ACSF-Oxfam Rural Resilience Project

Case Study: Ek Balam, Yucatan, Mexico

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Exploring Rural Community Resilience of Ek Balam in Yucatan, Mexico

Revised Report to Atkinson Center for a Sustainable Future and Oxfam

by

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1. **INTRODUCTION**

This report contains information gathered from a participatory community assessment during the summer of 2013 in the rural village of Ek Balam in Yucatan Mexico. The purpose of the assessment was an exploratory effort to gain a better understanding about the community’s resilience and to share that information with the community in order to strengthen their capacity building processes. The assessment was conducted over two weeks with community members, which included ten individual semi-structured interviews, informal conversations, and a focus group. Section 2 of this report contains a resilience profile that includes a description of the community, governance structure, civic capacity, natural resources, and economic resources. It also contains a brief discussion about the resilience of Ek Balam. Section 3 describes the participatory assessment process and summarizes data gathered from the individual interviews and the focus group. Section 5 reflect on the Framework and section 6 concludes with insights and reflections on the findings.

2. **RESILIENCE PROFILE**

2.1 **Community Description**

Ek Balam is a small rural subsistence agriculture community located in the central-northeast region of Yucatan Mexico with the latitude 20°53’32.84” north and longitude 88°08’44.60” west. The community has approximately 500 residents, 62 households, and the village is roughly the size of two city blocks. About half of the homes are traditionally constructed with thatch palm roofs and wood pole walls. The remaining homes are made of cinder blocks and concrete. There are decently paved roads connecting to a main road a few kilometers away that lead to nearby towns and a city. The closest large town to Ek Balam is Temozón with about 8,000 residents. Ek Balam is located in the municipality also called Temozón. Twenty kilometers south of Ek Balam is the nearest major city of Valladolid with about 62,000 residents. About 80% of Ek Balam’s residents have electricity and there is a water-well and tower located in the center of the village that services most of the homes. The community possesses over 20,000 ha of land surrounding the village that is mostly an agro-forestry landscape. Figure 1. Is a picture of the main street through Ek Balam.
Livelihoods in Ek Balam primarily involve maize cultivation, but more recently the people have been attempting to enhance their well-being through the tourism economy. What separates Ek Balam from the hundreds of other small subsistence farming communities in the region is the nearby archaeological zone that opened to the public in 1994. Since then residents have had increasing contact with tourists with over half the households in the village having at least weekly interactions. Particularly, the women have been making hammocks to sell to tourists. Because of tourism it is readily apparent that the community has a higher standard of living compared to other nearby communities. Regardless of the increased tourism the older generations still see themselves as farmers and view tourism as an opportunity to enhance their well-being. But the younger generation views tourism as an alternative to becoming a farmer.

2.2 Governance

Beneath the federal and state authorities the predominant level of government is the regional municipality. The president of the municipality is elected every two years, which follows the national presidential election. The municipal president significantly influences the
governance at the village level. This is because the outcome of the election for municipality president determines who will be the village commissioner.

Municipality presidential candidates campaign in all the municipality’s villages to form alliances. Each village has a campaign house and the people from the village involved in the campaign house select their candidate for village commissioner. The municipality presidential candidate elected into office appoints the village commissioner from their associated campaign house. Basically, if the municipality presidential candidate wins the election, then the village commissioner candidate also wins the election. For this reason voter turnout is high in Ek Balam. The village commissioner is responsible for appointing the police chief, resolving disputes in the village that are not related to land, and interacts with the municipal president to acquire resources and funding for projects in the village.

Ek Balam is part of Mexico’s Ejido system. An Ejido is a concession of land granted from the national government to a peasant community for farming. The Ejido commissioner deals with land issues, and is elected by the Ejidatarios (Ejido farmers). In Ek Balam there are 27 Ejidatarios. Due to the type of land grant there can be no more than 27 Ejidatarios. Someone can become an Ejidatario only through inheritance and the person is usually a male. Ejidatarios vote in the Ejido assembly on land matters, elect the Ejidal commissioner, and gain access to various farming related programs as well as other programs and associations such as membership in the indigenous tourist lodge association of Ek Balam, which is managed based on the Ejidatario system. Almost all community meetings involve only the Ejidatarios.

