁶ INE, Chile: www.ine.cl

⁷ Society at a glance, 2012, at www.oecd.org/els/social/indicators/sag

This is the context of the project evaluated. The Chilean affiliate of EarthAction: Defend the Earth provided substantive support for action by organized civil society to address serious environmental issues in Montepatria (Region IV), Pichidegua (Region VI), and Chanco (Region VII). In this latter commune, the mission was able to assess the impact of community organizing, which put a halt to the construction of a thermoelectric power plant that posed a threat to its living conditions.

III. PROJECT STRATEGY

i. Project approach and strategy

The project “*Empodérate! Más y mejor participación para un futuro sustentable*”⁸ was launched after 20 years of transition in the country’s democratic life. Its purpose was to respond to the need to empower citizens to organize and increase their access to information and their exercise of the right to participate.

Given the negligible community involvement in finding solutions to environmental problems, the project launched capacity-building initiatives. It lent support to citizen participation initiatives in vulnerable communities struggling with conflicts of interest and the need to defend their lands and natural resources like soil and water. Many of these communities knew little about their rights and had few opportunities to engage in dialogue and influence policy. The particular focus of the project was youth and women in the beneficiary population.

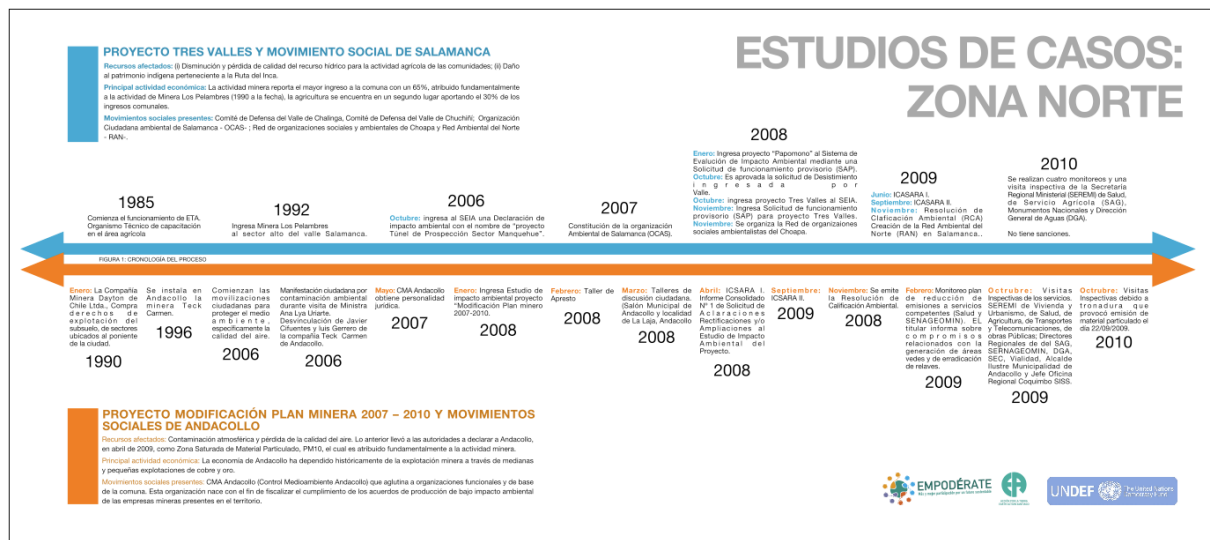
The project operated in three regions of Chile: in the North, in the Coquimbo region, Monte Patria Commune; in the Central Region, in the O’Higgins region, Pichidegua Commune, and in the South, in the Maule Region, Constitución and Chanco Communes. Two partner organizations were responsible for local coordination: in the North, the NGO *Kolleg Gestión y Formación para el Desarrollo Sustentable*⁹ and in the South, the NGO *Sur Maule*¹⁰. In the Central Region, *Acción por la Tierra*, the beneficiary NGO, coordinated the activities.

