

*Final External Evaluation*  
Conservation Agreements in the Mayan Biosphere Reserve Project

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## Table of Contents

<u>Project Identification .....</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>Acronyms .....</u>	<u>5</u>
<u>Executive Summary.....</u>	<u>6</u>
<u>Introduction .....</u>	<u>8</u>
<u>Methodology.....</u>	<u>9</u>
<u>Scope of the Evaluation.....</u>	<u>10</u>
Findings in relation to the Standard Review Criteria .....	10
Relevance.....	10
Impact .....	12
Efficiency.....	18
Effectiveness.....	19
Sustainability .....	21
Quality ratio / price.....	23
Equity .....	24
Replicability .....	24
<u>Innovations and Lessons Learned .....</u>	<u>25</u>
Actions and successful approaches.....	27
<u>Recommendations from interviewed partners .....</u>	<u>29</u>
Program Management.....	29
Program Design .....	30
<u>Annexes .....</u>	<u>33</u>
List of interviewed people .....	33
Consulted Documents.....	36

## Project Identification

<b>Project Reference</b>	20-008
<b>Project Name</b>	Conservation in the Mayan Biosphere Reserve Project Evaluation
<b>Leader Institution Name</b>	Wildlife Conservation Society
<b>Beginning date</b>	04/2013
<b>Termination date</b>	03/2016
<b>Amount of funding</b>	£ 269,681
<b>Brief Project Summary</b>	<p>The Wild Life Conservation Society and its Guatemalan partners consider that the conservation and the sustainable management of natural and cultural heritage of the Mayan Biosphere Reserve of Petén, Guatemala its essential to generate long lasting social, political, economic and environmental benefits for the Guatemalan and local communities.</p> <p>To achieve this vision, the executed project was based on the long term commitment of WCS with Petén, strengthening and consolidating the capacity to create and manage representative, responsible, transparent and effective institutions on natural and cultural resources management in the intact areas of Petén. Through this project there were established commitments and responsibilities between four community projects: two concessionary groups, one group located on the Laguna del Tigre National Park and a group located on the Multiple Uses Zone adjacent to the El Zotz Biotope and the Indigenous Communitarian Reserve Bioitzá, with whom there were developed natural resources management and conservation activities, and in return said communities received social and economic benefits.</p> <p>The expected impact of the Project includes the access increase to basic needs as educations and health services for more than 1,000 residents in four resident communities, the protection of at least 574 tropical forest hectares that without intervention would be deforested, and the 10% reduction of the forest fires that impacted the area. The target communities are rural communities historically marginalized, including Maya Q'eqchí indigenous and the tropical forest to be conserved has a global importance to the biodiversity conservation.</p>
<b>Country where the activities developed</b>	Guatemala
<b>Implementing partners</b>	Balam Association, OMYC (Uaxactun), Carmelita Cooperative, PROPETÉN, Bioitza Association, CECON (For its acronym in Spanish Conservation Studies Center) /USAC (For its acronym in Spanish San Carlos of Guatemala University), CEMEC (For its acronym in Spanish CONAP's Evaluation and Monitoring Center), CONAP (For its acronym in Spanish Protected Areas National Council), Uaxactun COCODE, Carmelita, Paso Caballos and Corozal, ProPetén Foundation.

<b>Meta-Beneficiaries Groups</b>	<p>The beneficiaries of this Project include all the habitants of the four Conservation agreements participant communities and also include: Organized groups of the tropical forest concessions of Uaxactun and Carmelita, representing over 1,114 people.</p> <p>COCODES and their community base in Paso Caballos and Corozal representing 2,362 people; Women in communitarian organizations and COCODES; Elementary and Secondary student's beneficiaries of educational program strengthening.</p> <p>Co-administrators and their field personnel, representing over 200 families.</p>
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## Acronyms

ACOFOP	Association of Forest Communities of Petén
BID	Interamerican Development Bank
CALAS	Legal Environmental and Social Action Center
CC-MBR	Coordinating Committee of Maya Biosphere Reserve
CECON	Center for Conservation Studies
CEMEC	CONAP Center for Evaluation and Monitoring
CI	International Conservation
CICIG	International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala
COC	Joint Operations Center
COCODE	Community Development Council
CONAP	Protected Areas National Council
CUDEP	University Center of Petén
DEFRA	Department of Environment, Alimentation and Rural Affairs
FCA	Fund for the Conservation of Tropical Forests
FJA	Environmental Justice Forum
FONACON	National Conservation Fund
GTF	Governance and Transparency Fund
GIZ	German Agency for International Cooperation
IDAEH	Institute of Anthropology and History
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
MARN	Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources
MICUDE	Ministry of Culture and Sports
MM	Multisectorial Table of the National Park Mirador Rio Azul, Biotope Dos Lagunas, Multiple Use Zone of the Maya Biosphere Reserve
MP	Public Ministry
PAVI	Project Against Violence and Impunity
PDP-CMBR	Petén Development Program for the Conservation of the Mayan Biosphere
MBR	Maya Biosphere Reserve
RIC	Land Information Registry
RRNN	Natural Resources
TFCA	Tropical Forestry Conservation Act
TNC	The Nature Conservancy
USAID	US Agency for International Development
USDOI	United States Department of Interior
TFCA	Tropical Forest Conservation Act

## Executive Summary

The Project “*Evaluation of the Conservation Agreements in the Mayan Biosphere Reserve*”, (CONSERVATION AGREEMENTS- MBR Project) was executed in Guatemala during the period (April 2013 to March 2016). The goal of the project is to “*Rigorously evaluate the Conservation Agreements that are being implemented in four places of the Mayan Biosphere Reserve, as a tool to reduce poverty and preserve biodiversity*”. For that the project aimed to accomplish the following general results:

- **Implementation of four Conservation Agreements** on the community concessions of Uaxactun and Carmelita, and the communities of Paso Caballos and Corozal, located inside the Mayan Biosphere Reserve.
- **Report the impacts of the conservation agreements**, synthesizing experiences on different community contexts, evaluating the biodiversity and the reduction of poverty impact, and demonstrating “value for the money”.
- **Elaborate divulgation material of the learned lessons**, targeted to different audiences.
- **Policy Recommendations**, including opportunity analysis and replication limitations of the conservation agreements through the Mayan Biosphere Reserve and the Guatemalan System of Protected Areas.

The final external evaluation of the Conservation Agreements Project has as goal to realize a synthesis of the impacts, relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, equity, sustainability and replication possibilities of the actions of the project as part of the closure activities, and as a way to feedback the Environment, Alimentation and Rural Affaires Department and specifically the Darwin Initiative about the impact of the activities of the project, as for WCS and its implementing partners of this project.

The Conservation Agreements, are a tool developed by International Conservation (CI for its acronym in Spanish), and modified by WCS, that pretends to involve the communities settled on high biological priority areas to realize specific actions of protection, management and conservation of their natural resources and in return receive economic resources for social tangible benefits that allows them to improve their life quality. The Conservation Agreements project in the MBR conducted support activities with the participant communities to strengthen the accomplishment of some of the acquired commitments in their respective concessions contracts and covenants of permanence, as well as support on social aspects of development not included in these contracts and covenants.

Also supported the governability in priority areas and two strategic concessions of the MBR, through the strengthening of the concessionary groups and the Community Development Councils (COCODE for its acronym in Spanish), as well as government institutions as CONAP and CECON. It also strengthened civil society institutions as Balam Association, Bioitzá Association in achieving support and development goals in the four communities. Both groups of organizations were interconnected through contracts that included monitoring and control components, Environmental Education, Land Use Planning and the control of forest fires, as well as the strengthening of the alliances between the government and the civil society oriented to promote governability in the MBR.

Highlights of the most important impacts of the project are: a) Conservation of at least 184,000 hectares of forest located in the influence areas of the participant communities. b) The formation of inter institutional work teams that conducted monitoring and high impact control operatives inside the influence area of the four communities. d) Support to the community concessions and community Development Committees. e) Support to the control and vigilance committees of the community concessions and to the land use planning committees of the two participant communities. f) Strengthening of the community organization. g) Prevention and decrease of forest fires. h) Increasing access in education and health services.

It also had innovative approaches as: a) Investment on basic services projects for the four communities, two of them indigenous, to integrate them to the conservation and natural resources management benefits. c) The construction of a base line of socioeconomic well-being for the four beneficiary communities. d) The articulation of government institutions CONAP and control and vigilance Committees with the Joint Operation Centers and as principal corollary the intensification and improvement of the monitoring and control in the four areas of the participant communities.

The project accomplished the expectations on several goal, purpose and result indicators that are widely documented in the annual reports, especially on the year five report and acknowledged by CONAP and different national and international organizations. In regards to the well-being community indicator, it's important to mention that the project used the "*Basic Necessities Survey*" methodology, which focuses on households and includes the quantification of the services and social infrastructure available to the community level (ex. Electric energy, water, alimentation, farming tools, etc.). The methodology provides a good base line that can be used to evaluate global wellbeing tendencies on Carmelita, Uaxactun, Paso Caballos and Corozal communities.

