Evaluation overview

Guatemala City Green Belt (CGT 1004)

Countries: **Guatemala**

Area: **Adaptation and low-carbon transition of towns, cities and regions**

Assessed by: **Groupe Huit**
Date of evaluation: **July 2023**

Key FFEM support data

Project name: Guatemala City Green Belt
Project number: CGT 1004
Amount financed by the FFEM: €1,510,000
Project grant date: 12 June 2016
Duration: 5 years (end 2016 - March 2022)

Context

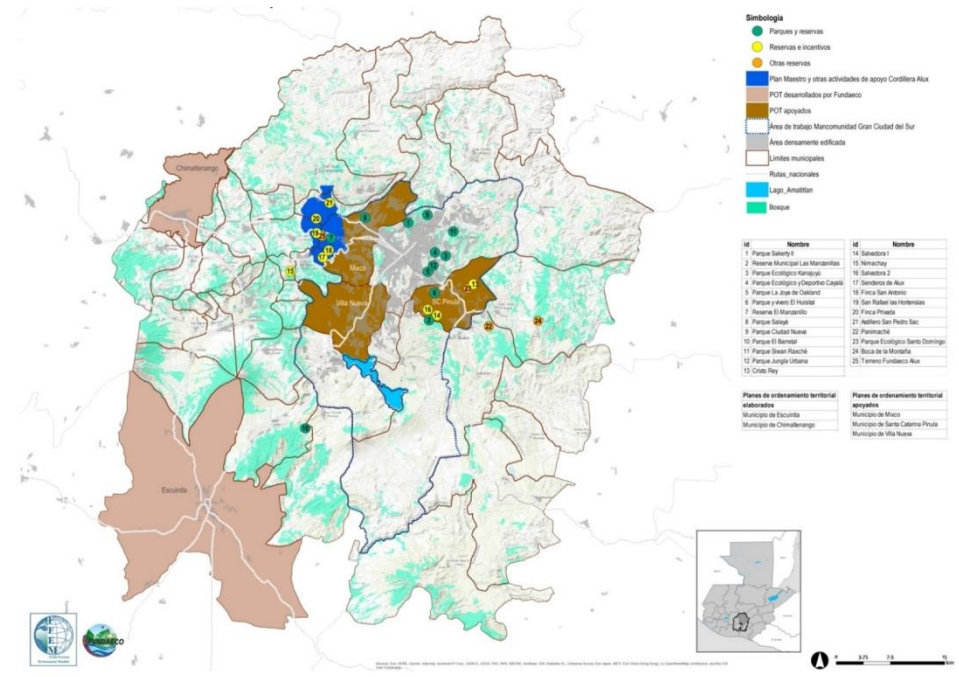
As the capital of a country regularly experiencing natural disasters, Guatemala City suffers multiple disasters each rainy season, and is now ranked among the 10 cities worldwide most vulnerable to climate risk. The city is built on geological foundations that are porous, permeable and friable, on a plain furrowed with deep gullies.

The 44 municipalities which comprise the city's wider metropolitan area are home to 25% of the country's population and also constitute Central America's most populous conurbation. The extensive urban sprawl, uncontrolled by the local authority, has occurred in areas that are topographically unstable, exacerbating the city's vulnerabilities. The project aims to convert these topographical threats into something positive for the region by transforming the gullies and mountains into a green infrastructure for sustainable management of the city.

Participants and operating methods

As the contracting authority's representative and the recipient entity in the financing agreement, FUNDAECO was directly responsible for project execution. FUNDAECO made available a team of technical, financial and administrative personnel to deliver each element of the project. A Steering Committee and an Expert Committee supported the project team in managing and implementing delivery.

Project location map



Aims

To help mitigate vulnerability to the impacts of climate change while ensuring the long-term environmental and socio-economic sustainability of Guatemala City by applying regional planning and development tools and implementing steps to manage, protect and restore natural assets and spaces.

Specific objectives:

SO1: To underpin the planning and establishment of Guatemala City's green belt to mitigate vulnerability and enhance protection of the city's green infrastructures.

SO2: To support the protection and restoration of parks and areas of groundwater recharge to ensure sustainable water supply for the city in the long-term.

SO3: To undertake pilot projects to mitigate vulnerability to the impacts of extreme climate events and to sustainably renovate threatened city districts.

SO4: To ensure all stakeholders are consulted and involved, while encouraging the dissemination of experience at national, regional and international levels.

Performance appraisal

Relevance

Assessment of relevance has shown that this project has more than satisfied the local, national and international objectives for the conservation of nature, urban nature and human well-being.

