



Expansion of Blueprint Sustainability Assessment to Build a Common Territorial Agenda

Case study: The evolution of SAN's Blueprint – a sustainability assessment tool for small territories embraced by community members in Colombia

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Cover image: Focus group to democratize Blueprint assessment results with El Osito village representatives

Blueprint – how everything started (2018)

Blueprint started with a concept idea from SAN's senior technical advisor Oliver Bach in 2017 about a multiple-layer landscape evaluation system, which was presented by Technical Manager Silvia Rioja (†) and Oliver as a poster at the 2018 Mesoamerican Landscape Dialogue at CATIE, Turrialba, Costa Rica. The concept received promising feedback from many conference participants.



Blueprint conceptual model for a systemic landscape evaluation system.

The 2018 concept was designed in a modular system-structure with three spatial levels: 1) Territory macro-level, 2) property (farm) level and 3) local actors' level with focus on smallholders and members of rural communities. By then, SAN had a clear perspective that its future landscape sustainability evaluation system would need to:

- Count on a high-precision land-use analysis with ground verification that would link the farm level sustainability with the broader landscape situation; and
- Have a strong social focus with equal participation of the local stakeholders during the landscape assessment process.

2019–2022 development of Blueprint for a Sustainable Landscape

The original Blueprint project proposal was developed in 2018/19 and at that time was influenced by SAN's certification history, as well as standard and checklist approaches. In April 2019, thanks to a project alliance formed with the Colombian SAN member Fundación Natura, SAN won a three-year project grant from the ISEAL Innovation Fund – supported by the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO):

Blueprint for a Sustainable Landscape – Developing and field testing a support, verification, and evaluation 'blueprint' for landscape sustainability in a high biodiversity, high poverty region of Colombia where small-scale and plantation-based bananas and oil palm are grown (Zona Bananera, Magdalena Department, Colombia).

Key Milestones of the 2019–2022 Blueprint development phase

Key events of the development phase were:

- Hiring of a local Fundación Natura technician for Zona Bananera, who kept building relationships with local stakeholders and civil society organizations. This Zona Bananera-raised technician also supported the land use type verification on the ground, supported with interviewing, tool development and organization of workshops.
- Building the relationships with the small banana and oil palm growers, Community Action Boards (JACs) and technicians of the Zona Bananera municipality. Political buy-in from the mayor was impossible to be achieved. However, this political barrier does not have to affect the governance of the other committed local stakeholders. The participation of the local landowners is the most important factor for future change towards a more sustainable and resilient territory.
- The thorough development of a high-precision land use analysis element based on the CORINE land use cover method officially adopted by the Colombian geographic institute. The high precision was possible due to visual classification and verification of land use types in the field. The analysis resulted in an [online interactive map](#).
- The summary and evaluation of official secondary data for the Apartadó municipality.

- The upload of the questionnaire for individual farmer interviews that was uploaded via ODK for tablet offline and online use to make the organization and analysis of interview data more effective.
- The organization of the landscape evaluation indicator catalogue in four dimensions: environmental, social, economic, and local governance; together with the elimination of duplication, the location of indicators within the best methodology area and refinement of interview questions. Cross-referencing between interview results and secondary data showed how coarse and imprecise secondary data are, especially with respect to the access of local inhabitants to basic needs.
- Three test-runs of the different Blueprint system versions in the field.
- Two workshops to democratize the data with JAC and farmer representatives. Two meetings to share the land use analysis maps with the Apartadó municipality technicians.
- The linkage between the landscape dimensions leads to a holistic interpretation of the territory's sustainability status.
- The summary of all results via visually attractive Infographics and maps that facilitated the democratization of the results with the local stakeholders.
- The creation of a [Dashboard](#) summarizing the development, applied sampling, maps, results per dimension (infographic and graphs), and an online document library.



Blueprint: resultados piloto en Zona Bananera, Colombia



Un conjunto práctico de herramientas para medir el estado y el progreso de la sostenibilidad en paisajes. La concientización es el primer paso para alentar el cambio hacia la planificación sostenible del uso de la tierra. Los enfoques participativos y la verificación de la situación de la vida real con las partes interesadas locales es el principio fundamental de Blueprint y un paso importante hacia la democratización del conocimiento y la construcción de una visión de desarrollo a largo plazo para el paisaje.

Las herramientas Blueprint proporcionan una evaluación de los parámetros ambientales, sociales, económicos y de gobernanza utilizando datos primarios y secundarios, y mapeo SIG para identificar los desafíos y oportunidades más importantes y lograr la sostenibilidad en una región.

