



COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean



Resilient responses to pandemic impacts

Central America and the Caribbean have been heavily affected economically and socially by the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, causing all sectors to rethink activities and adapt to the new reality.

The IUCN Regional Office for Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean is rising to the challenges of conservation work during times of pandemic through two strategies of resilience: mitigation and adaptation. Providing prevention equipment or resources, using technological tools to build capacity and strengthening strategic partnerships with partners on the ground have been key to continuing our work in the region.



Miskito Cays, Nicaragua. © Paúl Aragón

The emergency triggered by the Covid-19 pandemic coupled with mandatory confinement has undeniably tested all sectors of society. The IUCN Regional Office for Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean (IUCN ORMACC) is no exception. In its determination to continue working for nature's conservation and people's well-being, IUCN ORMACC effectively integrated containment measures in its operations, responding to the emergency and the challenges it imposes.

Supported by strategic partners, IUCN ORMACC has applied an adaptive management and mitigation approach maximising the use of information and communication technology and strengthening alliances with partners on the ground, including IUCN Member organisations, government authorities, municipalities, Indigenous People's organisations, youth networks and women's groups.

“As the global voice for nature, at IUCN we remain more than ever committed to our powerful Union, to our vision of a just world that values nature, and to working together to ensure a healthy planet with healthy people. This pandemic will pass and will leave lessons, so it is necessary from now on to draw our “new normal”, where we can rebuild, but rebuild more intelligently. Human health, the conservation of our natural resources and economic recovery are inextricably related. Investing in restoration, sustainable use and conservation of natural resources can in turn create new sources of employment, social and economic benefits, but above all it can be the perfect platform to achieve a healthy planet that we can all enjoy with quality of life”, said Dr. Grethel Aguilar, IUCN ORMACC Regional Director.

From the early stages of the crisis, IUCN focused on the health of the staff and the communities and people involved in the daily implementation of its Programme around the world.



Selva Maya. © Erick Ecker.

A Covid-19 business continuity plan has served as a tool to assess and mitigate the level of risk in operations. Covid-protocols support the vital efforts of those who continue to work in the field implementing IUCN's Programme. Our top priority is the health and safety of our staff, partners and communities.

Mitigation approach

Under the mitigation approach, measures were implemented to support partners, beneficiaries and communities directly to cope with the difficult conditions imposed by the pandemic, including the following actions:

Water in times of Covid-19:

- In coordination with the Municipal Water Company of the Municipality of Guatemala (EMPAGUA) and thanks to the support of the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), a campaign was carried out to supply potable water in vulnerable areas of Guatemala City. More than 350 tank trucks with 956,000 gallons of water were sent in, benefitting 26,000 people.

Video: [Water supply campaign](#)

Video [Water Security Program of the Municipality of Guatemala](#)

Protecting people on the ground:

- With the support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), budget allocations to beneficiaries of the [Small Grants Programme](#) run by the Coastal Biodiversity project were increased in response to the Covid-19 emergency in Motagua (Honduras-Guatemala), La Moskitia in Honduras and Río Paz (El Salvador and Guatemala). With USAID's crucial support, and in agreement with IUCN,

up to 10% of the total amount assigned to each organisation will cover organizations' needs, such as the acquisition of biosafety equipment for protection while doing fieldwork, food, preventive medicine, among others. A total US\$ 233,324 was awarded through the [Small Grants Programme](#) to [twenty entities](#), whether community-based groups, companies or organisations, to implement biocommerce and sustainable landscape management initiatives.



Emergency kits for people well-being:

- The German cooperation through the KfW development bank redirected funds to attend the health crisis by providing [emergency kits](#) with hand sanitizer and face masks to institutions in charge of the Selva Maya protected areas in Mexico, Guatemala and Belize, as well as attention to other environmental contingencies such as forest fires. Actions on the ground were also strengthened through equipment and inputs for the management of protected areas and mobilising of park rangers in each of the three countries.



Rapid grants for the Caribbean:

- The BIOPAMA programme launched a call to award [Rapid Response Grants](#) to respond to risks and direct impacts associated with the pandemic in 15 Caribbean nations. Applications must address emergencies requiring rapid action related to the management and governance of protected or conserved areas, increasing resilience to the pandemic's main impacts and maintaining the livelihoods of local communities. [The call for applications](#) is open until 31 December.



Barbados. © Dale Benskin.

Adaptation approach

The adaptation approach involved readjustment measures to maintain operations in the region, such as:

- Replacing in-person activities with video calls, virtual workshops and seminars, online surveys and virtual formal training activities notably:

—The [Course on Water Governance in Central America](#), organised with the the Central American Commission for the Environment and Development (CCAD) and the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO), thanks to the support of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC),

—A course on international policies and legal frameworks related to natural resources and protected areas management, rights-based conservation and ecosystem approaches and practical tools for implementing international commitments and recommendations, and

—The five-month regional course on [Indigenous Peoples, Territory and Governance of Natural Resources in Central America](#), with the support of Bread for the World and the Ford Foundation in association with the University of the Autonomous Regions of the Nicaraguan Caribbean Coast (URACCAN) and the Central American Indigenous Council (CICA), with the participation of 50 young indigenous and Afro-descendent people (23 men and 27 women) from Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, Panama, Costa Rica and Nicaragua.

- In the Caribbean, the Plastic Waste Free Islands project designed a print and video package to train local consultants in collecting information about plastic and other waste management in order to conduct a quantification and flow analysis of sectoral material in Grenada, Saint Lucia and Antigua and Barbuda, with the support of the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD). [PWFI conducted online training sessions](#).

- The participation of indigenous leaders in La Moskitia, Honduras, has been maintained through virtual sessions by providing Internet services as strategy to ensure their involvement. The project also plans support for establishing online radio.

- Communication campaigns have been promoted through social media. These include a [campaign](#) promoting [prevention measures](#) necessary to fight Covid-19 in [Spanish](#) and [Miskitu](#), as part of actions promoted by the Coastal Biodiversity project in La Moskitia in Honduras, in collaboration with with GOAL. An [awareness campaign](#) has also been launched on the use of [water resources](#) in times of pandemic.



Local teams were trained virtually in wasted characterization methodology in the Caribbean. © Richard Beadle

The health crisis imposes new challenges in all spheres, and the conservation of nature is no exception. We remain committed to our mission of sustainable development and keep working together to guarantee a healthy planet with healthy people. We are grateful for the trust and support received from our donor partners throughout this year and call for working in innovative ways to continue providing technical assistance, training and investments for the conservation of biodiversity and economic development.

In this difficult time, IUCN continue working protecting our families, our countries, our people and nature. Let's keep moving forward!



Guatemala. © Paúl Aragón.

IUCN ORMACC

IUCN – International Union for Conservation of Nature is a membership Union uniquely composed of both government and civil society organisations. It provides public, private and non-governmental organisations with the knowledge and tools that enable human progress, economic development and nature conservation to take place together.

Created in 1948, IUCN has evolved into the world's largest and most diverse environmental network. It harnesses the experience, resources and reach of its more than 1,400 Member organisations and the input of some 15,000 experts. IUCN is the global authority on the status of the natural world and the measures needed to safeguard it.

Since 1988, IUCN Regional Office for Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean (IUCN ORMACC) has been working together with Members, Commissions and Secretariat, joining efforts and actions for the implementation of the IUCN Programme, the conservation of nature and the well-being of people and communities.

For more information:

<https://www.iucn.org/resources/covid-19-resources>
www.iucn.org/ormacc
ormacc@iucn.org



COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean



IUCN Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean