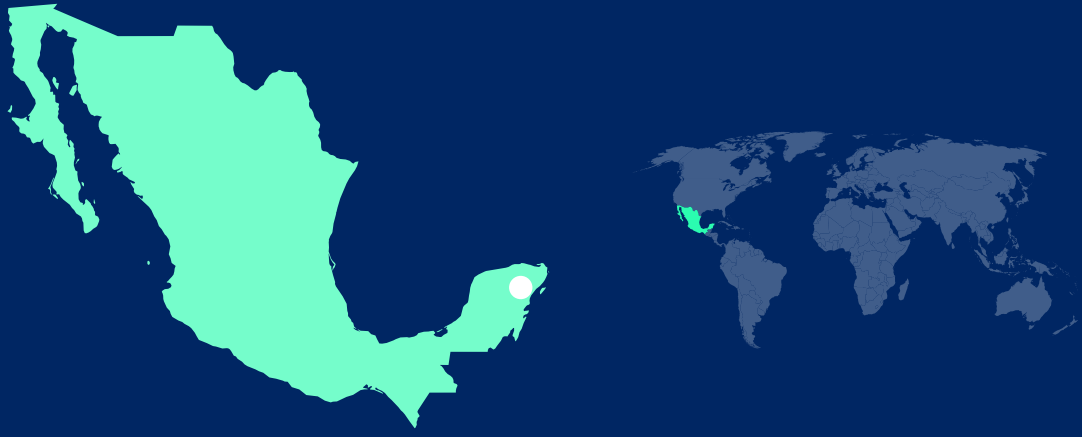


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Natural Climate Solutions in Action

Laguna Om

Project/Program Type	The project generates carbon credits not from avoided deforestation—the usual mechanism of REDD+—but by carbon sequestration. Laguna Om measures the amount of additional carbon being removed from the atmosphere by the forest through conservation activities; and registers and verifies its credits through the Climate Action Reserve (CAR).
Description	The project protects tropical forest on the Yucatan Peninsula in a rural community called an ejido and provides additional community income to residents who mostly earn a living through farming, ranching and forestry.
Location	Laguna Om is a communally governed ejido in Quintana Roo state on the Yucatan Peninsula. The project's tropical forest is a hotspot of biodiversity and a haven for threatened and endangered species like the jaguar, the harpy eagle and the Baird's tapir.
Scale	The project protects 84,000 hectares of forest on one of the largest <i>ejidos</i> in Mexico.
Number of Credits Issued to Date	422,880
Project Proponent	Toroto



Impacts

Impact To-Date

The project is completing the verification of its first carbon credits this year and will deliver over 70 percent of income from sold credits to the 500 people living at Laguna Om. Money will be spent to protect rainforest and fund job creation and economic development in the community through transparent and inclusive democratic participation, promoting gender equality and reducing social inequalities. The project promotes the conservation of the rainforest and biodiversity, reduces the main drivers for deforestation, promotes climate action and contributes directly to the increase of carbon sequestration in this region.

Projected Longer-Term Impact

The project is implementing sustainable resource management to guarantee the long-term conservation of tropical forest, reduce vulnerability to climate change and restore and increase connectivity in agricultural landscapes. Likewise, the project will establish sustainable and better-paid economic activities in rural communities that generate less environmental impact, such as agrosilvopastoral management and regenerative agriculture.



A Rural Mexican *Ejido* Leads the Way on Community-Led Climate Action

In 1941, Mayan people on the Yucatan Peninsula came together with immigrants from other parts of Mexico to form a community called Laguna Om. "At that time, you could only get here by boat or airplane," says Ady González, who serves as treasurer of Laguna Om today. Her father moved to Laguna Om in 1943 to harvest chewing gum from *chicozapote* trees. "There was nothing but forest in the area then," she says.

The jungle shrank over the decades, however, as community members became farmers, ranchers and loggers. Human-wildlife conflict became more common too. "Growing up, I would hear stories of jaguars hunting sheep and other livestock," says Elva María Leyva Cruz, a biologist who was born in Laguna Om. "Now that almost never happens, because there are so few jaguars left."

Mexico has one of the highest rates of deforestation in the world—but communities like Laguna Om are bucking the trend by funding conservation through the carbon market. Many rural Mexican communities started to govern their land collectively in associations called *ejidos* at the start of the twentieth century. Today there are nearly 30,000 *ejidos* like Laguna Om in Mexico controlling over half the country's forest resources. *Ejidos* contain more than two-thirds of the country's water and more than 80 percent of its biodiversity. Laguna Om is one of the largest *ejidos* in Mexico with 84,000 hectares of land.

As climate change became a bigger problem, the 500 people living at Laguna Om recognized the importance of protecting and restoring their forest—and the Mexican government paid

the community for ecosystem services. The voluntary carbon market was an opportunity to generate even more income for conservation and community needs. *Ejidos* in other states were protecting their forests to generate carbon credits, which companies could purchase to counterbalance their annual unabated greenhouse gas emissions. *Ejidos* could spend the income to enhance forest protections and on education, health care, infrastructure and economic development.



Elva María Leyva Cruz
Biologist
born in Laguna Om

Growing up, I would hear stories of jaguars hunting sheep and other livestock, now that almost never happens, because there are so few jaguars left.

