Performance Story Report

CLIMATE CHANGE REGIONAL PROGRAM – PILOT APPLICATION IN NICARAGUA AND GUATEMALA

CONSULTANTS

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References
Acronyms

CCF-A = Forest and Environment Consultative Committee
COCODES = Community Development Council
CONAFOR = National Forest Council
CONAP = National Council for Protected Areas
CRACCN = North Caribbean Coast Autonomous Regional Council
EDFOR = Forest Development Strategy for the North Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region
FLEGT = Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade
INAB = National Forest Institute
INAFOR = National Forestry Institute
INPESCA = Nicaraguan Fishery and Aquaculture Institute
MAGA = Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock
MAGFOR = Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Forestry
MARENA = Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources
MIFAPRO = My Family Progresses Program
MTI = Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure
MCBM R: Miskito Cays Biological Marine Reserve
NCCAR: North Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region
NCCARG: North Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region Government
PPII = indigenous peoples
PINFOR = Forest Incentives Program
PINPEP = Forest Incentives Program for Smallholders of Lands Suitable for Forests or Agroforestry
RCCP = USAID Climate Change Regional Program
SERENA = Nicaraguan Secretary of Natural Resources and the Environment
SIGAP = Guatemalan Protected Areas System
TIG = Territorial Indigenous Government
Introduction

In recent years, IUCN and, in particular, its Regional Office for Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean (ORMACC), has been making forays into a programmatic approach under the Theory of Change (ToC) perspective, overhauling the way project cycles are implemented.

At ORMACC, this process has implied starting to align all projects in order to carry out a harmonized and effective monitoring and evaluation process. This evolution in the way we identify, formulate and implement projects has, in consequence, created the need to generate Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) instruments and methods capable of identifying the evidence of change that demonstrates IUCN's key contributions to the countries where it works, in its areas of expertise.

Another aspect of this evolution is the growing demand from partners and counterparts, as well as from the donor community, to receive relevant information from monitoring and evaluation systems reporting on project programmed results that reach beyond quantitative monitoring and budget execution reports. They need reports that reveal and document with methodological rigor, precision and credibility the contributions and impact of cooperation efforts.

Within the frame of the Climate Change Regional Program (RCCP) funded by USAID, and specifically under the sustainable landscapes component, IUCN is currently working on “priority landscapes” in the Verapaz regions, in Guatemala, and the North Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region (NCCAR), in Nicaragua. In particular, in emissions reduction (CO₂) and landscape restoration, as well as in devising and applying social and environmental safeguards to design and validate Free and Previous Informed Consent (FPIC) methodologies with a gender approach.

In line with the aforementioned process and in order to determine how much progress has been made towards obtaining results from the above intervention, as well as to predict its medium- and long-term impacts, ORMACC has decided to carry out a ToC evidence gathering pilot activity in Guatemala and Nicaragua, in search for a set of tools to ascertain the achievements made so far. This pilot activity has been conducted under a programme named “Improving the way knowledge on forests is understood and used internationally” (KNOWFOR), funded by DFID.

This document gathers the achievements found in both countries and the pathways to change that have led to them. Achievements related to areas such as political incidence, qualified community participation, access to and management of sound information, incidence on access to and use of financial resources, and incidence on productive practices stand out from the two years the RCCP has been under execution.
About the Climate Change Regional Program (RCCP)

RCCP is a regional initiative, launched in July 2013, which seeks to propose solutions and actions that enable rural territories to face the effects of climate change. The program is funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and is executed by six organizations: CATIE (Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center), IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature), The Nature Conservancy (TNC), the Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere (CARE), Terra Global (Terra Global Capital LLC), and DAI LAC (Development Alternatives Inc. America Latina and the Caribbean) in coordination with the CCAD (Central American Commission on the Environment and Development).

The project works to reduce the vulnerability of human populations to climate change in Central America and the Dominican Republic, and to integrate into development decisions geospatial technologies used to observe and monitor the Earth. In addition, it expects to reduce emissions by establishing and applying incentives to lower forest and other land use deforestation and degradation rates and support countries’ implementation of the REDD+ mechanism.

To achieve its goals, the RCCP focuses on two components: sustainable landscapes, and adaptation. In addition, it carries out actions on specific sites, such as the Darien in Panama, the Mosquitia in Honduras, the NCCAR in Nicaragua and the Verapaz regions in Guatemala (source: CATIE).

About KNOWFOR

KNOWFOR (titled “Improving the way knowledge on forests is understood and used internationally”) is a DFID funded knowledge programme which aims to “increase the value and impact of forest and tree-related knowledge by improving dissemination, strengthening knowledge pathways and increasing uptake by key forest stakeholders such as policy makers and practitioners.” KNOWFOR is implemented through a partnership of three organisations: the Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the World Bank Programme of Forests (PROFOR). This partnership brings together these significant and complementary organisations in the international forestry development sector to leverage their comparative strengths and networks to improve the uptake of relevant knowledge in priority forest-related practice and policy processes (source: KNOWFOR).

Methodological framework

This document results from the consultancy “Design, piloting and application of evidence-of-change gathering tools in the Climate Change Regional Program”, which had the task of
contributing to identifying and reporting the achievements made in the pilot territories as a result of RCCP's intervention and contribution.

A set of instruments were designed to help evidence-of-change gathering and institutional learning, based on outcome harvesting, most significant change and focal group techniques. The tools were designed between April and May 2016, and trialed in Guatemala and Nicaragua on June of the same year. Interviewees included community and private sector representatives, local authorities, members of Congress and senior staff from both countries’ agriculture and forest sectors. The instruments used are available for consultation at IUCN.

The set theory and methodology are framed by the Theory of Change: a planning, monitoring, and evaluation method inspired by chaos and complexity theory, which refutes causal relations and assumes that transformations—and the societies where these take place—are complex and at their core have relationships among multiple actors and variables. The tool selection and diagnosis process itself was, in addition, framed by critical theory and qualitative research.

1. General context
1.1 Nicaragua

NCCAR, a region striving to consolidate its autonomy

The Atlantic Coast is the second poorest region in Nicaragua (INIDE, 2014). The colonization process—Spaniards in the Western and Center-North parts of the country, British in the Eastern Caribbean territory—conformed “two differentiated territorial spaces, weakly integrated even today.” (Mattern, 2002). After many years of struggle, the indigenous peoples of the Atlantic Coast achieved autonomy from the central Government, in 1987, when the Statute of Autonomy of the Atlantic Coast Regions of Nicaragua (Ley 28) was promulgated. Multietnicity was the most important pillar of the autonomous regime recognized by the Constitution. Currently, there are three large indigenous groups in the NCCAR: Miskitos, Sumo-Mayangna, and Ramas (GIZ, 2010).

The definition of autonomous regime provided by Law 28 states that it is “The system or form of government legally, administratively, economically and financially decentralized within the Nicaraguan State unit, it establishes the Nicaraguan Autonomous Atlantic Coast Regions attributions, administrative organs, rights and obligations of its inhabitants for the effective exercise of the historical rights of indigenous peoples and ethnic communities in the Nicaraguan Atlantic Coast, consigned in the Political Constitution of the Republic of Nicaragua, Law 28 and other laws of the Republic.”

In this sense, Law 28 underscores political, cultural and historical rights of autonomous regions peoples; however, there are a series of structural voids and problems. First, “Autonomous Regions competences or attributions are ambiguous and poorly developed” (Mattern, 2002). Law 28 established attributions exercised through government organs, however, “statutory and legislative competences in health, education, and natural resource
aspects remained in the hands of the Central Government. Therefore, transfer of administrative faculties and other state services to the regional government has been the area of least progress.” (Frühling, González and Setter, 2009).

On the issue of exercising the rights awarded to the Atlantic Coast’s original population, “Law 28 does not establish firmly and clearly communities’ judicial and administrative status; the ways to control and manage community lands, and the legal certainty of community property.” (Sánchez, 2009). For this reason, although the normative process following the statute’s approval has been very slow, indigenous, political and social organization united and achieved the National Assembly’s approval of the Regulations of the Law of Autonomy by the National Assembly, in July 2003, almost 15 years after Law 28 passed. In the same year, they succeeded in the promulgation of the Law on the Communal Property Regime of Indigenous Peoples.

Regarding the economy, Law 28 establishes that funding will be provided by the National Budget, which evidently leaves the NCCAR completely dependent on the central Government. Another financial source established is participation in income generated from natural resource exploitation. In practice, this has represented some additional income for the Autonomous Regions, but it is based on agreements between Regions and Ministries, which may be subject to modification (Mattern, 2002).

The forest sector in Nicaragua
Estimates of forest cover by department and Autonomous Region indicate that “62.7% of Nicaraguan forests are concentrated in the Caribbean Coast, of this percentage, the NCCAR holds 43.4%.” (INAFOR, 2009). For this reason, the forest sector offers large development opportunities to the NCCAR. Forest sector problems are deep and generalized throughout Nicaragua. Several causes have led to a drastic change in the country’s forest cover. Most sources mention the advance of the agricultural frontier as the main cause; in fact, currently most of the territory is used for agriculture and cattle.

According to the Institute of Territorial Studies (MARENA, 2016), the country’s total area is used for:

- 6.67% is occupied by cities, towns, settlements, soil without vegetation, wetlands and savannahs.
- 8.71% is covered by lakes, ponds and rivers.
- 34.45% is covered by broadleaf forest, conifers, palms or bamboo, mangroves, and forest plantations.
- 40.31% is used for agriculture, annual or perennial crops, and grassland.
- 9.86% is occupied by secondary vegetation, such as shrubs and fallows.

Over time, new problems have worsened the situation and contributed to forest resources degradation and destruction. Direct, indirect, and underlying causes “interact with each other and establish synergies that potentiate them according to each context.” (MARENA, 2016).
The NCCAR does not escape the national forest situation. In the following map we see land change use from forest to other uses in Nicaragua. During the 2000-2009 period, change in NCCAR has been fast and important. Wide tracts of land suitable for forests are currently used for agriculture and livestock.

