

Evaluation overview

Urban Nature Reserve and Managing Climate risks in the city of Santa Fe

Countries: **Argentina**

Topic: **Sustainable cities**

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Key FFEM support data

Project name: Creation of an Urban Nature Reserve and Managing Climate risks in the city of Santa Fe

Project number: CAR 1001 01

Amount financed by the FFEM: €1,000,000

Project grant date: 09/04/2015

Duration: 2015-2019/20

Context

The city of Santa Fe is the capital of the province of the same name, located in the Centre-East region of the Argentine Republic. The city is located between the flood valleys of two plain rivers – the Paraná and the Salado. Seventy percent of its region comprises rivers, lagoons and marshland. These geographical characteristics, combined with the lack of infrastructure and the high socio-economic vulnerability of the population, *inter alia*, are all factors behind the elevated risk of flooding caused by rising water courses and precipitation intensity.

The overall objective of the French Facility for Global Environment (FFEM) project entitled “Creation of an Urban Nature Reserve and Managing Climate risks in the city of Santa Fe” is to design and develop an urban nature reserve in the West of the city of Santa Fe in order to nurture the sustainable development (socially, economically and environmentally) of an urban area designated as neglected and subject to high geographical and socio-economic vulnerability.

Participants and operating methods

The main actors involved in this project, financed by the FFEM, are the municipality of Santa Fe, the University of Rennes 2 (France) and the National University of the Littoral (Santa Fe). These partners have signed and developed different cooperation agreements to take the project forward while also underpinning discussions about this urban nature reserve and one established in Rennes: the Prairies San Martin urban nature park.



Aims

Specific objectives:

- OS1: Create an urban nature reserve.
- OS2: Contribute to the reduction of flood risk and factors driving vulnerability.
- OS3: Promote the economic and social development of the intervention area through pilot projects and training activities.
- OS4: Capitalise and disseminate the project's outcomes in a North-South-South cooperation framework.

Performance appraisal

Relevance

The fact that the stated objectives addressed the issues initially identified is testament to the project's relevance. Despite the ambitious nature of the multiple objectives, and the criticality of the problems ranked by order of priority, the project has proven equal to the task.

Coherence

The project complies with national and international policies in matters of environmental and biodiversity protection, risk management, water policies, housing and the relocation process - with a human rights-based approach. Its successful integration within local policies in matters of water and climate change - which are seen as national benchmarks - should be emphasised.

From an organisational standpoint, some adjustments took place throughout the project and justifications have been provided in each case. Some of the initial expectations go beyond the local level or existing practices.

Effectiveness

With respect to its goals, the project has been judged as effective overall.

OS1: The reserve has been created, its perimeter defined, the urban boundary formalised and the families living within the reserve site have been relocated. Ecological restoration of the site is well underway.

OS2: Rainwater reservoirs have been deepened and optimised, preserving the area's ecological functionality and bringing new uses as well as extended operation. The project fosters a culture of training on flood risks through the development of different educational projects, and constitutes a space for reflection.

OS3: Initial progress has been made, but the uptake of informal waste collection remains a challenge, as does the creation of community vegetable gardens supplementary to the gardens at individual houses.

OS3: The project was presented at various high-profile international events although the sharing of South-South experiences needs to be enhanced.

Efficiency

The impacts achieved by the project are proportionate to the allocated funds, which were respected despite contextual changes.

Impact

Formal opening of the reserve had happened too recently when the assessment took place for the impacts on the community to be measured, but projections are positive.

Viability/sustainability

The reserve constitutes an important step in the integration of the West sector and Salado river with the city, thus strengthening regional cohesion. The multiplicity of project goals and components favoured the coordinated involvement of different sectors, which sparked new institutional capabilities within local government. While public access to the project is recent, various obstacles to its socio-cultural acceptance have been identified. The project has been affected by exchange rate variations and the economic situation, but the necessary adjustments have been made.

Added value of FFEM support

The FFEM has contributed to the coherence of this multi-objective programme, provided an anchor point and continuity in the face of changing circumstances (economic, administrative and health), provided a reference model together with supporting methodology, and has at the same time been a catalyst for project formalising and monitoring. The added value clearly surpasses the monetary contribution.

Recommendations & learnings

General recommendations:

1. Maintain the institutional framework and monitoring.
 - Continue to provide an anchoring role for international cooperation in the achievement of objectives.
 - Highlight the value of a cross-cutting solution to environmental and social problems, as opposed to a strictly hydrological one.
 - Maintain an institutional framework that ensures a minimum of equipment and information continuity even when internal changes occur.
 - Continue to monitor *ex-post* for an extended period after the reserve has been opened.
2. Continue to monitor *ex-post* to demonstrate the value of the results obtained and their demonstrable impacts.
3. Create and consolidate spaces for communication, information and decision-making to build solid governance and mutual trust.

Recommendations by type of actor:

1. Municipality
 - Implement a guided visit system on the reserve for staff during working hours.
 - Implement a public information system for the reserve.
 - Prepare specific educational documents.
 - Integrate the reserve into the climate change strategy (evaluate its role in carbon sinks).
 - Contiguity study for the made-up road.
 - Capitalisation aimed at African cities facing similar challenges.
2. Universities
 - Add training for municipality technical staff in inter-University exchanges.
 - Provide continuity for studies conducted to monitor and assess the efforts applied.
3. Community actors
 - Clearly define the different roles of steering and management.
 - Continue to play an active part in organising priorities, and monitoring productive social integration and reintegration projects.