This evaluation considers that the project reached an overall success in its goals and objectives, since it helped improve the relations in Corozal and Paso Caballos with their main partner, CONAP, strengthened the relations and institutional presence of the administrator entity in its efforts to recover the governability in these communities as well as to strengthen the institutional presence in the ZUM. The participation of CONAP was determinant in the development of the project, that also consolidated the local civil organizations and showed to the local, national and global community that it's possible to involve responsibly the communities to agglutinate efforts in favor of the biodiversity defense and the accomplishment of well-being in the communities than inhabit protected areas strategically important as the MBR, contributing to maintaining after 26 years, the 69% tropical forest cover of the reserve. It is obvious that without the contributions of the Conservation Agreements project this would have not been possible, and the tropical forest cover of the MBR would be no doubt seriously decreased.

## Introduction

The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and its partners executed the project *“Evaluation of the Conservation Agreements in the Mayan Biosphere Reserve in Petén, Guatemala”*, (onwards Conservation Agreements Project) in a period between April 2013 and March 2016, with funding of the Darwin Initiative of the Department of food, Environment and Rural Affairs of the United Kingdom. The project had a duration of three years, beginning on the date of the signing contract. This project gave continuity to the Conservation Agreements already established in the communities of Uaxactun, Paso Caballos and Carmelita, and began a new one in the strategic zone formed by Bioitzá-Corozal-Zotz.

The goal of the project is to *“Rigorously evaluate the Conservation Agreements that are being implemented in four places of the Mayan Biosphere Reserve, as a tool to reduce poverty and preserve biodiversity”*. For that the project aimed to accomplish the following general results:

- **Implementation of four Conservation Agreements** on the community concessions of Uaxactun and Carmelita, and the communities of Paso Caballos and Corozal, located inside the Mayan Biosphere Reserve.
- **Report the impacts of the conservation agreements**, synthesizing experiences on different community contexts, evaluating the biodiversity and the reduction of poverty impact, and demonstrating “value for the money”.
- **Elaborate divulgation material of the learned lessons**, targeted to different audiences.
- **Policy Recommendations**, including opportunity analysis and replication limitations of the conservation agreements through the Mayan Biosphere Reserve and the Guatemalan System of Protected Areas.

The project was led by the WCS but featured the close and active involvement of the main institutional partners: The Protected Areas National Council (CONAP for its acronym in Spanish), CECON, Concessionary Groups of Carmelita and Uaxactun, and COCODEs of Paso Caballos and Corozal.

The purpose of the Final External Evaluation is to have a programmatic independent revision of the accomplishments and impacts of the Darwin Project, for:

- Measure and inform about the efficiency on the accomplishment of the expected objectives and results.
- Describe the positive and negative effects of the Project, planned and unplanned.
- Systematize the learned lessons according to the actions and approaches driven by the partners.
- Present an independent evaluation of the advances and results of the program to date, with respect to the planned objectives.



### **The specific objectives of the evaluation are:**

- Evaluate the relevance of the purposes and objectives of the Project, in the actual context of the Mayan Biosphere Reserve.
- Evaluate the performance/commitment of the technical team of the Project, implementers and communities.
- Identify the results and impacts of the Conservation Agreements Project. The evaluation should contemplate the impacts inside the focus area as well as the transversal and unexpected impacts.
- Evaluate the sustainability of the impacts.
- Systematize and share the lessons.
- Contribute with inputs to the Darwin Initiative, about the impact of the Conservation Agreements in regard to biodiversity conservation and poverty reduction.

The partner institutions and main actors of the Darwin Project are: Protected Areas National Council (CONAP for its acronym in Spanish); Monitoring and Evaluation Center (CEMEC/CONAP for its acronym in Spanish); ProPetén Foundation; Conservationist Studies Center (CECON/USAC for its acronym in Spanish); Bioitzá Association; Corozal Community; Paso Caballos COCODE; Carmelita COCODE; Uaxactun COCODE; Organization, Management and Conservations (OMYC) of Uaxactun; Carmelita Cooperative; Balam Association.

Honored Witnesses: Rainforest Alliance; Tikal National Park; Forest Communities Association of Petén; Integral Forest Association San Andrés, Petén; and the municipality of San Andrés, Petén.

### **Methodology**

The evaluation is based on the analysis and summary of the project documentation, participative observation, deduction, induction and focus groups. Instruments used include an interview guide, a tape recorder, individual and group interviews, aimed at reviewing the standards established on the reference terms: relevance, impact, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, quality/price ratio, equity and possibility of replication. The main stages were developed as follows:

- a. Project documentation review.** Collection, review and analysis of all available material related to the project, which included, among others: the justification material used in the project preparation, approved project documents, follow up documents, annual reports review, disbursements reports, progress reports, action plans, presentations, publications, press, databases and other available information.
- b. Logical framework review, performance indicators and verification means.** There was a logical framework, performance indicators and means of verification analysis to confirm their consistency with respect to the goal and purpose of the project. In this sense the data generated by the monitoring system Project was reviewed, as a source of first order information for the evaluation process. Also, information from national

institutions that provided reliable and useful statistics for evaluation purposes was considered.

- c. **Field visits, interviews and inquiries:** Field visits were carried out in order to perform in-depth interviews with beneficiaries, inspection and analysis of the project activities. These visits were useful as an “in situ” verification of the main successful and unsuccessful project experiences and to collect opinions from local groups and communities. Telephone interviews and consultations to those people who for reasons beyond the consultant reach could not be visited personally were also conducted.

Also, interviews with officials, main executors of the project, project staff who participated in the design and implementation of the project and key external interest groups including allies and beneficiaries of the program were realized; Interviews with representative staff from partner organizations, project witnesses of honor (CONAP, Bioitza Association, CECON, ACOFOP, Balam Association, Tikal Park, Rainforest Alliance and PROPETEN) and representatives of the beneficiary communities were conducted. For each of these interviews, ideas for the content and format of the interview form used to capture the required information were developed and presented. This interview was based on the elements proposed by TDR: Relevance, Impact, Efficiency, Sustainability, quality/price ratio, equity and possibility of replication.

- d. **Quality/price activities performance review.** Through interviews and document analysis was verified to what extent, with the resources and financial, personnel, regulatory, administrative and time procedures, the results were or not achieved and how efficient was the performance of the implementation of program activities in relation to the funds used.
- e. **Initial findings Presentation and discussion of final draft version prior to submission of the final report.** A presentation of initial findings and a discussion of such with the project staff was completed, along with a discussion to the final draft report prior final editing. The report was also translated in English and project representatives' doubts were clarified.

## Scope of the Evaluation

The following observations and findings, are based on the information provided by WCS and its implementing partners up to April 2016, indicating that at the moment of evaluation, the final report of the project was not available, and in that sense neither the logical framework nor the goals and results reports are up to date to the last reporting period of the project which is 2015-2016, so most of the data was extracted from reports from 2014-2015, except for socioeconomic studies and final reports made by organization in 2016. Thus it is feasible to integrate or modify some of the comments in this assessment when having the final report with the indicators report by agreement integrated within the logical framework.

## Findings in relation to the Standard Review Criteria

### Relevance

- 1. Contribution to the governance of the MBR.** The Agreements Conservation project responded in an effective way to the governance demands from CONAP in four strategic communities for the sustainable management of the MBR. Through Conservation Agreements it was possible to integrate key players in these communities to carry out successful actions of monitoring and control of areas under agreement, actions of control and forest fires prevention, land use planning, education and provision of economic incentives in participating communities, developing internal and external management capacities. At an institutional level it stands out the strengthening of community control and protection committees, of committees of forest fires, and strengthening of COCODE. Externally, it stands out the substantial improvement in the relationship between the four participating communities with CONAP, as well as those communities with their community assemblies with who they have established a permanent dialogue about the obligations and benefits from the signing of the Conservation Agreements. All these institutional developments constitute a contribution to the local and regional governance of MBR and strengthens the role of CONAP in its role as governing body of protected areas.
- 2. Improving inter-institutional cooperation.** The Conservation Agreements project in the MBR catalyzed the development of very productive cooperation relations between different government institutions and local communities represented through their COCODE and concessionary groups, which have remained stable throughout the execution of the project. Participating community organizations through their officials achieved a steady and effective leadership aimed at reaching the commitments made in the agreements of conservation, which not only gained them credibility and respect from its constituent members, but also provided tangible direct benefits to them. This showed that it is possible to work hand in hand with CONAP to achieve governance in the MBR under human and environmental standards all this with the support of Conservation Agreements.
- 3. Economic Resources.** Conservation Agreements constitute an opportunity, something innovative that has supported communities through economic and technical aides, which should ideally be long-term benefits, but in reality their sustainability is a challenge. In cases of Uaxactun, Carmelita and Paso Caballos, during the operational years of the Agreements Conservation Project, activities that communities were contractually obligated to perform were subsidized, because they did not have insufficient resources due to inefficient previous administrative tasks. In Paso Caballos administrative procedures were conducted by the COCODE and his approach is more social. These communities have a problem of lack of financial resources that was remedied through Conservation Agreements, however, the permanent provision of resources can only be possible when the internal administration of the participating communities improves and internal productive alternatives that generate sufficient financial resources to cover expenses related to the contractual obligations of those communities with CONAP are developed. As this happens, we need to continue promoting Conservation Agreements in these communities and others where resources of this type are required to support conservation action and governance, for which it also necessary that other projects develop similar actions of fundraising and internalization of institutional commitments acquired through such agreements; develop project proposals with the same approach and similar or longer duration focused on other social areas necessary for the development of communities and which have been obviated by the government institutions in charge of providing basic services to the communities. The

Conservation Agreements support the contractual obligations that communities have with CONAP over an established period of time, but these communities with or without agreement must comply with terms, since by the end of the agreements and even if there is no continuity with the agreements, they should in any way resume the contractual actions entitled by law.