"*Ejidos* are the solution to the problem of climate change in Mexico," says Rocío Harispuru, a co-founder of Toroto, a company based in Mexico City specializing in nature-based solutions. Because *ejidos* contained so much of Mexico's natural wealth, it was essential to engage them in conservation projects. She and three friends started Toroto in 2019 to connect businesses and ecosystem-service projects—but they quickly realized that there weren't enough projects in Mexico to meet demand. So they shifted focus to developing new projects on the ground.



84,000
hectares of tropical forest protected



7
SDGs contributed to by the project

422,880
tons CO₂e predicted to be sequestered in year one



35%
of income* reinvested in climate action by *ejidos*

Follow the progress

*Of total income received by *ejidos*



Today Toroto works with over 40 *ejidos* to protect forests to sequester carbon and generate credits, including Laguna Om.

The community of Laguna Om met with representatives from several different project developers to discuss how they could participate in the carbon market before voting to work with Toroto. The community members chose Toroto in 2021 because the company offered the *ejido* the lion's share of income—at least 70 percent from each credit—and on-the-ground technical support. Toroto sent technicians to live near the *ejido* and work with community members to calculate the carbon emissions they would be sequestering by conserving and sustainably managing the forest; to designate areas for farming, livestock and forest protection; and to limit land conversion by adopting more efficient and sustainable agricultural and ranching practices.



Rocio Harispuru
Co-founder
Toroto

Ejidos are the solution to the problem of climate change in Mexico.

"After 10 years, we want the community to become their own developers so they can do directly all the bureaucratic parts of climate action research and all the forest restoration they have to do to continue producing carbon credits", Harispuru says.

The *ejido* members meet four times each year to vote on community issues. When the first income

from carbon credits arrives –after verification is completed and the credits are sold—they'll decide democratically how to invest the money. They will reinvest at least 35 percent of the income back into climate action on their land and spend the rest on building sustainable economies and developing other social and environmental activities. Already word has spread to neighboring communities about Laguna Om's carbon project. "After Laguna Om gave us the go, we started to hear from neighboring *ejidos*," Rocio says.



Ady González
Treasurer
Laguna Om

We see our forest as a lung, not just for the ejido but for the world.

One of the interested neighbors was called Cinco de Mayo, where Elva María Leyva Cruz had moved as an adult. Elva contacted Toroto after she heard about the project in Laguna Om. Cinco de Mayo signed a contract with the company; and now Elva works as a representative for Toroto, leading outreach to other *ejidos* in Quintana Roo state. Like Laguna Om, these programs are so new that the communities haven't yet received their first carbon payments, but already Elva says she senses hope. "It's a hope for a better income, for being able to improve their houses, for purchasing necessities for school," she says.

In Laguna Om, Ady González senses not only hope but pride also—in restoring rainforest their parents left them and making an impact on climate change. "We see our forest as a lung," she says, "not just for the *ejido* but for the world."



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About the NCS Alliance

The NCS Alliance (NCSA) conveys the voice of businesses, NGOs and solution providers on the need to mobilize a high integrity demand for high quality Natural Climate Solutions (NCS). The Alliance focuses on identifying opportunities and barriers to investment in the NCS voluntary carbon market and serves as a forum for knowledge sharing and technical capacity building to ensure natural climate solutions reach their full potential in abating climate change, while also tackling nature loss and socio-economic issues. NCS in Action was established to showcase how NCS are making a real difference in the world today.

For more information visit www.naturalclimatesolutionsalliance.org and follow us on [LinkedIn](#).



Statement of Acknowledgment

The NCS in Action are testimonials designed to highlight the benefits for people and nature associated with NCS projects and programs financed through the voluntary carbon market. The NCS Alliance strongly believes that the voluntary carbon market is necessary for financing NCS projects and programs. It is critical however that it rests on the integrity of the climate benefits, i.e. the ability of credits to truly represent real and verifiable carbon reductions.

The NCS Alliance recognizes the importance of staying up-to-date with the latest science and best practices as carbon-crediting programs evolve. We acknowledge that there have been challenges with certain methodologies and that improvements have not always been made as quickly as necessary. However, we believe that this is a valuable learning-by-doing process and that scaling up NCS is crucial in achieving global 1.5C goals. In support of this, the NCS Alliance will continue to highlight projects and programs in this space while also advocating for consistent improvement in standards and methodologies. For more information about how and when these methodologies are updated see [Verra](#), [Plan Vivo](#), [ACR](#), [ART](#).

NCS in Action is made possible with generous funding support from the We Mean Business Coalition.

Disclaimer

Inclusion of an NCS project or program in the NCS in Action program does not imply a recommendation to purchase, trade or retire credits associated with the project or program.

The NCS Alliance and its members take no responsibility for the purchase, trade or retirement of credits from these projects and programs. Instead, it recommends that individuals, companies and other organisations procuring credits as part of their climate strategies conduct their own independent due diligence to validate the quality and environmental integrity of their purchases.

The NCS Alliance secretariat in no way benefits financially or by other means from the selection.

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Citation: NSCA (2023) NCS in Action - Laguna Om.
Natural Climate Solutions Alliance.
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