

The C-Condem Project

Local Presentations To Preserve The Ecuadorian Mangroves

The National Coordinating Corporation to Defend the Mangrove Ecosystem (C-Condem) in Ecuador works hard to campaign for the preservation of Ecuador's mangroves. Because of the destruction of the mangroves in Ecuador, local fishermen find it increasingly hard to find shellfish. The Mangrove Information and Communication Technologies project promotes community production initiatives around the mangrove ecosystem. The initiatives make sure that communities can defend their rights, and the importance of keeping the mangroves, more easily. The project focused on installing computers in isolated fishermen's communities and on providing basic computer training, including how to make PowerPoint presentations.

Raising awareness about the dwindling number of shellfish

This project was supported by the International Institute for Communication and Development (IICD) for ICD from 2004 until 2007. It has been operating independently since the beginning of 2008. The project focused on installing computers in isolated fishermen's communities and providing basic computer training, including how to make PowerPoint presentations.

With the PowerPoint presentations, C-Condem raises awareness about the increasing shortage of shellfish in the Mangrove areas. In the project three environmental management plans were created by C-Condem, two of which have been accepted by the Ministry of Environment for implementation.

In these environmental management plans, extensive use is made of a Geographic Information System. This system allows the organisation to put information about the mangrove area on a digital map at the headquarters of its sister organisation Fundecol (the Spanish acronym for : Ecological Defence Organisation) that can be viewed online.

No internet, but still online

Ecuador's economic policies are geared toward extracting natural resources to repay its foreign debt. This often entails the destruction of the Amazon rainforest and other tropical forests, land suited to farming, and mangrove ecosystem areas along the Ecuadorian coast. In response to this, the



C-Condem is raising awareness to protect both the mangroves and the shellfish that are being sold by local people.

National Coordinating Corporation to Defend the Mangrove (C-Condem) has created initiatives in provinces along the Ecuadorian Coastal Region, working with grassroots communities and organisations to recover, conserve, and defend the mangrove ecosystem, which is the natural heritage of the Coast and considered to be among the five most productive ecological units in the world. More than anything, C-Condem wants to prevent large-scale shrimp companies from destroying the mangroves.

The C-Condem project has no internet component because of the remote location of the areas where it has helped to install computers. Cable internet and internet through phones is not possible and satellite connections are too expensive. In order to put information on the Geographic Information System, the organisation has to travel to its sister organisation, Fundecol.



User impact

By incorporating production alternatives in the mangrove ecosystem, the project is aiming to construct a model – together with the local community - for the recovery, conservation and management of the mangrove ecosystem as a protected area. This is also being done by creating audiovisual and print records of activities that have been carried out with the communities, promoters, leaders, technicians and coordinators.

All actions to defend, conserve and recover the mangrove ecosystem on the Ecuadorian coast began with a local community proposal, which has gradually and increasingly influenced broader mangrove management policies. It is only recently that both the authorities and the public woke up to the seriousness of the destruction that was happening along the coastline.

Objectives

- *To create a community management proposal* - The development goal is to develop a community management proposal to recover, conserve, and defend the mangrove ecosystem on the Ecuadorian coast, while safeguarding the human rights of the communities that are ancestral users of this ecosystem and which fish there for shellfish, both for their own personal consumption and to sell them on the national market.
- *To strengthen local knowledge* - The overall goal of the C-Condem project is to strengthen local knowledge as well as the capacity of local organisations and communities that are the ancestral users of

the mangrove system, with a view to improving their management of production initiatives relating to the conservation of the ecosystem by using ICT. The project focuses on providing income through ecotourism in Muisne and repopulating fish and shellfish supplies in Limones, both of which are in the province of Esmeraldas.

Newsletters and a bulletin board

One result of the project is that the institutional capacity of C-Condem has been strengthened. Today, through its website at www.ccondem.org.ec, it shares information and knowledge more effectively with its members and with other institutions and organisations. The organisation has also launched a bulletin board and regularly sends out newsletters which its staff members can now create on the new computers.

Even though the Mangrove Information and Communication Technologies project is now in independent continuation, support by the Wetlands Programme of the shellfish project component is expected.

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