

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 27, 2019

Golden Stream Corridor Preserve

Toledo, Belize



### Ya'axché Summer Camp involved 100 youth in forest conservation

On Monday, 12<sup>th</sup> of August 2019, the younger generation of 8 communities in southern Belize came together at Ya'axché's Field Station for a highly interactive week of fun learning. Ya'axché's annual summer camp aims to educate and increase awareness on the importance of sustainable forest management and how communities can be more involved. This year's summer camp was held under the theme "*Empowering communities, Conserving biodiversity, Connecting the world*".

Fifty campers of ages 9-14 years, both male and female, joined the first week to learn about forest conservation and governance. The summer camp kicked-off with an introduction to Ya'axché's work and an overview of the week's activities. The children learned about integrated land management, pollinators and their importance, biodiversity monitoring, protected areas and climate-smart farming practices. Presentations were done by Ya'axché staff and representatives from partner organizations such as OCEANA, Belize Forest Department and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

This year, Ya'axché extended the invitation to ages 16-30 years for the second week of the summer camp, which focused on entrepreneurship and sustainable livelihoods that help in forest conservation. Campers learned about climate-smart farming practices, which can diversify their farm, and consequently, their income. Entrepreneurs of the Maya Golden Landscape such as women's groups, and farmers doing ecotourism, cacao agroforestry and beekeeping showcased their work to the campers.

Each day, the enthusiastic campers shared their thoughts and ideas during the morning reflections before delving into the different presentations, fun activities and field trips. Campers visited agroforestry farms, Bladen Nature Reserve and Maya Mountain North Forest Reserve. At the end of each week, the outstanding campers were recognized for their exceptional participation, well behavior and leadership skills. A total of 100 Ya'axché campers were exposed to our forest governance initiatives at the landscape level.

Ya'axché has been protecting wild places and empowering communities in southern Belize since 1998. Much of the organization's effort has focused on supporting the livelihoods of eight communities and directly protecting over 151,000 acres of forests in southern Belize. This year's summer camp was supported through the EuropeAid Forest Governance Project.

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