



Indian State comes to Mexico to Learn and Share Experiences about Green Growth and Climate Change

South-South Exchange Program

Overview

In September 2012, the World Bank approved a \$100 million Development Policy Loan (DPL) for the state of Himachal Pradesh (HP), India to support its transformation to green development. Some of the policy actions supported by the DPL are:

- Policy mandating cumulative environmental assessments for the state's five key river basins;
- Benefit-sharing policy to ensure that communities located near hydroelectric projects benefit from them;
- The launch statewide of a community-led watershed protection program;
- Adoption of an organic farming policy;
- Modification of the state's industrial policy to promote cleaner production; and
- Modification of the tourism policy to promote environment-friendly tourism.

The second tranche of this programmatic series is now in preparation. That preparation included the South-South Exchange Program, designed so that participants could learn from successful experiences in the "Global South," in this case, Mexico. From May 5 to 11, 2013, the Chief Secretary of HP led a delegation that included four other senior officials to participate in this exchange program, which took place in Mexico City, Oaxaca, and Quintana Roo.

Mexico City

Among emerging economies, Mexico has had a pioneering role in introducing green growth and climate change agendas. HP officials met with representatives from Mexico's Environment Ministry (SEMARNAT), its Ministry of Tourism, and its National Commission for Knowledge and Use of Biodiversity (CONABIO), as well

Photo above: Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reserve.
All photos courtesy of HP DPL.

as energy experts from think-tanks. Topics focused on: (i) mainstreaming a green agenda in different sectors; (ii) the national climate change strategy and action plans, the state's contribution, and greenhouse gas (GHG) inventories; (iii) natural capital accounts and a green economy study; and (iv) biodiversity conservation.



Presentation at SEMARNAT (Mexico's Environment Ministry)

A cocktail reception was organized for the end of the first day, where the delegation had an opportunity to meet on a more informal basis with many of the representatives met earlier, and with representatives of several universities, research institutes, and the private sector.

Oaxaca

While Oaxaca is the third poorest state in Mexico, the government is proactively addressing the climate change agenda, which includes initiatives such as the development of the Atlas of Climates and of Climate Change for the State of Oaxaca (ACCCO). Meetings with state government officials, a local representative of the National Forestry Commission (CONAFOR), and local forest communities focused on (i) payment for environmental services; (ii) sustainable tourism; and (iii) watershed management and rural development.



Timber mill, an Ixtlán community forest enterprise.

In Oaxaca, the Indian delegation visited, in Ixtlán community, one of Mexico's best organized community forestry enterprises. The visit afforded an opportunity to learn about sustainable forestry practices and the struggles of indigenous communities for the right to use their own natural resources as they deem appropriate. The enterprise has generated jobs and income for the community, diversified the goods and service it provides, and maintained its rich ecosystems. The visit to Ixtlán was complemented by discussions with Oaxaca's Secretary of Social Development, who explained the state's efforts to eradicate poverty; the Secretary of Agriculture, who briefed HP officials on ongoing programs to strengthen community organizations enabling them to produce goods that can be marketed more easily; and the Director of the State's Institute of Ecology, who summarized the state's climate change efforts. HP officials also visited the Monte Albán archeological site to learn about the management of this cultural site as one of Oaxaca's main cultural tourism attractions.



Monte Albán archeological site in Oaxaca.

Quintana Roo

The State of Quintana Roo is home to many tourist destinations owing to its rich tourism resources, such as coral reefs, mangrove and tropical forests, and Mayan ruins. Meetings and site visits focused on holistic planning for environmentally-sustainable development of the tourism industry.

After a short visit to Cancún to see this most successful, yet unsustainable, tourist destination in Mexico, HP officials

“ When you have a similar situation, like Mexico – a federal country, similar to India – when something is being done here, we can directly relate it to our situation and then find, ok, this is possible. ”

—Shrikant Baldi, Principal Secretary (Finance and Planning) of Himachal Pradesh



Entrance of the Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reserve.

visited the Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reserve, where they learned from the experience of local communities of developing ecotourism products for highly selective markets. The site visit enabled the HP officials to observe the unique cultural and natural attributes of the Reserve, including Mayan ruins and rich natural amenities.