The project strategy employed a bottom-up approach in two complementary phases. The first centered on the analysis and assessment of citizen participation processes implemented within the framework of the environmental impact assessment system (SEIA), which had been operating in Chile for 10 years (2000-2010). To accomplish this, the project conducted a series of research activities (mapping, data gathering, and information production) through five case studies in the country’s North, Central, and South regions. In each location, a timeline was prepared, summarizing all the information on the affected resources, area social movements, activities organized by citizens, monitoring mechanisms, inspection visits, etc. This first phase made it possible to ascertain the quality of citizen participation in Chile, identifying the different types and mechanisms that had been organized within the framework of the SEIA. This shed light on the dearth of real opportunities for participation by the communities most vulnerable and most exposed to the risks posed by investment megaprojects that would have a serious social and environmental impact in their territories.

⁸ “Empower yourself! Greater and more effective participation for a sustainable future”

⁹ “Kolleg Action and Training for Sustainable Development”

¹⁰ “Maule South”



Systematization of the results of the investigational phase (timeline). Case study in the North Region.

The design of the second phase of the project was based on the information gathered during the investigational phase. The collected information was publicized and served as the foundation for training social leaders, women, and youth in the communities. A participatory methodology was used in developing the program contents, coordinating with other CSOs and the leaders of social and environmental organizations in the project intervention area. This dynamic made it possible to identify the real needs of the beneficiary groups, as well as their strengths and expectations. The issues discussed in the training sessions centered on citizens' rights, while the training centered on mechanisms for participation in environmental decision-making. To improve the quality of citizen participation, a Guide to Citizen Participation in Environmental Decisions was published. To complete the empowerment process, an international seminar was held on civic monitoring, networking, and how to influence policy. Attended by the beneficiary groups and national and international experts, the seminar was designed to share experiences and lessons learned in the movement engendered by the project and to create opportunities for coordination among the three territories. During the seminar, recommendations were issued for environmental policymakers, considering the new environmental institutional framework.

We learned that voting is much more than casting a ballot.

Rodrigo O. Member of the Social Organizations Council, Constitución Commune.

The strategic approach received very positive reviews from the beneficiary groups. A salient feature of this approach was its adaptation of the activities to the real needs of communities, while respecting the capacities and knowledge of local groups, which have truly been empowered. Many of the participants said that the project's name, "Empower yourself!", was what had aroused their curiosity and led them to participate in local groups.

ii. Logical framework

The table below illustrates the logic of the project interventions, based on four outcomes:

Activities	Intended outcomes	Medium-term Impacts	Long-term development objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewing over 100 projects submitted to Chile's SEIA; 30 fact sheets prepared for pre-selected cases; Five study cases; 	<p>Systematic knowledge on citizen participation in the environmental assessment process provided by Chile's SEIA system is made available to inform, educate and train local leaders in three selected localities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis of the quality of the citizen participation processes; Identification of the mechanisms, tools, modalities and strategies of the participatory processes; Definition of the content for the training program. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organization of regional meeting (North, Central, and South regions) with social and environmental organizations, to link social movements; 	<p>Links among existing civil society organizations in three localities in Chile are created or consolidated, and the groundwork is laid for a networking platform on citizen participation and environmental rights.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creation of local networks: (i) Coordinadora Ambiental Valles en Movimiento, in the North; and (ii) Red Ambiental del Maule (RAM) in the South. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identification of needs and environmental conflicts in the three intervention areas, improving citizens' awareness of rights and ability to participate at the local level.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Production of invitations, banners, posters, press releases, radio announcements and materials for workshop; 12 workshops organized (four per community); Six open information sessions (two per community); International Seminar; Dissemination of a Guide to Citizen Participation in Environmental Decisions 	<p>The general public is informed and educated about the right to participate in environmental impact assessment processes, and how to do it properly under the current law.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local populations, CSOs, Universities, local authorities and other actors informed and made aware in: Monte Patria (North Region), Pichidegua (Central Region), and Constitución, Chanco (South Region); 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving opportunities for coordination among social stakeholders, civil society, and local authorities with the capacity to protect the environment and natural resources. Social leaders (especially women and youth) empowered and committed in venues where they can have an impact in the three intervention areas.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creation and support of local networks in the three regions; 	<p>Communities are empowered with participatory methodologies and tools for environmental impact assessment and conflict resolution.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of initiatives organized by the local networks, in collaboration with the municipalities and schools; Development of an environmental education program for the schools; Radio slots for information 	

IV. EVALUATION FINDINGS

i. Relevance

The project's strategic approach, centered on empowerment as fundamental to community development and change, is extremely relevant to the profile of the beneficiary groups. By and large, these are isolated, vulnerable farming and fishing communities, whose way of life and sustenance are highly dependent on the protection of natural resources and whose culture is deeply rooted in the land and the environment. Many of these communities are threatened by major energy and mining projects that heavily pollute and degrade their environment, severely impacting their quality of life. These populations do not know their rights, their voices are rarely heard, and they have little access to channels of political influence.

