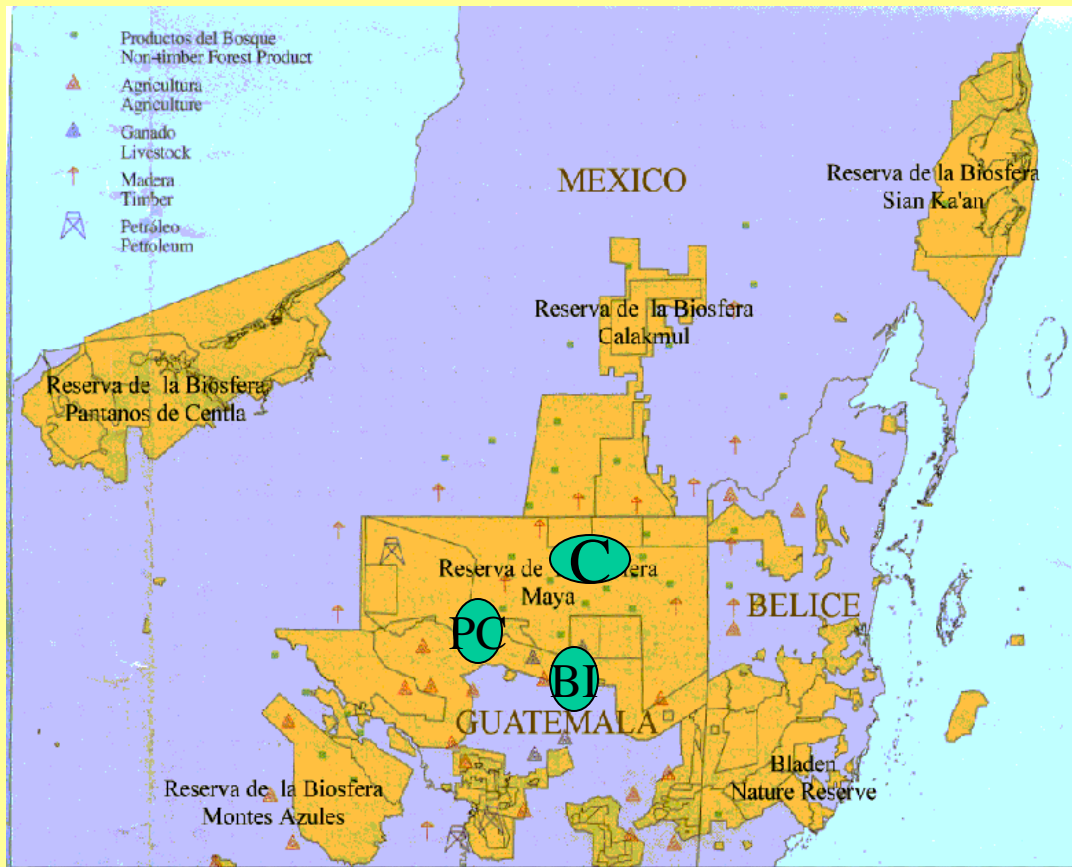


INDIGENOUS AND TRADITIONAL COMMUNITY ENTERPRISES

**AN EXPERIENCE IN PETEN,
GUATEMALA**

GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION



IMPORTANCE OF THE MAYA BIOSPHERE

- The biggest Protected Area in Central America (2,112,940 ha)
- The three communities mentioned have 63,742 ha. under management, also support the conservation of National Parks as: Mirador, Tikal and Laguna del Tigre.
- 18 different natural ecosystems
- More than 230 bird species
- 67 species of reptiles
- 62 species of mammals
- 85 species of flora
- 110 medicinal plants
- More than 175 mayan archaeological sites.