Later, HP officials met with state officials and representatives from the nongovernmental organization Amigos de Sian Ka'an, who explained its strategy of developing a community-based ecotourism destination in Quintana Roo, integrating multiple experiences and targeting people traveling to Cancún and Riviera Maya, as well as those who might be able to visit only this new ecotourism route.

State government representatives also gave presentations on their environmental management and climate change efforts, including the development of a partnership with the neighboring states of Yucatan and Campeche to address climate change in the entire Yucatan Peninsula. These



At the meeting with Quintana Roo government, a Himachal Pradesh official gave a presentation on green growth in that state.

states have many features in common, including their ecosystems and landscapes. The tri-state partnership is working on three key issues: (i) climate change adaptation; (ii) Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD+); and (iii) climate change financing. This partnership is another innovative model that could be relevant for state authorities in India. Officials from the government of HP gave a presentation on its green growth strategy.

Outcomes

The exchange provide support for an enhanced understanding of technical and policy issues underlying responses to climate change developed and the promotion of inclusive green growth. HP officials had in person discussions with technical and policy specialists who have been designing and implementing various environmental management approaches for many years, which enabled them to share their operational challenges, progress made, and lessons learned. The site visits and discussions complemented one another and helped highlight best practices in Latin America.

The South-South exchange was particularly useful because it involved officials from dynamic developing countries faced with similar development challenges and, arguably, with similar resources and constraints. For Mexican officials, the experiences of Himachal Pradesh also proved relevant and informative, especially regarding the bold reforms the state government has implemented under the leadership of the current administration. These included measures ranging from the sharing of benefits resulting from the new hydroelectric project development to a plastic bag ban and a total ban on timbering.

Among discussions most useful to HP officials was one of Mexico's new General Law on Climate Change. This was the first time they had learned of the enactment by a developing country of a law in this area. HP officials were interested in the institutional framework established by the law, which makes mandatory formal coordination among sectors, as well as among different levels of government. The law's provisions on monitoring and evaluation and on sanctions were highlighted as particularly innovative features.

The visit to Sian Ka'an and the discussion on the promotion of nature-based ecotourism were other highly productive aspects of the exchange. HP officials saw and

“I'm looking at picking up certain aspects of tourism in Mexico, where the communities or the stakeholders are involved in the process of promoting sustainable tourism and conserving the traditions and the culture.”

—Subhasish Panda, Managing Director of the Tourism Development Corporation, Government of Himachal Pradesh



Mangroves in the Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reserve.

discussed the planning and development outcomes of large mass tourism projects such as Cancún, and compared them to the community-based, sustainable ecotourism now emphasized. For HP officials, discovering that Cancún had grown relatively quickly from a small fishing village gave them a grasp of the potential role of well-coordinated government interventions in tourism development. At the same time, it helped them understand the different challenges

“ As follow-up to the study tour, a number of HP stakeholders will continue to interact with Mexican counterparts using information tools such as Internet platforms and videoconferencing.”

posed by Cancún’s explosive growth, including unplanned urban development and exponential demographic growth. These two cases also illustrated how the Cancún model is mass market-based, its main beneficiaries being large tour operators and companies, whereas the new approaches aim to benefit local communities and attract fewer tourists, but ones willing to spend more at the sites they visit. This new approach recognizes that tourism activities must take account of the carrying capacity of ecosystems and provide the unique experiences that sophisticated tourists seek.

As follow-up to the study tour, a number of HP stakeholders will continue to interact with Mexican counterparts using information tools such as Internet platforms and videoconferencing. Also, the knowledge and learning gained and disseminated through this exchange program is expected to be mainstreamed in the design of the second DPL now in the pipeline.



Sunrise in Quintana Roo.

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