Politically empowering these communities helped transform governance, offering social groups greater opportunities for participation and leading to more democratic decision-making on issues that affect their quality of life. The various project initiatives empowered the existing social, community, and environmental organizations and movements in the three intervention regions, prioritizing the defense of citizens' rights and well-being. The project sought to improve the quality of citizens' information about environmental issues. This in turn improved their civic participation, enabling them to advance cogent arguments and have a greater influence on decision-making.

There is a growing need for this type of support in the municipalities to publicize the Environment Act. Civil society support is essential.

Valeria L. President of the Social Organizations Council in Constitución Commune.

The issues addressed in the training program were identified during the investigational phase, which improved knowledge about the situation in each location and documented community concerns. The areas of interest that local organizations were already tackling were also mapped. All this made the public awareness, information, and training initiatives, which are much appreciated by community members, more relevant. The groups interviewed said that they had gained a better understanding of the problems that affect them and had been able to change their organizational practices and embrace their civic responsibility for preserving the environment.



Event at the school in Pataguas Cerro (central Chile), site of the proposed thermoelectric plant.

Another important indicator of the project's relevance is its consistency with Chile's recently enacted legal framework for citizen participation, environmental institutions, and the right to access public information. Project beneficiaries and participants were informed about the implications of the laws and regulations for public policy implementation and about the benefits of decentralization, which had strengthened the channels for community participation.

The Associations and Citizen Participation in Public Administration Act (N°20500), which went into effect in February 2011, recognizes the public's right to participate in policy-making,

planning, programs, and activities (Art. 69). It also creates formal mechanisms for citizen participation and amends the Organic Constitutional Municipalities Act, establishing civil society organizational councils in the communes. With Chile's upcoming municipal elections, slated for October 2012, citizens were apprised of their rights and responsibilities in civic participation. To encourage communities to take part in the monitoring of public services, they were given specific information about the Transparency and Access to Public Information Act (N° 20285), in effect since 2009, which governs access to information in Chile, and an explanation of how to take advantage of it in specific situations. They were also informed about Chile's new environmental institutional framework, which went into effect in January 2010 and provides for citizen input in environmental impact statements (EIS), and about other sectoral laws on mining, water, and thermoelectric plants of relevance to each location.

The effective and pragmatic discussion of these issues in the materials and training provided to the beneficiary groups confirmed the relevant incorporation of the rights approach across the board. The gender approach was also integrated in a relevant manner, promoting equitable participation by men and women, young and old.

ii. Effectiveness

One activity that contributed to the project's high degree of effectiveness was the definition of a baseline in each of the localities¹¹ targeted for intervention. This led to a more accurate and objective assessment of the progress made and the degree to which the objectives and intended outcomes had been achieved.¹²

The first phase of the project was devoted to information gathering, ascertaining the current situation and environmental concerns of each community. Formal and informal venues (groups, schools, and social and environmental organizations) that could motivate citizens to get involved in environmental issues were mapped. The beneficiary groups were directly involved in this investigational phase, making it possible to learn citizens' views and how they perceived the problems, as well as what they knew about their rights and ability to obtain information. The five case studies conducted in the framework of the SEIA revealed the quality and type of previous citizen participation in the environmental impact assessment process in the three intervention regions.



Public awareness meeting in the Maule Region (in the south)

The five case studies conducted in the framework of the SEIA revealed the quality and type of previous citizen participation in the environmental impact assessment process in the three intervention regions.

The second phase of the project focused on empowerment. Activities to promote public awareness and information dissemination, together with the Civic Empowerment Program, were planned around very specific issues, based on the input received during the first phase. The information was organized into four specific complementary categories: basic concepts, environmental institutions, tools for citizen participation, and complementary strategies.