*Map 1*

The North Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region Forest Development Strategy, updated in 2012, identifies four types of issues related to changes in the forest sector:

**a. Social issues.** Social issues in the NCCAR forest sector are related to a population migration from the North and center of the country. The new migrants are appropriating large tracts of land for agriculture and livestock.

**b. Forest issues.** These revolve around the advance of the livestock and agriculture frontier, which exerts a considerable pressure on forests. This, along with wood industry practices and illegal logging contrasts with “the need to turn all productive
areas towards a sustainable forest management” (EDFOR, 2012). On the other hand, forest fires remain difficult to handle.

c. **Environmental issues.** Deforestation and poor forest resource management are altering the environment, and climate in particular. "These new climate phenomena must be counteracted with forest cover, that is, turning forests into a better social and economic option, where environmental services play a very important role in community sustainability: selling oxygen, carbon sequestration, and mountain eco-tourism, among other resources.” (EDFOR, 2012).

d. **Political/environmental issues:** Although there are indeed a series of institutions regulating forest management, bureaucracy complicates the sector’s functioning; therefore, there is a need to “create a single window for forest management administrative processes. In this sense, credit policies are almost nonexistent or very limited for the forest sector.” (EDFOR, 2012).

Nowadays, despite efforts to monitor and control institutions that manage forest activity in the region, resource losses have not been placed under control. On the other hand, “despite large efforts undertaken in recent years by INAFOR and the regional government, training and dissemination of the environmental, ecosystem, social and economic value of forests are still insufficient to see convincing results.” (EDFOR, 2012).

Since the 90s, the State and the NCCAR Government (NCCARG) have made efforts to organize the region’s forest sector. Logging bans and forest plans have been issued since 2000; however, in 2006, the NCCAR and other departments in the country were declared in a state of economic emergency in order to control clear-cutting and illegal extraction of forest resources in several areas of the country.” (Decree 32-2006).

For a period of 180 days, the State suspended “rights and guarantees contained in Articles 21, 33, numerals 1 and 2.2; 34, numerals 2 and 8; 45, 86, 188 and 189 of the Political Constitution of the Republic of Nicaragua because of the illegal logging, transport, management, processing, storage, possession, and trade of forest resources.” (Decree 32-2006).

The NCCAR Regional Council as well launched an important initiative to improve forest resource management. In 2004, the NCCARG published its Forest Development Strategy (EDFOR), updated in 2012. EDFOR’s objective is to “guide the forest sector in the development frame to improve living conditions, favor a climate of governance through a territorial approach... contributing to generate income, maintain forest cover and the provision of goods and services derived from the forest ecosystem.” (EDFOR, 2012).

The combination of Law #445 and the forest sector regulatory framework on a national level with efforts from the NCCARG opened the door to strengthen forest management in the region. In 2010, an evaluation study of EDFOR was carried out for 2004-2009. Results showed advances in some areas and lags in others. Subjects such as forest resources, forest ordinance and support to community forest enterprises have advanced the most.
In this sense, the consolidation of the Forest and Environment Consultative Committee (CCF-A), a technical instance backed by the National Forest Council (CONAFOR) and the North Caribbean Coast Autonomous Regional Council (NCCARC) is worth highlighting. It articulates participation from public, national, regional, municipal, and communal institutions, along with community forest enterprises, the private sector, international cooperation agencies, and others. It is the largest stakeholder conglomerate in the region, and its largest achievement has been to establish a space for dialogue and agreements for forest and environment sectors.

There have been additional advances on the strategic front facing ENDE-REDD+ implementation and the Subnational Restoration Strategy, producing a wealth of technical information on the current state of forest resources, deforestation, and potential areas for restoration.

1.2 GUATEMALA

Guatemala, a historical conflict between wealth and poverty

According to the most recent state of the region report (Informe Estado de la Región), in 2014 62.5% of Guatemalan households lived in poverty, that is, at least one of their basic needs were not met. Within this group, a large percentage lived in extreme poverty, that is, two or more of their needs were not met.

The same report states that, although inequality has diminished in the rest of the region, Guatemala shows a trend towards a larger concentration of wealth in fewer hands. This situation is worse in rural areas. In 2013, the minimum agricultural wage in Guatemala was insufficient to buy the basic food basket (PEN, 2016). Fifty percent of children below five years of age are chronically undernourished, and there are more than 3 million people experiencing hunger, mostly among the indigenous and rural population (PEN, 2016).

In environmental terms, Guatemala is one of the richest countries in the region, but also one of the worst “eco-debtors.” According to data from the National Council for Protected Areas (CONAP), Guatemala has close to 3.6 million forested hectares, but has been severely hit by deforestation, with 132,147 forest hectares lost every year, according to the Rafael Landívar University (IARNA, 2012).

The map of land use change published by CONAP in 2015 shows that deforestation occurred between 2006 and 2010 was half of that between 2001 and 2006. “SIGAP\(^1\) with its 328 protected areas looks after approximately 54% of the total forest cover, which has been key to forest conservation, same as INAB\(^2\) forest incentive programs.” (Vásquez, 2015).

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\(^{1}\) Guatemalan Protected Areas System (Sistema Guatemalteco de Áreas Protegidas)

\(^{2}\) National Forest Institute (Instituto Nacional de Bosques)
The National Forest Landscape Restoration Strategy attributes deforestation to, among other reasons, forest fires and firewood consumption, adding up to 15,771,186.9 tons per year, with a deficit of almost six million annual tons.

According to the USAID “Climate, Nature and Communities in Guatemala” program, deforestation generates close to half of total greenhouse gas emissions in the country. According to the IDB, this transforms the reduction of emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD+) into a strategic initiative for adaptation, mitigation and resilience facing climate change.

Guatemala is currently preparing its REDD+ strategy, led by MARN, in coordination with MAGA, CONAP and INAB. The goal is to reduce CO₂ emissions by 21 million tons between 2016 and 2020. In return, the country will receive compensations from the World Bank Carbon Fund of up to US$ 100 million, to be invested in the Guatemalan Protected Areas System (SIGAP), the ProBosque Law and forest incentives PINFOR and PROBOSQUE (MARN, 2016).

The strengths identified for Guatemala in relation to REDD+ strategy preparations include the creation of a solid technical and political interinstitutional coordination mechanism³; advances in forest governance, gender, stakeholder participation and benefits distribution; and the creation of a National Environmental and Social Safeguards Committee for REDD+ (UN-REDD Programme, 2016). The UN attributes these achievements to government institutional cohesion and technical and financial support from FCPF-BID, USAID –through its Climate, Nature and Communities program, the Rainforest Alliance and the RCCP-, IUCN, UNPD and FAO.

Other environmental and forest advances include a commitment from the Guatemalan state to the Bonn challenge, ratified in the 20x20 initiative, which seeks to restore 1.2 million hectares in highly vulnerable areas. Government political and economic commitments include support to FLEGT processes (INAB, 2015) and the 2013 approval of a legal framework to regulate the reduction of vulnerability, mandatory adaptation to the effects of climate change and mitigation of greenhouse gases.

The Lachuá Ecorregion

Considered one of the last remaining tropical rainforests of northern Guatemala, it is conformed by 55 Q’eqchi communities and minor Achi and Quiché groups, as well as the Lachuá Lake National Park, administered by INAB, MAGA and CONAP (Medina, 2012).

The Lachuá Ecorregion is inhabited by 185 thousand people and occupies around 53,523 hectares in the Northern Transversal Band, in the Izabal, Alta Verapaz, El Quiché and Huehuetenango departments. Since 2006 it has been part of the RAMSAR convention, and a member of the Ibero-American Model Forest Network since 2008 (Medina, 2012).

³ The Interinstitutional Coordination Group was established in 2011 to harmonize efforts among instances related to REDD+ implementation. It is comprised by the Vice Ministry of MAGA, the Vice Ministry of MARN, the direction of INAB and CONAP (https://goo.gl/FHgfpd).
The area relies on agriculture (maize and beans), livestock and forestry activities, which generate 71.3% of total household income. Trade, crafts and ecotourism amount to 19.2%, followed by the sale of labor (5%) and remittances (4.5%) (Medina, 2012).

The region faces important challenges both in terms of human development as well as in economic growth. Analphabetism is at 36.5%, affecting mostly women, whose families do not send them to school. Per capita income is at a mere US$ 413.45, which places the population within the definition of poverty.

In terms of political organization, communities are represented by a first-tier Community Development Council (COCODES), and “at the Lachuá Ecorregion level, communities are represented in addition by two second-tier COCODES, representing the northern and southern parts of the Ecorregion, respectively.” (Medina, 2012). The main State institutions present in the area are CONAP, INAB, MAGA, and the MIFAPRO program (Medina, 2012). Funda Lachuá’s work is worth mentioning among civil society organizations in the area.

The Lachuá Ecorregion is a member of GuateCarbón, a community forestry project supported by USAID in the Petén area. This initiative, through a REDD+ mechanism and thanks to coordination between the Guatemalan government and 23 other communities, will allow 1400 people to extract natural resources from the Mayan Biosphere, in a regulated manner, advised by The Rainforest Alliance. GuateCarbón makes available close to a million tons of CO₂ per year, which environmentally friendly companies will be able to acquire paying US$ 5.20 per unit (Chávez, 2016).

2. Achievements in Nicaragua and Guatemala as a result from RCCP interventions

2.1 Achievements in Nicaragua

Achievement 1. The Mayagna indigenous people build and apply an instrument for consultation and free, previous and informed consent (FPIC)

For the first time in the NCCAR, a participatory methodology and a roadmap are constructed together with an indigenous group to steer a consultation and free, previous and informed consent (FPIC) process. Thanks to the process of writing this document and its implicit learning experience, Matumbak communities have appropriated a mechanism that allows them to evolve from demands to negotiation and dialogue with different private and State entities. Community leaders and stakeholders report the acute relevance of having a mechanism like this at their disposal. It has allowed them to have an impact on the protection of indigenous peoples’ rights. Private and State entities acknowledge the importance of this guiding document.
In Nicaragua, the right to FPIC is clearly defined by Article 181 of the Constitution, Laws 28 and 445. On the international scope, it is established through Agreement 169 of the ILO and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The legal and normative instruments mentioned above recognize a special autonomy regime for indigenous peoples and communities inhabiting the Atlantic Coast Autonomous Regions, and are entrusted with guaranteeing “the right to common property on their lands, the right to maintain and develop their cultural identity, their manner of social organization and to manage their local affairs”. (Cunningham, 2012).