Blueprint ha sido probado en el campo en Zona Bananera de Colombia, un municipio que alberga muchas plantaciones de banano y palma aceitera, pero es replicable en otras regiones, sectores productivos y usos de la tierra.

En este sitio Web, el equipo Blueprint comparte una selección e interpretación de la gran cantidad de información que recopilamos a través del análisis de cobertura terrestre de imágenes satelitales de alta resolución, diálogos con productores y organizaciones locales y algunos datos de instituciones nacionales.

Blueprint dashboard introduction screen.

Resultado sostenibilidad territorio

Este resumen de la sostenibilidad aplicada en el municipio de Zona Bananera con las herramientas de evaluación Blueprint es el resultado del análisis de datos recopilados por SAN y Fundación Natura basado en bases de datos nacionales, un diagnóstico cartográfico de coberturas terrestres y entrevistas con actores locales.

El municipio de Zona Bananera tiene un área total de 44.721,8 hectáreas, con una población de 56.404 habitantes. Las entrevistas se realizaron a pequeños productores de banano, cooperativas de pequeños productores bananeros, representantes de las autoridades municipales, trabajadores de fincas bananeras, distritos de riego, empresas públicas prestadoras de servicios de acueducto y de recolección de residuos. La precisión del análisis podrá ajustarse incrementando el número de entrevistas y ampliando la zona geográfica.

El propósito de este resumen es aportar insumos a los actores locales para la discusión y toma de decisiones sobre la sostenibilidad ambiental del paisaje y sobre los aspectos socioeconómicos y de gobernanza en el territorio.

Para acceder al detalle de cada dimensión haz click en cualquiera de los iconos a continuación.



[Ver mapa](#)

[Ver selección de la muestra](#)



Ambiental



Social



Económico



Gobernanza

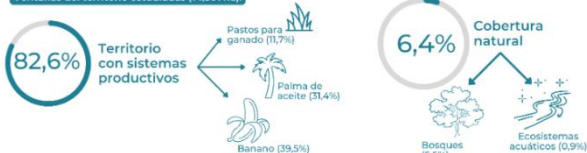
Dashboard selection pane.



DIMENSIÓN AMBIENTAL



Ventanas del territorio estudiadas (14,501 ha):



Datos sobre el municipio:



Salinización alta o moderada

Fuente: Instituto Geográfico Agustín Codazzi IGAC



70%**

Caudal de ríos destinado a la producción

- Pozos profundos sobre aguas subterráneas en fincas y cascos urbanos **
- Escasez de agua en verano **
- Alta probabilidad de inundación en invierno

Fuente: Ministerio de Ambiente y Desarrollo Sostenible de Colombia

Prueba 1. Información obtenida mediante entrevistas con 60 pequeños propietarios (menos de 8 ha), 15 juntas de acción comunal y 120 trabajadores, y datos del Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística.

**Fuente: entrevistas Blueprint.

Ver documentos Blueprint de análisis geoespacial en la Biblioteca.



[Ver más](#)

Environmental dimension dashboard.



DIMENSIÓN SOCIAL



Ventanas del territorio estudiadas (14,501 ha):



Datos sobre el municipio (DANE):

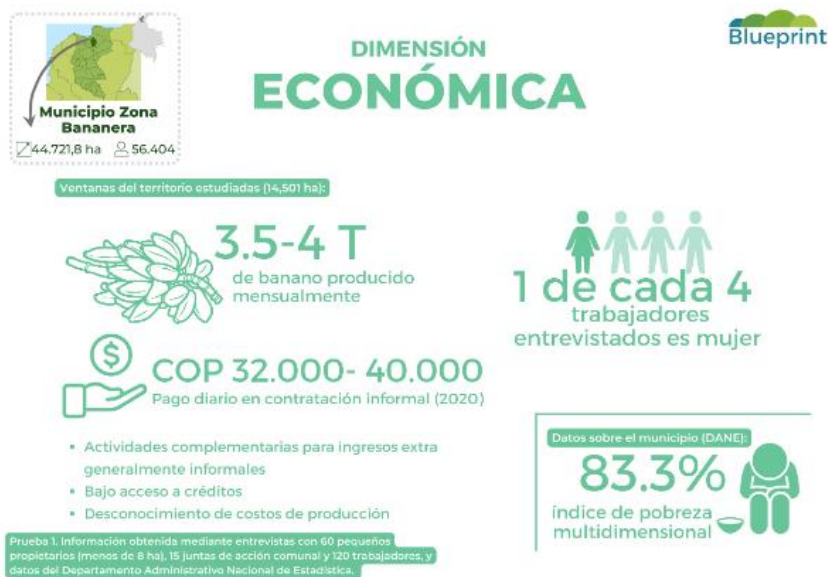


Prueba 1. Información obtenida mediante entrevistas con 60 pequeños propietarios (menos de 8 ha), 15 juntas de acción comunal y 120 trabajadores, y datos del Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística.



