

COMMUNICATION ON ENGAGEMENT, COE

Grupo Ecológico Sierra Gorda IAP

Period covered by this Communication on Engagement

From: 1 January 2021

Until: 31 December 2022

Part I. Declaration of continuing support of Executive Director or equivalent position



01 September 2023

To whom it may concern:

I am pleased to confirm that Grupo Ecológico Sierra Gorda I.A.P. reaffirms its support for the United Nations Global Compact and its Ten Principles in the areas of human rights, labor standards, environment and anti-corruption. This is our Communication on Engagement with the UN Global Compact. We welcome feedback on its content.

In this Communication on Engagement, we describe the measures taken by our organization to support the UN Global Compact and its principles as suggested for an organization such as ours. We are also committed to sharing this information with our stakeholders through our main communication channels.

Sincerely,



Martha Isabel Ruiz Corzo

General Director

Part II. Description of measures

The Sierra Gorda Biosphere Reserve is a protected natural area, considered the last well-conserved territory in central Mexico. It presents highly complex management for the conservation of nature and is made up of five municipalities in the north of the state of Querétaro with 638 communities in extreme poverty, so it is necessary to operate in an inclusive manner with solutions that provide sustainable economic development.

Declared a protected natural area in 1997, it is the only reserve created by a grassroots movement in partnership with the federal government. Since then we have been described as the most participatory Biosphere Reserve on the planet.

Formalized as an organization in 1987, Grupo Ecológico Sierra Gorda began work with a community environmental education strategy and with reforestation and participatory monitoring activities which in 1997 led to the region being declared a protected natural area, the only biosphere reserve in Mexico to emerge based on local initiative, and it is considered a unique case of co-participation between the federal government and civil society. This small local initiative, with regional influence, has become a solid figure in the field of sustainable development and biodiversity conservation, achieving wide national and international recognition.

Grupo Ecológico Sierra Gorda IAP, the parent organization, coordinates the Alliance for the Conservation of the Sierra Gorda Biosphere Reserve, conducting a continuous education program oriented towards sustainability, involving all community actors, offering through the Earth Center productive training, solid waste management, regenerative soil management, food production and development of nature-based solutions. We manage and promote interinstitutional relationships, giving impulse to public policies for climate action.

Bosque Sustentable AC provides technical assistance to forest producers of timber and nontimber forest products, including aromatic herbs, carbon reduction payments to forest owners, operation of fire control brigades, technical assistance to agricultural producers and monitoring of private wildlife reserve areas.

Sierra Gorda Products and Services is an integrated company that continuously promotes the development of microenterprises, tourism marketing activities, and community products.

Viva Sierra Gorda, based in San Francisco, California, serves as an international advocate and promoter and is a member of the Earth Island Institute's network of projects.

The coordinated work of these organizations generates local benefits, mitigates global warming, regenerates natural resources by increasing ecosystem services and provides social and economic development options with nature-friendly alternatives, aligning our strategies, values and actions with two of the 10 principles of the UN Global Compact:

Principle 7: Businesses should support a precautionary approach to environmental challenges.

In this case our activities are sustainable. They seek the conservation of resources with minimum impact on the environment. We develop methodologies and tools with proven effectiveness for the conservation and recovery of soil, water, forests and biodiversity, with total respect for the environment.

Principle 8: undertake initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility.

The raising of funds from various national and international donors has allowed us to support forestry producers for the payment of environmental services, strengthening the mechanism of carbon offsets, mitigating environmental footprints and valuing the reserve's ecosystem services.

We are working on 5 main strategies:

1) Community environmental education.

Consolidating the participatory culture of protection and respect for nature at the local and regional level. Transferring knowledge, tools and actions to increase ecosystem-based climate change adaptation and mitigation. Involving the participation of students, teachers and parents of elementary, middle and high schools, in alliance with state educational authorities and local authorities, to design projects that include sanitation actions, water collection, recycling centers, healthy cafeterias, children's forests, and other actions to strengthen the health and climate action capabilities of their own communities.

Through Centro Tierra and its educational offering, both face-to-face and virtual, organizing actions and events for the transfer of regenerative tools at all levels to stimulate community participation and promote environmental and cultural values, food production, solid waste management, reforestation, participatory monitoring, conservation and improvement of the community and the natural environment.

2) Regenerative management of natural resources.