- 4. Involvement of community groups participating in the control and monitoring of their areas of influence.** Previous projects in the MBR, considered communities as counterparts of projects associated with CONAP, whom ultimately had the final responsibility to act against recurrent threats of deforestation, land sales and forest fires within the MBR. In this regard, integrating communities within the dynamics of governance MBR as was done with Conservation Agreements is considered a truly innovative and effective element within the regional and national history of management of protected areas, as themselves not only participated, but acquired experience and expertise in forest fire control and monitoring of illegal activities occurred in their concession areas, as well as the internal management of their areas.
- 5. Strengthened networks between CONAP and participating communities.** Both concessions as COCODES were strengthened in their performance by conservation agreements, demonstrating proficiency and positive interaction with CONAP and NGOs. This is relevant, especially if it is considered that, for example, Carmelita agreement, although not formally, continued with certain strategic lines originating in the conservation agreement previously signed with the community. Acceptance of conservation agreements by CONAP and participating communities, constitutes an important project result and is inserted into the dynamics of strengthening local communities in their role as participants and executors of the agreements.
- 6. Encouraging Learning and divulgation for the conservation of the MBR.** The continuous learning of community groups in the implementation of this project is as important as the divulgation thereof. The education component implemented in the participating communities, improved the perception of the local population towards the MBR and its resources. Disclosure reports were drawn up periodically and achieved its mission, and consensus with the communities was consolidating basis of the operating Conservation Agreements, managing to promote a comprehensive understanding of the commitments and obligations undertaken by the participating communities.

## **Impact**

- 7. Supporting Development and Conservation Processes.** The greatest lasting impact of Conservation Agreements is the precedent established with the signing of community contracts, incorporating the method of payment for environmental services and involving communities in the care and recovery of degraded areas through activities of natural enrichment, monitoring and protection. With the precedent set, it is feasible to articulate new agreements in communities with more complex problems such as communities on route to Carmelita or those located in the Sierra del Lacandon and Laguna del Tigre where it is also necessary to promote good governance. Following up on this process, WCS with support from implementing partners as ProPetén, Bioitza and BALAM, is making efforts to incorporate more endangered areas and keeping the areas under agreement in dynamic processes of diversification of activities and commitments to support participating communities. The

main objective is to maintain the approximately current 185,000 ha, under conservation agreements, with emphasis on key sites for conservation and breeding areas of the Scarlet Macaw, located in Paso Caballos, as well as Yala, El Peñon, Biosphere Itza, the Zotz and other equally fundamental in Carmelita and Uaxactun concessions areas, and which is currently being threatened by legal and illegal economic interests.

- 8. Tropical forest saved from deforestation.** The most obvious territorial impact it is having avoided deforestation in participating communities, for which was the increased control measures and surveillance by strengthening local commissions, forest fire prevention and actions aimed at land use planning were fundamental. This resulted in the recovery of 287 hectares of forests within tropical forest concessions and species participating communities, which are again under process of regeneration and enrichment. However, it is clear that some of these areas are being watched by their former usufructuaries, so to minimize the risk of these parcels being retaken, it is necessary to consolidate land use planning measures, and that control and surveillance are maintained. In this sense, the sustainability of actions is essential to consolidate the achievements element, while maintaining support for conservation agreements and giving priority to the protection of these areas recovered through regulation of land use contained in a Land Management Plan approved by the community.
- 9. Institutionalization of conservation agreements.** A transcendental and long-term impact it would institutionalize Conservation Agreements by the CONAP as a permanent mechanism to support community groups with whom the institution wants to establish long term commitments and support government institutions and stakeholders. The local institutions recognized weakness could be overcome substantively by strengthening them through specific Conservation agreements, focused on efficiency and development of relations as a means of articulating with CONAP, and other government institutions which would allow community organizations actively participate in the conservation of the MBR.
- 10. Improving Community Wellbeing.** Through the Conservation Agreements it was possible to support basic communities' services such as education, health and access to goods that improved their quality of life. These activities are not part of the concession contracts and intention agreements through which relations between the government and communities are regulated, but they are the basis for community wellbeing. In this sense the measurements made in three communities with Conservation agreements indicate a general improvement in the Index wellbeing of communities of Paso Caballos, Uaxactun and Carmelita, as well as the substantial increase in access to assets and resources that are managed by COCODEs and local groups. This substantial improvement in the welfare of the inhabitants, alongside a stabilization and reduction in some cases of resident populations, has supported reducing rates of deforestation and fires in communities under Conservation Agreements. These activities should be continuously supported in potential new agreements, to achieve substantial and systematic long-term improvement that may lead to the conversion of extensive production activities for more activities compatible with the legal nature of protected areas where the participating communities settle. In this regard, it is priority to consolidate the existing infrastructure and support the ongoing management of basic services to those communities, especially permanent access to formal education. Although it should be clear that, Conservation Agreements can support education, but they could not take responsibility for the

formal education of communities. Benefits such as education are defined and agreed in a participatory manner with participating communities so they could vary over time.

- 11. Consolidation of control and monitoring committees.** Through conservation agreements the operation of the control and monitoring committees in the four participating communities were financed. The consolidation of these committees has a lasting impact because it involves the community in protecting their own areas under concession or intention agreement. This had not been done for different reasons, but its strengthening is considered vital for the sustainability of Carmelita and Uaxactun concessions, and for the Laguna del Tigre National Park, the Bioitzá reserve and Zotz Biotope, as the involvement and interest of communities located in these areas have a more lasting and significant impact to the territories under threat of deforestation than temporary and short-term interventions by NGOs or government.
- 12. Unexpected Positive Impacts.** It is considered a positive unplanned impact the substantial improvement of CONAP presence in historically problematic areas such as Paso Caballos and the southern area of Biotope the Zotz, as well as the consolidation of Community Organizations participating in Conservation Agreements, as local territorial entities making a positive impact for areas under threat. The investment made in strengthening these organizations paid off beyond the expectations to the point that these organizations have managed to settle debts and generate their own projects and maintain a positive interaction with government institutions and local municipalities. The integration of COCODE within the dynamics of conservation of natural resources in the participating communities is another positive impact, although in a way it was planned, it exceeded expectations, and consolidated as a priority to ensure good governance in the MBR. However, it is necessary to redefine the actions of some COCODE in concession areas where the main role goes to the concessionary groups. In this sense, coordination of functions between the two community organizations is proposed.
- 13. Strengthened Institutional Credibility.** In terms of public credibility, the image of CONAP, able to exercise their mandate in concessions and conflictive areas in an articulated manner with the communities was promoted. However, it is very important that this is maintained in the long term, consolidating a stable budget for control measures and surveillance that were funded the past 3 years through Conservation Agreements and the Darwin Initiative. Fortunately, these activities will be resumed under the same type of conservation agreements by another donor, in this case CI for communities Uaxactun and Paso Caballos, while Carmelita will be supported by Balam Association, which will give continuity to the dynamics of operational work achieved so far. There has been a positive turning point in the activities of land use planning in Carmelita, Paso Caballos, and Uaxactun, mainly due to internal institutional dynamics, so it is necessary to consolidate the legal support and dedicate resources to land use planning committees within communities to develop the legal and operational enforcing thereof. Fortunately, the WCS strategy of gradual achievement of funds is working properly to achieve the conjunction of several projects leverage to give continuity to the actions of governance in the communities supported by conservation agreements. To consolidate this image, CONAP should continue its work of governing body monitoring the actions and supporting activities such as land use planning in agricultural areas within concessions, as it is part of their function, as well as having a continuous and direct approach with communities

- 14. Support for the management of National Parks, Laguna del Tigre and the Mirador and Zotz Biotope.** Manageability of CONAP, CECON and Bioitza Association was strengthened with the support of its most relevant monitoring, management and control activities in the areas under their responsibility. Also, the support to tropical forest concessions enabled an environment to prevent materializing threats looming over these areas which ultimately would be detrimental to the local concessionary groups and communities living in the areas under agreement. The development of land use plans within participating communities strengthened this line of work, consolidating agricultural areas and therefore also the tropical forest. According to interviewed communitarians, Conservation Agreements should include a line of joint work to promote joint tropical forest concessions and committees of local tourism in Carmelita and Uaxactun about the future of Mirador as a tourism destination integrating economic importance to both concessions. However, it should be understood that the activities and commitments that are defined in a conservation agreement cannot be imposed because they are built by a participatory and voluntary design, and in that sense you cannot decide that a component should be included in particular before checking with the community. The methodology of the agreements indicates that conservation action and social benefits are selected by the people and approved at the Community General Assembly.
- 15. Weakening of cattle ranching in Carmelita.** A direct impact of the Conservation Agreements planned actions was the reduction of at least 50% of the existing livestock in Carmelita, which contributed to the gradual disempowerment of ranchers in this community, as the funding and support for this activity, allowed their economic influence to lose relevance. However, there is a latent threat of these groups to operate outside the law within Carmelita and Corozal, so it is necessary to consolidate the legal actions to eliminate the risk of re-entry of cattle to Carmelita, and the conversion of farms of purely livestock activities in Corozal. In the case of Paso Caballos, the community agreed in the negotiation process, the removal of existing livestock before starting the implementation of the Agreement and that commitment has been kept. It is also important to stop the illegal sale of rights for land lots in communities such as Corozal and Paso Caballos, since they jeopardize the Zotz Biotope and Biosphere Itza, for which it is also necessary to strengthen the support for the COCODE, as a mechanism to generate greater confidence and support from local communities.
- 16. Consolidation of the Community Tropical Forest Management.** The support of community groups prone to tropical forest management and the MBR was consolidated in concessions Carmelita and Uaxactun. The good community disposal to develop land use planning concerted efforts with CONAP, was positive, achieving significant progress in the management of agricultural parcels in Carmelita, Uaxactun and Paso Caballos, as well as the consolidation of the limits of Bioitza and Zotz. During this process, CONAP great impact operatives have not been welcomed by farmer's groups and illegal groups in the area, therefore, must be a priority the consolidation of these Land Management initiatives in order to protect the area. Currently, Conservation Agreements have achieved solid results in land use ordering in Carmelita and Uaxactun.
- 17. Progress in land use planning.** Land use planning have had political consequences within the participating communities, achieving the support of most farmers, as planned in Conservation Agreements. There is obviously a risk that a change in

