

# Implementing the Biodiversity Convention

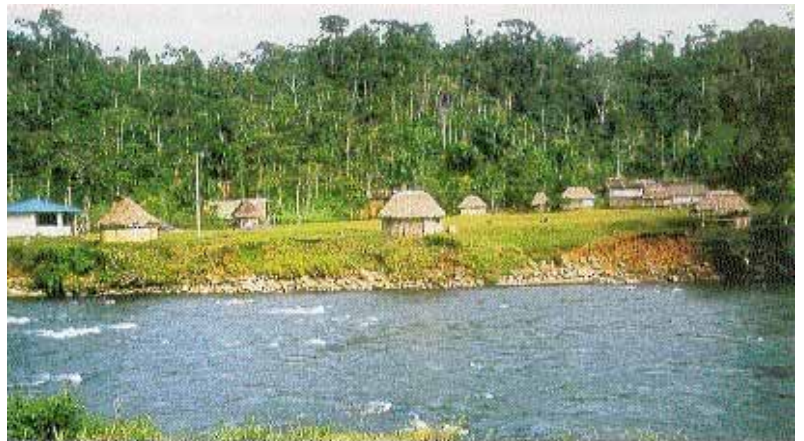
## YAWA JEE: Indigenous Protected Area Management in the Ecuadorian Rainforest

A German-Ecuadorian cooperation project

Ecuador is a country of contrasts. On an area only 2/3 the size of Germany, three main landscapes are united: *Costa*, *Sierra* and *Oriente*. The diversity of climatic and vegetational zones is accordingly impressive: rainforest, mountain cloud forest, coastal regions, mangroves, dry forest, savannas, steppes, paramo. With its estimated 25,000 plant species, of which one fifth is endemic, Ecuador is the most species-rich country of South America. Particular importance attaches to the *Selva Tropical Oriental*, the Ecuadorian part of the Amazon basin, which accounts for 40% of the country's area and is home to about half of the 1500 bird species found in Ecuador.

Ecuador has by now given protected status to 14.5% of its territory, in the form of national parks, reserves or protected recreational areas. The 'community conservation forests' are a particular category of protected areas, which can also include non-state-owned land, and in which sustainable land uses are basically permitted. These conservation forests, often administered jointly by village communities, have a particular political and psychological potential for biodiversity conservation. On the other side of the coin, there is degradation of the rainforest by mineral oil extraction, state-promoted development measures and settlements in association with large-scale clearcutting.

The Amazon region is an increasingly popular destination for foreign visitors. In addition to the experience of pristine nature and sports activities such as rafting, trekking and hiking, the opportunity to meet the numerous indigenous peoples is a main attraction. Ecotourism is thus gaining importance as a part of strategies to reap economic benefits from biodiversity.



Photographs: Birgit Steck

The objective of the project is to support *Yawa Jee*, the indigenous organization in the province of Pastaza, to the point at which it is able to manage the forest conservation areas under its stewardship such that the conservation of their biological diversity is ensured and they are returned to their livelihood-securing function for the local population. The project thus underscores the importance of local knowledge for biodiversity conservation and the rights of indigenous communities. The project is consequently in accordance with the Biodiversity Convention,

which stresses the right to self-determination of indigenous peoples.

### Project tasks

- **Management plan**

- **preparation and consulta-**

**tion:** Data on fauna and flora, human uses and zones in particular need of protection are being compiled for four conservation areas administered by *Yawa Jee*. Besides a scientific team, it is essentially the local population which maps the biogeographical features and human uses, and jointly determines future zoning.

- **Supporting the establishment of administrative structures for protected areas:** In order that the biodiversity conservation efforts can be continued after con-

### Biodiversity and the Biodiversity Convention

The concept of »biological diversity« or »biodiversity« refers to the diversity of life on Earth, from genetic diversity over species diversity through to the diversity of ecosystems. The international Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) adopted in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro integrates three elements: the conservation of biological diversity, its sustainable use and, finally, equitable sharing of the benefits that arise from its use. By now, 178 states have joined the Convention. By signing the Convention, Germany has committed itself not only to conserving biodiversity at home, but also to supporting developing countries in the necessary steps.

clusion of the project, one focus is placed on organizational advice and the establishment of suitable consultation processes that guarantee the active involvement of all community members.

- **Professionalizing existing ecotourism activities:** *Jawa Jee* already runs small-scale ecotourism operations. However, these are still unprofessional in many aspects. Proceeding from workshops conducted on site, the necessary training and investment measures are now being identified for the various services, with the support of experienced tourism experts. The entrepreneurial capabilities of the organi-

zation shall be enhanced, notably with respect to marketing and cooperation with national tour operators and travel agencies.

GTZ, October 1999

### Project data

**Project title:** YAWA JEE: Promoting Indigenous Protected Area Management in the Ecuadorian Rainforest – An individual measure in the context of the sector project »Implementing the Biodiversity Convention«.

**Project duration:** ca. 30 months

**Project progress:** In July 1997, the *Yawa Jee* indigenous foundation submitted a project application for the »Promotion of ecotourism in Pastaza province, Ecuador«. In the course of a short project appraisal mission conducted in April 1998, agreement was found between *Yawa Jee* representatives and GTZ concerning the objectives and tasks of the project. In February 1999, the *German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)* approved in principle the support of the project proposal with funding from the sector project »Implementing the Biodiversity Convention« implemented by *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GmbH*. In April 1999, a plan of operations was drawn up and agreed with the parties involved at a planning meeting in Puyo. Since then, first workshops on 'community conservation forest' management have been carried out in two communities. In order to exchange experience, several representatives of *Jawa Jee* have visited another indigenous tourism project in Ecuador; further exchange programmes are in preparation. Workshops shall commence within 1999 to identify the ecotourism potential in the individual communities, jointly define a tourism product and determine the necessary training and investment. Back-up measures aimed at improving the nutritional situation through traditional house gardens and small animal rearing or fish breeding are being identified.

The project »Implementing the Biodiversity Convention« is implemented by GTZ on behalf of the *German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)*.

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