



Yaxha National Park Tourism Enterprises | Final Report

Prepared for ASODESTY and Rainforest Alliance by:
Mohamed Fouad, Erin Ntalo, Amal Warsame, Franklin Zumba-Deleg

Master of Development Practice Candidates, 2018
Interdisciplinary Center for the Study of Global Change
University of Minnesota



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Geo-Political Background

Guatemala history

In order to understand the current work of ASODESTY and its partner, Rainforest Alliance, it is important to situate it within a broader context. Roughly translated as the “land of forests” in one of the ancient Maya languages, Guatemala is located in central America bordering Mexico, Belize, El Salvador and Honduras, and the Caribbean Sea and Pacific Ocean. Today, the country is inhabited by more than 16 million people and is considered the most populated country in Central America, covering 42,042 square miles.¹ The country has a robust manufacturing sector and is a travel destination for many due primarily to its culture and the existence of pre-Columbian archaeological sites of the Maya civilization, making tourism the second largest earner of foreign exchange.²

According to the CIA World Factbook, unequal income distribution has led to high inequality in Guatemala where the richest 20% of the population own more than 51% of the wealth and more than half of the population lives below the poverty line³. Like other nations with comparable histories of colonization, civil conflicts and volatile governments, the people of Guatemala suffer from a wealth disparity. Poverty in Guatemala has been one of the highest in the Americas and has driven a dark, protracted history of civil conflict, food and livelihood insecurity, as well as deforestation and land degradation. This dark past and Guatemala’s goals for a sustainable future have guided the recent passage of laws protecting the rich biodiversity of the nation, as well as creating economic and social development opportunities for the people.

The Civil War

As a former Spanish colony, Guatemala won its independence in 1821, but it was not until 1945 that the country had its first civilian leader from a coup d’etat. The previous sitting leader was Jorge Ubico, a pro-American dictator who permitted the United Fruit Company, a U.S.-based banana trading corporation, to be the largest landowner in the country and to be exempted from taxes. Under the new leadership of Juan Arévalo, followed by Jacob Árbenz, the country started to have positive reforms for education, land reforms, and economic reforms,

¹ Gonzalez, N. L. (2006). Guatemala. Retrieved February 20, 2018 from <http://www.everyculture.com/Ge-It/Guatemala.html>.

² Shriar, A. J. (2002). Food security and land use deforestation in northern Guatemala. *Food Policy*, 27 (4), 395-414. doi:10.1016/S0306-9192(02)00046-5.

³ The World Factbook: GUATEMALA. (2018, May 01). Retrieved February 17, 2018 from <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/gt.html>.

especially for poor and indigenous communities.⁴ By 1953, in a bid to restore land to the citizens of Guatemala, the government took back 40% of the land owned by the United Fruit Company. Around the same time, America's foreign policy concerns, coupled with a heightened fear of communism's spread in Latin America, led the U.S to covertly support another coup, which began what is now known as the 40-year civil war in Guatemala.

This second coup that placed Colonel Carlos Castillo Armas in power, gave rise to a leftist guerrilla group fighting for social and economic freedoms, and a right-wing paramilitary group. During this period, the military committed extrajudicial killings, kidnappings, and massacres of villages believed to have supported the leftist guerrillas, who were mostly Maya. According to the research conducted by the Center for Justice & Accountability,⁵ at the beginning, the leftist group gathered backing from some indigenous Maya who considered them the last hope to gain economic and political rights. This support was recognized as an official alliance between the Maya and the guerillas and gave the government the necessary justification to target Maya communities as a counterinsurgency tactic. The time period between 1970 and 1983 was the worst for human rights violations during the civil war. It resulted in the deaths of more than 50,000 people and caused 200,000 people to flee their homes.⁶ After years of peace talks, the civil war finally ended in 1996 with the signing of peace accords.

Maya Biosphere Reserve

Before the early 1960's, The Petén region was treated as a quasi-independent state outside the reach of most national policies. Most of Guatemala's population lived in the southern region of the country while the remote northern Petén region was mostly uninhabited, due to its distance from the rest of Guatemala.⁷ The parastatal company Empresa de Formento Y Desarrollo Economico de Petén (FYDEP) governed the area. Due to FYDEP's policies of economic growth, the government offered land to anyone who was willing to live in the area and the population of the region grew 9% every year since the 1960s. With the increase in population, heavy logging and deforestation grew and it was determined that if nothing was done to curb it, the complete destruction of the forest was projected to occur within 30 years. Deforestation and slash-and-burn clearing to make space for agriculture provoked

⁴ PBS Frontline. (2002). Timeline: Guatemala's history of violence. Retrieved February 20, 2018 from <http://www.pbs.org/frontline/world/stories/guatemala704/history/timeline.html#>.

⁵ The Center for Justice & Accountability. (2016). Guatemala, "silent holocaust": the Mayan genocide. Retrieved February 20, 2018 from <http://cja.org/where-we-work/guatemala/>.

⁶ PBS Frontline. (2002).

⁷ Radachowsky, J., Ramos, V. H., McNab, R., Baur, E. H., & Kazakov, N. (2012). Forest concessions in the Maya Biosphere Reserve, Guatemala: A decade later. *Forest Ecology and Management*, 268, 18-28. doi: 10.1016/j.foreco.2011.08.043.

conservationists and non-governmental organizations both nationally and internationally to demand action from the government. To change this alarming future, the government passed the Protected Areas Law Decree 4-89 creating a system of protected areas and biodiversity conservation. In that same year, the National Council of Protected Areas (CONAP) was established, and in 1990, Decree 5-90 was passed, creating the Maya Biosphere Reserve.

The Petén region was then split into three zones: the protected core zone (36%), which includes national parks; the buffer zone (24%), which serves as a barrier between the protected area and the populations to the south; and finally, the multiple use zone (40%) which grants concessions for sustainable resource extraction and business enterprises (see Figure 1). At first, the government made attempts to expel inhabitants from the reserve and tensions arose between local communities as the government restricted access within the protected areas. This proved to be a futile effort because local people continued entering the park lands illegally; banning them did not fix the problem of forest burning and extractive deforestation.⁸