The evaluation mission observed very concrete results. Communities and beneficiary groups, with a high degree participation by women and young people, gained a greater knowledge of their rights and the environmental risks and threats to their towns. At the same time, they

¹¹ "Localidades" small villages

¹² Described in the Project Document.

improved their ability to participate and successfully organize to protect their environment and way of life. Teams of leaders in the three locations have received training in participatory methodologies that can be used in their communities to encourage citizens to participate in the monitoring of environmental problems and in negotiation and conflict resolution. Many of the beneficiaries interviewed noted that thanks to the project, they had been able to move from heavy reliance on protests to consensus-based proposals and involvement in negotiation and consensus-building. CSOs were able to develop permanent mechanisms for sharing information and coordination, improving their ability to organize and participate in joint initiatives to foster citizen participation and protect environmental rights.

The project helped us develop a “technical arm” and be more proactive in environmental issues. Our work has become more organized through our alliances with other social actors.

Julio O. President of Red Ambiental del Maule

The workshops and activities culminated in the participants’ agreement to create permanent coordinating bodies. In Chanco and Constitución, in the south, citizens founded the *Red Ambiental del Maule* (Maule Environmental Network) as their representative to oppose a mining project and the construction of a thermoelectric plant in their area. In the north, the *Coordinadora Ambiental Valles en Movimiento*¹³ was founded by local organizations from several towns in Monte Patria Commune. In Pichidegua Commune, in

the Central Region, groups organized to combat the potential threat posed by the construction of a thermoelectric plant.

The clarity and instructional quality of the materials produced for the project are deserving of mention. Designed specifically for the beneficiary groups, the materials, written in simple, easily understood language and accompanied by very didactic visual aids, were widely distributed and are currently used in these locations. The Guide to Citizen Participation in Environmental Decisions offers an array of concepts, information, and tools for monitoring respect for environmental rights and public administration.

Finally, the evaluation team would like to point out the excellent linkage established with the two partner organizations that coordinated the project at the local level. This was undoubtedly a positive factor that helped maximize the effectiveness of the intervention.

iii. Efficiency

The project’s efficiency and cost-benefit ratio were highly satisfactory. With a modest and reasonable budget, *Acción por la tierra* carried out a range of relevant activities suited to the widely different situations and needs of three regions in Chile, covering a highly diverse and representative beneficiary population.

Three regional coordinators were in charge of the strategic management and monitoring of the project, working in close collaboration with the partner organizations responsible for local coordination in each region. Coordination between EAN and the two partner organizations was planned in detail. Based on the characteristics of the work area, the strategies to pursue, components required for internal consistency of the intervention, and distribution of work and responsibilities were clearly established. The choice of the partner organizations was very judicious, since both have a reputation in the region for professional competence and a good track record. The organizations efficiently handled the coordination and follow-up of activities in the intervention areas. Several workshops were held to organize project start-up and study the emblematic cases identified in each of the three regions.

¹³ Valley Movement Environmental Coordinating Group

Phase one of the coordination was largely virtual, using email and Skype. Activities in phase two were more face-to-face, involving several rounds of meetings in the field to build trust and encourage beneficiaries to participate. Local and regional monitoring visits helped increase the efficiency of the activities, enabling stakeholders in the different regions to share knowledge and experiences.



Public awareness event in Chanco Commune.

At first, the project had difficulty meeting deadlines due to contextual and external factors. On the one hand, the first tranche of funds from UNDEF was delayed because of red tape at the Bank of Chile. The State Bank does not recognize NGOs as legal entities, which blocked the receipt of funds from abroad, making it necessary to postpone activities and forcing the NGO to request a two-month contract extension.

