

Conservation and sustainable management of the Humuyaku Kichwa community's Forests, ECUADOR

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The main objectives of this project were to: 1) strengthen the capacities of the Kichwa Humuyaku community to inventory and conserve biodiversity, 2) reduce pressures on forests, 3) engage in reforestation activities and 4) sustainably manage protected areas around their territory.

A key component of the project was also to educate the community about the importance of revitalizing traditional knowledge to improve quality of life. Exploitation of natural resources on Kichwa Humuyaku lands was negatively impacting people's health and well-being and leading to a reduction in loss of traditional knowledge and nutrition. Community members had begun buying products like pasta and rice rather than eating locally available foods. The community felt it was critical to revitalize traditional knowledge to improve diet and in order to preserve species that were no longer being used or conserved due to perceived lack of importance.

To achieve these goals, the community conducted a participatory biological assessment of their lands and engaged in conservation activities, reforestation, awareness raising, documentation of traditional practices and education of youth.

The project demonstrated the importance of traditional Kichwa knowledge and proximity to nature, and led to the revitalization of traditional plants, foods and medicines. It also had the effect of creating a local handicrafts market, improving the quality of handicrafts and preventing migration to cities.

BACKGROUND

The Kichwa Humuyaku community is an Indigenous community located along the shores of the Napo River, Chonta Parish End, Tena corner, in the Napo Province in Ecuador. It has a population of approximately 360 people, grouped in 40 nuclear families. The community is spread out over close to 240 hectares with individual lots of around 30 hectares per family, near a forest reserve with an extension of 2500 hectares. The economy in the area is supported by subsistence farming (peanuts, beans, rice, yucca, banana, among others) with a small percentage of activities being directed towards the market such as coffee, cacao and maize.

The Kichwa Humuyaku community area is characterized by its high biodiversity, but due to exploitation of natural resources it is in heavy decline.

Project Name: Conservation and sustainable management of the Humuyaku Kichwa community's Forests

Database title:
ECU/SGP/OP4/RAF/07/05

Executing NGO:
Centro de Investigación de los Movimientos Sociales en el Ecuador - CEDIME (Non-government Organization)

Project dates:
11/2007 - 1/2010

SGP grant amount: US\$50,000

In-kind cofinancing: US\$15,000

In-Cash cofinancing: US\$15,200

Since the community has undergone market activities and a certain amount of assimilation over the last few years, it is also facing loss and devaluation of traditional knowledge and Kichwa cultural practices that have formed the basis of traditional subsistence activities. Loss of environment and forests in the zone is leading to decreased access to and accelerated deterioration of biodiversity and natural resources.

IMPLEMENTATION

The main activities of the project were: conservation, reforestation, awareness-building, documentation of traditional practices, youth education, revitalization of traditional plants and foods, building a local handicrafts market and improving the quality of handicrafts.

The Small Grants Programme provided training in numerous aspects of the project including conservation; gender mainstreaming; and technical and organizational skills.



The community also teamed up with an NGO to introduce classes and school lessons to youth on the forests, natural resources and traditional knowledge. The school training took place through a partnership with the executing NGO CEDIME, who co-financed the project.

In addition, the following activities also took place as part of the project:

- Development of a management and protection plan of the communitarian territory.
- Inclusion of procedures and rules for the opening of new Chacras (Kichwa name for small family farms), protection of domestic animal spaces, water sources protection and guidelines for touristic areas.
- Establishment of records documenting traditional knowledge and customary use of natural resources in the area. This information was incorporated into classroom materials.
- Integration of environmental school course work in the local school.

- Establishment of a communitarian nursery of native species using threatened species that were previously used and valued by ancestors for medicines and food.

80% of the population participated, including 360 women, 188 men and 172 Indigenous Peoples.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

The most biological diverse areas are being preserved and the community is willing to request the Ministry of Environment to declare the zone a Protected Area.

More than 20 hectares of communitarian territory were reforested thanks to the establishment of a communitarian nursery of native species, using threatened species that were previously used by ancestors for medicines and food.

In order to diversify the family chacras, species were identified to improve family diets and health.

