From Governments to Governance?
German forest aid in Mesoamerica
Methodological Note

This note provides additional information on the methodology used for the production of the report *From Governments to Governance?: German forest aid in Mesoamerica*.

This research took place over eight months and included four key phases:

i. Collection and analysis of quantitative data using the AidData Data Release 3.0.

ii. Document searches and review for information relating to German cooperation forest and conservation policy and programs globally as well as in Mesoamerica. This phase included both primary information (published German reports and online materials) and secondary and scientific literature.

iii. Interviews with current and former German cooperation staff, contractors, and consultants; national and local government agency staff; indigenous and forest community leaders in key geographies of interest; and regional experts on forestry and conservation from NGOs and research institutions.

iv. Extended search of documents and online data based on interviews and other acquired information.

Quantitative Methodology

AidData is one of the major efforts to track development assistance, along with IATI (used by Pokorny in his 2015 review of German aid) – both base their data on the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Creditor Reporting System (CRS) as well as additional information provided by and scraped from donors. Pokorny (2015) details the various challenges with tracking ODA, including that the programs and projects supported with a given disbursement are often unclear and that the system depends on self-reporting by donors. AidData has similar challenges to IATI and neither database is complete. This analysis uses AidData based on the research team's prior familiarity with the product, that the coding scheme behind it that allows for greater accuracy in assigning a given project to an activity or sector,

and that it is overall more complete for the Mesoamerica region, according to AidData researchers who acknowledge the limitations of the current iteration of the database.[i]

Using SPSS and Microsoft Excel, we examined trends in German aid within each of the countries under consideration (Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Panama).[ii] We created separate databases of German aid for each country from the AidData full release product.[iii] The size of the AidData full product means that opening it directly in Excel would overwhelm the program and cut off the data, as that program can only accommodate 1.05 rows of data and the full data set has over 1.5 million rows, so each country had to be isolated in SPSS so as to preserve the data.[iv]

Within each of these country databases, we used a combined SUM and SUMIFS function in Microsoft Excel to aggregate German funding to that country by sector and year. For sector, we used the AidData "coalesced purpose code" category, which ensures each project has at least code assigned to it and comes not only from donor-identified activity reporting but from an independent assessment conducted in accordance with the AidData methodology.[v] Further, this code is meant to represent the "dominant activity that the project is meant to foster."[vi] For the time component, we used "year" rather than "project start date" to indicate when the Germany made the funding commitment for a given effort. From this point, we then created the "forest aid" category from the coalesced purpose codes identified in the following table. These codes were identified from the full list of codes after a review of the OECD CRS descriptions and specific project names/descriptions from within the database.

Purpose Code	Purpose Name
31210	Forestry policy and administrative management
31220	Forestry development
31261	Fuelwood/charcoal
31281	Forestry education/training
31282	Forestry research
31291	Forestry services
41010	Environmental policy and administrative management
41020	Biosphere protection
41030	Bio-diversity
41040	Site preservation
41050	Flood prevention/control
41081	Environmental education/ training
41082	Environmental research
43040	Rural development

Some of the codes are more straightforward (and include "forestry" in the name) whereas other categories include aid that may not be strictly environmental in the sense of "green aid" as used by AidData, but does capture directly forest-relevant activity ("rural development" which in many of these countries relates to integrated and/or sustainable development programming after the late 1980s). While not everything under the categories of rural development or site preservation may qualify as "forest", and there may be projects we are missing based on this combined visual review and coding approach, we employ these purpose codes across countries for consistency. From the above steps, we could examine temporal and sectoral trends in aid within each country and at the aggregated regional level, with a particular eye toward what we termed forest aid for the purposes of this study.

To consider German forest aid in the context of all other aid to the region, we used R- Studio and Excel to summarize by coalesced purpose code by donor by year. Thus, a single row in the database would read Year/Donor/Purpose Code/Commitment Amount and each commitment amount for a given donor for a given year would have its own line.[vii] We used a similar SUM and SUMIFS function in Excel to aggregate forest aid per donor per year and summary numbers for each country, as above, and then aggregated by year and for forest and total aid to the regional level. We considered bi-lateral and multilateral donors together and separately to reflect the relative role of different donors.

After we had processed the data as described above, we decided to examine German aid in the context of debt-related assistance and a non-debt total. Debt overwhelmed all other aid in Nicaragua and made up nearly 30 percent in Honduras, so we wanted to consider forest aid in the context of other productive or activity-based projects. To do so, the purpose names "action relating to debt", "debt forgiveness", "relief of multilateral debt", and "rescheduling and refinancing" were omitted from the sector-year analysis of German aid, creating a debt-free database for each country. Cross-donor comparisons all contain debt.

Qualitative methods

The primary sources of qualitative data were interviews and document reviews. An initial round of document reviews helped inform the quantitative portion of the research, but also identified important targets for interviews. The research team conducted semi-structured interviews with 35 stakeholders and experts familiar with German forest aid. This included former or current staff of German forest aid agencies (9), researchers/academics (4), expert practitioners (7), indigenous/community representatives (6), NGO staff (4) and government agencies (5). These interviews captured detailed information about specific programs in the region as well as

opinions on the programs' impacts from intended beneficiaries and general subject-matter experts.

An academic and grey literature review then complemented the analysis of formal project documents and evaluations. In addition to publically available program reports and German Cooperation strategy papers, we requested documents from BMZ, GIZ, and KfW; the former two organizations did share documents that we analyzed for program details and trends in programming. KfW did not respond to our request for documents. The research team also specifically used the series "Biodiversity in German development cooperation", a version of which has been published biennially since at least 2002, to analyze the significant discourses employed by this donor over time. These documents as a whole provided key data regarding program priorities for German Cooperation as well as the specific details of different experiences across the region.

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[i] D. Runfola, personal communication, June 21, 2017.

[ii] IBM Corp. Released 2012. IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows, Version 21.0. Armonk, NY: IBM Corp.

[iii] AidData, 2016. AidDataCore_ResearchRelease_Level1_v3.0 READ ME. Accessed on 27 April 2017. http://aiddata.org/research-datasets.

[iv] Ibid, 10.

[v] Ibid.

[vi] Ibid, 6.

[vii] Urbanek S. & H.-J. Bibiko, 2016. R.app GUI 1.70 (7375 El Capitan build). R Foundation for Statistical Computing. https://cran.r-project.org/bin/macosx/.