BIOITZA COMMUNITY

- The only indigenous group originally from Peten Guatemala.
- They live by the Peten Itza lake in the buffer zone of the Maya Biosphere
- 80 families are the beneficiaries
- The forest is their principal cultural base

BIOITZA BACKGROUND

- The only maya group originally from Peten, their language are the Itza and Spanish.
- They decided to organize themselves in 1990
- Problems with an international organization almost dissolved the group in 1995.
- The municipality decided to take away their reserve and give it to immigrants
- They get their legal status as an organization
- They get their Reserve in usufruct from the cityhall, for 30 years.
- They get a block A, financing from GEF to start their project.

ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES THE BIOITZA PROMOTES

- Reserve management and protection
- Ecotourism: Bioitza trail and Spanish School for foreigners.
- Medicinal plants gardens.
- Carpentry shop

PASO CABALLOS COMMUNITY

- A Q´eqchi´ community originally from Alta Verapaz Guatemala. Their languages are the Q´eqchi´ and Spanish.
- 112 families are beneficiaries.
- They live in the Laguna del Tigre National Park; on the side of San Pedro river.
- They have an agreement signed with the government of Guatemala.
- They have as a priority the implementation of an integrated plan.

PASO CABALLOS BACKGROUND

- As a result of the peace accord and in search of land the people invaded the area in 1997.
- The community reached an agreement with the Guatemalan Government in 1998.
- There was a condition to have a management plan and the community prepared one.
- GEF finances the conservation and support of Laguna del Tigre National Park, Paso Caballos became a beneficiary of the project.

ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES PASO CABALLO PROMOTES

- Agroforestry
- Ecotourism
- Nontimber forest products such as: xate and copal.

CARMELITA COMMUNITY

- A petenero traditional community, mixed with ladinos and indigenous. Their language is Spanish and some Q'eqchi'
- They live in the Multiple Use Zone in the Maya Biosphere Reserve.
- The government of Guatemala gave them a community forest concession in 1997.
- They have as a priority the development of a forestry management plan.

CARMELITA BACKGROUND

- A forest economy based society
- Invasions started in 1994 and they recognized the problem of losing their area.
- Archeological sites depredation increased.
- They initiated the process of getting a forest concession. It took three year before getting it.
- The concession is given in 1997. For 25 years
- They have five year of implementing their management plan.

ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES CARMELITA PROMOTES

- Timber products
- Ecotourism
- Nontimber products (xate, chicle, all spice)

CHALLENGES FACED AT THE BEGINNING OF THE PROJECT

- Originally ProPeten/CI started the community enterprises within its own structure with the plan of making them independent later on.
- This did not work out because of several limitations such as: Paternalism, policy, social, idiosyncrasy etc. These did not permit the development of the enterprises.

THE CHALLENGES WERE

- Low level education of the groups
- Lack of access to market.
- Commitment of the groups toward environment conservation.
- Political weaknesses.
- Lack of credits.

IN SEARCH OF SOLUTIONS “ECOMAYA”

- A commercialization branch to support communities is established. (it supports local, national and international marketing)
- 8 community enterprises are the owners of Ecomaya (they are the shareholders)
- The communities concentrate on improving the quality and development of their services and products.

TO PROMOTE TOURISM “ALIANZA VERDE”

- A proposal of tourism policy is prepared by all sectors from Petén and presented to the Guatemalan Government.
- A best practice code is implemented.
- Tourism programs for training communities are in place.
- “Green Deal” is a project that is implementing a tourism certification in Peten, the tourism bureau of Guatemala is interested in implementation of tourism certificaion in all the country.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT “FONDO MAYA”

- It was created to support the forestry community enterprises(only nontimber products).
- The three community here mentioned (Bioitza, Paso Caballos and Carmelita) get a starting capital from Fondo Maya.
- The credit fund was closed, because the donnor did not want to support tourism and timber products.

POLITICAL SUPPORT FOR THE COMMUNITIES “ACOFOP”

- It is an organization that integrates all forestry communities in Petén.
- The three communities are part of this organization.
- This organization defends politically all communities, regarding their rights to access to the natural resources.

CONCLUSSION

- It is possible to construct indigenous community enterprises. Although it is needed to base the efforts in taking in account: participatory procecess, education levels of the groups, access to market, commitment with environment conservation, policy and access to credits.