



Protection and Sustainable Use of the Selva Maya

The challenge

The Selva Maya is a tropical forest region extending over Belize, northern Guatemala and southeastern Mexico. It covers an area of more than four million hectares of protected areas and is the most extensive tropical rainforest of Mesoamerica. The Selva Maya hosts an extraordinary biological diversity in over 20 different ecosystems that reach from the evergreen rainforests of Petén to the dry forests of the northern Yucatan peninsula.

These ecosystems play an important role in terms of water protection and landscape connectivity, as the multiple ecological corridors maintain the mobility between organisms and species, as well as the functionality of the ecosystem as a whole, promoting the coexistence of a high biological diversity of representative elements of flora and fauna. The forest is a natural habitat to a large number of species, many of them endangered. Furthermore, it is of great importance to all three countries as a safeguard for ecosystem services (water, biodiversity, natural resources).

However, the Selva Maya is exposed to extreme pressures that strongly compromise its short and long term viability and operability. The main reasons are forest fires, illegal logging and exploitation of flora and fauna as well as oil extraction, excessive use of pesticides and fragmentation of the ecosystems. To gain pastures and farmland, vast forest areas are destroyed by fires. At the same time, the borders between the three countries that share the natural resources of the Selva Maya, emphasize the challenge of implementing joint strategies to mitigate these threats.

Recognizing that one of the central challenges in the area is the protection and conservation of the Selva Maya, through the sustainable use of its natural resources in the long term, the Selva Maya Program seeks to strengthen adequate coordination and tri-national cooperation that allows consolidating the conservation of this cross-border region.

The program had its first phase from 2011 to 2015 and the second phase is currently under way.

Project name	Protection and Sustainable Use of the Selva Maya II
Commissioned by	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Project region	Belize Petén, Guatemala Quintana Roo and Campeche, Mexico
Lead executing agency	Central American Commission on Environment and Development (CCAD)
Duration	02.2015-01.2019

Our approach

This program focuses on the protection and sustainable use of the tropical forest which extends in parts of the territory of Belize, Guatemala and Mexico. The objective of the program is to ensure that key actors of governments and civil society implement concerted measures for the protection and sustainable use of biodiversity and natural resources in the Selva Maya region.



L. to r.: The Mayan Site Calakmul in the Selva Maya, Mexico & the Maya-Nut.

Starting points

The program fosters activities along four lines of work:

1. Protected areas and biodiversity
2. Land use planning under consideration of the environment
3. Sustainable income generating alternatives
4. Environmental governance in the Selva Maya region

The activities in Belize are implemented by IP Consult, in cooperation with the ECO Consulting Group.

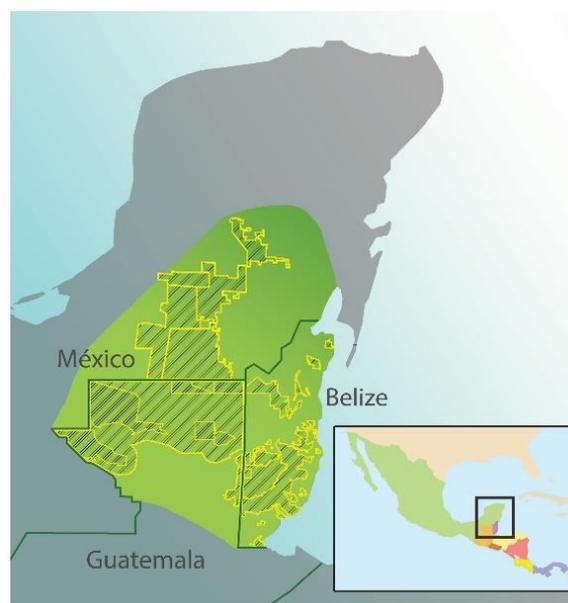
On a regional level, the program cooperates with the CCAD, and on the national levels, with the institutions responsible for the conservation of protected areas: the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Forestry, the Environment and Sustainable Development (MAFFESD) in Belize, the Guatemalan National Council of Protected Areas (CONAP) and the Mexican National Commission of Natural Protected Areas (CONANP). Furthermore, the program works with non-governmental and civil society organizations that share a common objective: to contribute to the protection and sustainable use of the Selva Maya.

Good practices

Since the start of the Selva Maya program, first results have been achieved:

- Management plans for the sustainable use and protection of forests were developed or updated, for example:
 - the forest policy and the National Protected Areas System Plan of Belize
 - the Management Plan for the Buffer Zone of the Maya Biosphere Reserve in Guatemala and
 - the Development Plan for the Protected Areas Calakmul and Bala'an K'aax in Mexico

- In various communities, local staff was trained in methods and instruments of participative planning. Among other things, this raised the acceptance rate of the land use plans developed on community level.
- To promote sustainable income generating alternatives
 - ramon nut and honey products are promoted by valuechain approaches and pilot projects and
 - sustainable agroecological practices are encouraged.
- To strengthen environmental governance in the Selva Maya region, the program supports cross-border exchange, among other things through
 - the strategic coordination group (GEC) of the Selva Maya, consisting of the MAFFESD Belize, CONAP Guatemala and CONANP Mexico,
 - the trinational exchange of park rangers and
 - cross-border cooperation initiatives, for example between the conservation areas Calakmul (MX) and Mirador/Rio Azul (GT) and in the sector of forest fire prevention between Guatemala and Belize.



Protected areas in the Selva Maya Programme region

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