

# STRENGTHENING TOURISM AS A STRATEGY FOR TERRITORIAL PLANNING AND MUNICIPAL MANAGEMENT IN CALAKMUL, MEXICO

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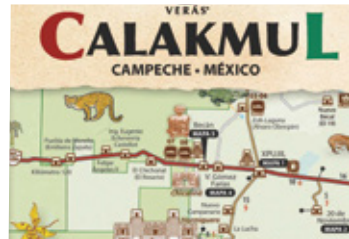
## » Context and challenges

Calakmul refers to the municipality, the archaeological zone and the Biosphere Reserve; overall, it denotes the cultural region of the southern territory of the state of Campeche, which has historically been a place of strong attraction and interest for national and foreign visitors. Tourism as an economic activity in Calakmul has an incipient development, despite the increasing numbers of visits due to the important natural, archaeological and cultural attractions that can be found in the area, but above all after it was declared a Mixed World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 2014. In this sense, the greatest challenge for tourism in Calakmul is to overcome the limited capacity of local actors and competent institutions in the sector. Therefore, the Protection and Sustainable Use of the Selva Maya Project aimed at promoting the organizational capacities of diverse

actors in the tourism sector. The Tourism Committee (TC) represents a first organizational basis for the tourism service providers in the municipality, which is represented in the Municipal Council for Sustainable Rural Development (CMDRS) of Calakmul. The objective of the Tourism Committee is to promote and manage a sustainable and prosperous tourism development in the municipality as well as to promote the destination and the participation in the Municipal tourism activity planning. Part of the intervention included the strengthening of institutional capacities of actors and stakeholders such as the Tourism Directorate of the town of Calakmul, the communities that have ecotourism sites and Civil Society Organizations with similar objectives, in addition to supporting a Study on Limits of Acceptable Change (SLAC).

## Beneficiaries

Directly, 65 tourism services providers, 10 local representatives of the same sector, municipal government agencies dedicated to tourism, environment and economic development, and more than 200 families offering products and/or services in Calakmul (handicrafts, hoteliers, etc.).



## Impacts



- ◆ The Tourism Committee (TC) is strengthened as an instance of representation and organization that fosters cooperation between the government, civil society organizations and local tourism entrepreneurs. Today, it is the promoter of a sustainable tourism model in the protected area.
- ◆ The Study on Limits of Acceptable Change (SLAC) defined criteria to regulate visits in 13 nature and archeology trails.
- ◆ For the first time, a map of Calakmul's tourist services has been developed in a participatory manner, promoting natural, archeological and cultural destinations.
- ◆ The Technological University of Calakmul and the communities with visiting potential strengthened their capacity to design tourism products, including seven cultural and environmental routes.



## ● Reactivation of the Tourism Committee of the municipality of Calakmul

In view of the weak structures of municipal tourism organization and representation, a wide call was made to reconstitute the Tourism Committee, whose task is to promote the development of tourism in the municipality with the participation of the majority of tourism service providers in the municipality. At the same time, this has enabled working in the organization of the most representative municipality sub-sectors, such as artisan groups, tourist guides, transporters, hoteliers and restaurant holders, mainly from the social sector or community projects.

**Enabling factors:** The growing demand for local tourism services and the establishment of a new municipal government allowed tourism service providers to reactivate their interest in reorganization.

## ● ● ● Experience exchanges as a learning strategy

To promote the learning of the representatives of the Tourism Committee and their representatives, various experiences exchanges took place between tourism service providers in Mexico and with their peers in Guatemala and Belize. This resulted in learning based on greater awareness of the nature of tourism in protected areas, building capacities for tourism product design and forming alliances with other destinations.

**Enabling factors:** The possibility to combine experiences between tourism service providers from two countries or regions facilitates the perception of new improvement opportunities.

## ● ● Improving the internal organization of the Committee

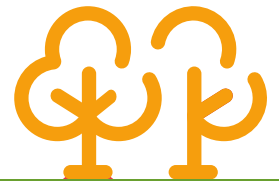
In order to strengthen the Committee organizationally, once new representatives were elected, a discussion of the organization's operating mechanisms and their objectives took place. The result was the development of internal regulations which laid the foundations for the functionality of the Committee. Likewise, the sub-sectors gained strength in their organization and representation.

**Enabling factors:** The organized sub-sectors managed to incorporate the most incipient, which generated a balance in participation among tourism service providers.

## ● ● ● ● Promotion of the design of tourism products

Tourist service providers have jointly promoted the design of various materials for public use and value chains, such as the Calakmul Tourist Map and the seven Tourist Routes on culture, nature and history of Calakmul. This allowed the strengthening of the capacities of community companies for the design of tourist products and thereby expanding the offer of services organized in Calakmul.

**Enabling factors:** The possibility to work towards the same objective and to obtain the expected products increased the certainty about the effectiveness of the collective work.



The intervention considered three strategic elements: organization, innovation and product design skills. Each of these elements constitutes a logical sequence starting from the need to have an organization that represents the tourism sector, followed by the critical formation of its tourism vision based on the knowledge of other similar experiences and finally with the application of knowledge and skills to reflect on their own tourism products.

## » Story

"In 2015 we started working with the Tourism Committee in cooperation with GIZ. Today, we have seen its development, especially when it comes to its organization. Although much remains to be done, considerable progress has been made. We have started from scratch and are now organized into sub-sectors. Given the importance of the municipality for what it represents worldwide, I believe it was more than necessary that all sub-sectors worked and joined efforts to be better organized and do a better job, not only for the benefit of



entrepreneurs, but also for the protection of nature of the municipality. Tourism represents a very important and responsible activity. It is not only a matter of providing a service (accommodation, food or guidance), but also of preserving and balancing the resources. Our commitment, in addition to providing a good service, implies having a good image by assuming a co-responsibility for the Calakmul Biosphere Reserve, the mixed heritage and the municipality itself, and by trying to consolidate Calakmul as a tourist destination."

**Luis Navarrete, President of the Tourism Committee of Calakmul.**

