

Darwin Initiative: Half Year Report

(due 31 October 2014)

Project Ref No:	20-008
Project Title:	Evaluating community-based conservation agreements in Guatemala's Maya Biosphere Reserve (20-008)
Country(ies):	Guatemala
UK Organisation:	N/A
Collaborator(s):	Protected Areas Council of Guatemala (CONAP); Asociación BALAM, Uaxactún COCODE, Paso Caballos COCODE and Carmelita COCODE, Protected Areas Council for monitoring (CEMEC/CONAP), Organización Manejo y Conservación (OMYC)
Project Leader:	Roan Balas McNab, WCS Guatemala
Report date:	October 31st, 2014
Report No. (HYR 1/2/3/4)	HYR 2
Project website:	www.wcsguatemala.org

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – Sept) against the agreed baseline timetable for the project (if your project has started less than 6 months ago, please report on the period since start up to end September).

Progress towards Output 1: Four Community Agreements in the Maya Biosphere Reserve

Progress of existing Conservation Agreement of implementation (Activity 1.1):

Implementation of the agreements in Uaxactún, Paso Caballos and Carmelita continued, yielding the following notable results:

- *Fire prevention:* the villages implemented the Fire Early Warning System (FEWS) during the burning season months of April to June in order to better control fires. 229 farmers complied with the FEWS system in Paso Caballos, 74 in Uaxactún, and 16 in Carmelita for a total of 319 farmers assisted. This resulted in no forest fires detected during the 2014 burning season within the project focal areas, a significant accomplishment.
- *Control and surveillance:* During the past six months, the three villages carried out control and surveillance activities to prevent illegal activities, Uaxactún carried out 17 patrols in the forest concession covering 208,059 acres (83,558 hectares), Paso Caballos carried out 6 patrols covering 16,148 acre (6482 hectares), and Carmelita 12 patrols covering 133,954 acres (53,797 hectares).
- *Xate sustainable management in Uaxactún:* 26,500 new xate palm plants were planted in the forest, surpassing the expected annual commitment of 20,000 plants. Since the beginning of the conservation agreement, 148,000 plants have been inserted in the forest with an annual survival rate of 85%, resulting in growth of wild populations. Additionally, 230 local people have received monetary benefits through employment in the xate storehouse (bodega) during the past six months.
- *COCODE projects leveraged in Paso Caballos:* The Paso Caballos Conservation Agreement has provided support to the leadership of COCODE. Since April of 2014, village leaders worked with the Ministry of Education to create the first Academy of computer systems, which will open in the community during 2015.
- *Monitoring:* With DARWIN resources, we produced three comprehensive reports evaluating the impact of fire and deforestation over the last year for the Uaxactún, Paso Caballos, and Carmelita Conservation Agreements. These were developed in partnership with the National Council of Protected Areas' Monitoring Institute (CEMEC) using remote sensing indicators. The reports revealed stability in forest cover in all three community-based management units.

- On September 5th, we signed the third phase of the Uaxactún Conservation Agreement, which will span a 2-year period (2014-2016). The community was honored at the signing ceremony by the presence of three special dignitaries: Guatemalan President Otto Pérez Molina, Sarah Dickson (the United Kingdom's Ambassador to Guatemala and Honduras), Ing. Benedicto Lucas (the Executive Secretary of CONAP).
- On September 10th we held an annual internal meeting and celebration of our fifth year of Conservation Agreement implementation in Uaxactún. 20 people participated, including: OMYC representatives, the COCODE President, School director, Control and Surveillance commission, xate project coordinator, administrative coordinator, forestal engineer of the forest concession, WCS representatives. The next meeting will be in January 2015 with participation of CONAP and other partners such as Asociación Balam, Rainforest Alliance, Asociación de Comunidades Forestales de Petén (ACOFOP).
- We produced an annual Spanish language report outlining results, challenges, and lessons learned during implementation of Uaxactún and Paso Caballos Conservation Agreements. Both were delivered to CONAP, as the government authority on protected areas.

New Conservation Agreement in a different context (Activities 1.2 and 1.3):

The original site evaluated for the “new” Conservation Agreement, the village of Buen Samaritano, was rejected because the results of the feasibility study indicated inadequate conditions for agreement implementation. The main impediment was the concentration of land within the hands of powerful ranchers suspected to have links to narcotrafficking. The second site evaluated was the community forest concession of Yaloch. Project staff spent considerable time and effort in developing a feasibility study and negotiating a draft agreement with beneficiaries. After three months of engagement, however, the agreement was deemed unviable due to decreased interest of the Yaloch Forest Concession members.

After considering these two candidate sites, we selected a third option to develop an agreement with two community groups (village of Corozal and Bio-itza Municipal Reserve) located adjacent to the San Miguel La Palotada “El Zotz” Biotope. This agreement will focus on reducing threats to the Biotope and protecting the Bio-itza Municipal Reserve. These threats include deforestation, fire, and natural resource poaching. The new agreement will be implemented by the national NGO “ProPetén”. ProPetén has 8 years of experience in the area and a solid relationship established with both community groups. During October 2014, ProPetén will lead the production of the feasibility study, and proceed to the design and negotiation stages.