[Ver más](#)

Social dimension dashboard.



[Ver más](#)

Economic dimension dashboard.



[Ver más](#)

Local governance dimension dashboard.

Final deliverables of the 2022 Blueprint version 1

The final deliverables of the 2019–2022 ISEAL–SECO Blueprint project were:

1. [Blueprint dashboard](#)
2. Zona Bananera [online maps and land use cover data layers](#) to be shared with key stakeholders in the municipality.
3. GIS land cover analyses (1:5000 for geographic focus windows Río Frío and Río Sevilla; 1:25000 of the full Zona Bananera municipality)
4. Documents:
 - a. Annotated indicator matrix with farm owner questionnaire
 - b. GIS analysis report – comparison of different types of analysis
 - c. GIS replication protocol
 - d. How to select useful secondary data for local scale
 - e. User Manual for the ODK App for questionnaires
 - f. Steps to encourage participation in Blueprint (stakeholder engagement strategy)
 - g. Recommendations to standard systems for landscape scope efficiency
 - h. Comparison of Blueprint themes and indicators with VSS principles and criteria
 - i. Blueprint communication plan.

Lessons Learned from the 2019–2022 Blueprint development phase

Learnings with respect to the design, user testing and analysis of data for the Blueprint sustainable landscape system's 3-year development process circled around the interconnected patchwork of different land uses, ecosystems, land cover and the human beings that interact with them (governance structures, communities, socioeconomic status). Lessons learned included:

- **Design with the End-user in Mind:** Time needs to be invested at the development onset to discover and address the end user needs. Any product or tool needs to be grounded in knowledge about the user's needs, goals, and activities. The first iteration of the Blueprint tool was designed with several potential end users in mind, including private and public

entities, finance institutions, cooperatives, and individual farmers. As a result, the survey instrument included over 200 questions and more than 70 indicators which made it difficult to analyze the data in a meaningful way and resulted in lengthy interviews.

- **The Blueprint process democratizes the creation of knowledge:** The working methodology to build the indicators with local actors motivated their participation. The local stakeholders who participated in the Blueprint development and primary data (interviews and GIS analysis) collection process stated that they felt empowered by providing and receiving information that would foster a long-term development vision and purpose for the community. This included engagement and information sharing with local stakeholders, such as small banana producers and cooperative technicians, Community Action Board presidents, and municipality technicians. One of the activities that generated the most confidence and receptivity was the socialization of the results of Test Run No. 1. The analysis carried out and presented to the local actors revealed the reality of the territory that few people dare to spread.
- The most successful elements of the Blueprint system version 1 were:
 1. A high-precision land use cover analysis which acts as an environmental analysis tool that effectively links farm and landscape scope intervention levels.
 2. A digital survey instrument for offline data collection using the ODK app allowing SAN to collect survey responses using a tablet or smartphone without internet connectivity and systematize the data collection and analysis of interviews with the future potential to encourage local stakeholders to act as enumerators of a participatory monitoring approach.
 3. The Blueprint dashboard's visual and graphic information elements distilled a lot of data to gain deeper insight into the overall sustainability status of the landscape.
- On the other hand, the least successful elements of Blueprint version 1 were:
 1. The indicator catalogue that still included some redundant indicators resulting in an information overload. Although the initial intention was to have a framework of broad indicators to later prioritize the most strategic ones, it was found that the greater the

number of indicators, the more difficult the analysis because of the information volume to be analysed.

2. The Blueprint did not fully accommodate the perspective of women who may not have access to land but have an opportunity to take collective ownership of the landscape.

2024 Blueprint version 2 – adaptable to other regions and organizations

These lessons learned and SAN’s vision to convert Blueprint into a more effective tool taken up by external organizations for the high-precision and participatory definition of a landscape sustainability status, materialized in the proposal for the 2023-24 Blueprint Replication Grant, also funded by the ISEAL Innovation Fund with the support of SECO.