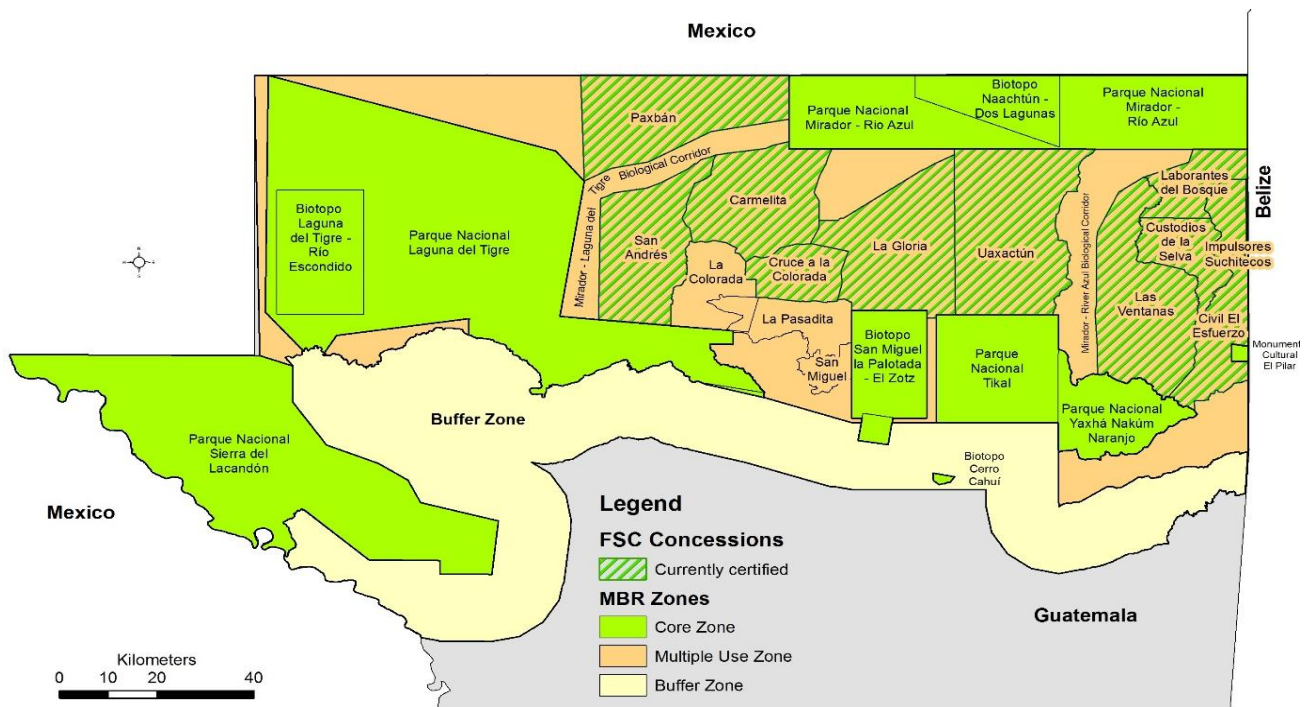


Figure 1: The Maya Biosphere Reserve within the Petén region, showing the separation of the three zones and Yaxha park in relation to other communities. Retrieved from <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/10/>.

In the years immediately following the 1990 creation of the biosphere reserve, it became apparent that CONAP was unable to effectively manage the parks and the reserve. Deforestation and illegal logging were prevalent, and seven large timber companies operating in Petén were

⁸ Feldman, M. (2001, December 20). Besieged forest saved by users in Guatemala: Village loggers guard biosphere. Retrieved February 18, 2018, from <https://www.sfgate.com/green/article/Besieged-forest-saved-by-users-in-Guatemala-2838274.php>.

found to be associated with the military and government.⁹ It was clear that top down, centralized management was not working and an innovative system was needed for sustainable forest management. Wanting to keep the forest out of the hands of private logging firms, a community concession model was advocated by both conservation groups and the local community.¹⁰

The push for this sort of model was in part due to the advocacy of conservation and local groups, but also to new shifts within development and government pledges in the peace accords. The 1996 peace agreement decreed increased democratization and decentralization of power from the government to local communities, as well as proclaiming for a model of participatory development.¹¹ In the late 1980s and 1990s, development trends shifted toward encouraging Integrated Conservation and Development Projects (ICDPs). ICDPs encouraged conservation of natural resources while contributing to livelihood development of surrounding communities, often executed as community-based conservation or community forest management.¹²

Since many people within the community had previously relied on the forest for their livelihoods, the government understood that granting alternative sources for income generation strategically linked to the wellbeing of natural resources would decrease forest degradation and link community prosperity to forest prosperity.¹³ Through this process, the Guatemalan government moved away from a centralized form of governing to a decentralized model. This new system allocated responsibilities of managing the area to local communities, but power was still held by the central government.

In order to get a concession to extract from the biosphere reserve, communities needed the partnership of CONAP and a local non-governmental organization in order to gain technical skills to adhere to the management and environmental analysis requirements of CONAP. CONAP created these guidelines out of fear that communities would not be able to protect or know how to manage the forest, and complete control would cause dire consequences. Nevertheless, there was an understanding that local groups were more likely to conserve the forest if their livelihoods depended on it.¹⁴ Thus, the concession model was implemented to serve the dual purpose of conservation and affording community members the chance to

⁹ Wilsey, D. S. (2005). Guatemala's Maya Biosphere Reserve: An institutional overview and comparison of two models of conservation and development administration. *School of Natural Resources and Environment*, 1-25.

¹⁰ Fortmann, L., Sohngen, B., & Southgate, D. (2017). Assessing the role of group heterogeneity in community forest concessions in Guatemala's Maya Biosphere Reserve. *Land Economics*, 93 (3), 503-526. doi:10.3368/le.93.3.503.

¹¹ Radachowsky, J. et al. (2012).

¹² Wilsey, D. S. (2005).

¹³ Radachowsky, J. et al. (2012).

¹⁴ Macqueen, D. (2012). Enabling conditions for successful community forest enterprises. *Small-Scale Forestry*, 12 (1), 145-163. doi:10.1007/s11842-011-9193-8.

participate in economic ventures. Yaxha National Park is an example of a protected area in which community members have sought permission to operate tourism businesses in the park.

Yaxha National Park

The Cultural Triangle Yaxha-Nakum-Naranjo National Park, or simply “Yaxha”, is located in northern Guatemala, between the municipalities of Flores and Melchor de Mencos in the Petén department. Situated within the Maya Biosphere Reserve, the park has outstanding archeological ruins from the Pre-classic, Classic, and Post-Classic periods of the Maya civilization.¹⁵ Yaxha National Park is a unique model of management in a protected area in Guatemala, because it seeks to ensure that local communities receive tangible benefits from conservation. The funds raised by tourist visits to the park are invested in regional community development and conservation of natural and cultural patrimony, as is promoted by the legislative decree creating the park.¹⁶ Over the years, the park was jointly administered by three institutional bodies: the Institute of Anthropology and History (IDAEH), the National Council for Protected Areas (CONAP), and the Association for Sustainable Development of the Yaxha Territory (ASODESTY), which has helped to implement conservation efforts and local economic development.

In 1970, IDAEH was the first to initiate a series of activities monitoring and maintaining archaeological sites. Today, this governmental agency of Guatemala is in charge of the administration, protection, investigation and registry of the archaeological and historical ruins of the country.¹⁷ At Yaxha, this institution is in charge of the museum, campsites, the administration of archaeological monuments, and the monitoring and management of archaeological excavations.