In addition, project start-up coincided with the advent of a new rightist coalition government. One of its first actions was to implement the new environmental institutional framework that the earlier administration had begun to put in place, delaying publication of the Guide to Citizen Participation in Environmental Decisions so that the most recent government regulations could be included. Despite these difficulties, all the activities were carried out in-budget, a fact documented accurately and in detail in the reports.

iv. Impact

In terms of impact, the mission noted the NGO's clear determination to promote self-organizing and ownership processes among beneficiary groups. Its objective was not to solve the local problems identified (mining, thermoelectric plants, etc.) but to improve citizens' ability to organize and protect their environment. This approach had a concrete, visible impact on the beneficiary populations:

- The project raised expectations in the communities. The presence of a CSO as a local partner helped build trust, motivate citizens, and launch grassroots organizing activities. The beneficiaries took ownership of the initiatives and mobilized to achieve specific results.
- The activities built on existing activities in need of consistent technical support. In the north, for example, advantage was taken of *Red Ambiental*, which covers five regions. The project joined this network, offering technical assistance and strengthening the network's capacity for autonomy and coordination. As a result, *Red Ambiental* was formally recognized and is currently working with the municipal government to draft environmental regulations.
- In the south, *Red Ambiental del Maule* was formed. Although this network was not formally recognized, it connects a considerable number of social and environmental groups, political actors, teachers, students, educational centers, and youth groups.

The workshops were very instructive, teaching me about transparency in management and giving me the tools to work with the media.

**Alejandro S. Spokesman for
Red Ambiental del Maule**

- These geographical environmental networks have been successful in securing representation in local political and governmental forums. *Red Ambiental del Maule* participates in CONAF, serving as chair of the Advisory Board; the president of one of the NGO members of the network serves as its spokesperson in dealings with *APRO-MAULE* and coordinates with the Regional Office of the Ministry of the Environment (MMA), which gives it a voice in the territory and facilitates access to public information.
- Some local organizations are drafting a proposal for another project, “Explore,” which will be submitted to the Municipal Board for Science and New Technologies.
- The training of leaders (many of them women and young people) committed to ensuring the continuity of the initiative in their respective groups is leading to the emergence of new opportunities for citizen participation.
- Citizens have a better understanding of their situation and a greater ability to manage conflicts. The fact that the training courses dealt with both theory and practice, including field visits, gave citizens more accurate knowledge about problems and threats to their way of life. They also received training in the appropriate use of the media, using local radio programs, local newspapers, and social networks.



Training workshop on the Transparency and Access to Public Information Act, in Chanco.

Taking advantage of loosely structured emerging civic movements, the project managed to inform, motivate, and train citizens, improving local governance and generating activities aimed at defending and protecting rights.

They taught us that the initiatives must be self-sustainable over time. Many initiatives end with chapter I.

President of the Organizational Coordinating Office in Constitución Commune

v. Sustainability

Sustainability was a concern throughout project implementation. Aware that it could not ensure the continuity of the activities once UNDEF support came to an end, *Acción por la Tierra* focused on empowering stakeholders, emphasizing the local ownership process to the utmost. Having communities participate in the design of their own projects and strengthening leadership and coordination among local actors were the right options for promoting sustainability. The beneficiaries are aware that the local organizing fostered by the project is not a cycle that closes when it ends; instead, it is an ongoing process that will require sustainability. The beneficiaries and organizations interviewed are convinced that they must play a role in guaranteeing the durability of the commitment made. Thus, they meet as often as they can and, above all, stay in contact through social networks. At the same time, they are aware that they will need help, both strategic and financial, to finish their volunteer work and, especially, to produce relevant communications materials.

The partner organizations, which have also been empowered, are acknowledged points of reference committed to the communities.

The stakeholders that were mobilized (CSOs, grassroots organizations, universities, educational centers, etc.) have the skills to continue creating opportunities for citizen participation and, especially, to continue taking advantage of the negotiating spaces already gained. Moreover, the networks' linkage and communication with other towns and communities faced with other types of environmental conflicts are motivating factors. All these are positive factors that can contribute to sustainability and consolidate the achievements obtained through the project.

Personally, I found it very useful. We learned to listen to young people and children. Now I'm working with the youth group "Connected" on the issue of culture and the environment. We need to be able to meet more regularly.

Aida S. Instructor, Member of the NGO Federico Albert and the Federico Albert Advisory Board on Natural Resources in Constitución Commune

Financial sustainability is one of the ongoing concerns and a pending challenge, not only for *Acción por la Tierra* but for other civil society organizations in Chile as well. The beneficiary NGO is a member of Chile's NGO Platform (*ACTION*) and lobbies for regulations to permit government funding of CSOs and NGOs. However, the change in administration has represented a setback in this area, since project support priorities lean more toward assistance activities and are based on volunteerism, which does not always foster greater professionalism. Many of the organizations interviewed mentioned this problem, noting the considerable dependence on volunteerism, which to some extent undermines the quality of CSO interventions. Because Chile's macroeconomic indicators rank it among the countries that do not need international cooperation, much of that cooperation is evaporating.

