

Fourth Annual Report: Web Update

GTF322: The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS)

The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), together with five governmental and non-governmental partners, has developed a coalition to simultaneously protect the forest in Guatemala's Maya Biosphere Reserve and improve the livelihoods of people who depend on forest resources for their survival.

The strategy for improving forest governance focuses on strengthening local capacity to create and manage representative, accountable and effective institutions responsible for the management of the natural and cultural resources of the Reserve. Results at the programme's midpoint include:

- **Recovery of 123,000 ha of illegally colonized land** in the project area - the equivalent of more than 100,000 football fields - largely held by landholders related to organized crime
- **Removal of more than 10,000 head of cattle** from illegal ranches in the reserve
- **Establishment of six new permanent Protection and Control Centres** restricting access to the core of the reserve
- **Increased multi-institutional patrols** with army, police, and park guards
- **Increased efficacy of the justice system**, including establishment of the "Environmental Justice Forum" and unprecedented convictions of individuals responsible for forest destruction

The strategy for improving the quality of life of the Reserve's residents focuses on improving local organization and governmental responsiveness for the provision of basic services. Results at the programme's midpoint include:

- **Improvement of secondary education, health service delivery, and water delivery in seven target communities** benefitting approximately 6,000 people including children, youth, and Maya-Q'eqchi' indigenous peoples, one of the most marginalised and exploited groups in Guatemala
- **Community Development Councils strengthened** and actively managing projects for education, health, and access to potable water
- **Improved administrative and forest protection capacity** in community forest concessions, resulting in improved financial management and environmental sustainability of community enterprises

The Wildlife Conservation Society believes that strategic investments through passionate and experienced civil society organizations can leverage increased governmental responsibility, increased investment from other sources, and produce tangible benefits for both the environment and the well-being of the world's poorest people. During the remainder of the GTF programme, WCS will focus on institutionalising key structures and policies, highlighting the successes and importance of governance-oriented actions, and developing an endowment for sustainable financing of conservation and development activities in the MBR. Furthermore, WCS will replicate lessons learned through the GTF programme across other WCS sites, strengthening governance and improving livelihoods in some of the world's most fragile and remote places.

For further information about the WCS Guatemala Forest Governance project, including project reports, please visit: <http://www.StateOfTheMBR.org/>



Photographer: Jeremy Radachowsky. Children in the village of Uaxactun, Maya Biosphere Reserve, Guatemala.



Photographer: Jeremy Radachowsky. Village of Uaxactun, one of the GTF programme's focal forest-based communities.