In 1990, twenty years after IDAEH’s inception, CONAP joined IDAEH and began its activities as the body that protected and managed the park. Today, its mission is to ensure the conservation and protection of all park areas, through designing, coordinating and overseeing the application of policies, norms, incentives and strategies, in collaboration with IDAEH. During the early 1990s, CONAP established control posts to prevent invasions, the advance of the agricultural frontier, forest fires, illegal use of forest products, and illegal hunting, which has helped prevent the deforestation of this protected area.¹⁸

¹⁵ Plan Maestro 2006-2010 Yaxha-Nakum-Naranjo (2010), 26-27.

¹⁶ Consejo nacional de áreas protegidas: Ley de áreas protegidas y su reglamento. Retrieved March 10, 2018.

¹⁷ Valdés, J. A. (2006). Management and conservation of Guatemala's cultural heritage: A challenge to keep history alive. In B. T. Hoffman (Ed.) *Art and cultural heritage: Law, policy and practice* (pp. 94-99). Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.

¹⁸ Elías, S.; Gellert, G.; Pape, E. y Reyes, E. (1997). Evaluación de la sostenibilidad en Guatemala. FLACSO: Guatemala, Guatemala.

In 2003, under legislative decree 55-2003, the park was declared a protected area and among its objectives was to provide economic opportunities to the surrounding communities through the provision of goods and services in the park.¹⁹ In 2014, the Association of Organizations of the Yaxha Region (ASODESTY) was created, which focused on providing a space for dialogue and management that could bring together the efforts of organizations and the local population.²⁰

ASODESTY is an association of seven different organizations, made up of citizens of the twelve rural communities located in the vicinity of Yaxha. Each organization represents a different tourism enterprise, such as tour guides, dining services, aquatic and terrestrial transport, and artisan handicrafts. One of its purposes is to facilitate the integration of production-oriented development and conservation organizations in the southern region of the park. Another is to coordinate, and channel investments and governmental, non-governmental and cooperative projects interested in supporting the comprehensive and sustainable development of the Yaxha territory. Finally, ASODESTY is a key player in the administration of the park. Along with the technical support and resources provided by Rainforest Alliance, ASODESTY has been preparing to launch their tourism services in Yaxha National Park. As of March of 2018, an agreement signed by all park stakeholders officially granted ASODESTY the necessary concession permits to begin business operations for a two-year pilot.

¹⁹ Aquino, D. E., Caravantes, K. C. (2009). In J.P. Laporte, B. Arroyo, & H. Mejía, (Eds.) *La gestión del patrimonio cultural prehispánico: Labores de conservación preventiva en Yaxha y Topoxté*.

²⁰ Plan de Manejo 2006-2010 (2010). El Manejo de sostenible del Parque Yaxha: Gestión para el desarrollo sostenible.

Case Studies

Overview

When launching a new venture, like ASODESTY's tourism enterprises, it can be helpful to examine previous efforts to learn from challenges they faced and lessons they learned. In order to ensure case studies are relevant to the Yaxha tourism enterprises, a list of key characteristics has been developed to select the most applicable and appropriate cases. Those key characteristics are divided into primary and secondary criteria, indicating degrees of importance. In determining which case studies to include, all case studies were required to meet primary criteria, and if possible, the secondary criteria. It was required that each secondary criterion was represented by at least one case. The university team has highlighted important lessons learned from each case study to support ASODESTY and Rainforest Alliance in establishing a well-managed project that reflects an understanding of challenges and successes similar ventures have faced.

Primary criteria

All case studies meet the following primary criteria, deemed essential to be applicable to ASODESTY's tourism enterprises.

1. The case centers on **sustainable tourism**, which is tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social, and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, environment and host communities.²¹ Sustainable tourism combines the often-oppositional goals of conservation and income generation, which leads to unique challenges. Research findings show that forest degradation is driven by people's' need for livelihoods, and the best way to prevent the extinction of forests and habitats is to create a supply of employment that relies on the healthy, managed use of this resource.²² When communities rely on the forest for their incomes, they take better care of it and extract resources sustainably. Communities having greater control over their livelihoods has been identified as a crucial element to development, empowerment, and poverty alleviation.²³ The sustainable tourism model has been used

²¹ World Tourism Organization (2013). UNWTO Annual Report 2012, UNWTO, Madrid. http://cf.cdn.unwto.org/sites/all/files/pdf/annual_report_2012.pdf.

²² Norris, R., Wilber, J. S., & Morales Marin, L. O. (1995). Community-based ecotourism in the Maya forest. *Planeta.com*. Retrieved February 13, 2018, from <http://old.planeta.com/planeta/98/0598mayaforest.html>.

²³ Larson, A. M. (2003). Decentralisation and forest management in Latin America: Towards a working model. *Public Administration and Development*, 23 (3), 211-226. doi:10.1002/pad.271

to promote conservation of natural resources in many parts of the world, including Guatemala.

2. Case study enterprises are **developed and managed by community members**, not government, outside NGOs, or external private entities. Governments typically share power with communities through decentralized models where responsibility for managing a project or territory is moved away from the central authority (the government) to the local community, but power still ultimately rests with the central authority. Devolution is the process in which the relocation of power away from the center to the local communities results in the local community having real authority; they not only have the responsibility to protect and manage resources, but they also have the power to make change.²⁴ Decentralization of power is more common than devolution because devolution requires governments to trust local communities to make decisions regarding resources that could be beneficial to government or those with influence in the country. Many governments are not willing to give up control of potentially-valuable natural resources.

In recent history, indigenous communities like the Maya of southern Belize have begun to advocate more boldly for rights to their ancestral lands. Although the communities surrounding Yaxha are not indigenous to the Petén region, much of their livelihoods for several generations depended on the forest. With this pilot project, the communities have the opportunity to create businesses within the national park, shifting Yaxha from a decentralized model to an attempt at devolution. It should be noted here that Yaxha is a unique case in Guatemala; no other park operates under devolution. Case studies featuring devolution or community ownership were deemed a high priority and thus there are no cases from Guatemala.

3. The communities managing the project must be **long-standing or indigenous**, not made up of refugees or recent immigrants. Long-standing and indigenous communities have buy-in that more recently-settled communities do not. During the mid-90s there arose an understanding within development that local groups were more likely to appreciate the sustainability of the forest if their livelihoods depended on it.²⁵ Research

²⁴ Fisher, R. J. (2012). Devolution and decentralization of forest management in Asia and the Pacific. *FAO Corporate Document Repository*. Retrieved March 04, 2018, from <http://dlc.dlib.indiana.edu/dlc/bitstream/handle/10535/8405/Devolution%20and%20decentralization%20of%20forest%20management%20in%20Asia%20and%20the%20Pacific.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

²⁵ Macqueen, D. (2012).

conducted by Fortmann, et. al.²⁶ studied the types of communities that existed in the area, specifically whether they were new migrant communities, transient communities, or long-standing communities. They found that the community concession model had effectively decreased deforestation in all three types of communities, with a notable decrease in long-standing communities. This could be attributed to communities having historically found effective ways to manage their livelihoods and the health of the forests. The ASODESTY communities have been in existence since at least the 1960s, when migration to Petén was promoted. These communities are well-established and cannot easily move if their sustainable livelihood efforts are not successful.