However, despite this recognition, in practice Nicaragua has made no substantial progress in this matter. The State hasn’t institutionalized a mechanism to carry out formal consultation processes, on a multisector scale (Inter-American Institute of Human Rights, 2016).

In this sense, the State must “establish mechanisms to guarantee full and effective participation, previous, free and informed consent from indigenous peoples”. (MARENA and GIZ, 2013). In the NCCAR, in the context of building a national ENDE-REDD+ strategy, MARENA has carried out early dialogue workshops since 2012, with participation from Regional and Territorial Indigenous Governments (TIG).

However, the methodology and type of consultation developed by IUCN in the region to design the FPIC and consultation Bio-protocol of the Mayangna Sauni Arungka people is unprecedented, because “one of the larger issues of FPIC in Nicaragua, despite the existence of national and international jurisprudence, is the harmonization between the laws and the instruments available to enforce them”. (MARENA and GIZ, 2013).

**Area of change:** Qualified community participation/Access to solid information/political incidence.

**Line of intervention:** Consultation processes and FPIC.

**IUCN contribution:** IUCN made an important contribution to this achievement. Consultation processes and FPIC have been taking place in recent years because of the national process that has been gathering strength since Laws 28 and 445 were passed. Communities had been relying on their common law rights to carry out consultations and negotiations with companies, which haven’t always been favorable to the former. For the first time in Nicaragua, a community has a tool that explains step by step how to carry out a consultation while respecting indigenous governance structures. It also serves as a guide for dialogue between communities and those arriving to them.
Pathways to change

Among the instruments built in the case of Nicaragua to analyze and collect evidence of change related to consultation and FPIC, the first step was to find out what was the situation regarding consultation and FPIC in the Matumbak territory before the Bio-protocol elaboration process took place. In essence, we sought to find out what happened when a private firm or government instance arrived in the territory bringing a development project. Establishing the background was key to determine how important it is for the Mayangna Sauni Arungka people to have a document of this sort available to them.

Stakeholders from the territory agreed that, although previously they did have several national and international norms and legal instruments (mentioned in the previous section), they did not have an instrument to operationalize consultations. “Enterprises would just arrive here and ask a few community representatives, or just one person, and suddenly they were already implementing the project.” (Benedicto Dixon, President of the Matumbak TIG). “There wasn’t a line guiding how to establish a dialogue between enterprises and communities”. (Noé Coleman, Mayangna legislator 2011-2016).

Since the Law of Autonomy and successive indigenous rights protection laws were promulgated, Matumbak community leaders, with support from national and international organizations (including IUCN), have been able to get to know said norms and become aware of their right to be consulted on issues pertaining to their territories.

They point out that only community and traditional authorities used to hold that kind of information. “Before the Bio-protocol, as communal authorities we knew Article 36 of the autonomy law, that communal lands must be consulted upon but that information was only in the hands of the elders. Little by little it has been divulged to the rest.” (Eliseo López, Matumbak territorial cacique).

In 2014, IUCN proposed the Matumbak TIG working together on the Bio-protocol methodology. Leaders, authorities, and community members were interested in participating in the process because it fit their interest to find a way to operationalize their rights. “We were able to see they were open to the process because although one tells people we will pay for per diems and everything, often they don’t even show up to the second workshop.” (María Pía Hernández, Coordinator, IUCN Biodiversity and Rights Unit).

Once agreements and commitments had been reached, the Bio-protocol process began by striving to include the largest amount of sectors possible. “We then started working with all sectors. Women participation was active. We had moments with leaders combined with the women, a second moment with women only and a third moment with community members, the youth sector, for example.” (Noé Coleman, Mayangna legislator).

During the participatory evidence-of-change gathering workshop, it became certain that constructing a Bio-protocol had directly contributed to governance in the territory, because (1) it strengthened political and administrative management of TIGs; (2) it promoted active
community participation in communal and territorial assemblies; and (3) it included community organizations during protocol construction.

Of the three aforementioned aspects, the first one merits a closer look: a strengthened political and administrative management of the TIG. There are two very conclusive facts that prove it; the first one is the presentation of the Bio-protocol to NCCARG authorities. Stakeholders from both the territory and IUCN have mentioned this aspect as a key moment, because it was the first time such an event had taken place.

The second, even more important fact, was being able to corroborate that the NCCAR governor himself has promoted the use of this instrument. “People come here [to this office] wanting to do the processes without going through the mechanism, but we're trying... there are people who think it delays things because certain issues need to be addressed right away. I think we should reach the point where making the consultation is like paying your electricity bill. It needs to become routine.” (Carlos Alemán, Governor, NCCAR).

To gain a deeper understanding of these facts it is important to mention that, currently, although TIGs are accredited and recognized by the Regional Council, the highest political-administrative instance of the NCCAR, most of them are “still weakly developed structures, poorly consolidated and lacking recognition from public and private institutions.” (Jörg and Kraüter, 2010).

Finally, the most relevant evidence of this achievement has been the first experience applying the Bio-protocol, which took place in the Mayangna territory. The story is worth telling with two voices, one from the territory point of view and the other from the Regional Government:

“After our Bio-protocol, in this year, an MTI [Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure] company wanted to build a bridge in the territory. Since they had already received the document, they didn’t come directly to work but to present which type of work they would carry out and how. The beneficiaries asked that workers who are going to labor in this constructions [sic], we have the right to employ 50% from our community. The company accepted because we presented who we are. We have training, ideas, how we want to work with companies. They accepted.” (Benedicto Dixon, president ITG Matumbak).

“We have the case of the Ispayulilna bridge construction. It’s a construction that benefits the community, the municipality, in terms of accessibility, but we [still] carried out a discussion process with the community for the construction. That was a month ago. And there was an agreement with the community. The MTI is hardly ever asked to do these things. The machinery arrived at the community and they were about to start building the bridge and the community starts complaining that ‘no one has consulted us’, that ‘they’re going to use community resources’, etc. All this requires that institutions sit down [to talk] and that requires a learning process. The situation was resolved through the dialogue mechanism.” (Carlos Alemán, Governor of the NCCAR).
Achievement 2: Women participate widely in the construction of a consultation and FPIC instrument

Women from the NCCAR had an active participation in building the Bio-protocol for free, previous, and informed consent (FPIC), despite the fact that gender inequalities are considerable in the NCCAR. These occur in a multidimensional manner, especially around economic, social, and political aspects of community development.

Area of change: Qualified community participation with a gender approach.

Line of Intervention: Consultation and FPIC.

IUCN contribution: IUCN made an important contribution to this achievement. Women organizations continue to fight for stronger participation in decision making throughout the territory. Their struggle transcends the period during which IUCN worked with them in the region. Women are uncertain about the sustainability of this achievement, because after building the Bio-protocol there was no continuity of the gender approach in TIG decision making.

“Unequal resource distribution and usage affects women above all, who have less access to resources. Depending on the territory, the situation worsens as the agricultural frontier advances, employment is scarce and there are no public policies in place oriented to improve women’s socioeconomic situation (Dixon and Torres, 2008).

Despite legal reforms and institutional efforts carried out in Nicaragua to improve women participation in territorial governance processes⁴, things have not improved much. At the beginning of 2016, the Universidad Centromericana Nitlapan Research Institute and the Center for International Forest Research published a study where they state that “women from five Miskito and Mayangna communities studied in the NCCAR have no significant participation in decision making regarding community matters pertaining to natural resource management.” (Flores et al., 2016).

The above means that, currently, women in those communities continue to have little presence and are at a disadvantage in decision making instances. The study highlights two reasons for it: (1) weak community governance, and (2) cultural norms that privilege the collective but work against women. At the regional level, between 2001 and 2006, NCCAR women had minimal representation among elected council members. “In the 2001 elections, of the 45 council members only three were women. In the 2005 elections, only two women were elected”. (Del Cid, 2011).

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⁴ Law 648 – Equal Rights and Opportunities (2008); NCCAR Gender Policy (2010), and Electoral Law 331 with reforms 790/2012, which requires 50% female candidate participation.
In recent years, Mayangna women from the Matumbak territory have made considerable efforts to open up spaces within governance and decision making structures. “That is how they have had the Mayakat women’s organization during the last four years, created to seek solutions to their women-specific needs and work to ensure their rights are respected and known within the TIG.” (IUCN, 2014).

When IUCN arrived at Matumbak and proposed the TIG to develop a Bio-protocol, it also suggested the need to include a gender approach in the participatory mechanism construction process. The TIG agreed, and thus began work with the TIG women commission and the Mayakat organization.

Pathways to change

In order to comprehend IUCN’s contribution to this achievement, it is important to mention that Mayangna women’s struggle to increase their presence in territorial governance processes transcends their work with other organizations and began before the arrival of IUCN and will continue beyond the project’s lifespan. “The reality is that, ten years ago, us women were housewives. In that time, women didn’t worry about participating in decision making. Only men. Later, we heard through the radio that women could participate, take office. Organisms have accompanied us so we could move forward. We started in 2009, but the strongest actions were in 2013 and 2014, when women rose up.” (Kiatrina David Benítez, women commission, TIG Matumbak).