While the project has attempted to build local capacity to guarantee the continuity of the activities, contextual issues must be resolved to prevent them from negatively impacting the processes under way.

vi. UNDEF value added

UNDEF's value added is undoubtedly its support for the development of a dynamic to strengthen citizen participation in vulnerable populations in three rural areas with serious environmental issues. Prior to the intervention, these populations had little involvement in strengthening local democratic governance and transparency. One of the beneficiary groups interviewed commented that the UNDEF project was something they had not expected and that soon after it began, they realized it was something they needed. The results of the support provided to the initiatives on the ground, which developed concrete, lasting opportunities for participation, clearly contribute value added to UNDEF as well: they confirm the direct benefits of its strategic priority of supporting citizen organization at the grassroots level and among emerging groups working with defenseless populations whose rights have been violated.

V. CONCLUSIONS

i. Benefits of the NGO's appropriate strategy. Despite its relatively small team, the beneficiary NGO *Acción por la Tierra/Earth Action Santiago* (EAN), managed the project in a highly professional and responsible manner, achieving a very satisfactory degree of ownership in the beneficiary communities. EAN's institutional capacity was somewhat affected by the current funding constraints affecting civil society in Chile.

ii. The direct involvement of women and youth was a priority component of the project. The commitment it elicited from women and young people leads to the conclusion that the project will have an impact beyond its completion. According to the beneficiary groups, opening their eyes to the situation and organizing to tackle the problems in their communities made them more proactive citizens and can look from their current difficulties toward a better future. They have made great strides, moving from social commitment to political participation, the arena in which problems are ultimately solved and projects are designed for the benefit of society as a whole.

iii. Need to promote new forms of democratic participation. Chilean society is still suffering from the aftereffects of dictatorship. Political and institutional approaches stress economics over the strengthening of democracy. There are wide disparities in the country when it comes to democracy, as well as different degrees of participation. Although there are opportunities for the public to obtain information and/or make recommendations, participation is not always deliberative and the recommendations are not binding. These shortcomings are also seen in the way environmental disputes are handled.

iv. Little consensus-based public policy. The OECD report evaluating 10 years of transition in Chile states that while the country has signed all the relevant international agreements on this issue, it has not implemented them fast enough. The country still lacks consensus-based local and national policies in this area.

v. Value added of the rights approach. In this context, the rights approach prioritized by the project provides very important value added to vulnerable populations in the beneficiary locations. The empowerment process has made citizens aware of their rights. Participation in conflict management is an indicator of the maturity of citizens seeking to exercise their rights and defend their territories.

vi. Relevance of the priority strategic options. The project was implemented just as environmental institutions were changing. It addressed a real need, offering quality information about a new issue and specific tools to support forums for citizen participation. The quality of the information, messages, and products it provided strengthened the capacities of the beneficiary groups, enabling them to engage in transparent management and gain access to public information. The groups say that they learned how to request the information they need and know how to access information and what type of information to request. At the same time, however, they are requesting technical assistance so that they can continue producing up-to-date quality information.

vii. Current and developing civic empowerment processes. The training and empowerment program enabled local leaders to clear up their questions so that they could better inform people at the grassroots level and mobilize community stakeholders on a realistic scale. This strengthening of civil society has served as an example for communities. CSOs have begun to get involved in policy debates and bring issues to the table, fostering an

exchange of views among stakeholders at the regional, provincial, and commune level. The project has also created venues for connecting the participating communities from the three intervention regions, which are very different and have very different problems. These positive developments need support to ensure that they take root and sustainably capitalize on their successes.