4. **Participation by some, benefits to all.** There is bound to be conflict within the twelve ASODESTY communities between those who are directly involved in and benefiting from the Yaxha tourism enterprises and those who are not directly involved, but still reap some community-wide benefits. Managing how these benefits are determined and disbursed will likely be a central issue for ASODESTY, especially if their enterprises are successful and generate enough profit to draw attention.

Secondary criteria

All case studies did not need to meet the following secondary criteria, but at least one study had to meet each criterion below.

1. **Latin America-based.** For cultural and contextual similarity, and in light of the fact that there are no other Guatemala-based examples of community-owned projects, there had to be at least one case study from Latin America.
2. The case featured a **concession** (government gives a community the right to operate enterprises on government-owned land). Due to Guatemala's focus on protecting the natural resources of the Maya Biosphere Reserve, the community concession models were introduced as a way to decrease illegal deforestation and burning by giving an incentive to protect the resources communities often rely on for their livelihoods. Previous research findings show that experts have concluded that forest fires and deforestation are less frequent in places with community concessions.²⁷ Concessions were first introduced to satisfy the interests of conservation groups and local communities, and management plans were created to allow timber extraction for monetary benefits from a selected area one year, rotating to another section the next.

²⁶ Fortmann, L. et al. (2017).

²⁷ Feldman, M. (2001).

3. **NGO partnership.** Often, community-based organizations are required to partner with national or international NGOs for technical support and accountability. Critics of complete devolution to communities felt that local communities did not have the technical skills needed to manage the forest and its resources²⁸. In Guatemala, CONAP requires communities to submit an environmental impact analysis for the area from which they want to extract²⁹, and Guatemalan law guarantees legal ramifications for concession members for financial mismanagement.³⁰ In many cases of sustainable tourism around the world, communities lack resources like financial management skills, so they have partnered with NGOs. This type of partnership has been highlighted by researchers as one of the four steps of success for ecotourism and community concessions³¹.

²⁸ Wilsey, D. S. (2005).

²⁹ Ortiz, S. (2000). A successful community management experience in timber production and marketing in Guatemala. *ITTO Tropical Forest Update*, 10 (1), 10-12. Retrieved February 15, 2018.

³⁰ Radachowsky, J., et al. (2012).

³¹ Norris, R., Scott Wilber, J., & Morales Marin, L. O. (1995).



Case Study 1

Kokoda Track, Papua New Guinea

Case Summary³²

The 96 km Kokoda Track in eastern Papua New Guinea is a WWII-era military trail that has become a popular tourist hike in recent years, attracting primarily adventurous Australians who seek unusual tourism opportunities. The track sees 3,000 to 5,000 visitors per year and 16 different clans claim ownership of land along the track. The Kokoda Track Reserve covers just 10 meters on either side of the trail itself and the indigenous people who live along the track grow crops and raise animals at a subsistence level, selling some at local markets for cash. They receive other income from small tourism operations, like selling handicrafts to passing tourists. Like many other forested areas around the world, the Kokoda Track region is rich with natural resources and its future is threatened by unsustainable logging and mining operations. There has been a push in recent years to preserve the natural and cultural heritage of the region by groups like the World Wildlife Fund and the Kokoda Track Foundation (KTF), founded in 2003 by concerned individuals, NGOs, trek operators, and academics from Australia.

Among their first actions after being founded, KTF identified that a development strategy was needed for sustainable tourism. KTF lobbied the Papua New Guinea government to create Kokoda Track Special Purpose Authority (KTA),³³ made up of local landowners, clan leaders, government officials, community organizers and tour operators, and led by local indigenous leaders. Prior to the inception of KTA, local communities did not benefit from tourists hiking the track. They fought over the unequal distribution of benefits from individual community contracts with certain tour operators. Tour operators would use local labor for some functions, like porters, but would exploit them by paying low wages. KTA empowered local people to make decisions about the use of the track by tourists and about how to allocate tourism revenues, along with ensuring landowners and communities were collectively represented to outside groups with more power. One example of KTA's empowerment: villagers decided that porters should be sourced only from their communities, helping to curb conflict with outsiders, and ensuring fair access to tourism revenues. KTA's initial five-year strategy was centered on self-sufficiency for track communities through the provision of tourism services.

³² Wearing, S. & Neil, J. (2009) *Ecotourism: Impacts, potentials and possibilities* (5th ed.) Oxford, U.K.: Butterworth-Heinemann.

³³ Kokoda Track Foundation (n.d.). KTF History. Retrieved 23 April 2018 from <https://ktf.ngo/kokoda/>.

Lessons learned

>>Make provisions for the voices of minority or historically-overlooked groups to be heard in planning processes.

In developing the five-year strategy, KTA used a participatory planning model in which they facilitated community visioning workshops. These workshops were conducted in such a way that male leaders were overrepresented, and women had no representation. Women fought for and secured their own meeting where they could freely have input. They advanced their own interests of being able to prepare and sell food to trekkers, rather than guides bringing prepared food for their travelers, as had previously been the case. This ensured women a share of tourism revenues.

>>Community-led planning promotes self-reliance and confidence.

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) was reported as a useful tool in the process of helping the communities make management decisions and in organizing themselves. Although outside partners planned the PRA strategy, community members collected the data amongst themselves, with very little involvement from the outside researchers. This promoted independence, self-reliance, and confidence among the communities.

>>Stick together; the benefits of multiple communities working together outweigh the challenges of maintaining consistency.

One of the challenges KTA faced was ensuring a base level of quality-of-service and infrastructure along a track encompassing 16 different village. It is unclear how they fared in overcoming these challenges, as the primary source article does not answer this question. However, a cursory web search on the matter seems to indicate that perhaps they did not overcome this challenge, as at least one of the 16 villages recently temporarily closed their section of track following the signing of a controversial mining contract.

Despite these challenges—and perhaps the recent demise of the track—regional coordination was reported to offer the following benefits:

- Economies of scale: 16 communities working together to arrange support, like marketing and training, have far greater bargaining power than one community by itself.
- More people involved in and benefitting from activities: The more people involved, the more people that are invested in the success of the project.
- Conservation: By choosing a limited number of designated camping sites that are agreed upon by all, tourists are not trampling the forest choosing whatever sites they please.

- Development of a wider array of attractions and services: More communities working to offer diverse services and attractions is better for attracting tourists and allows each community to specialize.

>>Conservation and development will often be at odds. It requires discernment, partnership, and negotiation to make wise development decisions.