Conservation and regeneration of forests and soils with a network of private reserves for the conservation of biodiversity on 7,500 ha, in addition to forests under regenerative management with payments to the owners for the reduction of carbon footprints, almost 25,000 ha effectively protected.

Seeking optimal use and regeneration of soils and forests, generating economic value for nature's services, achieving administrative and organizational regularization, reconciling biodiversity conservation with the communities.

3) Productive diversification.

Combat poverty by consolidating the conservation economy, strengthening capacities to expand opportunities and reduce inequalities, increase primary productivity, strengthen local capacities, with tools for productive diversification, providing technical assistance, training and follow-up to small producers in rural areas, with new techniques for the agroecological production of healthy food.

4) Community-based tourism.

The micro tourism operators of the Sierra Gorda Destination are provided with support for activities, training, the improvement of infrastructure, equipment and image, application of quality standards, promotion of associativity, commercialization of services and promotion of the tourism offering, with permanent support in the process of organizing tourism activities.

5) Promoting public policies for climate action.

Development and promotion of public policies for climate action, such as the Querétaro Low Emissions Seal, a mechanism to mitigate carbon footprints under a local protocol, whose resources are used for payments for environmental services to forest owners who implement conservation actions on their land.

Part III. Measurement of results

Our organization operates a system for the analysis of social and environmental return on investment, integrating monetizable, quantitative, qualitative and narrative indicators, which are updated periodically through the application of surveys and field interviews, reports of follow-up visits and systematization of information.

The maintenance of this information allows us to validate the generation of knowledge and the system in order to operate a more adaptive management of rapid response, which seeks to give value to the intangible elements of social capital with the participation of numerous social and institutional actors.

In this way we have kept informed both our universe of donors and many other development and conservation actors with whom we have shared these results.

The quantitative and monetizable information generated allows us to meet the different demands for measuring and quantifying the impacts of the projects we develop.

The actions conducted during the period of this report are presented below:

1) Community environmental education.

Delivery of 99,000 trees to 88 communities, with the participation of 3,556 people, to implement school and community reforestation actions.

Delivery of 13,072 copies of educational materials such as flyers, posters, decals, sheets, banners, tarpaulins, magazines, newsletters, ecological bags and brochures on environmental issues.

Organization of four camps with young ecological leaders on the themes "Nature-based solutions" and "Food production practices" with the participation of 84 young people from elementary and high schools.

Painting of 17 murals in public places with the themes "Causing a forest fire is a federal crime," the "Zero Waste" campaign, and "Biodiversity".

90 environmental awareness sessions, with the topics of care and respect for the environment, environmental services of forests, the "Zero Garbage" campaign and separation of solid waste, with the attendance of 1,606 students from elementary and high schools.

Transmission of 110 broadcasts of the radio program "Our Land" through the Querétaro Radio and Television station.

Held 35 virtual meetings with the participation of 1,357 teachers and students from elementary schools, with the theme "Raising awareness of the climate emergency, a call for local action," as well as six webinars with the participation of 123 teachers.

Participation in the Community Education Leaders Program in collaboration with the National Council for the Promotion of Education (CONAFE), providing support to 27 projects and delivery of didactic materials on climate action.

Conducted two public address campaigns on solid waste minimization and fire prevention.

56 community meetings were held, with the attendance of 936 people, addressing the topics of waste minimization and forest fire prevention, and 45 GESG anniversary posters were handed out.

Waste minimization campaign, with 162 visits to 290 merchants in 21 localities. In addition, 80 posters were placed with messages to disseminate the "Zero Garbage" campaign and support and dissemination materials were delivered, such as ecological bags, stickers and posters for waste separation.

48 clean-up campaigns in 37 locations, with the participation of 1,024 people.

Strengthening of 10 collection centers for recyclable materials, with improvements to their infrastructure, as well as specialized machinery and equipment for better operation.

Strengthening of 47 small recyclers, providing equipment and supplies to improve their work, equipment for 40 segregators who separate and collect recyclable materials in sanitary landfills.

Formation of 26 community committees, with the participation of 523 people, to follow up on the project "Water recharge and sanitation of water resources. A comprehensive strategy in the Sierra Gorda of Querétaro Biosphere Reserve," financed by Nacional Monte de Piedad - PepsiCo Foundation, which enabled the installation of 30 water storage tanks with a capacity of 75,000 liters, as well as the installation of five additional tanks financed by the State Water Commission of Querétaro.