During the interviews, men and women agreed that the process of constructing the Bio-protocol gave an impulse to active women participation. “Through Mayakat and its board, women have been included throughout the Bio-protocol process”. (Benedicto Dixon, TIG president). However, women’s vision differs somewhat. Although they do agree that they did indeed participated widely during the process, they claim it wasn’t a TIG initiative but an external one. “Organisms such as IUCN have helped convince the TIG because they demanded women participation and the TIG felt compelled to bring us in.” (Sarai Benítez, TIG).

The women interviewed believe that although there was ample participation motivated by the Bio-protocol construction process, the process does not continue and has actually stagnated. “During the Bio-protocol elaboration, we participated... We’ve been to so many training workshops and women have the feeling alive, the ideas, but they lose enthusiasm when they see the direction turned off. If the dog isn’t barking, no one’s afraid.” (Kiatrina David Benítez, women commission, TIG Matumbak).

There is an urgent need to include women into community governance processes, but the struggles of the Matumbak women shows that although their inclusion is a very important step, it does not necessarily guarantee a change in the relationship between men and women, especially when inclusion initiatives do not spring from the community itself.
“Reflection, awareness, and consciousness spaces for women —and men— are needed to learn about women's role in territorial management.” (CIFOR, 2016).

**Achievement 3: Historic agreement among three indigenous territories for the governance and co-management of a protected area**

This is the first time that the TIGs of Tawira, Karatá and Prinzu Auhya Un arrive at a political agreement to co-manage the Miskito Cays Biological Marine Reserve (MCBMR). This has enabled them to present a united position facing the NCCARG, one that reflects their balanced intra-territorial natural resource use and conservation priorities and needs.

**Area of change:** Quality community participation/political incidence.

**Line of intervention:** Governance and protected area co-management.

**IUCN contribution:** IUCN made an important contribution to this achievement. IUCN facilitated dialogue and consensus processes. The subject, on the territories' agenda for more than 20 years, is politically very complex. All previous attempts to change the current situation had been unsuccessful.

During the 90s, Miskito interest in controlling natural resources in their territory grew. The first milestone in this ongoing process was establishing the Miskito Cays Biological Marine Reserve (MCBMR)\(^5\) category in 1991. Through the Reserve creating Executive Decree 43-91, a national commission was designated, comprised mostly by representatives from national ministries (at the time IRENA, INDERA and INPESCA), the NCCARG and community leaders to prepare a Preliminary Integrated Management Plan for the Reserve, published in 1995.

In 1999, with support from organizations such as USAID, the Caribbean Conservation Corporation and, later, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), a project was carried out to operationalize the plan. However, and taking into account the natural resource needs and uses from indigenous communities, the change of category from “reserve” to “biosphere” was proposed for the first time. Traditionally, Miskito Cay marine and terrestrial resources have been used by indigenous peoples and the biological category assigned by the decree was deemed too restrictive.

The document proposed a co-management scheme by MARENA, the NCCARG, and an indigenous organization. For this reason, Miskito communities had to opt for a form of

\(^5\) The MCBMR covers almost 13,000 km\(^2\), and its borders span 40 km around the Miskito cay, the largest of 30 or more cays offshore. The Reserve includes 30 km of coast between the Wohuta locality to the south and Gracias a Dios, in Honduras, to the north.
organization under the NGO legal framework, as was established by the law at the time. Therefore, the communities constituted the NGO Mikupia. However, only a couple of years later, Law 445 was created to protect indigenous communities’ rights over their territories, creating the Territorial Indigenous Government structure.

“The creation of the TIG structure generated conflict with Mikupia, for the latter was labeled an association under the civil organization framework and did not match the new rights protected by Law 445. That is why the plan was never implemented.” (Mendoza-Lewis, Dalvez, and Narváez, 2012).

A year after Law 445, in 2004, under the project “Atlantic Biological Corridor” (ABC), MARENA attempted again to implement the Miskito Cays management plan. There is a document called “Indigenous Communities and Miskito Cays Biosphere Reserve Management Plan”, however, it was impossible to change the management category or implement the management proposed in the plan, because it was not approved by the North Caribbean Coast Autonomous Regional Council, the highest authority in the region.

Between 2008 and 2013, the National Commission for Demarcation and Titling (CONADETI) and the Land-use Planning project (PRODEP), funded by the World Bank, developed a demarcation and titling process for NCCAR indigenous lands, including the coastal indigenous territories of Tawira, Karatá and Prinsu Ahuya Un.

In 2004, once the TIG status was consolidated in the Miskito Cays (Tawira, Karatá, and Prinzu Auhya Un TIGs), there was a new proposal to update the plan, under the institutional frame of the NCCARNG, through SERENA. On this occasion, participation from the CCF-A and the USAID Regional Program for Management of Aquatic Resources and Economic Alternatives were key.

The standout difference in relation to former updating proposals is that in this case the process took place through participation, consultation, and consensus with local indigenous community structures. “There was a great effort to develop the participatory, multi-sector and regional revision and updating process, which led to readjusting the limits, zoning, programs and management priorities to consolidate an agreed upon proposal for the Miskito Cays Indigenous Biosphere Reserve” (Management Plan Proposal for the Miskito Cays Indigenous Biosphere Reserve-NCCAR, USAID 2014).

This year, now with a proposal much more in line with the legal autonomy and indigenous rights protection framework, IUCN entered the territory through the RCCP to contribute to strengthening inter-territorial governance as a basis for territorial consultation and decision making. The process is framed by support from SERENA, CCF-A and USAID to achieve a change of category from Biological Reserve to Biosphere Reserve.

6 The CCF-A is comprised by a group of professionals promoting a mechanism for the environmental-forestry sustainable management of NCCAR natural resources. Their role is to enable, propose, coordinate and inform of actions related to these subjects and act as a multi-stakeholder dialogue, discussion and consensus platform.
Pathways to change
Since the Miskito Cays were declared a biological reserve, there have been several attempts to conform a reserve management entity with participation from MARENA, the NCCARG and indigenous communities. Updating plans and documents do exist; however, the change in category has not been achieved and, therefore, the co-management entity is yet to be implemented and ratified in national and regional instances.

It is crucial to understand the importance of the subject: a change of category is a priority for the Miskito people, because it would allow them to control the resources, especially now, when they are the proprietors of the territory. “Communities have been wary of the biological reserve being used as an excuse to breach their property and access to the Miskito Cays marine area rights from other territories or types of users.” (Jadder Mendoza Lewis, an expert consultant on the NCCAR).

This context allows the reader to understand IUCN’s contribution up until now, because this territory has been subject to achievements and setbacks for more than 20 years. In recent times, however, land demarcation and titling, as well as TIG consolidation, offer for the first time a guarantee and an opportunity to establish a joint management entity that stems both technically and politically from an agreement with indigenous authorities. Nonetheless, the process to reach agreements has not been an easy one.

“Despite the territorial environmental challenges that propel the urgency of adequate resource management, there was no agreement between TIGs, not even within the communities of a given indigenous territory. Tawira itself has 17 communities. From the beginning, we have promoted co-management arrangements between the three territories and their respective communities, among the three territories and, recently, between the three territories and the regional government.” (Alberto Salas, Senior Officer, forests and forest governance, IUCN).

IUCN’s proposal identified a key aspect of the problem. Although former plans included some form of indigenous community participation in their methodology, they hadn’t stemmed from NCCAR technical bases nor had they used lessons learned by community members or indigenous organization structures to generate political agreements. In consequence, the management system did not allow territorial governments to exercise governance in the protected area.

IUCN did not enter the territory to obtain a management plan but to strengthen indigenous peoples’ governance. That is how it changed the landscape. “The Miskito Cays are unlike any other area. We are talking about more than a million hectares of land titled to indigenous peoples. It is not an easily protected area, it requires a lot of consensus, a lot of articulation, and I believe this has been IUCN’s main contribution, to generate that territorial platform. I think this agreement is unprecedented, because the territories used to be very divided, even within their communities.” (Jadder Mendoza Lewis, an expert consultant on the NCCAR).
Historically, Tawira has been managed by the MCBMR, which represented communities at the Regional and Central Governments, but the reserve area did not include Prinzu Auhya Un or Karatá. At 90 thousand hectares, it is smaller than the over one million hectares comprised by the three territories. “The proposal we have been working on with the TIGs is to change categories and place the three territories under a one-million-hectare biosphere reserve that allows them to continue using and conserving resources.” (Alberto Salas, Senior Officer, forests and forest governance, IUCN).

The above was corroborated during the evidence-of-change gathering focus group with representatives from the three territories, where five achievements made since the RCCP started were identified:

- Co-management consensus among the three territories.
- A proposal for an internal natural resource control and management regulation.
- Preparation of the change of category proposal.
- A joint management proposal for the reserve.
- Active participation from women in the change of category process.

For the Miskito people, until now the two most important achievements have been the co-management consensus and the proposal for an internal regulation to manage and control natural resources. “We have the challenge of making very clear how are we going to enter the co-management, if we don’t study this well, we don’t know where we could end up.” (Jorge Webster, President, Tawira TIG). Although the basic agreement was worked out with help from IUCN, the consensus has allowed TIGs to endeavor to establish the mechanisms whereby “the Tawira territory will allow a Karatá community to enter its territory and use the resources, which permits it has to obtain.” (Jadder Mendoza Lewis, an expert consultant on the NCCAR).

Recently, on April 9th, 2016, Nildo Amacio, President of the CCF-A, accompanied by the presidents of the three TIGs, presented to the NCCARG Regional Council the plan to effect the change from Cay Miskitos Biological Reserve to Cay Miskitos Biosphere. This achievement posed a great political challenge: approval of the category change on the part of the NCCARG, and establishing co-management dialogue and negotiations with MARENA and the Central Government.