communitarian directives or weakening of economic support for this line of work, undermine what has been achieved so far. So this work axis must be strategically consolidated maintaining support for the process of parcels ordering that is based on the conviction and participation of most community members. CONAP as both partner organizations and the community must ensure that actions taken so far remain.

- 18. Increased Partner Credibility.** Not only CONAP also ProPetén, Bioitzá, WCS, and concessionary groups improved their image of effectiveness in controlling their territories under agreement. In this regard, it is important to cement relations with the army and DIPRONA to articulate the control and monitoring processes. In the field trip by the external evaluator, a proactive and teamwork attitude by the committees control and monitoring with CONAP was observed, however, there are some differences of opinion as to how to file complaints and monitor allegations of illegal activities. It is important to clarify that the procedure for complaints is the same, it differs in some cases the degree of risk in making the complaint. The Conservation Agreements supported and gave space to improve and support multi-institutional relations also with DIPRONA and the army as a strategy for more effective control and surveillance patrols.
- 19. Strengthening control and monitoring committees.** The control and monitoring committees strengthened by conservation agreements play a key role, since it is necessary to give operational and legal strength, because without this element control actions and coordination of patrols lose their functionality. However, the Committees of Control and surveillance now depend largely on Conservation Agreements in terms of logistics and supply to maintain its presence in the area.
- 20. Strengthening COCODEs.** COCODEs support was part of the strategy to work with others than concessionary groups that had been the focus of CONAP and previous projects in the MBR. The focus on COCODEs, which have a wider range of operation in terms of community development, as well as the tourism committees and fire prevention, has proven a Conservation Agreements key element in the strategy of governance of community territories, as it allowed harmonize the development agenda with the protection of natural resources. Examples of this harmonization constitute the management of the water project, telesecundaria and computer lab in Carmelita, hiring teachers, and school improvement, road and computer lab in Paso Caballos and Uaxactun, and building tourism infrastructure Carmelita.
- 21. Development of Strategic Alliances.** The formation of alliances through Conservation Agreements has had amazing results and created empathy for CONAP and its legal mandate, raising awareness to other legal and social institutions on the need to work together to protect the natural resources of the MBR. Part of that extent is the participation of managers and local organizations and partners of honor in conservation agreements.
- 22. Negative effects.** Supported Forest concessions and the community of Paso Caballos, have a pre-existing commitment to CONAP, so in all Conservation Agreements it is clarified that supporting the communities in the implementation of these commitments is additional, but these actions previously agreed with CONAP must be met WITH or WITHOUT Conservation Agreement. In this regard the agreements are an opportunity to support communities to effectively meet the 100% of the commitments agreed with CONAP. Some negative effects that could possibly



occur are the dependence on resources from conservation agreements, in terms of logistics and support as well as dependence on funds for management by COCODEs, although in Paso Caballos the COCODE also receives community funds, on a smaller scale, because the funds assigned in the Agreement are not enough for all they have to do. A potential negative effect is the possibility of reprisals on elements of CONAP, passing alone in the work areas, as well as possible retaliation against community leaders working together with CONAP and its partners in the governance area, which can also involve officials of other participating institutions. The strategies implemented so far seem to have been able to mitigate these possibilities, but the risk is latent. A side effect of the implementation of the agreements, are certain discrepancies between organizations about priorities implemented in communities, although it remains a healthy discussion about the design of each agreement. Control and surveillance commitments are obligations previously agreed with CONAP, so, although the risk is latent, are not necessarily due to the agreements, but the strengthening of the actions developed for the control and monitoring of communitarian territories.

- 23. Wellbeing baseline Design.** Another impact with important future implications constitutes the continuity of socioeconomic information and welfare for the participating communities of the Conservation Agreements, because it establishes a baseline that will be used to monitor joint efforts within the MBR, and consolidate different indicators in an integrated system that can be used by various organizations to schedule their activities within the area based on well-established priorities based on these indicators. Conservation Agreements enabled the updating of wellbeing indices for Uaxactun, Carmelita, Paso Caballos and Corozal communities, which is a long-term contribution to the MBR and the country.
- 24. Financial Solvency of Tropical Forest concessions.** Conservation Agreement for Uaxactun had a significant impact as administrative controls were ordered, and the accumulated debt that was Q.2.2 million, was paid to 100% at the end of the second phase of the Conservation Agreement. A change in timber sales also pushed up towards selling lumber, which generated greater benefits to the community and a manager in Carmelita was hired to streamline the administrative management of the cooperative.
- 25. Technical support for the New Phase of Conservation Agreements.** Technical support will continue to Uaxactun and Paso Caballos for two more years, with funds provided for CI, which is a sign of the commitment of both WCS, CONAP and its partners for the conservation and sustainable management of areas under agreement. The technical support is part of the Agreements, and is a fundamental element in the development and implementation of the actions planned and supported by Conservation Agreements.
- 26. Delayed Carmelita Agreement.** A negative effect, not attributable to the project context, but with implications for the actions taken by it, was the not continuation of the agreement with Carmelita. Despite this, the Balam Association strengthened the community with \$ 40,000 to support the work lines included in the previous agreement, during the years 2014 and 2015, giving continuity to it and allowing a new agreement be designed and put in context for the next two years, which would be signed in the year 2016.

- 27. Institutional Positioning of the Darwin Initiative.** The Darwin Initiative is positioned as a reliable external source for the implementation of conservation agreements, supporting the WCS project portfolio, generating synergies with other funds and projects that contributed their expertise to execute the commitments included in Conservation Agreements. Through agreements, there were strengthened local organizations as Bioitzá and ProPetén Association and whose organizational development is a long-term impact generated by the project.
- 28. Strengthening CECON and Bioitza Association.** With the support of Conservation Agreements, CECON concentrated on strengthening its action in the Biotope El Zotz, where he improved his presence, monitoring, control and surveillance in coordination with the Bioitza Association, the Tikal Park and the community of Corozal, especially in its southern limit. It was possible to negotiate with families and farmers occupying land within the Biotope and strengthened its operational capacity, having achieved a certain sustainability of their activities, as through conservation agreements have been provided with equipment and additional financial resources.
- 29. Supporting the monitoring of deforestation and forest fires.** The Conservation Agreements contributed to monitor deforestation and forest fires, applying the new methodology to estimate more accurately implemented by CEMEC in 2014, that helped quantify forest regeneration within the estimated coverage, something really new and had not been implemented in the Maya Biosphere Reserve since 1987. With this new methodology the information is more accurate and allowed the publication of reports and adequate monitoring of key indicators, improving the estimate of land use change in the four communities under a conservation agreement accurately and reliably.
- 30. Coordination of various financial sources.** Conservation Agreements provided additional contributions from other donors to the sites of implementation for different activities as part of an investment effort of different projects that came together in the four participating communities. That account was successfully coordinated with investments of USDOJ, FONACOM, FCA, FUNDAECO PACUNAM and MICUDE, with whom it was possible join activities of Governance, tourism and education in Uaxactun and Carmelita. Sites implementing the agreements were leveraged funds for other projects consolidating the originally planned actions.

## Efficiency

- 31. Investment in communities.** Interviews with key stakeholders and community groups, confirm that the resources came promptly and effectively to the communities, and institutional and technical support was timely, allowing achieve planned results almost entirely. One aspect that stands out is that investments were decided by COCODEs and Control and monitoring committees, in coordination with other entities and endorsed in the Agreements. Although Conservation Agreements fulfilled their part in terms of supporting education with immediate resources, teachers' deficiency remains in communities such as Carmelita and Uaxactun, despite being managed by the COCODE. Participating communities were concerned and expressed their full support for the continuation of Conservation Agreements.