The communities along the track experience continual tension between conservation and development. Money comes most often from exploiting natural resources and it is tempting to exploit resources beyond what is sustainable in order to provide a better livelihood for a people that otherwise rely on subsistence agriculture.

For example, each village can still make its own decisions about the land it owns along the track. One village recently signed a contract with a multinational mining firm, which, if executed, means the track will have to be moved to accommodate the mining. The community has threatened to completely shut down their portion of the track if other communities try to intervene, politically. This demonstrates that among diverse communities, there are times when communities are not in agreement as to how to balance development and conservation. Negotiation and dispute resolution skills are critical to sustainability with many communities sharing power in administering the track.

>>Successful tourism enterprises provide economic opportunities to engage younger generations.

As is true in many rural and indigenous communities around the world, younger generations are not interested in subsistence agriculture. Instead, they are moving away to urban centers to seek more lucrative and professional livelihoods. A more formal tourism sector in their communities affords them economic opportunities that could keep them in their ancestral villages, preserving culture, language and a way of life.



Case Study 2

Mapu Lahual, Chile

Case Summary³⁴

Alerce is an endangered species of evergreen tree native to southern Chile. Since logging of alerce was prohibited by anti-deforestation regulations in Chile, the local communities there found themselves with limited economic resources and low incomes, as alerce trade had been the primary source of income for most of the indigenous people of southern Chile.

The Mapu Lahual Network of Indigenous Parks (RML), an ecotourism development and conservation project, was established in 2000 by elected leaders of the indigenous Huilliche communities of southern Chile. They received technical support from public agencies and financial assistance from national and environmental conservation organizations. The primary purpose in creating RML was to increase and diversify incomes of community members in a way that preserves the environment and culture. In November 2004, RML launched ecotourism businesses in parks where they secured government permission to operate, providing services highlighting their cultural and natural resources. Evaluation studies of the project made during the following three years showed that tourism has become a reliable source of income and employment for the members of RML and their families.

RML relies on ecotourism for sustainable economic development, believing it promotes conservation of the natural and cultural resources while also providing decent incomes to local people. The tourism activities provided in southern Chile include volcano-climbing, skiing, rafting, surfing, fly-fishing and horse riding, along with cultural activities, from religious festivals to providing traditional food and drink, as well as a range of museums which rank among the best in Latin America.³⁵

Lessons Learned

>>Establish trust with cooperation.

Cooperation between the leaders of the Huilliche, public and government officials, and environment conservation organizations provided a base to create RML. This cooperation fostered trust among participants in the decision-making process. Trust was essential for diverse parties to feel comfortable advocating for their interests and working together to pursue consensus. The creation of RML gave the communities a stronger, united voice, causing the Chilean government to take more notice of their advocacy.

³⁴ McAlpin, M. (2008). Conservation and community-based development through ecotourism in the temperate rainforest of Southern Chile. *Policy Sciences*, 41, 51–69.

³⁵ Nahuelhual, L., Carmona, A., Lozada, P., Jaramillo, A., & Aguayo, M. (2013). Mapping recreation and ecotourism as a cultural ecosystem service: An application at the local level in Southern Chile. *Applied Geography*, 40, 71–82. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.APGEOG.2012.12.004>.

>>Accountability and financial transparency to build trust

One lesson RML adapted from the success of another ecotourism pilot project launched in 2000 in the community of Maicolpi, was to establish a transparent bookkeeping and income distribution model. Leaders of Maicolpi created a system that effectively tracked and distributed the income generated from different tourism activities among community members and their families and kept a percentage for facilities maintenance. To build trust among its members and enhance transparency, RML followed a Maicolpi strategy: allowing a financial oversight committee to present finances at each community meeting.

>>Establish a concrete management plan with specified rules, sanctions, and associated resources.

RML established a management plan but encountered challenges in limiting overuse of natural resources. Their plan delineated forest types based on the dominant tree species, trails and facilities, but the plan lacked specific management rules and sanctions. Without precisely determining these, and the related activities and requisite financial resources, the management plan was not effective in conserving natural resources. The lack of a clear vision among RML leaders and members about how to use funds led to incomplete implementation of some parts of the project which slowed the progress of the development program, reducing the leverage of RML and accountability of its leaders to their current and potential funders.

>>Create community centers to provide environmental and cultural information.

The RML communities established four community centers around four parks where they operate tourism businesses as bases to:

- (1) Promote RML tourism services by selling materials such as publications, maps, gifts and products that reflect the cultural heritage of the RML communities and the history of southern Chile's archaeological sites.
- (2) Train community members how to interact professionally with tourists.
- (3) Serve as a location for community meetings to discuss the future development of RML and strengthen local capacity.

>>Participatory decision-making is essential for community support.

One of RML's main weaknesses was confusion among members because management did not offer sufficient opportunities for participation in decision-making. When development progress slowed, members argued that it was due to RML leaders withholding information,

emphasizing that community involvement, inclusion, and participation are key to sustaining development, satisfying expectations, and obtaining desired results.

>>Communities that have the authority to monitor implementation and progress are more effective in achieving their goals.

To assess their successes, RML sat procedures allowed the communities' members to monitor different phases of the projects' implementation. In cooperation with Fondo Bosque Templado (FBT), a local NGO concerned with conservation projects, RML developed a tool to support the monitoring and evaluation of the impact of the project on their economic status. The evaluation process included visiting the communities and created the opportunity for feedback and self-appraisal.

>>There must be sufficient returns on investment for communities to see the value of conservation in the long-term.

Ecotourism literature suggests that rural communities should be able to successfully conserve their natural resources if they see sufficient economic benefits from their work. Some researchers are skeptical, asserting that sustainable tourism projects cannot lead to conservation because of insufficient financial incentives^{36,37}. For Chile, or any similar case, the future impact of the project on both conservation and the RML communities' per-capita income depends on the number of tourists and how the tourism businesses are managed. To conclude, setting an effective marketing strategy is the key to attract the more tourists to financially sustain ecotourism ventures.

³⁶ Honey, M. (1999). Treading lightly? Eco-tourism's impact on the environment. *Environment*, 41, 4–32.

³⁷ Isaacs, J. C. (2000). The limited potential of ecotourism to contribute to wildlife conservation. *Wildlife Society Bulletin*, 28, 61–69.



Case Study 3 San Miguel del Bala, Bolivia

Case Summary³⁸

The Tacana indigenous community of San Miguel is located in the remote Bolivian Amazon. In the early 1990s, the community experienced conflict surrounding extensive logging in the area. There was economic opportunity for local men who worked for logging companies, but there was constant tension between economic development and conservation. At this time, the main sources of income for the Tacana were timber and non-timber forest products, agriculture and fishing. In 1996, the Bolivian government, as part of nationwide conservation efforts, created the Madidi National Park. The laws of the new park prohibited logging and barred San Miguel residents from their normal subsistence hunting and gathering activities within park boundaries. This meant exclusion from historic Tacana territory as well as the loss of economic opportunity.

