

# STRENGTHENING THE MONITORING AND EVALUATION SYSTEM FOR THE FOREST CONCESSION MANAGEMENT UNITS IN THE MAYA BIOSPHERE RESERVE, PETÉN, GUATEMALA

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## » Context and challenges

One of the tasks of the National Council of Protected Areas (CONAP) is to approve concession contracts for the use and management of protected areas (PA) of the Guatemalan System for Protected Areas (SIGAP) and to ensure compliance with the standards contained in the regulations. Current regulations include the establishment and implementation of a monitoring and evaluation system for the use of timber and non-timber resources within concession areas. To comply with these standards, instruments and/or monitoring and application tools are required. In this sense, the Protection and Sustainable Use of the Selva Maya Project has advised on the design of the analysis instrument or standard for the monitoring and evaluation of the resource use in the forest concessions in

the Multiple Use Zone (MUZ) of the Maya Biosphere Reserve (MBR). The standard has been established and applied as a monitoring and evaluation system by the members of the boards of directors who have signed the concession contracts. In this way, the standard is an analytical tool that allows the decision-making process to adequately guide the policies, actions, management and operative guidelines for the different actors involved in the co-administration of the MUZ. At the same time, it generates reliable information for assessing and monitoring the performance and management evolution in the biophysical and socio-economic components of the management units, and for steering the actors involved in co-administration.

## Beneficiaries

Technical staff of the CONAP MUZ Petén region, the boards of directors and forest regents of the concessions. Indirectly, community groups, industrial companies and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) that support and implement the concession model.



## Impacts

- ◆ The application of the Standard of the Monitoring and Evaluation System of the management units now facilitates collecting information from different CONAP departments and integrating them into an annual report, which facilitates the identification and definition of strengths, weaknesses and problems for a better management.
- ◆ This tool provides clearer information for decision-making through 5 principles, 16 criteria and 69 indicators. These five principles are: 1) Sustainable Forest Management, 2) Territorial Management, 3) Administrative-Financial, 4) Social Responsibility and 5) Institutional Regulations; which together allow CONAP to evaluate the performance of the concessions.
- ◆ Through its institutionalization and implementation, the standard supports better governance of forest concessions in the MUZ and promotes dialogue between the parties involved.



## Design of the Standard for the Monitoring and Evaluation System

In order to design the current standard, it was necessary to analyze the pre-existing standard (2002), discuss it, and find consensus between the different actors in identifying weaknesses and proposing corrective actions, including technical and administrative aspects. With the support of the Project, consultation workshops with the Boards of Directors and regents of the concessions were held to identify weaknesses and gaps in the monitoring and evaluation system (e.g. the inclusion of the principle of Social Responsibility taking into account administrative, financial and social aspects). Based on the analysis of the pre-existing standard and its application, as well as the information gathered in the workshops, a draft of the new standard was prepared.

**Enabling factors:** The Boards of Directors of community organizations and forest regents provided relevant information for this update. The environmental and community authorities that benefit from the concessions showed interest and willingness to improve the pre-existing standard for sustainable forest use.

## Socialization of the Monitoring and Evaluation System

Through meetings and consultation workshops, the System was socialized and validated with the directors and technicians of CONAP as well as accompanying NGOs, regents, technicians and Boards of Directors of community and administrative organizations of industrial concessions. Involving external actors and experts in specific topics, who were unaware of the concession model, allowed to visualize aspects that strengthened the model and improved the instrument.

**Enabling factors:** The consensus among stakeholders involved facilitated the implementation of the tool allowing the orderly collection of information and facilitating its integration into a report on the performance of the management of forest concessions.

## Establishment of the Monitoring and Evaluation System baseline

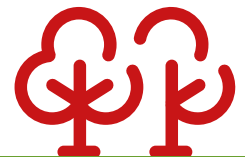
Through close communication, coordination and collaboration between CONAP, concessionaires and accompanying NGOs, the Monitoring and Evaluation baseline was established, allowing the implementation of the tool in forest concessions, as of 2018 and with the necessary adjustments for its improvement.

**Enabling factors:** Inter-institutional support and international cooperation facilitated the coordination to provide the instrument for monitoring and evaluating the concession process.

## Approval of the Monitoring and Evaluation System

CONAP's openness to develop the Monitoring and Evaluation System through a participatory and consultative approach, strengthened the tool and the administration of the concessions, so that the Honorable National Council of Protected Areas, as the governing authority, approved the Monitoring and Evaluation System as a valid and functional instrument by resolution.

**Enabling factors:** The good disposition and dialogue of CONAP with the rest of the actors created a solid basis of trust, which enabled the instrument to be improved and approved.



The Standard for Evaluation and Monitoring (1 and 2) for sustainable forest use, which was agreed upon with the different actors and tested in the field (3), facilitated the identification of gaps and areas for improvement, which created a basis of trust for approval and empowerment (4) by forest concessionaires.

## Story

"The Selva Maya has an unquantifiable value, so I still can't imagine how much biological, natural and cultural diversity there is on this surface, from flora, fauna, ecosystems and landscapes. The ecosystem goods and services provided to us as inhabitants of the region are very important. For example, for my home, it represents several things: living in stable climatic conditions, protecting ourselves from natural diseases and disasters, being a solid natural barrier and, above all, the opportunity to develop as a



human being. Through the Project, relevant actions that had a positive impact in some sectors and in the management of protected areas were generated. Its presence generated confidence and harmony, which over the last three years has resulted in a positive net rate of forest coverage changes in most of the management units. As a reflection we must continue working strategically and inter-institutionally. On the one hand, it is important to create governance capacity through control and protection, and on the other, to work with communities, with projects that generate knowledge, opportunities and commitment to conservation; to minimize pressure on natural and cultural resources."

**Allan González Díaz, Director of the MUZ of the Maya Biosphere Reserve.**