- 32. Risk Analysis.** Risk analysis for the project was well and carefully prepared, considering the dynamics of execution, the most dynamic years in terms of implementing them was in the last period of 2013 to 2016, coinciding with governance actions in the area, which declined from 2014. After the 2012 election there was a turning point in the operational dynamics of recovery of areas encroached by partner organizations and CONAP continued after the change of government which affected in the governance of the area. The year 2015 was particularly difficult due to the prevailing electoral climate in the area, and the new government has not yet established clear priorities regarding tropical forest concessions.
- 33. Inclusion strategy in decisions.** After six years of operation of Conservation Agreements, which allowed the inclusion of communities in commitments and receive direct benefits from them within allotted territories, the implementation thereof is considered successful, which it was manifested by the communities themselves during group interviews conducted in the four communities under the Agreement.
- 34. Problems in implementing the agreements.** Among the most important difficulties during the implementation process of the agreements include the organization of communities within the system to prevent forest fires, the initial refusal of some community to adhere to the Plan of internal territorial planning, misinformation regarding commitments acquired in the Agreement, by some community members, although there are not different commitments, commitments of the Conservation Agreements are the same as those established over 10 years ago in the case of Uaxactun and Paso Caballos.
- 35. Project Marketing.** The marketing of the project was strategic to the point that achievements are reported in communities, which is evident in the socio-economic reports and presented wellbeing indicators, where community recognized in general the benefits of conservation agreements, however, while in communities as Carmelita marked improvement of welfare, in Paso Caballos, 22% of the general population said that their conditions had not changed, which can be explained by the difference in population size and total investment in each community. However, it should be noted that each community is different and that interventions, although they can help, they cannot by themselves correct well entrenched poverty problems. Changes can only be seen in the long term with many interventions and efforts, it would be unrealistic to say that an ambitious agreement will curb poverty in a specific community.

## **Effectiveness**

- 36. Scope of results.** According to the 2012-2013 and 2014-2015 annual reports and final reports for each implementing organization almost all results were achieved satisfactorily, some as improved governance in Paso Caballos and Corozal and institutional strengthening of CONAP exceeded expectations. There is a discrepancy in the results of deforestation, since the initial logical framework indicates that would be protected 900 ha, however, the baseline indicates that they are 574 ha, that due to switching Cruce a la Colorada as was planned originally for Bioitza-Corozal-Zots. Regarding the performance indicator, the goal was reached as indicating that deforestation of 50% of an undetermined amount of hectares would be avoided, but in the final report indicates that were 574 ha, and reached protect 50% exactly, meaning 287 has. The same happened with the indicator of tropical forest cover affected by

fire, as it was estimated in the original proposal, that the area affected by forest fires by 10% in each community area would be reduced, and the overall result was 16.6% decrease in hot spots, indicating that although the indicator was not measured as originally planned, the planned objective was achieved. The greatest impact was in Paso Caballos and the lowest in Corozal, which is because the agreement only takes a year of execution in this community. In the area of community economic benefits three measurements in Carmelita, Paso Caballos and Uaxactun indicate a higher general welfare of the community, while in Corozal, the agreement is too recent to draw conclusions. The 2.1 indicator measurements indicated that annual welfare rates would be made, however, only were carried out at the beginning and end of the project. Two logical framework indicators were answered in a very general way in the annual reports, without making reference to quantitative scope or compliance thereof, example: policy recommendations, 4.1 indicator and 4.3 indicator.

Table summary of results achieved in deforestation and fire control.

	Zotz- Corozal- Bioitzá	Paso Caballos	Uaxactun	Carmelita	All the agreements	
Parameters						
Baseline (ha)	51.0	334.7	111.3	77.7	574.7	
Implementation of the agreement (ha)	37.0	120.4	87.2	43.4	287.9	
Area annual change in baseline value against the period of execution of the agreement (ha)	-14.0	-214.3	-24.1	-34.3	-286.7	
Change in % of baseline value against the period of execution of the agreement	-27.5	-64.0	-21.6	-44.2	-49.9	
Area annual change in baseline value against the last period data (ha, 2014-2015)	-14.0	-284.4	-45.6	-16.5	-360.5	
Change in % of baseline value against the last period data (2014-2015)	-27.5	-85.0	-41.0	-21.2	-62.7	
Changes in forest cover	Baseline (hot spots)	2.7	31.1	3.5	2.6	39.9
	Implementation of the agreement (hot spots)	2.0	24.6	6.0	0.8	33.4
	Change in annual heat points baseline value against the period of execution of the agreement	-0.7	-6.5	2.5	-1.9	-6.6
	Change in % of annual heat points baseline value against the period of execution of the agreement	-25.9	-20.9	71.4	-71.2	-16.4
	Change in annual heat points baseline value against the last period data (2015)	-0.7	-18.1	2.5	-2.6	-18.9
	Change in% points annual heat baseline value against the last	-25.9	-58.2	71.4	-100.0	-47.4
MODIS Heat points	Baseline (hot spots)	2.7	31.1	3.5	2.6	39.9
	Implementation of the agreement (hot spots)	2.0	24.6	6.0	0.8	33.4
	Change in annual heat points baseline value against the period of execution of the agreement	-0.7	-6.5	2.5	-1.9	-6.6
	Change in % of annual heat points baseline value against the period of execution of the agreement	-25.9	-20.9	71.4	-71.2	-16.4
	Change in annual heat points baseline value against the last period data (2015)	-0.7	-18.1	2.5	-2.6	-18.9
	Change in% points annual heat baseline value against the last	-25.9	-58.2	71.4	-100.0	-47.4

period with data (2015)					
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Source: CEMEC 2016.

**37. Opportunity and Purpose.** Most interventions had a direct connection with the achievement of the planned goals, however, much of the resources were allocated to achieving commitments under the concession contracts or intention agreements that in retrospective were significant as the reduction of area affected by fire, deforested area and recovered area. Investment of profits were decided at General Assembly. A widely recognized consequence in this sense, is that the agreements potentiated the activity of Xate harvesting to a better level of quality in Uaxactun, which generated additional income to community.

**38. Equipment Acquisition for control, surveillance and fire control.** The equipment donated to the monitoring and surveillance and fire control committees were part of a huge effort to achieve the goal of fire control, however this equipment already shows wear and tear and will need to be updated in the medium term. Procurement of equipment was particularly important in communities without constant access to resources from tropical forest management as Paso Caballos and Bioitza Association, since these communities do not have forest areas under concession to obtain resources from logging.

## Sustainability

**39. Sustainability and opportunity** Conservation Agreements were made at a critical moment of sustainability, particularly in the forest concession Uaxactun, who faced serious economic problems due to debts incurred by previous directives. The sense of opportunity of the intervention was ideal, as it shored administration until supporting with fresh funds some activities for which these concessions had no resources. In that regard, most of the impacts appear to be sustainable as the activities funded by Conservation Agreements are unavoidable commitments of concessions and community groups as Paso Caballos. It is also important the experience gained with the consolidation of social organizations that will need to continue to make efforts of Conservation Agreements, and whose representatives publicly declare their intention to continue to promote the work lines of support for governance in participating communities. In this sense, although it is considered that the strengthened institutions and organizations are sustainable over time, operational activities show a reduction of immediate funds due to the completion of the project, which is being remedied with alternative funds raised by WCS, Balam, but that are not sufficient to expand or maintain all existing Conservation Agreements. Funds for a third stage in Carmelita and Paso Caballos Uaxactun would be in the approval process.

**40. Contribution to Education in communities.** Support for primary education was an important contribution from the Conservation Agreements, which committed the people living in the participant communities to collaborate with conservation actions in exchange for education for their children. Education is a transversal necessity for all communities whose support could extend the CONAP institutional presence in other communities of the MBR.

- 41. Monitoring System for the MBR.** Most monitoring activities implemented with Conservation Agreements project, gave continuity to the activities developed by USDOJ and USAID projects in the last 5 years, so they are part of a systematic strategy for monitoring deforestation and improving welfare of communities of the MBR, including the four communities participating in the Darwin Project. An important element of monitoring the territory is that the control and protection activities are completely organized by local staff of the communities, which have developed local and sustainable capacities. Deforestation Monitoring and impact of fires are carried out by CEMEC and socioeconomic monitoring is done by technicians from partner organizations and WCS within a continuous monitoring system for MBR, another highly successful element of the strategy WCS and Conservation Agreements project and contributing valuable information to CONAP through the use of unified protocols.
- 42. Support to Local Directives.** The strategy of providing support for the directives of concessions and participating communities Conservation Agreements is also considered an essential element in this strategy of sustainability, as it consolidates the continuity of the same local staff that will boost fundraising for development projects similar to agreements Conservation project. In every sense, the training of local human resources in financial and community management has been a major achievement of the project. Keep in mind that the model of the Agreement, involves the leaders of the communities represented by the COCODE, deputy mayors and concessionaires' organizations like OMYC and Cooperative Carmelita, in the design and negotiation of agreements, which must then be approved by the community assemblies.
- 43. Financial Sustainability.** The endowment for the MBR is an indispensable element in the sustainability strategy of the Conservation Agreements Project, and its constitution shows significant progress. Another element that stands out is the possibility to export wood to the Brooklyn Bridge project, negotiations have shown significant progress in recent months of the project, with the visit of a commission to the community of Uaxactun for details of the project. It is essential that there is continuity to these actions to integrate into a potential new conservation agreement.
- 44. Support for Community Managements.** Many efforts are not made by the community due to the lack of resources to mobilize. A very important sustainability strategy element is the continuity of support for COCODEs through financial resources to enable them to consolidate support during the project achieved towards conservation and environmental management. It is considered important to maintain the agreements with the communities of Paso Caballos, Carmelita and Uaxactun with support from CI and must develop similar agreements in other communities that present potential and willingness to enter into an agreement of this type. In this sense, the most direct support should be managed with other funds or institutions that communities have the ability to manage their own projects for the benefit of the populations they represent.
- 45. New approaches to conservation agreements.** In interviews with the participating groups it was considered that some actions should be taken up within the conservation agreements, and in those areas where the objectives were achieved and would introduce new components to the Agreements. In interviews with local stakeholders and community groups repeatedly it mentioned the need to include production activities and economic and business development that generate greater

economic benefits to the community, based on the capabilities of their existing territories and natural resources. However, it should be clear that the agreements are not intended to be the only intervention in communities and these issues could be addressed with other funds and other institutions. Conservation Agreements seek conservation and management measures and compliance benefits change if given. It is considered that business economic projects if they can complement actions set out in the agreements.