**Achievement 4. Local stakeholders promote Rural Landscape Functional Restoration at the NCCAR and country levels**

Detailed information related to deforested areas and restoration costs (economic, social and environmental) has provided regional stakeholders, and the CCF-A in particular, the tools to (1) harmonize interests within the region; (2) negotiate with the Central Government the inclusion of Rural Landscape Functional Restoration as the main approach facing ENDE-REDD+ implementation; and (3) enhance participation from Territorial Indigenous Governments’ in discussions and decision making spaces at all levels.
The NCCAR has a land surface of 32,159 km\(^2\), representing 27.7% of national territory. In addition, it represents 43.4% of the country's forest cover, with 1,826,897.88 forest hectares. “The issue of rural lands and forests in the region is related to the advance of the agricultural frontier, which results in illegal logging”. This, along with the issue of forest fires, damage caused by hurricanes, atmospheric pollution processes, global warming, soil degradation, and unsustainable production and consumption models, results in a Molotov cocktail that subject natural resources to pressure and irreversible damage. The result? “A decrease or loss of ecosystem environmental services.” (UICN, 2014).

The national and regional legal framework supporting the efforts to change this forest-environmental situation in the NCCAR is only extensive but also unique in Latin America:

- The General Environment and Natural Resource Law (Ley No. 217-96), which establishes norms for the conservation, protection, and restoration of the environment and the natural resources that comprise it.
- The Autonomy Law (Ley 28), which allows the region to promote a rational use of water, forests, and communal lands, as well as to defend its ecological system.
- Ley No. 445, which guarantees the right of indigenous peoples and ethnic communities to protect, use and enjoy the natural resources in their lands.
- The Forest Sector Conservation, Promotion and Sustainable Development Law (Ley No. 462), which orders the State to promote and incentivize forest restoration, as well as its protection and conservation. The law also instructs the creation of a fund to encourage forest owners to opt to preserve and manage their forests in order to produce oxygen for the whole of humanity.
• The North Caribbean Forest Development Strategy for the NCCAR, which establishes the political, legal, technical and administrative conditions to guarantee a sustainable management and trade of NCCAR forests.
• The North Caribbean Atlantic Autonomous Region Strategy for Climate Change, with the goal of implementing actions to decrease climate change effects on the NCCAR’s main sectors and ecosystems.

All the aforementioned legal instruments were designed to demonstrate that forest resources use and conservation “are technically feasible, provide sources of employment and act as a break to illegal logging and deforestation” (EDFOR, 2004). However, although one could trace a timeline of various national initiative to solve the issue, none of them have prospered.

Regarding the issue of deforestation alone, in its 2007 National Reforestation Crusade, the National Forest Institute (INAFOR) states that Nicaragua’s deforestation rate was 70,000 ha/year, and that between 2007 and 2014 138,000 have been reforested. This in contrast with the 560,000 ha estimated to have been deforested during the same period, according to the average declared by the same institution.

Nicaragua’s Emission Reductions Program Idea Note (ER-PIN, 2015) presents the forest cover numbers for Subnational region 1, comprehending the NCAAR, the municipalities of Wiwilí in Nueva Segovia, Wiwilí in Jinotega, El Cuá and San José of Bocay. Forest cover was reduced during the 2000-2010 period.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference period</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2,709,772 ha</td>
<td>2,211,023 ha</td>
<td>1,956,905 ha</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

At the beginning of 2008, Nicaragua manifests to the World Bank its interests in participating in the REDD mechanism (reduced emissions from deforestation and forest degradation) of the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF). The request is accepted with the provision that MARENA act as the process management focal point, considering it is the institution which undersubscribes the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

In March 2008, Nicaragua prepares and presents its ER-PIN proposal to the FCPF. From the first version, approved a few months later, it was established that REDD+ actions would focus on the North and South Caribbean Coast Autonomous Regions. Then, the State decided to develop a REDD+ proposal taking into account all goods and services generated by tropical forests. Thus, after a nation-wide consultation process on three working levels (level I, political; level II, local-technical; and level III, community), the first ENDE-REDD+
strategy was prepared in 2012 (National Avoided Deforestation Strategy- reduced emissions from deforestation and forest degradation).

That same year, IUCN started working in the NCCAR for the first time. “After testing two approaches in the NCCAR, one of them was Locally Controlled Forests, meaning forest entrepreneurship, and the other was Rural Landscape Functional Restoration, we saw there was a high receptivity to the second approach by the NCCARG, because of the ENDE-REDD strategy.” (Germán Obando, Forest Governance and Economy Unit Coordinator, IUCN).

Pathways to change

“Our territory was prioritized in the ENDE-REDD, but we didn’t see ourselves reflected in it as a region, and when IUCN started talking about restoration we were interested because of their proposal regarding the stakeholders involved.” (Nitza Dixon, Technical Coordinator, SERENA). In other words, IUCN’s approach of Rural Landscape Functional Restoration was not to arrive in the territory and tell landowners to stop raising cattle or growing crops to contribute to solve the climate change conundrum, but rather "let’s improve the territory’s functions, because you need water, you need an environment less vulnerable to natural disasters, you need food security.” (Germán Obando, Forest Governance and Economy Unit Coordinator, IUCN).

The first thing IUCN did was to propose running the ROAM methodology (Restoration Opportunities Assessment Methodology) to the NCCARG. ROAM offers a flexible framework for countries to identify the restoration potential of a forest landscape and locate specific areas of opportunity at the subnational level. ROAM has an essential tool to establish priorities for restauration interventions among all parties involved.

Focusing on the needs of local stakeholders is a key aspect of this approach. "ROAM starts by asking people: Why do you need this restoration? They basically express their needs. I want water, I want firewood, I want this or that. Then the methodology allows me to talk with landowners, be they coffee farmers, cattle owners, whatever, and lets us analyze together which strategy or transition they deem more feasible, more effective for them, because there could be many types of intervention.” (Ronald McCarthy, Forest Governance Specialist, IUCN).

During the evidence gathering workshop we corroborated that this key point of the Rural Landscape Functional Restoration approach is known and well used by stakeholders in the territory. In addition, they know what the Restoration Strategy is and what it is for. During the workshop a definition exercise of the Strategy and its implications was carried out. The following were mentioned:

- A guide to knowing the current forest situation and to help future investments and restores affected areas.
- A long-term planning of the region's restoration of economic activities.
• An instrument to improve rural production strategies so they agree with the environment of degraded areas that will contribute to system conservation and protection through ancestral practices. It restores ecosystems according to need.
• It is a regional planning instrument that includes a series of programmatic activities that must be launched in order to restore the different productive systems linked to the forest. It is also a reference guide for actions and activities that may be developed to restore forests in the short, medium, and long term.

When the preliminary work to develop the Restoration Strategy began in earnest, ROAM shed a vital amount of information to analyze deforested areas. A map of priority restoration areas, specific actions regarding conservation and food security in the territories, transaction costs, a panorama of benefit distribution... All of it is data which the region never had before for its analysis and decision-making regarding forest and environmental issues. “IUCN opened our eyes to the reality of deforestation in our region, because hearing about it is not the same as being able to appreciate it on a map with numbers where you can see the economic, social, and environmental cost of restoring one hectare.” (Hanzel Zúñiga, Cooperation and Governance Liaison CCF-A/SERENA-GRACCN).

Information is power. It was information knowledge and management what made stakeholders on the ground, especially the CCF-A, transform their initial interest in starting to approach landscape functional restoration into the will to forward the subject in a political negotiation process with regional and national stakeholders and institutions such as MARENA, CONAFOR and INAFOR, in order to integrate the Productive Rural Landscape Functional Restoration Strategy into ENDE-REDD+. “We have managed to position the subject of restoration so it is incorporated in the ENDE-REDD+ reference document. This is something we have achieved thanks to the information we have generated through collaboration with IUCN and other local and international organizations, which have enabled stronger dialogue with MARENA.” (Enrique Pérez Soto, Regional Coordinator, FONADEFO).

Two key aspects made this achievement possible: First, there were negotiation processes between CCF-A and instances of the three ENDE-REDD+ working and coordination levels; second, having arrived at a consensus and internal concert through the Restoration Table. It is worth noting that when the CCF-A was created, working tables were organized to operationalize the subjects. One of them was EDFOR, which later became the Restoration Table after working with IUCN. “The issue of restoration is a follow-up of EDFOR, but more integral, which is why the name was changed.” (Enrique Pérez Soto, Regional Coordinator, FONADEFO).

Stakeholders agreed that internal NCCAR dialogue in search of consensus was not easy, and acknowledge IUCN’s contribution as a key accompanying stakeholder to the Restoration Table. “At the CCF-A Restoration Table all sectors converge, from forest owners, communities, and companies, to institutions that receive complaints and search for solutions. It’s not just a place to complain. There is dialogue and of course some fighting but agreements are reached. IUCN has been very flexible, and that gave us time to carry out
negotiations.” (Patricia Martínez Mairena, former head of Environmental Evaluations, SERENA).

At the workshop, the stakeholders identified a series of contributions to the NCCAR from the Restoration Table. The articulation with different sectors (cattle, mining, forestry, agriculture), a subregional mechanism of forest incentives, regionalization and better management of natural resources were some of the mentioned contributions. However, there is one subject where all participants agreed: the active participation and strengthening of Indigenous Territorial Governments decision-making capacities during all processes related to natural resources, forest and water resources.

“We are clear that Indigenous Territorial Governments play a key role in identifying restoration priorities. Our territory is very vulnerable regarding indigenous participation in governance processes. We have 18 indigenous territories in conflict. We must seriously promote their participation. IUCN has accompanied our dialogues with Indigenous Territorial Governments at the Restoration Table. There have been exasperating discussions, although rich in knowledge because its good to mix empirical indigenous knowledge with the technical knowledge we have.” (Nitza Dixon, Technical Coordinator, SERENA).

Stakeholders agree that this is one of the restoration work's major contributions, reflected in the fact that indigenous territories were represented at the ENDE-REDD+ work level I, which has a strategic political role at the highest level decision-making process.