viii. Aspects to strengthen. Notwithstanding the achievements, stakeholders recognize that there was not enough time to consolidate the processes begun. There is a need to (i) formalize regional coordination networks and prepare a well-defined plan of action; (ii) encourage greater responsibility among citizens and the social and environmental organizations involved in the process; (iii) promote greater knowledge about the specific and essential role of the justice system in defending and protecting the fundamental rights of citizens; (iv) possess informational and educational materials with basic contents written in language that the beneficiary populations can understand.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Through interviews and meetings with beneficiaries and project stakeholders, the evaluators were able to develop a series of recommendations during the mission, designed to consolidate the results achieved with the intervention. They are:

i. Consolidate the networks, improve training for leaders (with particular attention to youth and women) **and community representation in networks.** Help them create visual aids and better systematize the relevant knowledge from experts, adapting it to the community's ability to understand it. Educate the community, conveying the essence of the problems in an understandable and relevant way, bearing in mind that responsible participation implies possessing and communicating well-founded ideas and concepts, rather than mere opinions (see Conclusions iii and iv).

ii. Strengthen a culture of positive conflict management with a social and political perspective, improving stakeholders' ability to negotiate, listen, and dialogue. To this end, seek the assistance needed to facilitate face-to-face meetings in which the community shares its concerns in an environment of respect. (See Conclusion viii).

iii. Create synergies that coordinate efforts to preserve the environment and improve the quality of life of communities, supporting the promotion of relevant, **consensus-based public policies. Support environmental education initiatives in schools,** integrating them into the policies and projects being developed in this area, even by students, and implemented by the Ministries of Education and the Environment. (See Conclusion iv).

iv. In order to encourage adoption of the rights approach, offer legal counsel to enable citizens to better understand their rights and know how to distinguish between administrative and/or judicial action and decisions that are more political in nature. (See Conclusion v).

v. In order to maximize its institutional capacity to continue its support for local citizen participation processes, *Acción por la Tierra* should **intensify the use of diversified**

measures and alternatives in searching for financial resources that will contribute to their sustainability. (See Conclusion i).



Activities carried out by children who participated in community awareness events in the Central Region.

VII. ANNEXES

Annex 1: Evaluation questions

DAC criterion	Evaluation Question	Related subquestions
Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent was the project, as designed and implemented, suited to context and needs at the beneficiary, local, and national levels? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Were the objectives of the project in line with the needs and priorities for democratic development, given the context? Should another project strategy have been preferred rather than the one implemented to better reflect those needs, priorities, and context? Why? Were risks appropriately identified by the projects? How appropriate are/were the strategies developed to deal with identified risks? Was the project overly risk-averse?
Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent was the project, as implemented, able to achieve objectives and goals? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent have the project's objectives been reached? To what extent was the project implemented as envisaged by the project document? If not, why not? Were the project activities adequate to make progress towards the project objectives? What has the project achieved? Where it failed to meet the outputs identified in the project document, why was this?
Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent was there a reasonable relationship between resources expended and project impacts? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was there a reasonable relationship between project inputs and project outputs? Did institutional arrangements promote cost-effectiveness and accountability? Was the budget designed, and then implemented, in a way that enabled the project to meet its objectives?
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent has the project put in place processes and procedures supporting the role of civil society in contributing to democratization, or to direct promotion of democracy? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent has/have the realization of the project objective(s) and project outcomes had an impact on the specific problem the project aimed to address? Have the targeted beneficiaries experienced tangible impacts? Which were positive; which were negative? To what extent has the project caused changes and effects, positive and negative, foreseen and unforeseen, on democratization? Is the project likely to have a catalytic effect? How? Why? Examples?
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent has the project, as designed and implemented, created what is likely to be a continuing impetus towards democratic development? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent has the project established processes and systems that are likely to support continued impact? Are the involved parties willing and able to continue the project activities on their own (where applicable)?
UNDEF value added	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent was UNDEF able to take advantage of its unique position and comparative advantage to achieve results that could not have been achieved had support come from other donors? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What was UNDEF able to accomplish, through the project that could not as well have been achieved by alternative projects, other donors, or other stakeholders (Government, NGOs, etc.)? Did project design and implementing modalities exploit UNDEF's comparative advantage in the form of an explicit mandate to focus on democratization issues?