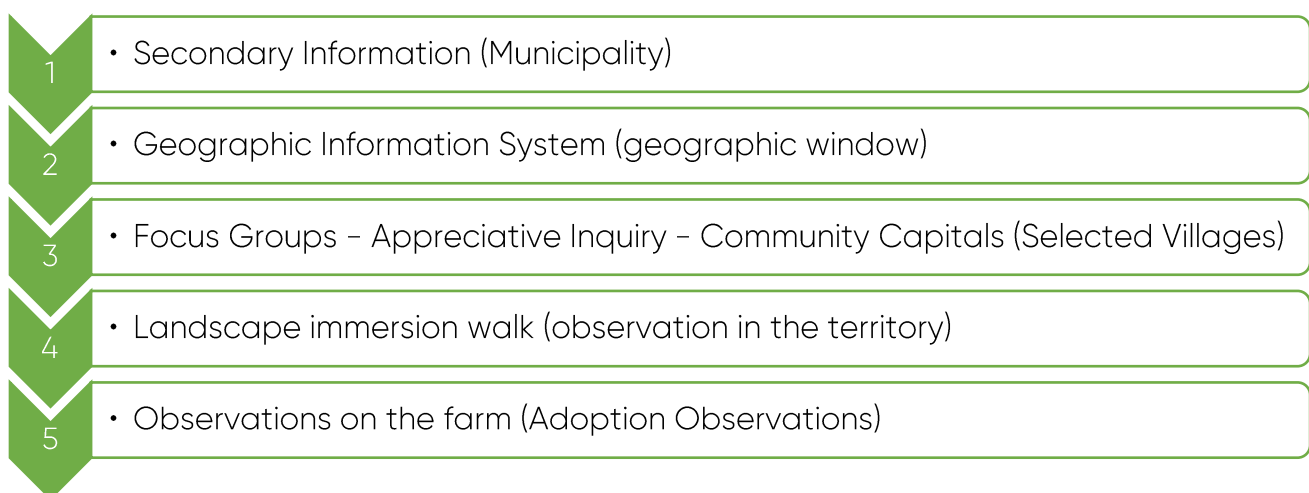
The following table compares the main elements of the 2019-22 Blueprint versions 1 and 2 versus its new 2024 version:

	2019 Blueprint v1	2022 Blueprint v1	2024 Blueprint v2
Number of indicators	200 + questions / 70 + indicators = almost 300 in total	33 questions / 87 indicators = 120 in total	92 in total , including topics and indicators
Number of assessment levels	3	3	5
Adopted by local organization	No	Buy-in from local Community Action Boards	Yes. Swisscontact Colombia

The following are the main improvements of the 2024 Blueprint version 2:

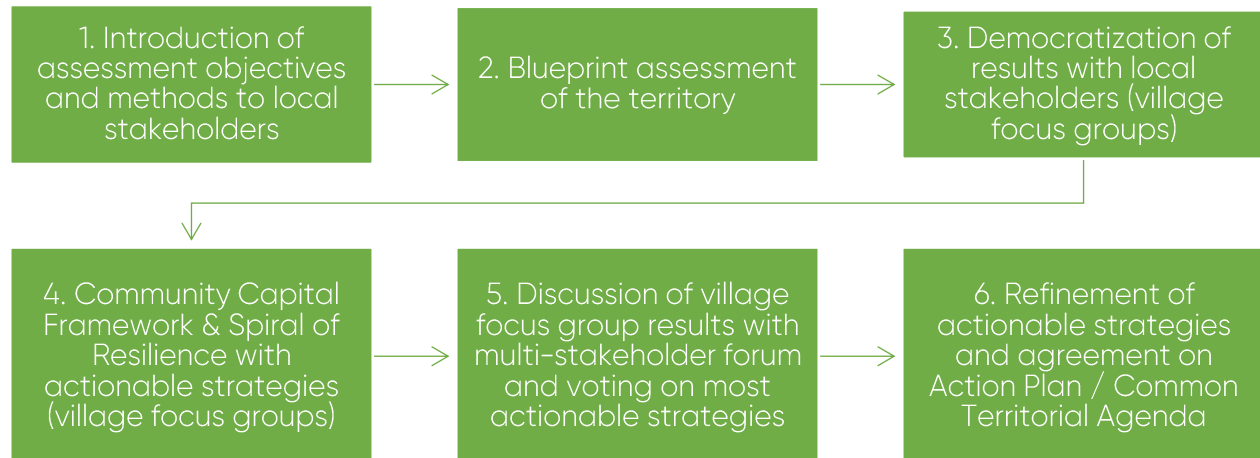
- a. The indicator catalogue was organized according to the seven Community Capital Framework types (Flora & Flora). The Community Capital flower turned out to be an outstanding tool to organize the opinion of the local community members around the sustainability status of their villages, agriculture land, natural resources, and access to basic needs. The Community Capital flower has also turned out to be effective for collecting results of the multi-stakeholder workshops in a participatory way.
- b. Comparing land-use change in the most effective and accurate way: Land use change analysis comparing two data points (in this case, comparing 2019 and 2023) based on the high-resolution images of Planet Scope provided for free by NORAD with 0.5 ha as the minimum interpretable unit for a 1:10,000 scale.