2.2. Achievements in Guatemala

Achievement 5: Productive restoration is part of the ProBosque Law

Today, both the law and the regulation Promoting the Establishment, Recovery, Restoration, Production, Management, and Protection of Forests in Guatemala (ProBosque) include the restoration of degraded forest lands as an area of work and investment, surpassing the purely forestry/ecology approach and including proposals from indigenous peoples and rural communities. Betting on productive restoration could enhance the sustainability of projects funded through incentives and improve small producers’ income as well as increase forest cover.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of change:</th>
<th>Political incidence.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Line of intervention:</td>
<td>Functional Rural Landscape Restoration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IUCN contribution:</td>
<td>IUCN made a significant contribution to this achievement. Interviewed stakeholders agree that IUCN shared knowledge and led incidence and participation processes that facilitated the achievement. They highlight its role in elaborating the map of potential restoration areas, methodological tools, cost projections and promoting social participation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Guatemala’s Forest Law passed in 1996 and was responsible for, among other things, the creation of the National Forest Institute (INAB, through Legislative Decree 101-96), as well as forest incentive programs such as PINFOR (Title VII, Chapter I, Article 71 of the Forest Law), aimed at owners of properties larger than 2 ha. The program was later complemented by the PINPEP Law (Decree 51-2010), which creates a small incentive for smallholders and owners of less than 15 ha.

ProBosque was born as the result of an evaluation of the forest policy, a PINFOR economic analysis and a consultation with indigenous peoples (PPII) about their view of the forest. The goal was to overcome deficiencies in the previous legal frame and innovate in forest matters. Thus, ProBosque harnesses an experience of 20 years and presents key advances in restoration and ecosystem services. According to Ebal Sales, Head of Forest Policy at the INAB National Forest Program, “the challenge is that projects must become productive, otherwise they will die when the incentive runs out. It’s also a challenge to make people stay and not retreat from the program, that people, after their project ends, continue carrying out restoration and productive projects, otherwise they will return to livestock, maize, deforestation.”

The role of ProBosque is to serve as an instrument to execute forest laws and follow proposals presented by civil society. Unlike the Forest Law, ProBosque will work on degraded forest land restoration, in order that projects financed through incentives remain sustainable. Another of its ambitions is that people don’t retire from incentive programs and, on the contrary, appropriate restoration practices. In this sense, INAB shall now be a process facilitator not only regarding financing but also citizen participation.

ProBosque will invest in protection, production and recovery activities for forest ecosystems and plantations. In consequence, it will help recover tree cover and generate more than 900,000 new rural jobs in tree cover protection and restoration.

Through ProBosque, the Government will make an minimum annual investment of US$ 39 million, in addition to the US$ 76 million expected from the private sector to support reforestation, restoration and sustainable forest management. During the 2017-2037 period, public and private investment under the scope of ProBosque could reach around US$ 1000 million and 2000 million, respectively (IUCN, 2016). The money could be invested in one of the following:

a. Establishing and maintaining forest plantations with industrial aims.
b. Establishing and maintaining forest plantations to fulfill energy needs.
c. Establishing and maintaining agroforestry systems.
d. Managing natural forests with production aims. Includes natural forests to produce forest tree seeds.
e. Managing natural forests to protect and provide environmental services. This modality includes projects to protect forest water sources, biological diversity conservation, ecotourism, germplasm conservation, and protection of sacred sites, among other places labeled as protected forests by the INAB.
f. Restoration of degraded forest land. Before ProBosque, the priority of norms and their technical instruments was to restore degraded land, but now that a soil-centered approach has given way to one focused not only on industrial restoration—which benefits large producers and is linked to the commercial production chain—but also on income generation, improving forest cover and productivity. What used to be an exception has turned into the norm.

This approach reached Guatemala in 2012 as an IUCN initiative. According to Sales, unlike the case of approaches proposed by REDD and other climate change mitigation and adaptation initiatives, the IUCN approach was more attractive to small producers. The possibility of adding trees to the production system to ensure firewood, food and productive diversification brought upon a change in the vision: “When we tell them about incorporating trees to the productive system, about firewood, food security and productive diversification—of products for daily life and their economy—, the vision starts to change”, Sales explained. The restoration potential of diversifying their income opened the doors to a new way of understanding the forest.

Pathways to change

That the ProBosque Law includes degraded forest land restoration as a work and investment area, partially surpassing a purely forestry/ecology approach, was possible thanks to three key points: technical and political evaluation of the Forest Law, technical and political accompaniment from IUCN, and civil society participation.

Evaluating the Forest Law allowed the identification of weak spots in the legal framework, as well as looking for solutions to overcome them, but it also enabled the conciliation of all political interests linked to the change in the law. From forestry sector demands to peasant organizations, including proposals from academia, forest authorities and other executive power instances. All were taken into account during the evaluation. In the words of Óscar Córdoba, Director of the INAB Forest Program, “the largest potential problem could have stemmed from conflicting interests, but that turned into dialogue and proposals.”

The lessons learned after the analysis were included both in the bill proposal as in the ProBosque regulation, and this constitutes another important milestone: both the law and the regulation were approved within a short time frame, meeting the 90 days required by Guatemalan law.

The role of IUCN was key to develop forest policy instruments, such as the national map of potential areas for forest landscape restoration. Sales and Córdoba coincide in emphasizing that “IUCN has contributed to unifying processes and enabling articulation and decision making.” IUCN was instrumental in designing the ProBosque regulation, socializing methodologies to develop public policies, and for its political incidence on the Guatemalan executive and legislative branches. “The training they have given to communities to encourage participation in areas such as PINPEP is especially relevant”, according to Carlos Chavarría, a Guatemalan legislator.
It is worth noting that elaboration of the ProBosque bill and regulation was accompanied by a consultation process with indigenous peoples and peasant organizations. Sales believes that a key component was “launching a consultation process with indigenous peoples, peasants and other stakeholders to find out if their needs and demands were included [in the bill].”

For Córdoba, regional workshops were also important, not just to pass the bill but also for the regulation: “Participation was overwhelming, so many people came willing to express their opinion and requests that we were able to consider a wide diversity of criteria.” This point, central to this achievement, constitutes a success in and of itself, as the following section explains.

Achievement 6: Relevant citizen participation in the ProBosque bill design

The size and quality of community participation during the elaboration and discussion of the ProBosque bill regulation is unprecedented, and stands out as one of the most open processes ever in the field.

Area of change: Political incidence/qualified community participation that enables access to forest incentive and improved livelihoods.

Line of intervention: Forest landscape restoration.

IUCN contribution: IUCN made an important contribution to this achievement. It is recognized as one of the stakeholders that encouraged and facilitated community participation the most, including them into larger political incidence initiatives.

The solid, qualified and sustained participation from peasant and indigenous communities and organizations during the ProBosque bill and regulation design is even more remarkable in a context of low community participation in decision making.

According to the Utz Che’ Community Forestry Association (2015), the formulation of the ProBosque bill began in 2011, during the IX National Forest Congress, but it was in 2012, “facing the majority preference to develop a more balanced, wide and sectorial process”, the INAB Board of Directors and the National Forest Program (PFN) traced a path to guarantee an inclusive formulation process. This enabled organized community organizations grouped into second-tier organizations and joint action articulations to present their priorities for the ProBosque bill to other stakeholders and the Guatemalan Congress.

According to the Mesoamerican Alliance of People and Forests (2015), one of the key platforms during the process was the Guatemalan National Alliance of Community Forest
Organizations (ANFC), integrated by dozens of indigenous, peasant, forest and fishery organizations. Their proposals included pro-transparency, equality and public resource efficiency usage and distribution measures to face, for example, water scarcity related to deforestation and ecosystem degradation. The measures were agreed upon along with the bases of the Peten Association of Forest Communities (ACOFOP), the Association of Los Cuchumatanes Organizations (ASOCUCH), the Guatemalan Coordinator for the Defense of Mangroves and Life (COG-MANGLAR), the National Network of Organized Communities Benefited from PINPEP, and the Utz Che’ Community Forestry Association.

The ProBosque bill, approved on September 24, 2015 by the Guatemalan Congress, included some of the community forest sector proposals (Utz Che’ Community Forestry Association 2015); among them, the establishment of a wider set of forest activities to incentivize. In addition, beneficiaries of incentives now include “cooperatives, indigenous communities or any other collective or communal form of agricultural land ownership, which historically belong to them and have been traditionally administered in a special manner, as long as they are duly represented.”

Pathways to change

The Forest Incentives Program evaluation was technical and political in nature. This enabled locating not only thematic and methodological weaknesses, but also those linked to the design and application process. Thus, the formulation of ProBosque was marked by smallholder participation, municipalities, indigenous communities, the forestry sector and academia, among others.

Their contribution was not limited to reviewing proposals; rather, it expanded to include the presentation of ideas and alternatives to consider both in the bill and the regulations. “Everyone was able to offer their point of view, identify whether their demands were included and sending their comments about their needs”, according to Sales.

In other processes, participation was limited by lack of resources to organize spaces for dialogue, so that rival interests from antagonistic stakeholders, the exclusion of PPIIs and ignoring indigenous and peasant voices as valid interlocutors within dominant spaces prevailed. But this time, things were different, especially during the elaboration of the regulations. Óscar Córdoba explains it very well: “Both call and answers were open, I’d say that with this bill it was the first time participation was open to all sectors willing to express their opinion. With the regulation, the space opened up again and even the poorest could voice their thoughts. Proposals were sometimes extreme, but we managed to move forward. We who summoned them were very happy.”

In this case, multi-stakeholder platforms were key, where State and international cooperation, hand in hand with academia and civil society organizations, worked to ensure a present and sustainable participation. The State opened the doors to plural participation,
while international cooperation summoned and funded spaces for dialogue and offered methodological resources.

Congressman Chavarría believes that organizations such as CALMECAC and Funda Lachuá, both IUCN members, played a key role not exerting pressure but promoting participation to pass the ProBosque bill. “They have raised awareness and participation, and they have made it so that legislation does not favor just one group [...] They have been an important effort to legislate in favor of these laws that will generate more biodiversity for us.”

It was a plural, very open and very clean process, valued as the first of its kind. This may be the reason why this law was not affected by social protests or the government change that took place in 2015.

