

PROTECTION AND SUSTAINABLE USE OF THE SELVA MAYA PROJECT

» Context and challenges

The Selva Maya is a tropical forest region extending over Belize, northern Guatemala and southeastern Mexico of global importance. It covers an area of more than four million hectares of protected areas and is the most extensive tropical rainforest of Mesoamerica. The Selva Maya hosts an extraordinary biological diversity in over 20 different ecosystems, these reach from the evergreen rainforests of Petén to the dry forests of the northern Yucatán peninsula. The forest is a natural habitat to a large number of species, many of them endangered and is of great importance to all three countries, as a safeguard for ecosystem services (water, biodiversity, natural resources and landscape connectivity). However, the Selva Maya is exposed to extreme

pressures that strongly compromise its short and long-term viability and operability. The main reasons are forest fires, illegal logging and exploitation of flora and fauna as well as the fragmentation of the ecosystems. Land degradation and land-use changes through agricultural activities, use of pesticides and development of new roads pose further threats. On the other hand, the borders between the three countries that share the natural resources of the Selva Maya, emphasize the challenge of implementing joint and coordinated strategies to mitigate these threats. The central challenge in the region is therefore the protection and conservation of the Selva Maya and the sustainable, long-term use of its resources.

Our approach

On behalf of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH*, together with the Central American Commission for Environment and Development (CCAD), implemented the regional Project "Protection and Sustainable Use of the Selva Maya" in two consecutive phases (Phase I: 2011 to 2015; Phase II: 2015 to 2019). The Project focused on the protection and sustainable use of tropical forests that extend over part of the territory of Belize, Guatemala and Mexico.

The Project fostered activities along four thematic lines:

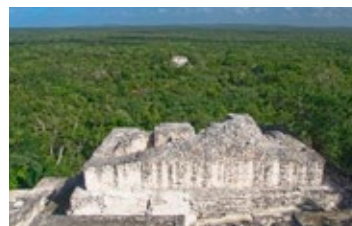
- ◆ **Thematic Line 1:** Protected areas and biodiversity
- ◆ **Thematic Line 2:** Land use planning under consideration of the environment
- ◆ **Thematic Line 3:** Sustainable income generating alternatives
- ◆ **Thematic Line 4:** Environmental governance in the Selva Maya region

On a regional level, the official project partner was the CCAD. On the national level, the Project worked with the institutions responsible for the protection and the conservation of protected areas: The Forest Department (FD) of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Forestry, the Environment, Sustainable Development and Immigration (MAFFESDI) in Belize, the National Council of Protected Areas (CONAP) in Guatemala and the National Commission of Natural Protected Areas (CONANP) in Mexico. Furthermore, the Project cooperated with non-governmental and civil society organizations that share a common objective: to contribute to the protection and sustainable use of the Selva Maya. The activities in Belize were implemented by IP Consult, in cooperation with the ECO Consulting Group.

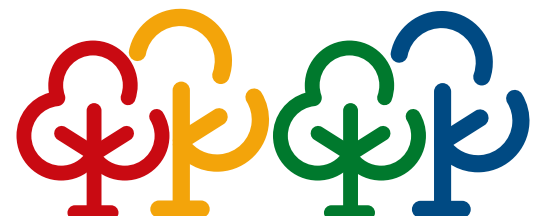
Project name	Protection and Sustainable Use of the Selva Maya
On behalf of	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Project region	Belize Petén, Guatemala Campeche, Quintana Roo and Yucatán, Mexico
Lead executing agency	Central American Commission for Environment and Development (CCAD)
Duration	05.2011 – 12.2019

Project objective

Key actors of governments and civil society implement concerted measures for the protection and sustainable use of biodiversity and natural resources in the Selva Maya region.



- ◆ Five protected areas in the Selva Maya have updated management plans which are implemented, and the Forest Department (FD) has a five-year Strategic Action Plan.
- ◆ An environmental planning approach has promoted the development and implementation of territorial management tools such as the Municipal Development and Territorial Planning Plan (MDTPP) of the municipality of Poptún, Petén, Guatemala, and strengthened social participation spaces such as the Municipal Council for Sustainable Rural Development (CMDRS) in Calakmul, Mexico.
- ◆ Various instruments and models are being developed and implemented to improve the management of the Selva Maya, including the local certification model for sustainable products and services: Sello Colectivo Calakmul (SCC), Mexico.
- ◆ Directly, at least 30 target groups in the three countries have enhanced technical, organizational and management capacities.
- ◆ More than 10,000 hectares of forest fires have been combated due to the increased capacity of more than 200 community brigades in Bala'an K'aax and Calakmul, Mexico. In seven municipalities, agricultural fires were prevented by the introduction of the Forest Fire Early Warning System (FFEWS) in Petén, Guatemala.
- ◆ In Calakmul, Mexico, the certification of "Areas Designated Voluntarily for Conservation" (ADVC) has increased the area of protected tropical forests by almost 100,000 hectares, thus improving ecological connectivity.
- ◆ More than 700 people have improved their skills in handling non-wood products (honey and Ramón seeds). More than 3,000 families in the three countries benefit from the economic strengthening of these value chains.
- ◆ Under different training models based on participatory methodologies and an Integrated Silvopastoral System Model in Guatemala and Belize, more than 300 families have diversified their family gardens by farming them agroecologically, reducing the use of chemicals and agricultural burns. In Petén, Guatemala, 60 producers implement sustainable animal husbandry practices on 400 hectares of land.
- ◆ The formation of the Selva Maya Strategic Coordination Group (GEC) in 2015 provide a platform for incidence and coordination at the political level for decisions at the regional level.
- ◆ With the formation of the Operative Coordination Group (GOC), which is integrated by directors and deputy directors of protected areas within the Selva Maya, it is operating a Platform for the representation of interests at technical and operational level, better coordinated at cross-border level.
- ◆ Between 2012 and 2019, more than 90 cross-border activities were carried out, including training and exchanges of experiences, which led to various inter-institutional agreements and cooperations.



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