Tourism was on the rise at Madidi in the late 1990s and at the same time that the Tacana were prohibited from using the new park lands, they noticed that people entering the park under the guise of tourism went unchecked. Private tour agencies and even NGOs took advantage of increasing tourism in the new park, and some wanted to open business headquarters in San Miguel, but balked at the idea of giving a portion of their earnings to community development projects. In the absence of logging and other forest-based subsistence activities, many Tacana people worked for these private agencies, but often were not paid fairly.

After watching a number of private agencies and other communities build resorts near Madidi, San Miguel residents decided it was time to start their own venture to capitalize on tourism and keep outsiders from taking advantage of the community and its territory. They launched San Miguel del Bala ecotourism lodge in 2003 in the buffer zone of Madidi National Park. Construction lasted from 2002 to 2003, followed by training of community members to run and serve in all positions in the lodge from 2003 to 2005. These activities were funded by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other government and NGO funds. The community used the management of its earliest grants as experience to strengthen its ability to manage the finances of the business and to garner further financial support.

Not everyone in the community wanted to be part of this new venture. 40 families became legal co-owners or associates, benefiting directly from the success of the lodge in terms of formal payment for work. Others benefited through community support for healthcare services or the local school, which received little support from government. They were also able to sell produce from subsistence farming efforts to the lodge. This meant everyone in the

³⁸ Peredo, B. (2015). Indigenous tourism and social entrepreneurship in the Bolivian Amazon: Lessons from San Miguel del Bala. *The International Indigenous Policy Journal*, 6 (4), 1-26.

community was directly or indirectly benefiting from the new lodge, lending it strong community support.

Associates were required to attend quarterly lodge meetings where key decisions were made, and distribution of profits decided. Financial or work penalties were instituted for those not attending without a good excuse, ensuring full participation in decision-making. To avoid bias, they used blind voting for major decisions and leadership elections; any associate could request blind voting on a contentious issue. Revenues were largely reinvested in developing the business but associates also received a distribution of profits every year, along with aid to the community in the form of support for healthcare, education and infrastructure.

Aside from its success, San Miguel faced many challenges in opening the new lodge. They struggled to come up with marketing strategies and sought UNDP funding to help. They were granted support to shore up this area because of the fact that UNDP witnessed their success in managing previous grants. They also secured the help of a network of international volunteers to assist with marketing by doing online promotion, writing reports, and even doing business administration training. Another challenge they faced with their workforce was pay. While they were able to increase wages 150% from 2008 to 2014, they still paid less than private agencies. This made it hard to keep their young people engaged in the lodge and meant that, at times, they had to hire from outside the community to be sufficiently staffed.

The lodge was prosperous from its inception, but three things contributed greatly to its success. The first was stable, visionary leadership. The initial leader stayed on for nine years, establishing protocols and strategy that allowed for steady growth and community-wide support. The second was installing solar panels on cabins. Previously, the only way to enjoy Madidi Park for more than a day trip was to camp overnight. Realizing that tourists might want more, San Miguel built solar-powered cabins, which offered desired amenities and proved to be an eco-friendly attraction. Finally, with growing numbers of tourists and an innovative indigenous economic model, San Miguel del Bala attracted international press, like the BBC. This helped with marketing to foreigners and made the lodge a place of international interest.

Lessons Learned

>>Use the management of seed grants as a training ground for financial management of the business.

The San Miguel community received early, successive grants to do community-based projects, then to construct the lodge, and finally, to train staff in business administration. They

took the management of the grants seriously and used them as opportunities to hone financial systems and skills. They attribute the healthy management of these grants to success in getting later grants from UNDP to expand the lodge and shore up weak areas, like marketing.

>>Network with interested international friends who can help from afar.

San Miguel's success is due, in part, to a group of committed international volunteers that helped with marketing. Individuals worked on online promotion, writing reports, and even visiting to conduct in-person business administration training.

>>Attract international press.

San Miguel del Bala wanted to attract more international tourists to compete with the private tour operators. They did this by being innovative (installing solar panels to power cabins, for example). Their story was unique enough to garner press coverage from the likes of the BBC.

>>Secure community-wide support by finding ways for non-participating community members to benefit from tourism operations.

Not every household in the San Miguel community joined the tourism business. Those who didn't benefitted indirectly and therefore, community support for the venture remained high. Indirect benefits included the ability to sell agricultural products to the lodge and financial distributions to the local school and healthcare.

>>Ensure ongoing commitment of those involved in business.

Unexcused absences at quarterly administration meetings of San Miguel del Bala were met with monetary or work penalties. This ensured that associates attended every meeting where crucial decisions were made about leadership, lodge problems, training, and profit distribution.

>>Strong leadership is critical, especially in early years.

A major part of San Miguel del Bala's success is attributed to the stability its first leader gave to the project. He led for nine years and established a lot of processes and systems that paved the way for a smooth, democratic leadership transition later. He is thought of as the engine for the project's success, constantly pursuing the dream of a community-based ecotourism project.

>>Empower the community by letting community members lead as much of the development as possible.

San Miguel del Bala was envisioned and developed by the community, with outside support. This fact led to increased confidence, technical ability, independence, and a sense of pride on the part of community members. It also strengthened the community's ability to negotiate contracts with external partners and the government.



Case Study 4 Vatulele Island, Fiji

Case Summary³⁹

Fiji is a country in the southwest Pacific Ocean and is made up of more than 300 islands. It is globally branded as a tropical paradise destination. In the minds of prospective tourists, Fiji's islands fit the quintessential beach holiday image of sun, sea, and sand where one can truly relax. Since the 1960s, the tourism sector in Fiji has been largely dominated by multinational corporations and foreign investors who have the capacity to establish fancy hotels and resorts that attract tourists who are seeking relaxation and enjoyment on Fiji's shores. The income generated by tourism in Fiji largely bypasses local people, as their participation in tourism is limited to semi-skilled jobs such as security, laundry services or room cleaning in the resorts. In addition, military coups in 2000 and 2006 caused political unrest which made many potential visitors wary of Fiji. The loss of tourism only added to the suffering of Fiji's people who relied on the sector as their primary source of income.

Recently, alternative tourism markets have been encouraged by the government as a mechanism to overcome the problems produced by the structure of the tourism industry in Fiji. The Lomanikaya Ecotourism Project (LEP) was established in 2002 in the village of Lomanikaya on Vatulele island to provide economic development opportunities and supplementary sources of income to the local people by supporting them in establishing their own tourism ventures. The LEP was initiated to help Fiji achieve its triple-bottom-line development goals: creating an integrated economy, securing employment, and conserving culture.