**46. Institutional Accompanying to communities.** Control activities, surveillance and fire control fall mainly on community groups that have concession contracts or intention agreements. Manifested reality is that some communities do not have financial resources to carry out these activities for different reasons, so it is necessary to maintain the important support that so far the Conservation Agreements project has provided them, since this support will remain critical in achieving sustainability of these and other activities implemented by the project. It is important that for the Conservation Agreement model to work, it should be an accompanying organization that already has a previous relationship with the community, to ensure that the relationship of trust conducive to the implementation of activities under the Agreement.

### **Quality ratio / price**

**47. Cost of activities.** Project actions on governance and institutional incidence rate have an immediate reference in the DFID Project with whom this project temporarily shared some of the most important actions and that somehow gave rise to some important lines of work incorporated in the agreements. In this regard it is estimated that the achievements through the Conservation Agreements exceeded expectations in the highly complicated regional and national context because despite being a project with a much smaller budget than DFID, it managed to give continuity to some of its most important components such as control of forest fires, land use planning and monitoring and control of the areas under concession or intention agreement. The strengthening of COCODEs is something completely new in the project and funds for encouraging community management is critical for good performance, because although the amounts were relatively small in some cases, catalyzed the implementation of other bigger projects for communities.

**48. Continuity to the payment of environmental services and governance.** In the MBR it has been developed a line of work on governance and payment of environmental services through the Conservation Agreements. The investment of 2.69 million quetzals in 3 years, at a rate of 0.9 million per year, it seems amply justified and exceeded the expected results in some areas such as governance, land management, monitoring and control, etc., however, direct investment in community development and combating poverty, requires a greater amount of resources to have a more decisive impact. Thus it is necessary to emphasize that the Conservation Agreements could not by themselves pull a community out of poverty, because this expectation would be unrealistic, more education and more interventions are needed, which itself aims is to contribute to improve the welfare of communities and contribute to improve tropical forest conservation.

## Equity

- 49. Ethnicity.** It is estimated that the population of the MBR is 20% indigenous and 80% Ladino. Although the project was aimed at four communities, ethnic profiling was prioritized, as Paso Caballos and Corozal-Bioitza are mostly indigenous, while Carmelita and Uaxactun are considered mostly Ladino, which gives a fair share in terms of Project location. However, Paso Caballos, Corozal-Bioitza constitute 70% of the total population served by the project indicating that the indigenous population, which has the highest poverty rates in Guatemala were mainly benefited. These indigenous communities are generally poorer than ladino communities, so that investment in these indigenous communities is considered a direct combat by the project to the prevailing extreme poverty in the participant communities.
- 50. Youth Orientation.** Most investments in the Conservation Agreements regarding education were established in agreement with community groups and aimed at strengthening primary and secondary schools, so that children and young people in the communities were assisted as is the working philosophy of the Conservation Project Agreements. No specific orientation of the project was seen to elderly or disabled people. In Paso Caballos there was an important requirement to strengthen an academy computer so that young people do not have to leave the community to be trained in this aspect, which began operating in January 2015, however, it is important to clarify that the benefits are agreed for consensus of all participants in the design and negotiation of the agreement and in those communities a benefit widely demanded is education.

## Replicability

- 51. Replicability of implemented actions.** Although novel, most project activities are replicable. Actions replicable are institutional strengthening, control and surveillance, land planning and community support and will remain a priority for governance in the area. In fact, these actions are being replicated as part of other projects already in management and / or implementation in Petén by Balam and ProPetén Association. The governance agenda driven by the Conservation Agreements Project, is being inserted and multiplied in several institutions that are also developing projects to consolidate this vision of responsibility and coordination by strengthening the most basic aspects of social development and the joint operational capacity among community and institutions legally empowered to exercise control in areas under agreement. Investing in education, health and production point sensitive to the stability of concessions and community territories components. Regarding the replicability of the tool of the Conservation Agreement as a whole, it is considered that the methodology is replicable under certain characteristics and conditions established in its implementation methodology. The way of working of the actors in terms of process is also replicable, as well as how to monitor the work of the community implementers, etc, however, they must meet necessary conditions like governance and a strong demand of communities as reference for implementation.
- 52. Financial flexibility.** A highlight by most respondents as innovative, and should be replicable is the flexibility of funds for investment in areas considered vital by communities, such as education, patrolling, monitoring and fire control and adapting these funds to different contexts where different aspects such as education or education infrastructure, are all prioritized to support conservation activities. This



flexibility of investment is a crucial aspect especially in situation where processes needed to act quickly. However, this flexibility should not be misunderstood as all the commitments of each party that will be supported with funds are written into a contract (the conservation agreement) where it is established what it is and in that sense the funds only can be used for what were agreed. The flexibility of the model is in terms of the total amount, which can be adjusted depending on the priorities and money available.

## **Innovations and Lessons Learned**

- 53. Institutional Leadership.** Much of the impact of the project was due to the leadership of CONAP, who responded positively to the initiatives and actions coordinated by the implementing partners. In this sense the alignment of proactive and committed to MBR inter-action actors enabled the project successfully. CONAP and its partners should develop better communication in the discussion of the agreements, to give priority to community needs and institutional commitments involving a management and conservation of resources in the areas under agreement.
- 54. Co-responsibility and commitment.** The Conservation Agreements have differences to most projects structure as it focuses on coordinating activities with communities and creating space for cooperation, learning and joint action in a joint way within the community territories. This is an innovative element that should be highlighted, since the agreements are built together with the community, also giving the government participation. In this regard the agreements are based on cooperation and internal consensus of the community assemblies with state institutions. Responsibility and commitment in performing everyday conservation tasks is achieved in a process of dialogue and discussion based on feasibility studies and taking as a requirement a certain level of governance in the areas, which allows the assembly and coordination of different actors working in the common target of sustainably natural resources management in their territories of influence. This creates a social capital that is very important as institutional human elements are changing, and new players are required from time to time to promote the agenda of conservation and development of form that promote Agreements, and achieving this is easier if you have experience with community leaders and social and environmental commitment.
- 55. Prioritized Approach.** The project demonstrated that it is possible to promote good governance in some areas of the MBR involving resident communities. In this regard it is important not to lose sight of the objective of Conservation Agreements is to support the conservation of areas of biological importance and support while improving quality of life of communities working to perform these actions. An interesting element of comparison is that many communities in the West area continue ungovernable while Corozal and Paso Caballos are being integrated into conservation actions. The factors that made it possible for this project to materialize in these communities were political will, resources, and a confluence of actors who collaborated with the common goal of encouraging collaboration to stop the advance of deforestation and forest fires on the tropical forest.
- 56. Community Commitment.** An important lesson learned in the implementation of this project is that communities are able to take direct responsibility and coordinate with CONAP, NGOs and other organizations, work, take risks and strive when material

resources and tangible benefits for their communities, and also have resources promptly and effectively. This fades the idea that communities are reluctant to make commitments or simply do not want to resume their contracts or work and renew confidence in the possibilities of community forest management and conservation of protected areas.

**57. Compliance and flexibility.** It was observed that most of the activities were executed as planned, indicating that costs incurred for the implementation of the agreements were executed under budget. The latest annual reports are expected to verify the percentage of overall compliance in each of the planned activities.

**58. Education, health and welfare.** The goal of generating access to education was achieved in almost all aspects. The updated regarding improvement in the welfare of participating communities' information confirms largely the achievement of project goals regarding increased general welfare measured with reference to elements prioritized by community groups. With regard to direct income, although specific interventions were made in this regard, the scope of investment seems limited, and the lack of recent information does not allow to estimate a change in direct income to participating families, however it was obvious the satisfaction of the groups interviewed in the sense of being benefited by the payment of wages for conservation and protection activities, and in some cases the provision of food rations was enough to achieve the integration of community in groups for control and fire prevention. However, in Corozal, they requested support for the payment of wages in a similar way as is done in other communities with Conservation Agreements. Shares and payment amounts vary in agreements, and depends on the total amount of the agreement. It is noteworthy that Conservation Agreements support these actions, although the final responsibility lies in government institutions.

**59. Financial support for community efforts.** Funding for community efforts, allowed leverage other interventions, such as tourism infrastructure in Carmelita, organized support groups, management in tourism, road to Paso Caballos, support to health centers, etc, satellite internet Carmelita and Uaxactun. This type of incentive was so effective that is considered the first time in the history of the MBR that a project invested in such basic and necessary services for communities inside the MBR.

**60. New Agreements.** The project enabled a direct impact on key components such as Zoning, Fire Control, Monitoring and Control. WCS has ensured the continuity of Agreements in Carmelita, Uaxactun and Paso Caballos, pending community Bioitza-Corozal-Zots, which manifested itself in a very positive way as to continue working under such agreements, however, agreements do not restrict other actions or interventions of other institutions to carry out other projects in these communities and give continuity to the actions already underway.