Coherence

The project's external coherence was judged as very satisfactory, the project having synergy and alignment with other initiatives and strategic national plans. The project team demonstrated the ability and flexibility to forge partnerships and seek joint financing opportunities. The project's internal coherence was deemed satisfactory, however the project presented a lack of logical structure and involvement from some actors at national level, and assumptions had not been explained in any detail.

Effectiveness

The analysis of effectiveness showed satisfactory results. The draft law has been submitted and the analyses have been used for other outputs, such as mapping for POT (*Plan de Ordenamiento Territorial - Land Use Plan*) analysis, however the Metropolitan Green Belt studies have been set aside. The project shows positive impact in the adoption of the POT and the identification of eco-parks for sustainable regional management.

Efficiency

Project efficiency was judged to be satisfactory overall. The project benefited from management that was solid yet sufficiently flexible to modify activities and outcomes (changes to the geographic areas, reduction in scale of activities, prioritisation of certain outcomes) according to the implementation context.

Viability and sustainability

The project is viable at local level, the approved POTs are unlikely to be deferred, but other municipalities do not appear to have sufficient resources available to initiate the POT work in partnership with local and national institutions alone. Only Guatemala municipality possesses the technical, human and financial resources to re-shape the POT and create its eco-parks, but closer cooperation with the greater city region is needed due to existing rivalries between both parties.

Impacts and visibility

By increasing the surface area of protected areas (parks and 2 POTs) and consolidating the other forest and conservation areas through financial incentives, the project has certainly contributed to ensuring the flow of ecosystem services such as were identified in the project design (in the short- and medium-term). The project has significantly contributed to improving the public's perception of urban gullies, increasing demand for conservation tools, and raising the awareness among decision-makers.

Collective learning

The project has contributed to transforming perceptions of urban natural spaces on three levels: (i) By engaging firstly through supra-municipal structures, such as CODEDE and the Mancomunidad Gran Ciudad del Sur, then directly with the municipalities and their spatial planning processes, the project has been able to input into local government by providing high-quality technical support (mapping, regulatory models, other analyses) to municipal technical bodies. (ii) Several educational events organised by the project led to changes in local behaviour with respect to natural spaces, for example by eliminating fly tipping, and by giving the spaces a new role and value. (iii) the project has nurtured relationships with academic and intellectual actors by holding workshops, particularly the *Metrópolis Central Colaborativa*, and by organising the informal *Mesa de Barranqueros* group and the TUYA urban concepts competition. Growing interest among universities for urban natural spaces confirms the impact of the project on these different actors.

Environmental excellence

When the project launched, the FFEM was the only international body financing actions promoting nature in the urban environment in Guatemala. The FFEM's role (cofinancing 30%) and strategies (funds specifically for the environment) allowed FUNDAECO to focus its efforts on finding cofinancing (70%) to dedicate to the protection of nature in the urban environment.
The FFEM has greater legitimacy in the eyes of society in supporting pilot projects that have real impact on the ground.

Responsiveness and flexibility

The project team and its partners have proven they are agile enough to respond to the challenges of project implementation. This flexibility allowed for restructuring within the team without affecting the nature and relevance of the project.

Recommendations & learnings

- This project demonstrated that improving ecosystem services in the urban environment yields significant connected benefits in terms of raising awareness, and social impacts such as the physical health and social tranquillity of the local people.

- Governance: The governance model should better integrate the agile and effective methods of the Steering Committee, which include the relevant organisations actively participating at national and local, governmental and non-governmental levels and have a certain control over work plans and annual budgets.

- Monitoring: Ensure monitoring of cofinancing and the attribution of project outcomes for the rendering of accounts. This project demonstrates the capability of private foundations to create impact-generating synergies by using different and varied financing sources.

- Adjusting the logical framework: The project team was able to develop a new concept for the project based on the Theory of Change in order to extend the project's solutions and attain impacts throughout the area by increasing the scale of protected urban zones with a water catchment-based approach to ensure better geographical, social and ecological coherence of project actions. It would create new entry points and higher transaction costs (approach, convey, convince) rather than leveraging existing entry points (communities and municipalities willing to design the parks and provide regional planning).

- Setting a "baseline": An ecological baseline has to be set so that the results of the project can be compared against this initial snapshot through ecological monitoring.

- Project scale: activities at reduced scale (*barrancos de bolsillo*) implemented as part of this project produced elements having more beneficial and relevant impact than at the greater city region scale. In this sense,we recommend continuing efforts to define a greater city region perimeter with a commensurate governance authority.

- Possible project continuation: It is highly recommended to continue with the work in progress, particularly in the creation of eco-parks, support for the creation of POTs for city municipalities and the presentation of the Metropolitan Green Belt law and Green Plan. To this end, providing more spaces for dialogue and awareness-raising among all regional actors would be beneficial.