2.3 Civic capacity

Ownership of Ejidal land in Ek Balam is a key factor shaping social relationships within the community. In terms of social capital and enabling access to resources in Ek Balam the only institution that works towards community objectives are the Ejidatarios. Most community meetings primarily involve the Ejidatarios and they alone make the decisions that affect community life. Ejidal plots and use rights to the land provide a level of status that is readily apparent when differences between Ejidatarios and non-Ejidatarios are considered. Most households are linked to an Ejidatario. Many household members work the land, but the land is titled to the Ejidatario. Ejidal land rights not only provide food security, but access to participation in multiple government sponsored programs, such as the Programa de Apoyos Directos al Campo (PROCAMPO), or the Program for Direct Assistance in Agriculture. It also
gives Ejidatarios additional political connections that very often lead to power in the political life of the community.

2.4 Natural Resources

Compared to many of the surrounding Ejidos in this region Ek Balam divide all of their Ejidal land among the Ejidatarios in order to better manage their natural resource base. The entire Ejido, with the exception of the community or village area and a relatively small forested area for conservation, is evenly divided among the Ejidatarios (780 ha each). In Ek Balam decision-making regarding land use and natural resource management (e.g., agriculture, conservation, and community development) is based on the individual Ejidatario and happens at the household or family level. Although some Ejidatarios practice forest conservation on segments of their parcels, the individual-based decisions about where to locate agricultural and forested areas can make for a more fragmented landscape. One important difference between Ek Balam and other communities is how they respond to external changes in the broader economic and environmental systems that impact their natural resource base and livelihoods. Ek Balam responds differently because of their differing institutional arrangements that are tied to land tenure.

2.5 Economic Resources

Community (livelihood) identity is characterized as campesinos or peasants. Although livelihood is primarily based on subsistence farming the people do benefit from the tourist economy. And now many of the men work at the ruins or archeological site in the morning and tend to the fields in the afternoon. The increased work has affected the training of children in farming practice. But the tourism provides them additional resources to cope with shocks when they lose a crop, to say a drought, as the government agrarian programs are lacking by some peoples estimation. The major question is whether the tourist economy is an opportunity for the people to enhance their well-being beyond peasantry or whether the tourist economy is an imperative for the people to maintaining their well-being and identity as campesinos?

With growth in the regions tourism, land in Ek Balam has taken on a new value. What was once a necessary resource for agriculture and space to build homes is now a commodity that is increasingly gaining the attention of outsiders, both Mexicans from other parts of the country and foreigners. In 2004, just two lots were owned by individuals from outside the community,
both for the purpose of profiting from the increasing amount of tourists in the region. However by 2007, there were no less than eight lots within the Ejido owned by individuals from outside the community. This number is increased by an unknown amount when outsider-owned lots in the neighboring Ejido of Santa Rita are taken into account.

Beyond selling land to outsiders or using it for the farming of maize land in Ek Balam provides important non-timber forest products as a livelihood resource. Some of the most important NTFPs in Mexico’s rural communities are the leaves and seeds of Chamaedorea (or xate) palm. These NTFPs can represent up to 75% of a household’s income. There are six species of Chamaedorea making it the most diverse of understory palms in Yucatan. Chamaedorea seifrizii is commonly known, the most abundant, and the only one with a local market.

The risk of land conversion has increased, and this increase has generated concern about overexploitation of the seed. The overexploitation of several palm species has diminished populations in several tropical areas. Regardless of xate’s abundance the intense extraction brings into question its sustainability as an important ecosystem service for sustaining livelihoods. Local extinction of certain xate species is due to overharvesting that may be linked to the type of land tenure. Figure 2 shows a resident of Ek Balam discussing forest resources.

![Resident of Ek Balam discussing forest resources](image)

**Figure 2.** Resident of Ek Balam discussing forest resources
2.6 Community Resilience

As an exploratory investigation with limited scope in terms of the time allotted and the amount of data collected it would be inappropriate to state whether or not the community is resilient. Moreover, the Rights for Resilience framework views resilience as a process of capacity building, rather than an outcome to be measured or assessed. Therefore, this report points to some characteristics that may enhance resilience. For example, having access to a diverse set of resources may enhance the community’s resilience, whereas inequity in the distribution of access to the diverse set of resources may jeopardize the community’s resilience.

The people in Ek Balam live challenging lives that wider social, economic, and environmental forces outside their control deeply affect. For example, in trying to access land they may now have to deal with a land owner that may be from outside the community. When they do have access to land for farming it requires great effort to maintain surplus crop yields, especially now as the farmers are faced with climate change. As a result many now look for opportunities to work in tourism as well as other kinds of work. Working for others can often separate them from their family and community for extended periods of time. The people in Ek Balam are thus rarely self-sufficient and rely more on formal market opportunities than in the past. They are subordinated to the wider social, economic, and environmental forces outside of their communities.

At a more fundamental level, the subordinate position of the people in Ek Balam to the wider social, economic, and environmental forces affects their peasant identity and social relations. Therefore it is essential to understand peasant identity, and their relationships to each other, to vital resources, and to the state. It is also important to recognize how these relationships affect the conditions in which they may produce the surplus that can enhance their well-being. As the global capitalist economy reaches deeper into rural Mexico the economic forces transform peasant identity. This is demonstrated through a historically significant strengthening of processes of concentration and centralization of the free market and free trade, capital accumulation, and a lesser role for the state.

These developments have had extremely widespread affects on the people in Ek Balam. The immediate and long-term implications of these affects are unclear. Nonetheless, the implications for the people will be significant. When asked about the resource the people might need for capacity building they mostly spoke of the tourist economy. Moreover, several
interviewees mentioned the lack of government support for farmers. In the following sections, we highlight some common themes that emerged in the research and are relevant to resilience, such as equity issues. Although equity issues clearly exist in Ek Balam, much of the conversations centered on tourism and agriculture.

3. PARTICIPATORY ASSESSMENT PROCESS AND DATA SUMMARY

3.1 Focus Group

3.1.1 Community Mapping

A focus group was held with six participants, one female and five men. The approximate age range was from 20s to 70s. The meeting was held outdoors on the patio of the village commissioner’s office, which is a community space. The meeting began with a community mapping activity where the participants were asked to draw a map of the community showing important places and resources on a large blank sheet of paper. All participants were actively involved and the exercise lasted twenty minutes. The map basically shows the village with important structures, for example the community building, as well as roads and paths leading to the agricultural fields and key natural features such as Cenotes or sink holes exposing underground water. Figure 3 shows the community mapping exercise.

Figure 3. Community mapping exercise
3.1.2 Open Discussion

After the mapping activity the participants were asked a series of questions about how a community in general may adapt to challenges they face. It was difficult for the group answer these more broad questions, so the same questions were asked specifically about their own community including what types of changes are occurring in and around Ek Balam, what types of resources they can access and what resources they lack. Four of the six participants were actively engaged in this session, with the one women and one of the elder men remaining quiet. This session also lasted twenty minutes.

Summary of the responses to the open discussion of the focus group:

They work (outside the milpa) when they can, but the milpa is their principal jobs. When there are tourists, they can do things like sell their hammocks. The resources that they have here are the indigenous tourism lodge and hotels, which provide jobs. They don’t really have any other alternatives, except to improve the milpa. Some people work outside the community. Some of the projects they have had here are things like the irrigation unit, but no one knows the name of the group that did that project. They believe they need more tourism, so they can sell more hammocks. They want more projects brought in from the outside (like the irrigation project). Their natural resources are water, wood, and products from the countryside (although they couldn’t mention any other specific products)

The community is pretty much the same as it has always been, the only change they have is that now they have access to infrastructure so they have transportation, telephones, a highway which are all things they described as making their lives easier. The older generation is tired, and they want their kids to take over some of the responsibilities of the houses and milpa (corn field). The kids know very little about the traditions even though they try and share them. The younger generation has a different type of expertise because they have more formal training in school, and know more about electronics. To help teach the younger generation these traditions they said they could invite them to their meetings and religious activities.
3.1.3 Final Session

The final session of the focus group participants were asked four questions that were written on large sheets of paper. The questions were 1. What are the challenges to our way of life, 2. What resources do we have that will help us to face these challenges, 3. What are our limits or weaknesses, and 4. How can we use our strengths and improve our capacity to adapt. Everyone in the group participated in writing down answers during this 20 minute activity.

Responses to four questions during the final session:

1. What are the challenges to our way of life?
   - The time of the sun (i.e., duration of dry periods)
   - Hurricanes
   - Plagues (agricultural diseases)
2. What resources do we have that will help us to face these challenges?
   - Pests Control: There are controls against the plagues
   - We have knowledge to create irrigation units, but we need resources to build the irrigation units
3. What are our weaknesses or limits?
   - Lack of work or jobs
   - Lack of tools
   - Lack of support from government
   - Lack of doctors
   - No access to funds
4. What are our strengths?
   - Conserving our resources
   - Preserving our culture
   - Retaining our traditions
   - Using our natural resources

3.2 Individual Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted on an individual basis with 10 residents of Ek Balam. The interviews explored the general theme of change (social, economic, and environmental) and the community’s capability to adapt. The questions focused on the challenges that confront the community and the resources they have and need to overcome those challenges. Overall, several common themes arose from the interviews. The first challenge and one of the most prominent is the changing climate and its impact on their livelihood. The next
prominent challenge was the changing nature of the tourist economy. The final challenge that is apparent from the interviews is the government and non-governmental support, specifically to farmers. The following represents what was learned in the voices of the respondents.

**Narratives about the challenge of climate change.**

**Respondent 1:** In the future…well we are campesinos, but right now the harvest produces very little. The changes that we ought to have are to mechanize the earth, and fertilizer so that we can produce more. In the times where we don’t get rain the crops don’t produce. The sun is hotter than before. Sometimes we are waiting for the rain, and it doesn’t fall, purely (only) sun. The crops are not able to produce from the drought. It could be possible to protect our crops with the help of an irrigation system. We have hurricanes every year. They damage the crops and the fruits are destroyed when they come.

**Respondent 2:** The last few years the sun was very intense, very strong. There are changes, there are many changes that show up in nature. For example we have people, the oldest people, that know how, when dawn comes, can say “it is going to rain” by just looking at the sky, but recently these people here cannot guess what is the weather forecast because of the changes that we have. It is very difficult for agriculture, and the younger generation do not know how to predict the climate.

**Respondent 3:** in 1988 there was a hurricane, called Gilbert. September 15th, 1988. It was in this year that we had a change in agriculture. The change happened because the harvest didn’t arrive. Every year we have different “sinestros” or something that comes to the maize. Sometimes drought, sometimes a hurricane, sometimes a plague of works, sometimes it causes a plague of red leaves on the plants. Sometimes it (the plaque) stays on almost all of the plants, and their leaves turn red, this is a plague that the plants don’t produce. The plague is from up above when the rain falls and a yellow cloud forms, or a red cloud. We call it Chalequ. When the cloud forms, you can notice if it forms yellow or red, and then it causes a plague because when the rain falls it is colored.

Other changes in the climate, now because we have a lot of changes in the climate sometimes the rain doesn’t fall like before. We had eastern rains, now we don’t have eastern rains. Eastern rains begin to fall in the month of June, on the 13th of June they start to fall. Before when it
began to rain it was not just the rains of storms from hurricanes, but now in this era that we are in until a storm of hurricane forms there is not rain, because if we do not have storms or hurricanes we don’t have rain. This is the change in the climate that we have, but previously 50, 40, 35 years ago this did not exist. We don’t have a way to protect crops from these changes. This is the nature that comes here from the sky (or heavens) I think that the time of our lord has arrived.

**Respondent 4:** The climate is changing. It is colder than it was before, sometimes we don’t have rain, and we have drought. There is nothing we can do to protect our crops from drought because we don’t have irrigation. This year we have had enough rain. We also every year have to hope that a hurricane doesn’t come. When one does it completely destroys our crops. When this happens we receive some financial help from the government, but not much. There is nothing we can do to protect our crops from hurricanes.

**Respondent 5:** I feel like the climate is changing. More extremes (more cold, more heat), sometimes the rains do not come, other days it rains when we are not expecting it. When we don’t have rain we plant in the kitchen gardens.

**Respondent 6:** The reason we work less in the milpa now is because of climate change, we lose our crops. Some people now don’t have milpa (around 50% don’t have milpa). The types of changes in the climate that we see are that they don’t have rain, and they have cyclones. The last 12-15 years corn production has been low, and people use their corn only for self-consumption. Before this, production or corn was much higher. It is low now because of climate change. Sometimes the rain leaves and doesn’t return soon enough (dry periods during the rainy season). Every year we have droughts starting in February or April and going to March or May. This year we had more rain than the past few. We are affected when the rains don’t come.

**Respondent 7:** There has been change. Sometimes the rainy season doesn’t arrive. And we have more small dry periods. Before when it started to rain it didn’t stop for four months. Normally we can harvest 100 kilograms of corn from a 20x20 meter section of the field, but during a drought it’s about half as much. Hurricanes cause the same problem by destroying everything. We now have more hurricanes then before. About 6 years ago we had 4 hurricanes in one year.
**Respondent 8:** The agriculture is a little worse especially during a drought. There was a drought nine months ago and there has been more in the recent past than before. This affects us because there is no work or money. The effect of a drought and a hurricane are the same.

**Respondent 9:** We produce a lot less than in the past because of droughts. The techniques we use to use to forecast the weather don’t work anymore, and it affects our farming practices. This has been happening for about 10 years. The difference between this year and last year is that there wasn’t a drought, but we have had droughts over the year. We are not changing our practices to cope.

**Respondent 10:** It’s been warmer for the last 7 years. We haven’t been affected by hurricanes since then Hurricane Emily 6 years ago wiped out all of the corn.

**Narratives about the peoples’ livelihoods.**

**Respondent 2:** I was working (as a manager) at a hotel. Now there is a problem with tourism, and we don’t have tourist visitors. I was working in agriculture a little. We were putting into practice some things that I learned in the school, for example how you can work the earth very little and live well. Then we started a small milpa, with a mecate (Mayan small plot 25 yards by 25 yards surrounded by forest) and with compost. Compost so we don’t have to burn the land to fertilize it. Tourism helps a lot though. Now thanks to many people that come from the outside, foreigners and all of those, thanks to them. I think in my point of view that they help us a lot because the women make their own hammocks, and sometimes the people come and buy them and with their money, it is little but if people are here all the time you can imagine it. We have good fortune with all of these people. More or less, there are enough jobs for the young people. Some have good jobs, and those that don’t they leave to look for jobs, mostly in tourism.

**Respondent 3:** I am a farmer and work at the community’s tourist lodge. Everyone in the village is a little better off because of the tourism that is generated by the lodge. Because of the lodge and the archeological zone the people here are benefiting a little by making hammocks to sell to the tourists. Before the ruins were open, people migrated to Cancun to look for jobs, and now there is less migration. Now we almost don’t have any people working in Cancun. But, the younger people are less dedicated to agriculture because many young people here don’t have sufficient land so they look for other types of work, or they study. Now all the young men are
working and the truth is that many young people are dedicated to being tourist guides. I think there will be less agriculture here in the future.

**Respondent 4:** I work in the (corn) fields with my father, and give haircuts but I have very little business with that because it is a small village. Right now we are working a lot in the fields because we are weeding their crops. My generation and the older generation is used to working in the fields, but many younger people look for different types of jobs because they don’t want to work in the fields because it is hard work, but those that are accustomed to it will keep doing it.

We now get visitors (tourists) and sometimes outsiders buy land here and then if they make hotels or restaurants they provide jobs to the local people. There is also some work at the archeological site, but really that is only temporary, and usually people only work a month or two at a time. December is the month when we have the most visitors. I hope that in the future our community’s tourist lodge brings in more visitors, and that this creates more jobs. I want my kids to have more job opportunities in tourism, and things like selling hammocks.

**Respondent 5:** I work in my house, the community’s tourist lodge and I make hammocks. We are more dedicated to tourism than before. There was no tourism when I was younger. So, we need things like materials to make hammocks and resources.

**Respondent 6:** I make a living through working in the (corn) fields, working at the community’s tourist lodge, my family’s store, my wife’s hammock business, and my reforestation project. I also have other activities like livestock rearing. People here used to work only in the (corn) fields, some people sold their corn, and some people looked for other options like in Cancun. Now with the archeological zone they have opportunities here. Tourism has influenced us a lot by providing jobs, and now the women can make and sell their hammocks. I would like to see more agro-tourism programs, more conservation so that people could bird watch. I also want programs to identify the different trees and plants for tourists. I also want to uncover and preserve more archeological sites and get more tourism in the (agricultural) fields.

**Respondent 9:** Now that we spend part of our day working at the archeological ruins people don’t take the time to teach their children about farming practices or our traditions. There have been changes, but slow. People aren’t use to tourism, but it is growing. Our community has a conflict with Santa Rita, a nearby community, about road access to the ruins. Tourism is good as
it makes our lives better. Tourism helps when things are not good, but in this time of year we work the fields and there is not much tourism. We do have capacity because when we can look for work elsewhere when we need to support ourselves. I hope tourism grows so that people in the community stay here and not go away for work. A lot of people stay here now. As farmers we know how to divide our time, so tourism doesn’t affect our identity as farmers. We can balance it.

**Respondent 10**: I’m a farmer but spend my days working at the archeological ruins. There is more tourism and selling of hammocks more recently over time. Mostly in the last ten years. Tourism is the most important thing and farming and animals. I hope that our community can get more tourism from the archeological ruins. To do that we want to have a 2 lane road with a divider from the entrance of the ruins to the entrance of the village constructed. The divider would have Maya statues on it and a large arch gateway at the entrance to the village that has Maya symbols on it. We also want to build an ancient Maya ball park in the middle of the village so the kids can learn the game and tourists can watch. I hope the arch gateway and the road is built as this would help the village economy a lot.

4. **Reflection on the framework**

Similar to rapid rural appraisals this research process consisted of a series of techniques that generated data of less precision, but still holds evidential value. It can offer insights on the various components of rural livelihoods that enable or inhibit community resilience. Most of all it emphasizes the importance and relevance of situational local knowledge, and the importance of obtaining a comprehensive understanding of the social-ecological system rather than focusing attention on one component of the system.

Conducting research from a broader view, as with this assessment, allows for a clearer understanding about the emergent properties of the social-ecological system. We view emergent properties as the characteristics of a system that are produced through the interaction of its components, and differ from the characteristics of any one component. Emergent properties provide conservation and development scientists and practitioners with goal-oriented and a problem-focus way of dealing with and managing complexity. The emergent properties can be
either ecologically or socially based, but are likely a combination of both sub-systems. It is often difficult to trace the emergent properties to the source, which this approach helps to discern.

Given the subjective notion of resilience and its potential vagueness as a conceptual tool, we framed our questions in terms of the community’s adaptability to the changes they may have witnessed. So, we did not explicitly ask about the community’s resilience and the resources need to foster resilience. Instead we asked about the social, economic, and environmental changes the people perceived, and the resources they need to confront challenges to their livelihoods in the face of these changes. This seemed to be a more grounded approach to dealing with the notion of resilience in the field. Resilience essentially deals with the nature of change both external and internal to the community, which this approach enhanced our ability to understand.

The usefulness of the research instrument comes down to the value added to both the researcher and the community where the research happens. The crux of the matter is whether any systemic changes are at a fundamental level thereby altering the identity of the community, or whether the changes are at a more superficial level and therefore not altering the community’s identity. However, in researching a community’s resilience it can also lead to discoveries of transformation in the community’s identity, for which this approach seemed most useful.

5. Conclusion

In Ek Balam there is a strong link between livelihood identity and the formal governance structure that affect the people’s well-being at the individual and community level. The sole institution serving as a mechanism for the people to access resources is the Ejidatario governing body. This is a direct outcome of peasantry being the community’s primary livelihood identity. Although this identity is challenged by the influence of the tourist economy of which Ek Balam has benefited greatly. A key question therefore is whether having recently become linked to the global capitalist economy is an opportunity to enhance their well-being or an imperative to sustain a certain level of well-being.

The interviews reveal that the tourist economy is of great importance to the people of Ek Balam and that they see tourism as a way to improve their lives. State-based agrarian support is lacking because of the neoliberal agenda that promotes the market as the mechanism for resource distribution. When confronting challenges to their livelihood, such as climate change, the people may have to depend more on the tourist economy. This reality is compounded by the lack of
social institutions in Ek Balam. All of the community decisions involve only the Ejidatarios and even the ecotourism lodge is based on participation as an Ejidatario. This social structure unfortunately does not benefit everyone and limits potential resources to those not an Ejidatario or less connected to someone that is an Ejidatario.

Being an Ejidatario provides status in the community, access to resources, and being part of the governance structure, which invades all aspects of life in the community. But there are now many more non-Ejidatarios living in the village than in the past. This is reinforced by the fact that there is a division of knowledge between the old and the young. The older people (who are typically Ejidatarios) have the traditional knowledge, and specifically farming knowledge. The younger generation has knowledge that comes from more formal education and experience in modern technologies. There is an overall interest in learning and capacity building but the types of knowledge and approaches to capacity building vary between generations. This may shape a very different direction for the people than in the past, and it’s one that may rely less on a peasant livelihood and more on gaining access to resources through the market.
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<td>the community seems to feel like they have no influence over higher level government, so not much</td>
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<td>Ejidatarios are eligible to participate in government programs, such as PROCAMPO, and agricultural assistance programs</td>
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<td>Development decisions (e.g. choosing to participate in tourism) are based on availability of economic resources</td>
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<td>Knowledge sharing among ejido members helps to influence decisions made at the ejido level</td>
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<td><strong>Natural Resources</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Government Programs, such as pro-campo are designed to help conserve resources and provide financial incentives for forest conservation</td>
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<td>Individual Ejidatarios have rights to use their land as they choose, and decisions about use of resources are made on the household level</td>
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<td>Water, Crops, Forest Products (fire wood, medicinal plants)</td>
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<td>Land is now valuable to outsiders as Ek Balam has become a tourist destination. Conservation is important as the community tries to develop ecotourism</td>
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<td>Information about agriculture and forest crops are passed on between generations, conservation and use of resources is based on these traditional techniques</td>
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<td><strong>Economic Resources</strong></td>
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<td>Not much currently, although government run restoration of ruins creates more economic resources for the community</td>
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<td>The ejido organization runs an eco-lodge for tourists that employees ejidatarios and their family members</td>
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<td>As the economy is largely agriculture and eco-tourism based economic resources are dependent on the availability of natural resources</td>
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<td>Tourism Industry and Peasant Agriculture</td>
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<td>Formal education and training promotes the development of economic resources</td>
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<td><strong>Knowledge Sharing</strong></td>
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<td>Government run schools are conducted in Spanish by teachers hired from outside the community, and do not include traditional knowledge</td>
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<td>Individual Ejidatarios pass on knowledge to their children who will take over their plot (typically the youngest son)</td>
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<td>As agriculture becomes secondary to tourism, knowledge sharing about traditional agricultural techniques is decreasing</td>
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<td>With the increase in the tourism industry, formal education including business training is becoming more important</td>
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<td>Local municipal school, informal knowledge sharing through family networks</td>
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