Progress towards Output 2: Report on the impacts of community conservation agreements

In Quarter 2, we worked with the Protected Areas Council Center of Monitoring (CEMEC) to conduct annual monitoring of deforestation and biodiversity in Uaxactún, Paso Caballos and Carmelita. CEMEC used satellite images to analyze changes in land use in each Conservation Agreement site, using metrics such as: hectares and percentage of forest, wetlands, infrastructure, agriculture, etc. Each report (in Spanish language) provides a precise picture of the percentage of land affected by deforestation and forest fires respect the last year. The reports detailed minor expansions in agricultural areas outside of a zoned area in one area (Uaxactún) but otherwise revealed extremely successful fire prevention efforts, and continued conservation of standing forests in all three agreement sites. (Annex 1,2,3).

Progress towards Output 3: Synthetic outreach materials do disseminate lessons learned.

As a strategy to increase the dissemination of results, challenges, and impacts in the implementation of conservation agreements, we made presentations to key partner institutions in addition to preparing written newsletters. Some institutions are: Mesoamerican Reef Fund; Foundation to the Natural Resources Conservation and Environment in Guatemala. (Fundación para la Conservación y Recursos Naturales y Ambiente en Guatemala); Protected Areas Council of Guatemala (CONAP). As request of the deputy executive secretary of CONAP, on October 28th we will offer a presentation to the Executive Board of CONAP called Honorable Consejo de CONAP, represented by 7 local and national institutions, including government agencies, environmental NGOs and academy.

Progress towards Output 4: Policy recommendations

With CONAP support and the attendance of partners we started planning the first workshop of conservation agreements in Petén, which will be held in November. In the workshop we will discuss the impacts, challenges and methodological issues that require improvement to make the process more efficient.

2a. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments that the project has encountered over the last 6 months. Explain what impact these could have on the project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.

Carmelita Conservation Agreement:

As reported previously, the Carmelita Conservation Agreement was not renewed due to an unexpected change in donor focus (i.e. PACUNAM) that resulted in insufficient funds. Balam and WCS continue to look for funding to maintain some modest levels of investment in key activities at present, and to implement a second phase in the future. It is important to reiterate that neither WCS nor Asociación Balam were able to confirm full funding for the third and fourth years of the Carmelita agreement. Nevertheless, Asociación Balam has continued supporting original agreement activities related to control and surveillance, and forest fire prevention. We have thus continued to monitor the impact of this partial funding for Carmelita on the key indicators of forest cover loss and fire in this third agreement.

Delay in the implementation of a new conservation agreement

Under the guidance of CONAP, WCS engaged the Yaloch community forest concession in the process to develop a new agreement in their forested area adjacent to Belize. During a three month period, Yaloch representatives, CONAP, and WCS worked together to evaluate the feasibility of an agreement and proceeded to design a draft agreement.

However, during one of the final meetings in the negotiation process, the president of the Yaloch organization informed of a lack of interest in the agreement among a high percentage of the Yaloch General Assembly. He also mentioned that some disagreements persisted regarding their commitments, and the use of funds. As a result, CONAP and WCS had an internal meeting and decided (following the principles in the methodology of “voluntary process of all parts”) to suspend the negotiation.

To ensure proper closure, the Regional Director of CONAP-Petén wrote a letter to inform the reasons to terminate negotiations with Yaloch Concession. Representatives of CONAP and WCS delivered the letter in the community to the President of Yaloch Forest Concession. Please note that this unexpected development and the decision to develop a new conservation agreement in a different context do not represent additional costs for this Darwin Project. The additional feasibility studies have been developed by technicians through existing WCS funds.

2b. Have any of these issues been discussed with LTS International and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?

Discussed with LTS: no

Formal change request submitted: no

Received confirmation of change acceptance no

3a. Do you currently expect to have any significant (eg more than £5,000) underspend in your budget for this year?

Yes No Estimated underspend: £

3b. If yes, then you need to consider your project budget needs carefully as it is unlikely that any requests to carry forward funds will be approved this year. Please remember that any funds agreed for this financial year are only available to the project in this financial

year.

If you anticipate a significant underspend because of justifiable changes within the project and would like to talk to someone about the options available this year, please indicate below when you think you might be in a position to do this and what the reasons might be: N/A

4. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to Darwin's management, monitoring, or financial procedures? None to report at this moment

If you were asked to provide a response to this year's annual report review with your next half year report, please attach your response to this document.

Please note: Any planned modifications to your project schedule/workplan can be discussed in this report but **should also be raised with LTS International through a Change Request.**

Please send your **completed report by email** to Eilidh Young at Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk . The report should be between 2-3 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number in the header of your email message eg Subject: 20-035 Darwin Half Year Report**