

» Context and challenges

For the management of protected areas, the active participation of society is required, therefore, it is essential to develop educational, formal and informal programs that emphasize the recognition, conservation and appropriate use of the natural and cultural heritage of Guatemala. In this sense, annually, the National Council of Protected Areas (CONAP), Petén Region, carries out a Training Plan aimed at technicians, forest rangers, and community members whose objective is to promote the proper management of protected areas, based on a wide range of topics aimed at strengthening conservation actions in the territory. In addition, it seeks to modify attitudes to contribute to the proper coordination of intra and inter-institutional actions within the community, while also aiming to raise the level of

coordination between CONAP and its target audiences. The main challenge is the implementation of that Plan due to the scarce financial and technical resources of the institutions, which in the past made it difficult to carry out the training in a timely manner. The Protection and Sustainable Use of the Selva Maya Project developed, between 2015 and 2019, a strategic line of strengthening technical capacities for the management of protected areas, as well as the development of sustainable productive projects, aimed at CONAP and partners. The intervention consisted of providing support in advice, planning and intra and inter-institutional coordination, for the training development (methodology, content, topics review and logistics).

Beneficiaries

Both the staff of public institutions that develop and implement the training, as well as those who receive the training, among others, decision makers, technical staff, forest rangers, and community groups.



Impacts

- ◆ 280 technicians, 35 forest rangers, and 591 community members were trained in legal and managerial aspects of protected areas, facilitating their openness to CONAP to report illegal activities, better manage natural resources and comply with the legislation.
- ◆ Through workshops, 140 women increased their knowledge about the preparation of food based on the Ramón seeds, traditional preserves and products for personal hygiene and health, generating additional income.
- ◆ 25 young people from the communities on the road to Carmelita were trained in the manufacturing of handicrafts.
- ◆ 50 young people improved their skills in the production of organic fertilizers and fungicides by reducing the use of chemicals harmful to the environment and health. They also improved their knowledge in agroforestry systems management and organic beekeeping, allowing production diversification in their plots and promoting forest conservation.
- ◆ 50 teachers today have more information and environmental legal knowledge to protect and manage the natural and cultural resources of protected areas, and they transmit that knowledge to their students.





Preparation of the Training Plan

Together, CONAP department directors and partner organizations defined the topics and dates of the training sessions. This programming has prevented the participants from spending too many days on the trainings to the detriment of their daily tasks. In addition, it was very successful to plan the trainings in consensus with the communities, taking into account forest management, the fire season or the preparation of the land for cultivation, among other things.

Enabling factors: The willingness of CONAP departments, partner and community organizations to jointly develop the Training Plan.

Reflection and incorporation of men, women and youth in the Training Plan

Regarding the participation of the communities, especially women and youth were interested in receiving training on productive projects, which would allow them to improve their income. Among other aspects, skills and knowledge in artisanal production, agroecology, use of the Maya nut, agroforestry systems and organic beekeeping were strengthened. To increase participation, formal and personal calls for training were made. In addition, it was important to clarify to the management boards of the Community forest concessions that these training courses are independent of the those contemplated in their Annual Operational Plans.

Enabling factors: The identification of training topics of interest to the community groups allowed a greater participation commitment.

Implementation of the Training Plan

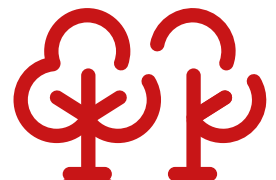
Identifying the target audience -to whom the training is directed- and the participant's subjects of interest, according to CONAP training plans, was crucial for the process. In order to ensure the participation and involvement of key CONAP personnel, close internal coordination was carried out with the departments of CONAP, Petén Region. The trainings were an integral process of continuous education that enabled the target groups to develop knowledge and experiences based on their skills.

Enabling factors: The involvement of CONAP staff and partner organizations, as well as the interest of the target groups favored the successful implementation of this Training Plan.

Theoretical – Practical Teaching: “Learning by doing”

The exchange on-site of productive experiences and good practices was an effective method of knowledge transfer. The community members showed a high motivation using the “Learning by doing” methodology. They also developed skills and abilities to produce handmade products and prepare food, the sale of which generates income for their families.

Enabling factors: The shift towards the “Learning by doing” methodology, as a mechanism of knowledge transfer, provoked greater interest and generated benefits.



The training for target groups (2), carried out with the support and coordination of CONAP departments and partner organizations, based on a Training Plan (1) has improved knowledge to mitigate threats to the ecosystem, improve the management of protected areas and promote the sustainable use of natural and cultural resources (3). The skills acquired through the “Learning by doing” methodology (4) favored the generation of additional income.

» Story

“I see the Selva Maya as a natural and cultural resource that should be used rationally for the benefit of families, so that it will last for future generations. I believe that the work supported by the Protection and Sustainable Use of the Selva Maya Project ensures the conservation of this forest massif. What we have learned in the training contributes to minimizing the deterioration of natural resources, which should be better used to secure the long-term livelihoods of families. Planning the trainings, involving men,



women and the youth in the workshops supported by the Project, and providing tools to transform the natural resources in a sustainable way, were important measures that allowed us to reflect on how we can develop. The future of the Selva Maya will depend on the local population and their willingness to manage natural and cultural resources in an environmentally friendly way, to preserve our ancestral traditions, and to use resources in a way that does not deplete them.”

Miguel Ángel Pereira, in charge of Environmental Awareness and Education of MUZ.