Another reason behind this success was the presence of a well-organized population, along with support from international agencies such as IUCN and FAO, which opened up spaces for quality participation. In the case of IUCN, its financial, methodological and political support were especially relevant during the ProBosque regulation consultations. Its contribution to linking the participatory process to initiatives with political incidence stands out, as well, ensuring a connection between both processes. Last but not least, IUCN’s support to communities to improve their lobbying and legal capacities is also acknowledged.

There are some nuances, however. Participation may have been successful in the sense that it was focused on technical discussions and not on resource assignation and execution, an area that generates more tension, as Sales explains: “Communities were heard [during the bill design] but there is a part where they do take to the streets: to demand incentive payments, to demand the initiatives are financed. On that issue they have and will continue to protest.”

**Achievement 7: The amount of community proposals exceeded PINPEP resources**

For the first time, part of PINFOR’s budget was transferred to PINPEP to meet the high demand for payments made on the latter as community demands and pressure increased. Communities developed management plans, incorporated them to the program and demanded payments. The need to cover projects was such that the budget assigned to the program was insufficient. The PINPEP Executing Communities Consulting Council lobbied to have the missing funds come out of PINFOR. In 2016, the council will become a national association with its own legal identity.
In Guatemala, incentive programs were born in 1974 by Legislative Decree 58-74, which allowed a deduction of up to 50% of road tax and income tax to persons and legal entities with proven expenses on forest plantations of no less than 5 ha. The program began a year later and the National Forest Institute was in charge of executing it (Medina, 2012).

In 1996 the current Forest Law was approved and INAB was created through Legislative Decree 101-96. This new Forest Law created PINFOR, a program for owners of lands suitable for forests who wished to implement forestry projects on their properties. INAB and the Ministry of Public Finance are the institutions in charge of providing the incentives (Medina, 2012).

Currently, Guatemala has two forest incentive programs. One is PINPEP, offered to smallholders for forest management and reforestation projects under 5 ha. One of its features is that it is able to benefit people and communities with no property title over their land. State general budget for this fund was close to US$ 17 million in 2016 (Escalón, 2016).

The other one is PINFOR, which incentivizes larger scale forests. In 2016, the government will assign almost US$ 38 million in what constitutes the program’s last payment. Because of changes introduced to the ProBosque bill, the program will be modified but will keep 1% of state revenues, although “no one in the sector expects it to reach that amount.” (Escalón, 2016).

Starting in 2017 and for the next 30 years, the Guatemalan State will invest in protection, production and restoration of forest ecosystems and plantations. This measure will have an impact on tree cover restoration and will generate 900,000 non-agricultural rural jobs in protection and cover restoration activities. During 2017-2037, public and private investments of close to US$ 1 million and US$ 2 million, respectively, are expected to take place (IUCN, 2016).

**Area of change:** Incidence on access to and use of financial resources/qualified community participation.

**Line of intervention:** Forest landscape restoration.

**IUCN contribution:** IUCN made an important contribution to this achievement. It promoted methodological instruments, strengthened organization and encouraged participation. Specifically, IUCN is credited with promoting and qualifying local participation from the bases. The RCCP will supply funds and technical and institutional accompaniment to obtain legal status for the Committee, which will become a National Association of PINPEP Beneficiaries.
**Pathways to change**

The roots of this change, identified by most stakeholders, lay in three measures linked to the RCCP project execution:

- Strengthening community capacities and knowledge to enable them to develop restoration proposals for their territories, as well as to influence local and regional decision making in forest matters.
- The impulse from political incidence strategies, whose goal is to influence governments to ensure quality investments in landscape productivity restoration initiatives launched by smallholders.
- Implementing field projects that enable testing, in a real, small-scale setting, socio-productive practices lobbied for through political incidence strategies. In the words of Sammy López, manager of FEDECOVERA, “next to incidence we must always project the execution of projects in the field in a mutually beneficial manner.”

Although each of these measures was implemented in parallel, their success lays in their complementarity. The sum of all three propitiated an increase in social pressure, the larger amount of community proposals and more demands for funds to finance such initiatives.

The technical capacity building and accompaniment the communities received during field projects enabled them to, for example, strengthen their own organization and design management plans they later presented to the incentive program. In addition, it enhanced their ability to combine forests and production. In consequence, communities began to realize, and therefore to believe in, the economic, environmental, productive and even political advantages of landscape restoration. A fitting example is the cacao production chain. Pablo Marín, Director of the National Council for Agricultural Development (CONADEA) of the MAGA as well as government official for the cacao chain says that

“Small producers live and eat from their property, so it’s difficult to take away an area to plant trees with the promise of a future reward. But it’s different with cacao: they can reforest, receive the incentive and at the same time sell and improve their income. This, combined with precious woods they can sell in 20 years. Restoration can benefit the cacao chain.”

Communities notice a change, too. According to Yasmina Archin, ex-member of the Funda Lachuá Board of Directors, the sum of strategies led to noticeable changes in the families of the Lachua Ecorregion. “Before, only cardamom, maize and beans were produced, but now there’s lots of people planting cacao because they see it generates income and there are buyers. Another change is that Funda Lachuá is better prepared to support families. Today, the families’ mindset has changed and we know we can break out of poverty.”

Milder Chub, another former board member, adds that by changing production practices “we have helped recover lands and shown families they don't have to fell trees in order to plant crops.”
Investing in communities and deciding to influence national budgets and legal frameworks enabled not only an increased amount (and quality) of community proposals, but also a more open attitude from the authorities to assign resources to them from. It was the communities themselves —through the Consultive Council of PINEP Executing Communities— who lobbied for receiving investments from PINFOR money. In 2016, the council will become a national association, with legal entity status.

Regarding the formulation of political incidence strategies, one measure that may have influenced the transfer of funds from one incentive program to the other is that within the RCCP frame—which facilitated and supported social stakeholders’ influence—both the legislative and the executive level were approached. MAGA, the Ministry of Finance, and technical institutions such as INAB were the target of lobbying activities. Thus, influence was exerted on both the establishing of priority incentives as well as on their actualization and effective funding.

Going forward, in order for incentive programs to work, it will be necessary to motivate producers to think beyond the forest as something “pure” and view it as something linked to agriculture, livestock, tourism and energy, instead, explain Sales and Córdoba. Another challenge faced by ProBosque and other incentive programs is lack of payment of the funds allocated by the government to these initiatives. “The lack of government budget allocation could make it fail and diminish its legitimacy.” Congressman Chavarría shares this view: “Spending quality and accountability are important to countries and we need a more responsive public entity. CALMECAC and Funda Lachuá are demanding it from us the authorities.”

A good performance from ProBosque, INAB staff explain, also hinges on its political incidence over Congress. This will remain a necessity “so that priorities dictated by the Ministry of Finance are respected.” Meanwhile, it will be important to lobby MAGA “because money is needed for incentive programs, but also to fund the very existence of ProBosque.”

**Achievement 8: A local action becomes the National Cacao Strategy**

The cacao value chain is now viewed by the Government as a product with restoration potential that could be positioned in international markets, despite being grown in small quantities and maintained by a small production. This is a result of enhanced community organization, changes in production practices, the articulation of multi-stakeholder platforms with evidence-based incidence, and of efforts placed in the national cacao strategy. This achievement constitutes a national scaling-up of a local action.
According to the Guatemalan national strategy, Alta Verapaz and Suchitepéquez are the largest cacao producers in the country, with 31% of the harvest. In 2014, Guatemalan production reported an increase of 29% compared to 2007, reaching 4400 harvested hectares throughout the country.

This increase reverberates across the Guatemalan economy: cacao generates 272,800 daily wages per year, 30% of which correspond to women employment. In addition, it reports exports in between 64 and 174 thousand dollars between 2014 and 2015.

Roy Fratz, a representative for the Cacao Verapaz company, states that five years ago the Lechuá Ecoregion production comprised 60% cardamom and 40% cacao. “Two years ago, production numbers were inverted”, he explains. He attributes the change to the fact that nowadays communities perceive cacao as a higher value, more stable crop, resistant to diseases if well-managed, and with a secure market.

This crop is destined mainly to the Guatemalan market, but the country still has to import grain to satisfy local demand. Most Guatemalan producers farm it on a small-scale and plantations are no larger than 10 ha.

However, current global conditions are generating new expectations. Buyers do not wish to depend on the African market and prices are on the rise. Guatemala has already given up on cacao once, when it was regarded as no more than shade for low-altitude coffee, but the international market’s focus on quality over quantity has shaped a new approach. This time, giving up is not an option and, in its place, there is an effort to generate a national cacao strategy based on quality, where all stakeholders along the value chain participate in both design and execution and whose pillars were social organization, technological innovation for both production and processing, and market positioning.

The ProBosque bill and regulation and National Restoration Strategy elaboration processes benefited the national cacao strategy design. Pablo Girón, director of the National Council for Agricultural Development (CONADEA) believes this was possible thanks to IUCN support to the ProBosque bill and regulation, the Restoration Strategy construction, and the National Cacao Strategy formulation. “To compete on quality we required a national strategy that only IUCN has helped us achieve. They lit the match and the others came afterwards.”
Today, producers, processors, marketers, exporters, buyers and technical and political authorities participate in national and local dialogue and initiative spaces, which bestow life onto the Guatemalan cacao strategy published in 2016.

The strategic axes of the strategy are climate change, organizational and entrepreneurial development for competitiveness, access to markets, improving production and productivity, strengthening value-adding processes, and technological research and development for competitiveness.

The national process was based on the local one launched in the Verapaces, where cacao chain articulation is stronger than in the rest of the country because small production is dominant in the region, a sector amenable to small-scale production aimed at a luxury market. The presence of organizations such as Funda Laudá, which enjoys a local and national strong political and technical role, is also a factor.

Fratz believes that articulating the Northern cacao table is fundamentally an achievement made by local stakeholders. “When they saw in Guate [Guatemala City] that here they were organizing better than there, they started holding more meetings and saying, if they can do it on a small territorial level, why not do it on a national level?”