In 2002, the project approached the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) to fund a business plan that required purchasing a boat to facilitate daily trips to Vatulele island. The plan proposed a program that included a visit to the village of Lomanikaya, a cross-island walk passing by heritage sites, and a cultural performance. Because the proposal was weak in terms of its operational strategy and revealed that villagers had little or no appreciation of potential tourists' expectations, CIDA decided not to fund the project fearing that the low quality of service would jeopardize its sustainability. CIDA also felt that the plan followed the same path of many unsuccessful ecotourism ventures: it did not ensure environmental integrity.

After three years of discussion and development, the communities of Vatulele succeed in obtaining the desired funding after reconfiguring their business plan to provide a high-quality product that ensure environmental sustainability. Indeed, the new model had the capacity to

³⁹ Doorne, S. (2008). Bridging the global–local divide. *Tourism and Entrepreneurship* (First Edit, pp. 203–222). Elsevier Inc. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-7506-8635-8.00011-3>

offer organised, high quality experiences to a well-established tourism market. LEP learned many lessons as they launched their tourism venture, some of which apply to ASODESTY.

Lessons Learned

>>Use critical feedback to improve funding proposals.

The first and most important lesson to be learned from the Lomanikaya Ecotourism Project is how the communities of Vatulele Island were flexible to adjust their business plan after initial rejection from funders. They spent three years responding to critical funder feedback and then reapplied for funding. They received that funding because of the changes they made.

>>Introduce new mechanisms to solve old problems.

Rather than attracting lots of tourists, the ecotourism model proposed by LEP relied on attracting visitors who sought—and were willing to pay more for—an alternative tourism product. Their model did not rest heavily on investment in infrastructure or capital-intensive projects; instead, it relied on social and cultural capital to develop tourism products and services.

>>Offer unique experiences

LEP focused on providing niche-oriented, non-traditional tourism products and services that often took tourists out of the traditional resort environment for natural and cultural experiences. Their day-long program began with a welcoming ‘kava ceremony’, following which, visitors were taken on a guided walk through the village. On their tour of the village, visitors watched the making of ‘masi’, a ceremonial cloth made from mulberry tree bark and beaten to form large sheets which are then painted in traditional patterns. The walk allowed visitors to observe subsistence plantations and see how traditional medicines are gathered from the forest. Along the way, tourists were taken to visit archaeological and cultural sites. Finally, visitors lunched at the spectacular western beach, taking the opportunity to swim and relax before returning to the village.

>>Promote heritage and correct misinformation.

In tourism ads for Fiji, appealing fruits and seafood are frequently displayed in vibrant color, along with traditional architecture, like thatch-roof huts. This imagery is what tourists expect when they visit Fiji, and these expectations had both an upside and downside for LEP. On the positive side, residents were able to promote their unique tourism product by showcasing

traditional habits, such as using natural materials like woven pandanus, coconut fronds or banana leaves to package food, rather than using plastic bags. The downside of these popular tourism images was that LEP was not always able to meet tourist expectations. For example, the fruit pictured in ads and found at high-end resorts was often imported. Tourists had been misled to expect that such the advertised fruits were in season year-round and concurrently, which was not accurate. Another example had to do with architecture. While some Lomanikaya villagers lived in traditional-looking huts, many did not. Tourists' expectations of an idyllic village were shattered when they realized that many houses were constructed of cement blocks with tin roofs. Managing these expectations was a challenge for LEP.

>> Educate local service providers to be aware of and meet tourist expectations around safety.

As LEP launched its tourism services, one of the difficulties it faced was in the hygienic preparation of food for guests. Village women made the food, but because they had not previously prepared food in a commercial setting, they were unaware of the sorts of hygiene standards that would be expected by international tourists. Therefore, when assessing one of LEP's requests for funding, CIDA identified a need for education around food safety, preparation, handling and serving, and creating a hospitable and aesthetically-pleasing dining environment. In order to be competitive with the luxury resorts nearby, CIDA recognized the importance of adhering to basic food safety standards expected by foreigners and encouraged its grantee to invest in this area.

>> Pollution impedes conservation and tourism

One of the biggest problems that faced LEP was huge amounts of garbage on the beaches and in the villages. There was no official garbage collection along the coast to rid the area of plastics, packaging, bottles, glass and discarded refuse from passing boats. Villagers also freely disposed of and burned trash in the forest as a matter of habit. For any tourist from a target market where environmental education was well entrenched, this situation was awkward on an "ecotourism" adventure. Success for the Lomanikaya project meant providing experiences which matched visitor's expectations regarding environmental cleanliness standards. This included educating villagers about the importance of discarding rubbish in trash receptacles only.



Strategic Priorities & Deliverables

ASODESTY is ready to launch their tourism services and start attracting visitors as soon as they get the requisite concession permits from the government. In early February 2018, they had a meeting with the government in which all parties agreed that the community-based tourism pilot was to move ahead. They were promised the necessary government signatures by the end of the month, lending a sense of urgency to the priorities below. While the University of Minnesota consulting team created a few of the tools ASODESTY and Rainforest Alliance will use for this venture, background research and case studies were included to give the team and the clients a better understanding of the nuances within similar projects around the world. There are many lessons to be learned from the case studies, but a few lessons are especially pertinent to each tool created by the university team in order to facilitate a more effective use of the tools.

Priority 1: Funding

ASODESTY is about to initiate their enterprise work involving the community members providing goods and services at Yaxha, but they first need a reliable source of investment capital to invest in the infrastructure and equipment necessary to launch. Access to financing is vital to promote entrepreneurship and development, and to building a competitive, innovative and sustainable tourism enterprise. However, access to finances remains an issue for a community-based venture like ASODESTY's tourism enterprises.

The funding portfolio (Appendix A) identifies seven possible funding sources from a wide range of private, public and nonprofit international donors that could invest seed capital of \$20,000 dollars or more to help create, operate and expand their business, and remain competitive among other enterprises in the region. In selecting funding sources to include in the portfolio, the areas of focus were sought: conservation and protection of the environment, socio-economic development, economic empowerment, and community entrepreneurship and education. The following seven funding sources include a brief description of the projects each supports; for full information on each funder, see Appendix A.

1. **The Critical Ecosystems Partnership Fund** is a global program that provides funding and technical assistance to non-governmental organizations, awarding grants from \$20,000 to \$150,000. The fund addresses challenges by empowering civil society groups like ASODESTY in developing countries and transitional economies. The application deadline was March 19, 2018.