A manual highlighting the use, nutritional and medicinal value of local species was published. A

Contribution to the Millenium Development Goals

MDG 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased income for the community • Improved nutrition and food security through community farming for 40 families
MDG 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empowerment of more than 300 women, from which at least three played leadership roles within the project and 13 improved their abilities in handicraft production.
MDG 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recovery and conservation of more than 20 hectares of communitarian territory. • Reforestation with more than 2800 plants of native species. • Reduced pressure over the Natural Reserve Runashito, which comprises more than 3000 hectares of Tropical Forest in the Napo province.



biological analysis of species from the communitarian ecological reserve was developed and a management and protection plan of the communitarian territory was developed.

The management plan was accompanied by rules and procedures agreed to by the community incorporating rules and traditional norms for hunting, fishing, animal breeding, farming and wood extraction (prohibited, unless it is for family needs with the condition of planting 10 trees for each cut tree), thereby revitalizing traditional forest management.

The plan also included procedures and rules for the opening of new Chacras, protection of domestic animal spaces, water sources protection, as guidelines for touristic areas.

More than 20 hectares were reforested with local species (3000 plants) and more than 10 plant nurseries.

In a participatory assessment of the biodiversity in the region, the community identified:

- 29 species of mammals from 17 different families, equivalent to 47% of the total number of mammal families of Ecuador.
- 61 species of birds.
- 57 species of plants that can be use for food, medicine, shelter and handicraft production.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT

A Government program called "Socio Bosque" (Forest Partners) is now paying the community US\$ 30 for each conserved hectare.

Food and medicine supply has improved in families, so the community do not need to buy or walk long distances to obtain them.

Market access has improved and products are now being sold in Quito.

The project gave the community the tools and knowledge to sustainably manage their natural resources and promote conservation of the biodiversity.

POLICY IMPACT

The community engaged in a Governmental program called "Socio Bosque" (Forest Partners) .

GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Improvement in the quality and diversity of handicrafts made by women helped revalue their role and contribute income to their families and to the community. 13 women produced handicrafts.

Women actively participated in the decision making and all the participatory activities of the project.

360 women participated in and benefited from the project.

SUSTAINABILITY

Markets have improved and products are being sold in Quito through an alliance made with the Mindalae Museum (Ethnographic museum) as well as the Handicraft Store of the Quito Municipality, as well as other places like Casa Junín.

Trough the participation in the programme "Socio Bosque" the community has incentives to conserve and sustain the results of the project.

REPLICATION AND UP-SCALING

This positive project experience, with extensive community participation, has positively influenced other communities in the area of the Biosphere Reserve of Great Sumaco.

Seventeen neighboring communities of the Association of Agroforestry Producers Kichuas de Río Napo have improved production in the zone as well as market exploration.

LESSONS LEARNED

In spite of the fact that Amazonian indigenous communities are in close connection with nature, the youth have lost this knowledge under the influence of occidental cultural practices. It was very important to reinforce the importance of conservation and biodiversity in the area. It was also important to make clear that conservation and sustainable management go hand in hand with sustainable use of resources for food, shelter and sustainable production of medicine and handicrafts.

The participatory assesment of their biodiversity was a great opportunity for the community to better understand the importance of their territory and their role as custodians of a large swath of territory and its inherent biodiversity. With this process, men and women felt they were a part of the project, while also improving their knowledge of the area and learning to identify new species they were previously unaware of.

The creation of the management plan through participation was important for people to feel useful and set their own rules, which in turn led them to honor their agreements.

It was very important to set clear rules from the beginning of the project and explain very clearly what the objectives were. For this purpose families were visited one-by-one. Many people expected the project to produce economic earnings, however it was important to explain that the project would improve food supply and generate some income through the commercialization of handicrafts.

In reforestation activities, it was important to use species that grow fast and have commercial and shelter uses for the community, such as Balsa, to protect threatened wood species.

Women served as important motivators for the participation of their families as they involve their children in their close relationship with nature.

It is also important to involve teachers in the activities and ensure that the children learn to appreciate their resources, as they will be the next generation to be in charge of the conservation of the area.

Community Action...

Global Impact



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