With funds from Nacional Monte de Piedad and the PepsiCo Foundation, 80 water tanks with a capacity of 2,800 liters were donated to schools in the region for storing rainwater.

A total of 38 domestic water collection systems were installed, donated by the Rotoplas company.

Conducted 45 community diagnoses on the topic of "Water and climate action for conservation," with the participation of 929 people from 45 communities.

The following events were held at the Centro Tierra educational center:

- Biomagnetism Workshop.
- The "Training of new beekeepers" course.
- Water Forum", with the participation of 48 students in person and 10 via Zoom, within the framework of World Water Day.
- 2 workshops on "Establishment of vegetable gardens".
- As part of the alliance with the Monterrey Institute of Technology and Higher Education (ITESM), we launched the Centro Tierra Sierra Gorda Virtual Learning Center, a training space for self-employment and awareness and learning on environmental issues; through the ITESM platform we offer the Climate Action Portal for All, for which Grupo Ecológico Sierra Gorda has developed virtual content that serves as support for the delivery of courses.
- Design and delivery of the Diploma in Sustainable Development "Teaching Tools for Climate Action," in partnership with the Monterrey Institute of Technology and Higher Education (ITESM), through its "Teaching Teachers" platform, aimed at teachers in the states of Querétaro and San Luis Potosí. In collaboration with the Basic Education Services Unit of the State of Querétaro (USEBEQ) and the Secretariat of Sustainable Development of the State of Querétaro (SEDESU), 167 teachers graduated from the first generation, as well as 40 ITESM teachers taking the course.
- Environmental awareness workshop for 13 tutors of the Diploma in Sustainable Development "Teaching Tools for Climate Action."

2) Regenerative management of natural resources.

With resources from the World Land Trust, payments for environmental services were made to 60 forest owners in the municipalities of Jalpan de Serra and Landa de Matamoros in the state of Querétaro, and the municipality of Xilitla in San Luis Potosí, protecting 7,210 hectares of cloud and temperate forests.

In addition, with resources from the website Planeta Carbono Neutral and the Biodiversity Carbon project, SEDESU and the National Forestry Commission (CONAFOR), payments for environmental services were made to 21 forest owners for 1,176 hectares.

The firefighting brigade based in Valle Verde provided support to combat three forest fires in conjunction with other brigades from National Commission of Natural Protected Areas (CONANP), CONAFOR, Secretariat of Agricultura Development (SEDEA) and the municipalities.

This activity is in addition to the rehabilitation of 70 km of firebreaks and other fire prevention actions. 7,500 hectares of forest with monitoring of management for wildlife protection.

3) Productive diversification, soil regeneration and healthy agriculture.

1,090 technical assistance visits to 193 agricultural producers, vegetable and fruit growers, promoting healthy agriculture and regenerative management.

Ongoing follow-up, technical assistance and training to producers with six greenhouses producing organic vegetables.

Equipped 34 backyard gardens for the production of vegetables for subsistence, with shade netting, water tanks, hose and mesh for circulation.

Reactivation of 29 apple and avocado orchards.

Ongoing advice to 57 beekeepers with 751 hives, equipment with 100 boxes for existing apiaries, as well as for the establishment of 10 new apiaries.

Acquisition and distribution of a batch of compost, as well as 5,000 liters of soil activator to strengthen productivity in 153 hectares of corn, as well as 29 plots of fruit trees, 34 backyard gardens and six greenhouses, benefiting 133 producers.

Strengthening of two ejidos dedicated to the collection of aromatic species, distributed in 11 localities, with the participation of 163 people, through training, technical assistance and the acquisition of sifting equipment.

Training and technical assistance for the use of pine nuts as a non-timber forest species utilizing good management practices.

4) Community-based tourism.

The Sierra Gorda Tourism Services Network comprises a total of 53 micro-enterprises, including the Ecological Network, the Flavor Route and the Artisan Workshops, strengthening the conservation economy.

Held two plenary meetings with members of the Network, addressing diverse topics to strengthen their activities, as well as workshops on "Interpretation of the cultural and natural heritage of the Sierra Gorda" and "Basic accounting principles."

Management of resources for the rehabilitation and strengthening of 15 micro-enterprises, including tourist sites and establishments of the Flavor Route, as well as the delivery of recycling stations to 13 micro-enterprises.

Placement of 25 signage elements (posters, advertisements and maps) at sites of tourist importance.

