# THE GUATEMALAN CONSERVATION COAST PROJECT

## Forest conservation in the Guatemalan Caribbean

The forests of the Guatemalan Caribbean coastline are home to extraordinary beauty and biodiversity. The coastline is a migratory corridor for birds as they make their biannual journey between North and South America. Hundreds of species of birds depend on these forests as part of the Mesoamerican 'flyway,' and the area is home to almost 10% of the world's known bird species. Part of the Althelia Climate Fund, the Guatemalan Conservation Coast Project uses climate finance through the sale of carbon credits to protect this incredible landscape and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, aligning world-class conservation with viable, sustainable economic activities. Implemented by local NGO FUNDAECO, hundreds of landowners, including local communities, have joined together to protect almost 59,941 hectares of threatened forest coastline, an area about the size of Chicago.




Deforestation and degradation is a result of increased industrial agriculture such as palm oil and cattle ranching. These economic pressures have pushed subsistence and commercial farmers deeper into forested areas, including protected areas, resulting in the loss of 65% of its original forest cover. This is one of the highest global deforestation rates of the last decade.

### Project area and its threats

The Guatemalan Caribbean coastline forms part of the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor, an area that includes eight Protected Areas. The project is located in the Izabal region and spans the entire Caribbean coastline of Guatemala, bordering Belize to the north and Honduras to the south. The landscape ranges from lowland, mid-elevation, and pre-montane tropical forests, semi-flooded or swamp forest, as well as aquatic habitats such as mangroves and lagoons.

### Mitigating climate change

Carbon credit sales finance systematic solutions to the drivers of deforestation in the project area including effective law enforcement, land-use planning, education, economic opportunities, and sustainable agroforestry initiatives. As a direct result of project activities, over 4 million tonnes of $CO_2$ will be reduced by 2021 - the equivalent of taking 441,000 homes off the grid for a year.

## Measurable impacts

We track seven impact areas across all of our projects, and each project also produces sustainable commodities. Here are the Guatemalan Caribbean Coast project targets to the end of 2021.

**CLIMATE:**
6.1 million tonnes of $CO_2$ emissions avoided

**ECOSYSTEMS:**
59,941 hectares of threatened forest protected to date in the Mesoamerican Biologial Corridor, with a target to increase

**SPECIES:**
30 High Conservation Value Species, including jaguar, Baird's tapir and West Indian manatee

**LIVELIHOODS:**
716 jobs created or supported for indigenous and local communities

**INCLUSIVITY:**
30% of jobs held by women

**SUSTAINABLE ENTERPRISE:**
7 sustainable businesses such as an ecotourism travel hub

**FAIR ECONOMIC RETURN:**
€7.5m contributed to local economy

**SUSTAINABLE COMMODITIES:**
Cardamom, xate (jungle leaf), pepper, rambutan, lychee, cinnamon, timber and ecotourism

### ECOSYSTEM RESILIENCE

- 120 migratory bird species use the forests of Guatemala as their main wintering or transiting habitat.
- The project protects the 'cloud forests' in Izabal that generate the local water supply.
- The project strengthens vulnerable coastal areas at risk of severe weather events like hurricanes.



The Yellow-Headed Amazon, a threatened native parrot.

## Protecting biodiversity

The Mesoamerican Biological Corridor is vital for migratory birds making their biannual journey up and down coastal Central America. As many as 426 species of birds have been documented in the project area, many of whom depend on the corridor to sustain these great migrations.

The project protects the habitat of 30 High Conservation Value (HCV) species such as the jaguar, Baird's tapir, and the West Indian manatee whose habitats are threatened by economic pressure in the region.

The project protects the entire Guatemalan Caribbean coastline and is developing a network of ecotourism sites and ecological reserves. Copyright: FUNDAECO



Specific activities financed by carbon credit sales include:

- **Surveillance and law enforcement:** Protection and surveillance activities at highly threatened sites are coordinated with local and national authorities and offer legal assistance to communities and individual forest owners fighting illegal activity on their land.
- **Biological monitoring:** HCV species health and numbers are tracked in forest areas.
- **Conservation Education:** Formal and informal education through organised events, workshops, fairs and exhibitions engage local communities and improve conservation outcomes.

## Working with communities

Izabal is home to some of Guatemala's most underserved and lowest income communities. Carbon revenue helps tackle the economic drivers of deforestation which is essential to achieving the project's goals. Over 100 local and indigenous communities are impacted by the project, and they play a pivotal role in maintaining the integrity of the work through active participation in consultation, decision-making, and implementation of activities.

The lives of 3,250 families are being transformed by job creation, agricultural training, and increased access to legal and financial resources. The project aims to support nearly 720 jobs, 30% of which are held by women.

A key focus for the project is giving access to health care and education for women and girls who have not had this before. Copyright: FUNDAECO



### BENEFITS FOR WOMEN & GIRLS

Empowering women and girls with access to health care and education is crucial for effective conservation and development outcomes. The project improves access to healthcare for under-served groups (such as non-Spanish speaking indigenous women) and has established 24 community-run clinics which provide family planning and reproductive health services. These clinics combine modern healthcare techniques with traditional practices, including the services of midwives, so that they can be sustainable long-term. To date, over 1,300 people have benefited from sexual and reproductive health services and 750 families are using family planning.

Increased access to reproductive health and family planning services leads to more control over the timing and frequency of children, which leads to greater opportunity for women to seek an education and earn an income. This empowers them to make decisions about their own future and the future of their community.

The project supports young women to finish their elementary education and continue high school, providing direct training to increase employment opportunities.

**LAND RIGHTS**
The grouped nature of the project means that hundreds of committed landowners are working together to change the pattern of land use and protect the forest. The project is supporting individuals and communities to register and obtain land titles, as legal land ownership in the region is complicated. Securing land titles corrects inequalities that are barriers to achieving real, positive change.

## Supporting sustainable livelihoods & enterprises

The project integrates conservation and sustainable approaches to productive land use, helping local people to pursue viable, sustainable livelihoods.

Small enterprises drive positive change in rural communities, but many of them lack sufficient capacity or market connections to succeed without external support. To achieve scale, the Guatemalan Conservation Coast Project prioritises working with local enterprises and provides technical assistance on business management, market support for agroforestry products and eco-tourism, as well as access to finance and training.

**SUSTAINABLE COMMODITIES**
The project finances the development of sustainable agroforestry systems, providing supplies and assisting the establishment of commercial crops to diversify family incomes in key communities. Over 1,000 hectares of crops including xate (a jungle leaf used for ornamental purposes), spices such as cardamom, pepper and cinnamon, fruits such as lychee and rambutan, and timber are being produced, with the goal of achieving commercial scale.

Local farmers are producing spices, timber and ornamental jungle leaves in sustainable agroforestry systems. Copyright: FUNDAECO



**ECOTOURISM**
The project is developing a network of tourism sites and ecological reserves throughout the Caribbean region of Guatemala, promoting the conservation coast as an ecotourism destination. The project also supports the infrastructure development necessary to make this venture successful.

### WHAT IS A "GROUPED PROJECT"?

The Guatemalan Conservation Coast Project is a 'Grouped Project', which means multiple landowners are represented as a group by FUNDAECO, which manages the development of emissions reduction projects on their behalf. It is the largest grouped project in the world, and includes hundreds of landowners across the region, including government, NGOs, private and community landowners.

## Project implementing partners

The Guatemalan Conservation Coast Project is implemented on the ground by FUNDAECO, a private not-for-profit Guatemalan organisation. Created in 1990, FUNDAECO is one of the main conservation organisations in Guatemala whose mission is to conserve biodiversity and promote sustainable community development through the participatory establishment and management of Protected Areas.

## External standards

The Guatemalan Conservation Coast Project is verified by the Verified Carbon Standard (VCS, project ID 1622) and the Climate, Community and Biodiversity Standard (CCB) to the gold level for biodiversity.

**Sustainable Development Goals** The Guatemalan Conservation Coast Project advances many Sustainable Development Goals

# The Guatemalan Conservation Coast Project

## Impact targets for 2021

### LIVELIHOODS

**Jobs supported**

**716**

**30%** are held by women

### SUSTAINABLE ENTERPRISE

**7 enterprises**

with improved capacity

### CLIMATE

**6.1m carbon credits**

(tonnes $CO_2$)



### ECOSYSTEMS

**59,941 ha**

forest under improved conservation management, focusing on cloud forest

**1,761 ha** reforested

### SPECIES

**30 HCV species** protected

**426 bird** species in the area

### INCLUSIVITY

To date **1,621** people have benefited from health services, particularly reproductive healthcare

At least **1,040** families using family planning

**Climate**

The project will avoid 4.4 million tonnes of $CO_2$.

**Ecosystems**

The project aims to improve the management 59,941 ha in the region, focusing on protection of cloud forest, a key ecosystem for water provision.

**Species**

30 high conservation value (HCV) species protected. The region includes sites listed in the Alliance for Zero Extinction and is an important bird area.

**Livelihoods**

Support farmers of forest-friendly spices (such as cardamom & pepper) and other commodities and develop ecotourism activities.

**Inclusivity**

Focus on access to healthcare and human rights, particularly for women.

**Sustainable Enterprise**

Build the capacity of both agricultural enterprises and ecotourism services.

All numbers are targets are for 2021 unless otherwise stated

ecosphere+