



A co-operatively run NGO driven by the enthusiasm of its staff and volunteers to promote sustainable development in marginalized communities throughout Ecuador and to promote Cultural Exchange for mutual benefit in our increasingly globalized world

Stay up to date with all the news at Yanapuma!

A bimonthly newsletter

Issue No. 26: Nov-Dec 2011

Introduction

Firstly, we wish all our friends and supporters a very Happy Christmas and New Year!

It is always something of a cliché to say that the year has flown past, but here at Yanapuma we have to say – this year has really flown past!!!

It seems like only last week that we were gearing up for another year, but here we are again. The past two months has been a frantic rush to get all our programs and prices worked out for 2012, and up on the website in time for the arrival of the New Year.

Only in the last week, between Christmas and New Year, did we get time to sit down and reflect on the year that had gone by so fast. In general it has been a good year for us, not spectacular, but we have grown modestly through what has been a difficult year internationally. The Spanish school has stayed busy, the volunteers have kept on coming, and the foundation has remained just sufficiently funded to keep us all busy.

It is fair to say that it has been a year of consolidation, during which we have managed to work on our internal systems, strengthening our administration and accounting, and at the same time improve many aspects of the Spanish school – academically and organizationally. Additionally, we have put in place systems to manage volunteers

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and interns that will serve us well in 2012.

So we look forward with optimism to the challenges of 2012 in all departments. **And most of all, we look forward to your continuing support.**

Foundation

Over the last two months we have been busy wrapping up the project sponsored by the Ferguson Charitable Trust, writing the final report and creating a short video that you can view here: <http://www.yanapuma.org/videos/ferguson.php>

Other activities have included focusing on fundraising for our work in 2012.

Currently the Spanish school and our volunteer activities produce sufficient income to pay the admin and general overhead costs of the foundation, with some left over for project work. These extra funds we use throughout the year to bridge funding between external funding sources and to add in to these funds to augment and expand the projects that we are involved in.

Spanish School

Each year is different in terms of the way that student numbers vary and the paths by which they arrive at our school. The last two months have exemplified this unpredictability, with the school as busy as we were at the height of the summer! Normally in the run up to Christmas and New Year the numbers drop off as most people prefer to be at home for Christmas. Then in January the numbers increase steeply. But

Our Christmas Appeal!

It is still not too late to donate to our annual **Christmas Appeal** to provide scholarships to children in Estero de Plátano to continue studying in high school.

The program has been very successful to date, and in combination with the workshops in sexual and reproductive health and rights, we are making a big difference to the lives of the youth of Estero de Plátano.

The first student will graduate at the end of next year!

Please consider making a donation towards the fund, for which we require at least \$3,600 for the academic year.

You can read more about the program here: <http://www.yanapuma.org/en/xmas.php>

100% of your donation goes towards direct project costs.

To see a short video about the scholar-



ship students please click on this link: <http://www.yanapuma.org/videos/BecadosVideo.php>

we have been struggling to find enough teachers for the number of students right up to the middle of December, with a much higher than usual number of students staying over the Christmas period.

Our prices for 2012 will rise slightly, in line with general inflation.



Project News . . .

Tsa'chila

At the request of the Cabildo of the Tsa'chila community of Bua we sat down and worked out exactly how much we have invested as a foundation in the community over the past 5 years. This was a mammoth task for us, combing through all our previous records to extract all the relevant expenses. It will be easier for us in the future now that we have an efficient admin and accounting system in place. But for this occasion we had to manually search through invoices and receipts for the earliest years when our accounting system was not optimally organized.

The results were quite astonishing, even to us. We had planned to present the numbers at a meeting of the general assembly of the community but the meeting in December was cancelled at the last minute. We look forward to presenting our report in the new year.

We summed all the direct interventions over the years, including project funding, donations, money spent by our volunteers, interns and staff on accommodation in the community, wages paid to Yanapuma staff and other expenses. The total is a surprising **\$181,278.07**. Of that total, **\$49,470.59** came directly from Yanapuma's own income.

As we look forward to another year of working with the Tsa'chila, we constantly bear in mind the following factors that are particular to the Tsa'chila culture and history, and which profoundly affect the nature of our work with them:

- ◆ The Tsa'chila in general only produce about one third or one quarter of what their mestizo neighbors produce from the same area.
- ◆ By tradition the Tsa'chila hunt and fish, and practiced slash and burn agriculture. Lacking an agricultural background they have tended to rent out their land to mestizos to farm, sharing the crop. This has not led to very sound soil management.
- ◆ In the 1960s the government ceded the lands communally to the Tsa'chila, who had no concept of land ownership. Since then it is estimated that they have lost nearly 50%. With steady growth of their population since then, now there are many young Tsa'chila who do not have enough land to farm to support their families
- ◆ Today the problem of unequal land distribution continues unresolved, with some Tsa'chila having many hectares while others have almost nothing.
- ◆ The Tsa'chila tend not to trust mestizos and outsiders for the various bad experiences that they have had during the last 50 years. This has resulted in further isolation and a lack of progress on all fronts, as well as a very low sense of personal and cultural self-esteem.
- ◆ There do not exist adequate forms of collaboration and organization among the Tsa'chila, as their previous way of life did not require this. Their traditional forms have become maladaptive in the present circumstances.