Delivery of 183 copies of educational materials such as flyers, magazines, brochures, leaflets, folders, guides and tourism materials.

Promotion and sale of products from handicraft workshops and food products at inns, handicraft shops and points of sale.

Participation in the First Nature Tourism Networking Meeting in Mexico. AMTAVE 2021.

308 visits to 42 microenterprises, reviewing aspects of improvement, delivery of equipment and materials, identification of needs and verification of compliance with criteria for certification processes.

As a result of all these activities, the Sabino Seal was awarded to 11 microenterprises in the Network.

Meetings, workshops and training sessions were held as part of the certification process to obtain the EarthCheck Bronze Seal with the participation of tourism service providers, personnel from municipalities, local authorities, the National Commission for Natural Protected Areas (CONANP), the Sierra Gorda Ecological Group (GESG), the Secretary of Tourism of the Government of the State of Querétaro (SECTUR) and educational institutions.

5) Interinstitutional Management and Coordination

Interinstitutional Management and Coordination actions are permanently conducted for the conservation of the Reserve as the basis for the formation of alliances and to motivate the participation of all stakeholders involved, as well as for the development and promotion of public policies for climate action.

Meetings for the presentation of the Querétaro Model and the replication of activities of the NAMA of Subnational Actions for the Regeneration of Landscapes, with the participation of GESG, SEDESU, the federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as officials from various agencies.

Presentation of the Regenerative Agenda to Municipal Presidents elected during 2021 and members of the city councils of Landa de Matamoros, Jalpan de Serra and Arroyo Seco.

Meetings with micro-entrepreneurs of Recyclable Materials Collection Centers to coordinate follow-up actions and management of resources to strengthen the activity.

Meetings to address the water problem, obtain resources from various agencies and coordination of a multidisciplinary team, with the participation of 32 attendees, including personnel from the State Water Commission (CEA), the Autonomous University of Querétaro (UAQ), elected officials, municipalities, consultants and independent experts.

Follow-up meetings for the Regional Program for Solid Waste Management in the Sierra Gorda Biosphere Reserve to update municipal regulations on solid waste and water collection and sanitation.

Coordination of institutional and civil society actions for fire prevention and control, with the participation of 18 members of Grupo Ecológico Sierra Gorda (GESG), National Forestry Commission (CONAFOR), Sierra Gorda Biosphere Reserve (RBSG) - National Commission of Natural Protected Areas (CONANP), Querétaro Secretariat of Agricultural Development (SEDEA), federal Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT), and the municipalities of Jalpan de Serra and Arroyo Seco.

Coordination to address tourism management processes, certification and application of best practices with the participation of 95 attendees from Grupo Ecológico Sierra Gorda (GESG), Querétaro Secretariat of Tourism (SECTUR), National Commission of Natural Protected Areas (CONANP), Querétaro Secretariat of Sustainable Development (SEDESU), tourism operators in the region, municipalities, consultants and external advisors.

Coordination and work for the management of non-timber forest species, including oregano, pine nut and damiana, with the participation of 121 participants from Grupo Ecológico Sierra Gorda (GESG), Querétaro Secretariat of Sustainable Development (SEDESU), Querétaro Trust for the Conservation of the Environment (FIQMA), Serafo Environmental Consultants (SECOAM), municipalities, National Commission of Natural Protected Areas (CONANP), elected representatives, external consultants, National Forestry Commission (CONAFOR) and the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID).

Resource management with the submission of 61 proposals to private and governmental, national and international funds, of which 26% were approved.

Participation in Global Giving fundraising campaigns: Little by Little, Giving Tuesday, Climate Change, Support Young Environmental Leaders.

Monthly newsletter sent via e-mail to more than 6,000 subscribers.

Dissemination and communication through social media:

Webpage <https://sierragorda.net/> with an average of 3,320 monthly visits.

Webpage <https://sierragordaecotours.com/> with an average of 18,300 monthly visits.

Webpage <https://planetacarbononeutral.org/> with an average of 920 monthly visits.

Facebook: an average audience of 37,876 people.

Instagram: an average audience of 2,000 people.

Implementation of the "Reduce your Footprint" campaign with Mexican actor Alfonso Dosal as ambassador with the filming, editing and broadcasting of eight videos, a Facebook, Google Ads and YouTube campaign, and promotional spaces at the Querétaro Intercontinental Airport.