Annex 2: Documents Reviewed

- *Project programming and management documents:*
 - Project Document;
 - Mid-term Report
 - Final report;
- *Publications produced within the framework of the project*
 - *Participación ciudadana en decisiones ambientales. Una guía para la acción, Acción por la Tierra*, January 2012
 - *Empodérate: más y mejor participación por un futuro sustentable* (informative pamphlets)
 - *Boletín Ciudadano*;
 - *Seminario Participación y Democracia: Voces desde los territorios, Proyecto Empodérate*, Santiago, Chile, October, 2011
- *Other documents consulted:*
 - *Justicia Ambiental y gran minería. La discriminación de las comunidades*, Daniela Escalona Thomas, Verónica González, Felipe Griz Moreno, and Mauricio Mardones Silva, OLCA, 2011
 - *Empresas extra activistas en los territorios. Juego de mascararas que hay que descifrar. [Una](#) mirada desde las experiencias comunitarias. Guía para uso comunitario*, Consuelo Infante, OLCA, April 2012;
 - Agreement establishing an association between the European Community and its Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Chile, of the other part. Art. 28: Cooperation on the environment, February 2002;

Annex 3: Persons Interviewed

Monday, July 30, 2012	
Arrival of international expert in Chile Meeting of evaluation team	
Tuesday, July 31, 2012	
Meeting with <i>Acción por la Tierra</i> coordination team	
Karla Maass	Project Director, <i>Acción por la Tierra</i> , Project Coordinator, responsible for coordination in the Central Region
Patricio Guerrero	<i>Acción por la Tierra</i> expert, responsible for coordination in the South Region
Meeting of evaluation team: preparation of interview guides	
Wednesday, August 1, 2012	
<i>Trip to Tasca</i>	
Julio Gonzalez	President, <i>Federico Albert FAUPP</i> (NGO) Spokesman, <i>Red Ambiental Maule</i>
Oscar Sangüesa Valenzuela	President, Chanco Workers' Cultural Center
Katty Olivares	Local Project Coordinator, <i>Sur Maule</i> (NGO)
Stefano Micheletti	Executive Director, <i>Sur Maule</i> (NGO)
<i>Trip to Constitución</i>	
Juan Carlos Riquelme	Environment Officer, Municipality of Constitución
Alejandro Salas Barrios	<i>Agrupación por la Protección de los Recursos Naturales del Maule Norte (APRO-MAULE)</i> (NGO)
Valeria Leal	Chair, Council of Social Organizations
<i>Trip to Putu</i>	
Thursday, August 2 2012	
<i>Trip to Chanco</i>	
Juan Verdugo Iturra	Vice President, <i>Federico Albert</i> (NGO)
Javier Cansino	Member, <i>Federico Albert</i> (NGO) Chair, Regional Commission on the Environment, Municipality of Chanco
Aida Salgado Fuentes	Teacher, Member of <i>Federico Albert</i> (NGO) and the Federico Albert Advisory Board on Natural Reserves
Rodrigo de la O	Coastal Watch Program Civic movement opposing the Los Robles Thermoelectric plant Member of the multidisciplinary Environmental Board of the Maule Region
<i>Return to Santiago</i>	
Friday, August 3, 2012	
Lucio Cuenca	National Environmental Expert, OLCA (NGO)
Karla Maass	<i>Acción por la Tierra</i> Project Director, Project Coordinator responsible for coordination in the Central Region.
Patricio Guerrero	<i>Acción por la Tierra</i> expert, responsible for coordination in the South Region
Viviana Castro	Executive Director, <i>Acción por la Tierra</i> (telephone interview)
Moirá del Puente	Project Coordinator, North Region
Prof. José Manuel De Ferrari	Director, <i>Participa</i> (NGO)

Annex 4: Acronyms

APRO-MAULE	Agrupación por la Protección de los Recursos Naturales del Maule Norte
CONAF	Corporación Nacional Forestal
CONAMA	Comisión Nacional del Medio Ambiente
COREMA	Comisión Regional del Medio Ambiente
CSO	Civil Society Organization
EAN	Acción por la Tierra/ Earth Action Santiago (EAN)
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
SEIA	Environmental Impact Assessment System
EIS	Environmental Impact Statements
EU	European Union
EUD	European Union Delegation
FNDR	Fondo Nacional de Desarrollo Regional
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
HDI	Human Development Index
MMA	Ministry of the Environment
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
OCB	Grassroots Community Organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OLCA	Latin American Observatory of Environmental Conflicts
PD	Project Document
RAM	Red Medio Ambiental del Maule
UNDEF	United Nations Democracy Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme