

FOSTERING REGIONAL GOVERNANCE OF THE SELVA MAYA: THE OPERATIVE COORDINATION GROUP (GOC) AS A TECHNICAL ARTICULATING AGENT

TL4

» Context and challenges

The lack of an institutionalized mechanism that favors cooperation between key actors responsible for the management of protected areas (PA) in the Selva Maya at a regional level (Belize, Guatemala and Mexico), has limited the planning, coordination and governance which are appropriate to define concrete interventions that help to mitigate threats in the region, including the traffic of flora and fauna, poaching and forest fires, as well as to align and coordinate competences, knowledge and skills of technical personnel for the best performance of their activities. For this reason, the need to promote the coordination of cross-border activities in the Selva Maya constitutes a starting point to foster an enabling environment among managers of these areas that benefit the implementation of a cooperation strategy at a

technical-operative level. In agreement with the counterparts of the three countries, the Protection and Sustainable Use of the Selva Maya Project since 2012 has provided technical advice and support to facilitate and raise the rapprochement and dialogue between the parties both at the level of forest rangers and managers through exchanges, workshops and working meetings. As a result, the Operative Coordination Group (GOC) was formed in 2016 with representatives from the institutions responsible for PA management in the three countries, whose objective is to provide technical assistance in the management and protection of natural and cultural resources for the sustainable development and environmental governance of the Selva Maya.

Beneficiaries

Directly, the directors, deputy directors, technical staff and resource managers of the three countries.
Indirectly, the local population that lives in the buffer zones of the protected areas.



Impacts



- ◆ The formalization of the GOC favored a trinational collaborative vision and the promotion of regional governance that fosters the rapprochement of protected areas; improving communication, coordination, management, planning and implementation of joint actions in the territory, like joint patrols, exchange of experience and training.
- ◆ With the support of the Project, four exchanges of forest rangers at regional level were completed and more than 90 bi- or trinational technical meetings were held, promoting dialogue spaces which facilitate cooperation in the exchange of information.
- ◆ Directors and deputy directors who have participated in the Management and Effective Leadership Diploma, have acquired significant personal and organizational skills, and have strengthened and improved their management capacities in the field of human and technical resources management.
- ◆ The coordination between the GOC and the Strategic Coordination Group (GEC), which has an intervention approach at a political-strategic level, has been strengthened. The GEC recognizes the GOC's action and guides their implementation.



Participatory spaces at operational level

The promotion and facilitation of exchanges and training for forest rangers and operational staff at trinational level served to 1) visualize participatory and communication spaces at regional level, 2) define local capacities to be strengthened and to level competences for the best performance of their functions; 3) contextualize challenges and threats for protected areas in border zones; and 4) outline the first joint planning efforts for specific technical cooperation measures.

Enabling factors: The results of the first exchanges of experiences of forest rangers between the three countries, which were of rotating nature by country, motivated directors and technical-operative personnel of the three countries to get involved in work dynamics and to visualize areas of opportunity, including potential collaborative synergies, to address common threats.

Formalizing technical-operative coordination and cooperation

In order to promote the cooperation and coordination of cross-border activities at operational level, the formation of the GOC was facilitated, recognized as a technical advocacy platform at a regional level, which provides technical support to the Strategic Coordination Group (GEC) of the Selva Maya. The consolidation of the GOC, per se, provides the basis to recognize the potential work and role of this group, enhancing its positioning and negotiation level vis-à-vis other instances.

Enabling factors: The interest of the directors and deputy directors in building a joint work agenda at the regional level, as well as the interest of higher hierarchical levels of promoting joint work at a cross-border level.

Mapping of key actors and implementation of a joint action plan for regional advocacy

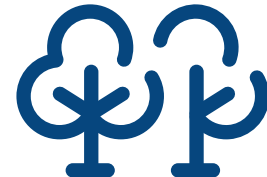
Through working meetings, both key actors with an impact on the operation of regional actions, and intervention needs were identified. The implementation of a joint work plan to promote bi or trinational actions allowed to raise the level of regional incidence, showing that even those PAs that are not located at the border to another country can share important experiences.

Enabling factors: Previous work with different actors from the three countries helped to define the universe of actors and their influence on decision making. Alliances from previous work have helped to determine the level of interest of those responsible for protected areas in working together to promote joint activities.

GOC Operational Guidelines

Meetings and workshops supported the elaboration of the GOC Working Guidelines, which facilitate their integration and operation through the development of an internal regulation and allow the level of certainty about the scope for action to be increased by establishing the collaboration and communication basis of this group.

Enabling factors: After three years of promoting joint and coordinated work for cross-border cooperation, the actors strengthened an assertive dialogue, recognizing the need to maintain the formalization of their operations.



The results of the trinational forest rangers experience exchanges (1) were key to trigger the coordination and cooperation among PA managers (2) by identifying common challenges and interests, including the improvement of effective communication, as well as the exchange of information, methodologies and action protocols to reduce regional threats. The interest and willingness of the parties during the process enabled them to develop organized work schemes (3). The increase in joint actions has shown the need for Operational Guidelines to improve intra-country and inter-country coordination (4).

Interaction

» Story

"The GOC has opened doors to learn more about the problems related to the conservation of the Selva Maya and promotes an important link between what happens in the field and at the desks. The Project has promoted links between protected areas and socialized knowledge to strengthen the management of the Selva Maya as a whole."
Ramón Pacheco, Programme for Belize.



"The GOC is an important mechanism of effective communication that articulates inter-institutional efforts to consolidate strategies and actions in the Selva Maya. During the last years the Project has facilitated relevant processes and contributed significantly to the development of coordination

mechanisms to achieve conservation objectives of this important area."
Wilson Guzman, National Council of Protected Areas, Guatemala.



"The GOC enables those responsible for protected areas to think regionally and not locally and to address common regional problems through coordinated local actions. The role of the Project was crucial, as it was an interlocutor and facilitator between the three countries, promoting the support and exchange of knowledge between the actors."



José Zúñiga, Calakmul Biosphere Reserve, Mexico.

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www.selvamaya.info