- ◆ Their traditional way of life did not require the Tsa'chila to develop a life plan or a vision of the future. In practical terms it is hard for them to maintain a vision of positive change over several years, which makes helping them to improve their long-term outlook quite complicated.
- ◆ For traditional and geographical reasons, communication and collaboration between Tsa'chila communities is not good. Their current system of government is a state-imposed system that is alien to their traditional ways of thinking and does not function.

We were pleased to learn that we have been awarded £5,000 by the **Onaway Trust** of Scotland, a contribution to our work with women farmers in the community of Los Naranjos to improve their cacao production as well as to work on improving their cultural and personal self-esteem and organizational abilities.

In December we began organizing a group of women to create new plots of improved cacao to sow up to 8,000 new saplings by April or May when the dry season starts.

Puerto Limón

In October we carried out a project to plant 10,000 trees in the parish of Puerto Limón, within the boundaries of which lie 3 Tsa'chila communities. These were planted by students from the US organization Thinking Beyond Borders. Unfortunately, due to time constraints and the difficult conditions on the ground we only managed to plant just over 6,000. But during November, with help from parish authorities and the Ecuadorian army we succeeded in planting the remaining 4,000 trees.

We now need to work on a plan to monitor their progress and fill in any gaps should some of these trees not survive. The weeds grow incredibly fast in the tropical climate, especially with the added humidity of the river banks, reaching as high as 3 meters in a matter of months!

From January onwards we will continue mapping the river banks in preparation for continuing to reforest the water courses of the parish with the aid of volunteers from the United States.



Estero de Plátano

In October and early November, long term interns Alex and Shelby carried out a fundraiser to buy books for a reading program for our scholarship students and other pupils of the school. In total they raised \$802. This was spent on buying sufficient numbers of various books that students could all read at the same time and discuss in groups during the break, from January to April.

In addition they were involved in building a recreation area at the Viña del Mar school (*see photo below*).



Caimito and Cabo San Francisco

Earlier this year we were shortlisted to receive funding from the IUCN for a proposal to purchase some threatened areas of rainforest around Caimito, in the Cabo San Francisco region of Esmeraldas Province on the Pacific coast. Although we were eventually not selected as one of the 5 projects from 12 to be funded, we continue to seek funding that will allow us to promote sustainable development in this area of important biodiversity.

In a recent conversation with George Fletcher, who lives in Caimito and works to promote sustainable agriculture in the area, he confirmed the continued destruction of the forests bit by bit. A new road allowing improved access for local farmers has provided an easy route for increased timber extraction, just as anticipated. Another lot has been clear-felled so the owner can plant balsa as a cash crop, financed by a bank loan.

The relentless daily nibbling away at the remaining areas of forest continue to drive species to extinction. There are several recognized species on the red list, as well as countless as yet undiscovered species that will disappear in the coming years if nothing is done to protect them. In addition, an increase in chemical run-off from unsustainable agricultural activities will increasingly threaten the biodiversity of the Galera-San Francisco Marine Reserve which lies just offshore from the Cabo San Francisco. With only 3% of the area of the Galapagos, this new marine reserve contains greater biodiversity, as revealed by a study by the Nature Conservancy: <http://www.nature.org/ourinitiatives/regions/southamerica/ecuador/explore/galera-san-francisco.xml>

Volunteers and Interns . . .

We were pleased to welcome **Sandra ten Zijthoff** as a new volunteer and intern coordinator for Yanapuma. Officially she will start in January, helping current volunteer and intern coordinator **Kelly Schussler** to manage the volunteer department. But she came in a few mornings during December to begin to learn the ropes.

Sandra is from Holland and is part Peruvian, and holds a Masters in International Development Studies, and she recently worked with Organización Guaruma in Honduras.

We also welcomed in December **Nick Haitel**, a tourism student from Stenden University in Holland. Nick will be working with us as an intern for 7 months.

Lisa Hoffman and **Jennifer Wilson**, with their son **Zey**, spent 7 weeks living with the Tsa'chila in Los Naranjos. During their time there they worked with the leaders of the cultural center and youth on creating a book on medicinal plants and Tsa'chila culture and stories, in the school teaching English, as well as spending time getting to understand the dynamics of the Tsa'chila culture.



Learning to make chocolate!

Having the opportunity to witness more closely than we do the details of daily life and the challenges that the Tsa'chila face, they were able to give us valuable information and feedback to allow us to improve the way that we interact with the Tsa'chila in the future.

United Nations Trust Fund for the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples



We were delighted to learn in December that we have been awarded a grant of nearly \$10,000 from the above fund.

Although we have not been officially notified as of the completion of this newsletter, our name appears on their website as beneficiaries

This funding will allow us to work in the community of Los Naranjos for one year with women and youth on issues related to leadership, cultural self-esteem and organization.

November and December Photo Gallery



Happy Holidays from all of us at Yanapuma!