**61. Safety of the participants.** Safety was a recurring theme in communities like Corozal, Yaloch, because of potential reprisals by farmers in the area. It is important to establish safety measures and prevention for staff of organizations like CONAP allies and partners who travel to the area. It is also important to strengthen community leaders with a sustainable vision of the MBR; since in some communities, ranchers may dominate social organizations and reverse the progress made through Conservation Agreements in recent years, as in the case of Corozal, Paso Caballos and Carmelita.

Security would be an element to coordinate with CONAP and government agencies responsible for enforcing it in concessions and areas under agreement.

- 62. Changes in community perception of the integrity of the MBR.** At the beginning of the project it was perceived by many communitarians in conflict areas had a negative perception of MBR in the sense that this was almost completely deforested and it was not worth continuing to invest in its conservation efforts. However, continuous awareness activities undertaken by the Conservation Agreements Project, CONAP and its partners helped change that perception to know the relevance and importance of it and there is still a lot of area to conserve, protect and recover, as the 69% of it is cover by tropical forest after 25 years of being created and that many areas still retain a great natural and cultural value that deserves to be preserved.
- 63. Continuous and systematic training.** The communities training process must be continuous and systematic, as the directives of concessions, COCODE, Control and surveillance Committees, and especially the Committees for the Prevention of Forest Fires are renewed periodically. Several members of which are elected every two years, and in the case of Paso Caballos each year, so it is necessary to renew the training so the current work dynamics of local community board do not stop.
- 64. Support for the current legal framework.** Something that was learned, is that although the work of the project partners developed with all necessary legal backing and following due process, it is important to note that legal contracts generate responsibilities to communities that sometimes they cannot comply. It was evident that the Conservation Agreements supported the legal framework established by CONAP in concession contracts and intention agreements especially in activities with little funding. In that sense the scope of the Agreements should be promote in the area so that people know the results of the project and some do not perceive them as negative to their interests. The Conservation Agreement should be perceived as an opportunity to fulfill the obligations that communities already had previously agreed with CONAP, since communities that are being supported with the concession contract and intention agreements like Paso Caballos, must comply having or not conservation agreements.
- 65. Investment and results.** There is a correlation between spending and governance of the MBR, to the point that it is estimated that the number of hectares recovered by the project is correlated with the amount invested in social development and year of investment. In this sense, communities as Uaxactun and Paso Caballos show deeper stable results than Carmelita and Bioitzá-Corozal-Zotz because of the number of phases implemented in the first communities and the total amount invested. In this regard, the areas showing the biggest hits are strengthening COCODE and concessions board, land use planning and education, according to the total amount invested in the project. In this regard it must be considered that the amounts allocated to each community have depended on many factors: resource availability, scope of actions, etc.

## **Actions and successful approaches**

- 66. Institutional co-responsibility.** A successful approach was the sharing of resources and responsibilities with key partners, who demonstrated the possibilities of developing the work assigned if they have timely adequate resources availability and appropriate

institutional support. This support is key and very successful in the case of Agreement Bioitzá-Corozal-Zotz, which with accompanying ProPetén had a very strong element of coordination between different actors and institutions which highlights the Tikal National Park and two communities, Bioitzá and Corozal.

- 67. Strengthening the COCODE.** This action allowed to extend the benefits of conservation groups and other concessionary groups with which the spectrum of collaboration and support CONAP at a broader level expanded, integrating aspects of local development within conservation strategies.
- 68. Endowment Fund of the MBR.** A source for the sustainability of the Conservation Agreements is the proposal to form the Endowment Fund of the MBR, which has the support of CONAP, PACUNAM, Defenders of Wildlife, BALAM and ACOFOP, with which it has been re-started the process of creating this fund. The constitution of FPMBR is a sustainability strategy and successful process approach. The fund is conceived as a permanent source of income for the MBR whose purpose is to promote the management of cultural, natural and social development heritage through a five-year prioritization and work in partnerships. It is a flexible and innovative resource management, linked to REDD and GuateCarbon, and as a replicable model SIGAP scale, co-investment principles and responsibility, catalyst, and flexible to changing conditions complementary financial mechanism in the MBR. Its design includes small grants, umbrella funds to manage. The fund will not run projects directly but will support through funding and links to other actors in the region and it will function as a joint private equity fund, with a minority government involvement, which could include financing Conservation Agreements in different zones of the MBR.
- 69. Focus on governance.** The biggest lesson of this project is that a focus on communities to support governance of natural resources can be useful as a starting point for a more comprehensive and systematic improvement of territorial governance in hazardous areas such as eastern and center of the MBR.
- 70. Organizational Development.** The recovery strategy of governance through commitments and benefits shared through Conservation Agreements, which involves the direct support to community institutions and the development of organizational capacities, was a success, although sustaining the current situation requires further work on the same thematic line. These elements not only constitute a historical innovation in the approach to the projects developed over 26 years in the MBR, but also its implementation improved the relationship of CONAP with Carmelita, Paso Caballos and Corozal, and it actually contained a very large threat towards the most upright part of the MBR. The strategy had multiple results, expressed in emerging communities strengthened and focused on governance issues, which did not previously exist. Some like Bioitzá, ProPetén and Balam Association adopted a multi-pronged approach to conservation integrating human development into its main components.
- 71. Unique patrol report.** This report is one of the innovations implemented within the Conservation Agreements project to document the coverage of patrols in the MBR, and also to plan strategies field. His goal is to have an updated report for each organization involved in patrolling system and as a means to gather information. The report also serves as supplementary information on illegal acts, crime scene, findings and others, and thus give substance to complaints in the courts. The report evolved into a new

system called "Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool" (SMART) with which contributes to global monitoring efforts, and opportunities to move towards some global issues, which is already being used by CONAP in others are created areas of the country like Punta de Manabique.

- 72. Complementary Niches.** The participating entities had different specialties that made them complement each other in the integrated actions required by the project Conservation Agreements. Their different experiences formed an amalgam that potentiated the actions of the Agreements and made possible its successful implementation. This model of complementation is a very important lesson for the project indicating that it is possible to have governance activities based on communities responsible for the territories, but also on the basis of experience, capabilities and long-term relationship of organizations that support communities in different regions of the MBR.

## **Recommendations from interviewed partners**

### **Program Management**

- 73. WCS-Balam-ProPetén-Bioitzá.** Although there is no availability of every inform and financial report of all partner organizations corresponding to 2015-2016, what was observed on field trips corroborates investments and activities declared in the annual reports. It is considered however that there are some activities that must be consolidated, such as land use planning, which must be strengthened, because although there are significant advances, it is an activity that requires clear rules and regulations for land use within the territories approved by the community. The policy of land use should be clarified by a plan approved by participating groups and CONAP, since there are no clear guidelines written to ensure its long term fulfillment. In this sense, the capacity of communities to implementing regulations of land use within the assigned polygons must be strengthen, and finalize the urban planning in Carmelita. CONAP in the case of Carmelita must continue the process and once it is finished, let the community know. Regarding the management of funds, it is transparent and effective in the financial part of the project, since a financial audit of the Darwin project will be done in the coming months. But every expenditure is supported and is given according to what has been signed by all parties and is one of the reasons all agreements are implemented by a partner institution responsible for every investment. In the case of Cooperative Carmelita and OMYC, they have administrative capacity and accountants to generate their own financial reports. In the case of Paso Caballos and Bioitza-Corozal-Zotz, the administrative management was done by means of the supporting organizations.
- 74. CONAP-WCS-ProPetén.** The focus of Conservation Agreements is to strengthen the existing commitments within the framework of the basic documents: contracts and intention agreements, and in that sense, the technical team has developed a very good job in terms of achievement of the activities planned within the project to meet these commitments.
- 75. Darwin-WCS-BALAM-ACOFOP.** Economic income. According to the views of the groups interviewed, the performance of field staff has been very efficient, showing great empathy and camaraderie among project technicians and community groups,

who rely on the support they can receive from them. The project effectively financed the direct payment of wages to participating communities, which improved the direct income in the communities that received it. However, the most obvious economic impact the project has had is the quality incentive to Xate in Uaxactun, which has resulted in an immediate income for xateros. Also, the direct financial support to COCODEs, and committees of concessions and communities, has meant the injection of economic resources in the community economy. Given the priority of the Darwin Initiative, it is considered that the provision of financial resources was a direct combat to poverty as a transverse axis to the actions of the Agreements.