2. **The Alstom Foundation** focuses on improving the living conditions of communities around the world. This foundation awards grants up to \$100,000. The majority of their funding (80%) has gone towards socio-economic development projects. ASODESTY's project falls into two categories this foundation seeks to fund: protection of the environment and socio-economic development. The application deadline is June 30, 2018.
3. **The Commonwealth Foundation** offers grants of up to \$70,000 in support of innovative project ideas and approaches that seek to strengthen the ability of civic voices to engage with governments. ASODESTY's project qualifies for this grant because it strengthens the ability of community members to engage with government by holding the government accountable to its legal obligation to allow communities to operate enterprises in Yaxha National Park (community concessions). The annual application deadline varies from the end of December to the beginning of January.
4. **The Coca-Cola Foundation** supports many community and economic development programs in Latin America. ASODESTY's project falls into three categories Coca-Cola seeks to fund: women's economic empowerment and entrepreneurship, conservation, and community and civic initiatives. There is no deadline for this application.
5. **The Rufford Foundation Small Grant** provides grants of 18,000 for small nature or biodiversity conservation projects and pilot programs in developing countries. Their funding priorities align with ASODESTY because sustainable tourism enterprises are projected to have a long-lasting impact on livelihoods, forest conservation, wildlife conservation, and the excavation and restoration of ancient ruins. There is no deadline for this application.
6. **The Oak Foundation** focuses on providing long-term support to its partners through a series of small, consecutive grants. They fund time-bound projects, core costs, technical assistance and collaborative activities. ASODESTY aligns with the foundation's priorities of social justice and projects that are realistic with solution-based strategies and objectives. This foundation only works through NGOs and their grants are considered on a rolling basis.
7. **The GEF Small Grants Program (SGP)**, provides grants up to \$50,000 to local communities including indigenous people, community-based organizations, and other non-governmental groups for projects focused on biodiversity conservation, climate

change mitigation and adaptation, land degradation mitigation, and sustainable forest management. There is no deadline for this application.

Priority 2: Financial Management

According to Radachowsky, et al. (2012), when concessions similar to Yaxha-Nakum-Naranjo have failed, it is often due in part to poor financial management and lack of transparency, which has resulted in internal conflict and threatened the sustainability of the resources in the area. Community-based enterprises do not always have access to skilled accountants who can keep their books and perform internal audits; nevertheless, ASODESTY is determined to avoid the pitfall of financial mismanagement and has requested the development of a simple, Excel-based bookkeeping system that they can use to track revenues and expenses. As a pilot project with many business components, an organized, simple record-keeping system is imperative from the start. This will keep their various transactions in order and provide a record from which to generate reports proving the pilot's sustainability to the government and funders.

The bookkeeping system created by the team (Appendix B) allows the communities of ASODESTY to easily record all financial information and transactions that occur from operating their tourism enterprises and administrative activities. The primary purpose of the system is to support ASODESTY in managing their finances by precisely calculating incomes, expenses, and profits and/or losses. The system templates for an income statement and a balance sheet, which are effective support tools in making financial and strategic decisions, and in dealing with the business' financial stakeholders.

The bookkeeping system uses a simple single-entry method that reports to one account when transactions are recorded. The system can record disbursements and receipts, whether they are incurred in cash, checks, or bank transfers. The single-entry method is commonly used by small businesses with few transactions and provides a starting point for ASODESTY's early days. The team chose the single-entry method because it is simple, practical, flexible, and relevant to the type of business ASODESTY intends to launch.

The key features of the bookkeeping system are:

- **Journal entries sheets** to record the money in and out transactions on a daily basis and for each month separately.

- **An income statement** that shows the income and expenses of the business for a given period and calculates whether the business has incurred a net profit or loss in that period.
- **A balance sheet** that shows the assets, liabilities, and equity of the business on any given date.

The team also prepared a full instruction manual for users that describes each sheet, its functions, and how to use it, supported by examples with screenshots.

Priority 3: Monitoring

The project at Yaxha-Nakum-Naranjo National Park is a pilot program, meant to test the ability of communities to effectively manage tourism enterprises in a national park. If the pilot proves effective, the government may be inclined to extend the program at Yaxha and expand it to other parks, benefiting the rural communities that surround such areas with a sustainable means to live. ASODESTY recognizes the importance of monitoring their project and evaluating its success, both for their own improvement and for reporting to the government to ensure the long-term viability of their tourism enterprises.

The university team has developed a monitoring tool (Appendix C) for ASODESTY to help them track progress that may interest the government. The primary purpose of this document is to aid Rainforest Alliance and ASODESTY by providing a monitoring tool and a plan for a future evaluation. This tool will help ASODESTY stay organized during the project and keep track of information that may one day be used if an evaluation is conducted. The tool provides guidance on stakeholders to engage and includes an outline for a future evaluation team to set up an evaluation process.

From the case studies, the team felt that lessons learned from two different cases can guide RA and ASODESTY to establish a way to use this tool in the most effective way possible. In the Papua New Guinea case study, the team found that in order to keep the project sustainable there was an effort to **Empower community members to conduct self-monitoring**. Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) was used as a useful tool in the process of helping the communities make management decisions and in organizing themselves. Even though outside partners planned the PRA strategy it was really the individuals within the community that collected the data amongst themselves, with very little involvement from researchers. This promoted independence, self-reliance, and confidence among the communities. In terms of the work ASODESTY and RA are doing, this lesson could be considered when using the monitoring

tool to maybe have community members or members of ASODESTY conduct the monitoring process instead of someone from RA or partner organizations.

Another important lesson to consider is from Bolivia where the project had direct and indirect beneficiaries but those involved within the project devoted time and effort to **Assess impact on non-participating members** in the project. Not every household in the San Miguel community joined the tourism business. Those who didn't benefitted indirectly and therefore, community support for the venture remained high. Indirect benefits included the ability to sell agricultural products to the lodge and financial distributions to the local school and healthcare. As a team, our understanding of the project is that the benefit isn't only going to be on the direct beneficiaries of the business enterprises but also the community through the community fund. For ASODESTY and RA, part of the monitoring tool asks about community income and livelihood changes and involving the community through serves, interviews can help understand their situation or ways it could be responded to using this project.

Priority 4: Marketing

ASODESTY recognizes the importance of attracting a broad base of tourists from Guatemala and abroad to support their enterprises. With the support of Rainforest Alliance, ASODESTY is confident in its ability to reach Guatemalans with word of their tourism services at Yaxha; however, they also want to attract foreign tourists and they have a ready market in the tourists that already visit the region for Tikal. They understand the power of an online presence—website and social media—in spreading the word outside of Guatemala and are eager for assistance in setting up a marketing plan specifically targeting international visitors. This plan would enable them to display beautiful images of the park and their services, along with tour package descriptions, and pricing information. They would also be able to sell tours in advance, which would bolster their financial position and increase the project's sustainability.

The marketing plan (Appendix D) is a first attempt at identifying strategic communications objectives, platforms and messaging. The university team has completed each section according to their limited knowledge of ASODESTY's work and plans; however, instructions are included in italics at the beginning of each section to allow ASODESTY to re-write the draft language to better fit their needs. The end of the plan includes tables to record specific communications activities, deadlines and target audience numbers. By tracking the reach and response rate of each communication platform over time, ASODESTY can determine which platforms offer the most return on investment.