Pathways to change
Multidimensional intervention made change possible. It is based on better community organization, changes in production practices, and in articulating multi-stakeholder platforms that make an evidence-based impact.

Better community organization, as explained in section 2.7, is the result of, in part, capacity building and knowledge that enables the population to change their social, political and productive environment.

In this case, training in plantation, harvest and post-harvest management; personalized technical assistance, learning among peers and elaborating business plans allowed communities —along with the whole value chain—to benefit from the existence of a better product. That was the first step for authorities and investors to pay attention to high-quality production in Guatemala.

Cacao buyers —both Cacao Verapaz and FEDECOVERA—remark that technical capacity in the communities resulted in a change in practices and attitudes that has benefited high-quality production. Fratz believes that a visible change can be appreciated in the adoption of grafts that enable not only seed reproduction but also a shorter, more disease resistant production cycle. “The change has been to accept the process, adopt it, take control of it and do it of their own accord. They [the communities] have also learnt to negotiate, they no longer sell to middlemen and they value having stable buyers. I attribute this change to community leaders and the presence of Funda Lachuá, IUCN and FundaSistemas.”
Jimy Chub, Director of Funda Lachuá, explains that community openness to new practices is linked to income. The possibility of earning more money renders the chain more attractive and stimulates collective labor.

Organization is therefore key. A strong social fabric is so instrumental that national and international buyers state that the better organized a community is, the higher the quality of the resulting production. “We buy cacao only from communities with a solid community articulation,” explains Marlon Ac, from Cacao Verapaz.

Sammy López believes that organizing producers is the most expensive cost in the chain. “Anyone can produce and offer technical assistance to production, but not anyone can organize production, because it is a social process. We’re talking about people with their own paradigms, struggles, unconformities, histories and experiences. A poorly organized producer also sells at a lower price, because they may fall prey to coyotes [middlemen].”

In addition, improving production technical capacities in communities showcases cacao as a product that, well-managed, may be key to restoring productive landscapes and contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Sammy López makes it clear when he states that cacao is one of the three crops, alongside coffee and cardamom, that could save the Verapaces. “The Atlantic watersheds that are born in the region may be salvageable with these crops, as long as they are produced under agroforestry systems and no other modalities. If people grow fruit trees and trees for firewood alongside the cacao, we’ll have an agroforestry system that will yield firewood, income, and reforestation.” In short, cacao grows well with other plants, resists droughts better than other species, does not affect farm soils, yields quickly and contributes to reforestation.

Formerly, small producers who live and eat from what their property yields did not plant trees hoping for future returns. Subsistence was their priority. With cacao this has started to change: producers know they can develop reforestation proposals based on cacao, crops for consumption and precious woods, all at the same time. This enables them to obtain the incentive for reforesting, producing, and selling, increasing their income and generating employment. This point shows that restoration can benefit the cacao value chain and vice versa.

All of the above must be backed by numbers, however. That is why generating data to help make better decisions has been another key area of the RCCP and one of the accomplishments that have enabled this achievement. Concretely, IUCN has contributed by providing all the financial and economic information needed to produce high quality cacao for the international market, as well as supporting market connections at an international level. These estimates and projections have facilitated dialogue between the cacao value chain and the authorities, who thus possess more inputs to prioritize cacao-related policies and budgets.
Evidence gathering, quality dialogue among cacao stakeholders and improving quality-oriented production have been possible thanks to an alliance of multiple stakeholders. This type of work in multi-stakeholder spaces has enabled civil society participation in decision making, qualifying the Society-State discussion, contributed to overcoming the myths that surrounded relationships among stakeholders in the value chain and, as the largest consequence, has been able to position cacao in the sights of state policies and budgets.

The group of stakeholders who have been part of the process includes MAGA, CONADEA, DEFRUTA, DIFOPROCO, the Department of Agroindustry, UICN, IICA, RUTA, CAC, ProPetén, FundaSistemas, Heifer International and FAO.

**Achievement 9: Knowledge of consultation and FPIC empowers Rocjá Pomptila**

Inhabitants and civil society representatives from Rocjá Pomptila express having—for the first time—knowledge about consultations and free, previous and informed consent, as well as having used these tools to rethink the future of their community and their relationship with authorities and companies in the area. In this sense, there has been an improvement in women participation and in the community's self-esteem, as well as an interest in the subject from the mayor’s office.

**Area of change:** Qualified community participation/Access to and management of solid information.

**Line of intervention:** Consultation and FPIC.

**IUCN contribution:** This achievement is attributed to IUCN, thanks to its knowledge of and respect for governance, participatory design and socialization of the consultation guide. The community acknowledges that participatory spaces were even more valuable than using the guide itself.

Guatemala has undersigned most agreements and instruments related to the protection of human, social and environmental rights of vulnerable groups, and “recognizes their rights to full participation and decision making in projects, processes and activities that impact their way of life, costumes, territories and geographical spaces they inhabit, as well as on their general development.” (IUCN, 2016).

In this sense, IUCN carried out a participatory consultation of instruments that operationalize the rights of consultation and FPIC in Guatemala, taking into account previous instances where the omission or inadequate consultation process generated conflicts both during the early stages of REDD+ and in other types of projects, left enormous economic and even human losses, and caused fractures in the relation between the State, indigenous peoples and local communities (IUCN, 2016).

The experience of participatory construction strengthened communities, especially their leaders and authorities, and increased their knowledge of rights and duties surrounding participation, governance, conservation, and dialogue and consensus capacities. It has also served to encourage women participation (IUCN. 2016).
In consultations linked to REDD+ projects, communities must construct a methodology along with the State, respecting international and national legislation related to self-determination, participation, and consuetudinary norms of indigenous populations and local communities.

Guides and bio-protocols elaborated with the communities act as an orientation that helps launch consultations. Therefore, they must be accessible to the population as a whole. Products generated along the process include a main document (extended version), and shorter versions, posters in Spanish and native languages.

As part of RCCP actions in the Verapaces, a participatory design of a consultation guide for the Lachuá Ecorregion —located in Alta Verapaz, Municipality of Cobán— was carried out, which the Rocjá Pomptila community used as a pilot for its own construction process. The process is yet to be socialized in Salacuim and other communities in the Lachuá Ecorregion.

**Pathways to change**

Before the participatory process launched by IUCN in Rocjá Pomptila, the community had never before had access to information about consultations and FPIC. Today, men and women representing their community say the situation has improved. The whole population has a guide with accessible information on the subject.

Such access was possible thanks to the repeated organization of spaces to inform, analyze, adapt and disseminate the guide’s contents. It also responds to the use of participatory methodologies.

Appropriation of the process and the community’s acknowledgement of its own rights are as important as access. To help Rocjá Pomptila appropriate the design process and consultation norms, permanent contact with the community, a knowledge of their social and cultural codes and the correct understanding of their ways of governance were key.

One indicator of change could well be the certainty with which the community talks about the future. In words of one of the focus group participants, “when the guide arrived it was late and we had already negotiated with the hydroelectric company, but in the future we see ourselves applying what we’ve learned the next time we talk with companies or governments.”

In all cases, working jointly with a local partner was key: Funda Lachuá is a member of the IUCN directorate and its counterpart in the area. Working in coordination with a local ally enabled IUCN to know the community, carry out field activities and launch a culturally-adapted process.

Despite the knowledge gained about consultation and FPIC mechanisms, the community admits it does not feel well prepared to negotiate with authorities and companies. Language is the strongest limiting factor. “We feel embarrassed to speak to the mayor in
our tongue.” This acknowledgement symbolizes the profound transformation populations must undergo when faced with consultation processes.

In this context, one of the milestones of the Lachuá Ecorregion consultation and FPIC work becomes even more valuable: presenting the consultation guide to the mayor of Cobán, in April 2016. Men and women from Rocjá Pomptila and Salacuim explained to the mayor the relevance of consultation. The words pronounced by Jimy Chub during the session sum up the value of what has been achieved during the process so far:

“The consultation tool we present to you today will strengthen development and governance, because it was built based on workshops, training, visits and interviews carried out with seniors, women, young people and even children. This document is very valuable to us, because it contains experiences generated in the communities throughout the years. Rocjá Pomptila was chosen because that's where the project known as ‘la hidroeléctrica’ [the hydroelectric] started, and people could see there were things that had been well done and others badly done. You will realize that certain steps must be carried out to execute a project. The instrument we are handing you today will serve not only Rocjá Pomptila, but also the other 55 communities of the Lachuá Ecorregion. We even think it will be useful at a national level, because it is the first of its kind generated here in Guatemala. We are very blessed because IUCN decided to come to work here. This will strengthen your administration because this law is applied in agreement with the law of Community Development Councils. We shall disseminate it and, we hope, forge an alliance with the Municipality to invest resources in promoting this tool, so we know what to do when we consult communities when a project arrives.”

Another noteworthy aspect is the necessary distinction between process and product. During the focus groups held in Rocjá Pomptila, all participants coincided in saying that they learned more during design, discussion and adaptation sessions than from using the printed guide itself.

Notwithstanding, information should be made available in municipal offices and other social instances, such as the COCODES. Asked where they would seek information about consultation and FPIC, some interviewees explained they would go to the authorities. For Yasmina Archin, “The municipal government must have this information. That is where I would go to see if they can send specialized people [in consultation and FPIC] to inform communities, but we know that some governments don’t want communities to wake up, because then they will demand that governments look after their municipalities.”

In conclusion, in this scenario, the challenge resides in socializing and implementing the guide, as well as in its appropriation by the local government and private sector stakeholders in the area. In the future, there will be more accessible versions of the guide widely distributed among the communities.

And the neighboring communities are eagerly expecting the process, as well. “I myself had no idea of was 169 all about, but then I learned about it and we even had a meeting with the
mayor of Cobán,” says Milder Chub. “In Pomptila, for example, the community has been empowered, and we know the same will happen in Salacuim.”
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