- 76. WCS-DARWIN.** There is no document with a specific exit strategy of the project, but there is a transfer of functions and activities to other organizations to continue with activities supported by other donors. However, in communities a concern about the continuity of the agreements is perceived, although CONAP seems already determined to continue supporting them. It is recommended to socialize with communities the potential implementation of the next phase and the strategies being implemented to give continuity to the actions developed by the project. Ideally, it is considered that with having the funds secured, the agreements would have many phases of two years, but in reality financing for the agreements in the short term is seek until they can get a long-term financing, for which the commitment of the implementing organizations is required.
- 77. CONAP-WCS-Darwin.** Given the apparent lack of employment and income in Corozal and Paso Caballos, it is necessary to develop alternative productive projects to improve the economy of these communities complementary to the implementation of other agreements. This should be done through an aggressive management of financial resources and strategic alliances with other partners who have this expertise within their institutional experience, which would strengthen the support for the conservation of the MBR.
- 78. CONAP-WCS Institutional budget.** It is necessary to integrate the implementation of agreements within the budget of CONAP to expand the tool to other communities with similar characteristics of governance and potential commitment with the joint execution of measures of conservation and protection of natural resources, as it is essential that CONAP budgets direct support to the implementation of agreements in other communities strategically located in the MBR.
- 79. Support processes.** Several members remarked the need to continue supporting processes through Conservation Agreements, which allow to solve commitments of the concessions and joint actions in strategic communities, with specific and achievable results and a temporary boundary that is full knowledge of the community which allow the gradually resuming of developed activities by communities after the Agreement as it is currently happening in Carmelita, where the community has taken several aspects that initially were being supported by the Agreement.

## **Program Design**

- 80. Logical Framework.** At the time of this evaluation, the original logical framework presented in the annual reports of 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 was available, so the logical framework analysis was performed based on these reports. The logical

framework of the Conservation Agreements Project has coherence between its activities, results, purpose and goal. Most indicators were defined in a quantifiable and measurable way in time, however, some have not been quantified at the end of this report because the final WCS report is under elaboration, so it is not possible to measure its scope with respect to a baseline or quantity expected, and thus determine if they were achieved wholly or partly with respect to its initial state, although the observed tendency in all indicators is they will be successfully fulfilled at the end of the project period.

**81. WCS – Darwin’s Initiative.** Solid and quasi-independent indicators. The Conservation Agreements required a group of different level socioeconomic indicators to measure the socioeconomic trends in the participating communities and the impact of the project. These indicators are almost independent of each other, in the sense that the information required is not a requirement for all, each requires its specific information, which allows them to be adopted by different institutions and centralized in CEMEC, which allows to promote a coordinated push between different institutions working in the MBR and also qualify and quantify the contribution of each project to improve these indicators in each participating community.

**82. CONSERVATION AGREEMENTS. Logical Framework of the project.** In 2014 and 2015 annual reports, the results seem to have been measured in the way they were originally designed in the project proposal. However, some indicators were modified because the community of Cruce a la Colorada that appeared in the original agreement proposal, was changed to the community Corozal-Bioitza-Zots. For example, in the original proposal, the goal indicator presented 138,000 ha to protect, but the four participating current communities total is 184,889 ha, due to the inclusion of the mentioned agreement. The scope in the purpose indicators exceeded expectations, although in the basis document of the project, some indicators are slightly different from those reported in 2014 and 2015. For example, the area to be protected indicated that would be 900 ha, but in the final report it appears as 574 ha, due to the change of Cruce a la Colorada to Corozal-Bioitza-Zots. The indicator 2 of the logical framework indicated that 50% of the estimated deforested area would be protected according to the historical average of the past 10 years, which was 900 ha, including Cruce a la Colorada, which changed due to the new agreement in Corozal-Bioitza-Zots mentioned above. Indicator 3 in the 2014 and 2015 reports referred to area affected by forest fires, it did not indicate the extent but a 10% annual reduction, however, it did not indicate the target area to be protected from fire. This indicator in the last framework presented by CEMEC is not reported as area but as hot spots, which is a change to the way of reporting the indicator because no fire scars were presented during the years of the project. Measurements of human welfare were not conducted annually as indicated in the original proposal, but at the beginning and end of the project. At the time of drafting this report, it does not have a report of compliance indicators as indicated in the original logical framework, so the analysis is based on reports of 2014 and 2015. In this regard, the following was observed. The indicator of human welfare referred to 4000 people, of which a thousand would benefit directly through improved access to education, health services or priority development initiatives, however, due to the community change reported above, the beneficiary population decreased to 3,476 people. Indicator 1 of the logical framework indicated that 1000 (25%) people would have their access to education and health improved or

their development initiatives prioritized. It seems to have been reached according to the community reports provided by each partner organization.

- 83. WCS-DARWIN. Monitoring protocol.** The project does not have a detailed monitoring protocol by which indicators, their definition and the methods to measure them in time are explained, which presents some differences in how they are defined and completed during the life of the project. For future projects it is advisable to have this protocol containing definitions, form and frequency measurement with respect to the baseline.
- 84. WCS-DARWIN. Baseline.** The baseline of most indicators was completed for year 1 of the project. However, baseline welfare index was subsequently developed mainly due to problems of availability of information in 2013. In future projects it is recommended that the baseline is completed as part of the design of the logical framework.
- 85. WCS-Darwin.** The logical framework of the narrative report of 2014-2015 indicates that 138,000 ha will be protected, however, the report of the logical framework does not indicate how many hectares were finally protected. In the tables provided by WCS are reported 184.889 hectares, the area of influence of the four communities, but it does not indicate this area is all forest and how much of this is agriculture, although it is known that a percentage of it is used for agriculture. The change of area to be protected, however, is due to the change of the Cruce a la Colorada community to Corozal-Bioitza-Zots.
- 86. DARWIN-WCS.** The project should improve the management of the media, and social networks as partners in spreading the scope of Conservation Agreements. It is suggested to incorporate this element of public opinion management as a strategy in such projects, to improve the advocacy and promotion of positive activities for MBR, as their implementation, not only negatives aspects, what is common in mass media today. The acceptance of Conservation Agreements by community groups is certainly a strength that should be widely disseminated regionally and nationally as is the necessity to broaden the scope of communities participating in this type of projects.



## Annexes

### List of interviewed people

	<b>WCS</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Activity</b>
1	Roan Balas	Project Manager	Interview
2	Miriam Castillo	Conservation Agreements Coordinator	Interview
3	America Rodríguez	Paso Caballos Technical Assistant	Interview and field visit
4	Julio Zetina	Carmelita Technical Assistant	Interview and field visit
	<b>Asociacion Balam</b>		
5	Bayron Castellanos	Executive Director	Interview
6	Daniel Trujillo	Carmelita Agreement Coordinator	Interview
	<b>CONAP</b>		
7	Salvador López	Regional Director	Interview
9	Edy Girón	Technical Director	Interview
10	Allan Gonzales	Protection and Control Assistant	Interview
11	Delfido Madrid	Legal Department Director	Interview
	<b>ProPetén</b>		
13	Oscar Obando	Agreements Coordinator	
14	Anita Castellanos	Corozal Technical Assistant	
	<b>Rain Forest</b>		
17	Jorge Cruz	Coordinator	Interview
18	Juan Trujillo	Carmelita Agreement	Interview
	<b>Yaloch</b>		
19	Carlos Gongora	El Esfuerzo Cooperative President	
	Ronald Segura	Administrator	
	Sergio Ortíz	Treasurer	
	<b>ACOFOP</b>		
20	Marcedonio Cortave	Manager	Interview
21	Elmer Salazar	Social Area Director	Interview
22	Teresita Chinchilla	Vice manager	Interview
23	<b>Corozal</b>		
	José Co Baudilio Osorio Arturo Caal Isaias Choc Ernesto Ramirez	COCODE Members	Interview
24	<b>Carmelita</b>		
	Carlos Crasborn	Administration Council President	Interview

	Rigoberto Martínez	Cooperative Manager Secretary	Interview
	Ivan Crasborn	General Manager	Interview
	Hedy Pulido	Forest Regent	
	Juan Antonio Pérez	Vice-president	
25	<b>Uaxactun</b>		
	Arturo Chib Mynor López Cesar Mendoza Nilsa Golib Elena Choc Carolina Alvarado Angel Luna Quixchán	Concession Members	
	José Elfido Aldana	Deputy Mayor, COCODE President, and OMYC partner	
	Floridalma Mas	Computer Teacher	
	Erwin Maas	OMYCC President	Interview and field visit
	Augusto Ramirez Guadalupe Cuy	The Xateros Representative	Interview and field visit
	Augusto Florentín Ualib	Member of the Control and Surveillance	Interview and field visit
26	<b>Paso Caballos</b>		
	Domingo Salam Pop	COCODE Treasurer 2011, President 2015	Interview and field visit
	Juan Cheb	COCODE	
	Domingo Tec	President	
	Julián Cac	Sheriff	
	Miguel Xol	Concession Member	
	Martin Chub Pop	Pre-primary commission	
	Víctor Ical	COCODE 2010, first agreement signatory	
	Orlando Cuz	Deputy Mayor 2014	
	Venancio Rax Ico	Council of Elders President	
	Domingo Cabnal	COCODE President	Interview and field visit
	Oscar Rene Pop	COCODE Representative	Interview and field visit
	Pablo Tec	Parents Committee President	Interview and field visit
	Ricardo Bo Chub	Parents Committee Member	Interview and field visit
	Domingo Guitz	Parents Committee Member	Interview and field visit

	Gaudencio Icoc Xoc	Parents Committee Member	Interview and field visit
	Aracely Ical	COCODE 2010	Interview and field visit
	Andrés Ical	Community Member	Interview and field visit
27	<b>Asociacion Bioitza</b>	Aderito Chaxaj, Coordinator	Interview
28	<b>CECON</b>	Marvin Peche, Biotopes Coordinator	Interview
29	<b>SIPECIF-CONAP</b>	Eduardo Morataya, Adviser	Interview
30	<b>AFISAP</b>	Milton Sinturion, Manager	Interview

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