- c. Agronomic and environmental assessment of a representative sample of cocoa smallholdings based on a dialogue with producers framed within the Cocoa Adoption Observations – adapted by SAN and Fundación Natura for Colombia. Adoption Observations for measuring realistic farming progress for cocoa smallholder production.
- d. The introduction of two additional assessment levels:
 - i. Focus group discussions at village level; and
 - ii. Landscape immersion walk, which deepens the analysis of the GIS land use cover report results and reflects on land use scenarios as a connection between farm and landscape management and explores the landscape while walking farms and natural ecosystems with community leaders. The activity makes it possible to feel and observe the landscape status and changes directly and discuss them on site.
- e. The new Blueprint toolkit version is more effective to use and can be implemented by local organizations after a participatory on-site training process.
- f. Fewer indicators and more clarity in the scope of the new Blueprint version facilitate the territory's sustainability analysis and prioritize the topics of interest for the improvement of the local communities' conditions.
- g. Blueprint's new toolkit is a multi-level system that accurately reflects the environmental and socio-economic reality and is composed of five evaluation levels, that together describe an accurate picture of the selected territory's sustainability as evidenced by the testimonies of the local stakeholders:



Blueprint application steps towards a Common Territorial Agenda

The Blueprint assessment forms part of the following steps with the final goal of the participatory definition of a Common Territorial Agenda:



Testimonies from local community members

"La metodología que nos trajeron acá fue muy buena. Me gusta mucho porque nos hablan todo sobre la parte de cuidado del ambiente. Va muy enfocado en todo lo que tiene que ver con la familia, entonces me parece muy, muy bueno y que nos traigan puestos proyectos a la vereda es super excelente."

The methodology applied here was very good. I really like it because they tell us everything about caring for the environment. It is very focused on everything that has to do with the family, so I think it is very, very good and that they bring projects to the village is super excellent.

Women farmer, El Guineo village

"La oportunidad de asistir a estas charlas que nos han regalado, que nos han brindado para hacer una agenda de las necesidades básicas prioritarias de nuestra comunidad donde pudimos socializar con profesionales de mucha capacidad y de mucho conocimiento que nos orientaron, que nos guiaron, que nos trajeron documentales de material bibliográfico, conocimientos y nos guiaron para nosotros poder sacar una agenda con lo que verdaderamente consideramos que son nuestras necesidades más prioritarias para el desarrollo y el bienestar de todos aquí en la comunidad. Estamos muy agradecidos y queremos sacarle el máximo provecho todos estos conocimientos y todos estos análisis a los cuales hemos llegado."

The opportunity to attend these talks to make an agenda of the priority basic needs of our community where we were able to socialize with highly capable and knowledgeable professionals who guided us, who brought documentaries of bibliographic material, knowledge and guided us so that we could draw up an agenda with what we truly considered to be our most priority needs for the development and well-being of everyone here in the community. We are very grateful, and we want to make the most of all this knowledge and all this analysis.

Farmer, El Osito village

"Donde la metodología implementada ha sido totalmente maravillosa porque nos permite evidenciar y visualizar todas esas necesidades que tenemos en nuestra comunidad, en donde

focalizamos cuáles son las más importantes en donde también nos permite visualizar lo importante que es tener muy en cuenta a nuestra naturaleza."

The methodology implemented has been totally wonderful because it allows us to demonstrate and visualize all those needs that we have in our community. We focus on which are the most important and it also allows us to visualize how important it is to take our nature into account. The idea is to continue working, articulated with all these entities.

Woman president of the Community Action Board, El Osito village