

Communities

There are several small communities, to the west and the south of the San Lorenzo Protected Area, with diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, of people living day by day in a close relationship with nature. The San Lorenzo Project considers the people of these communities as main players in the strategy to assure conservation of the Protected Area.

The Project is supporting communities to increase local capacity to organize and diversify their sources of income and to obtain benefits from the forest's resources in a sustainable manner. Some examples:

- Several communities have carried out "Participative Rural Diagnoses" to study the present situation of their communities, identify main problems and find solutions. The exercise includes the production of community maps on vegetation cover and agricultural uses.
- Project personnel give workshops on organic coffee growing, improving product quality and offering support for marketing to the Duran company.
- The community of Escobal, to the south of the protected area, already has an ecotourism and environmental committees that organize annual Festival in July. This is a way the community can obtain benefits from the area's biodiversity.
- Several people from the community of Achiote, to the west, have received birdwatching courses from the Audubon Society and developed a nature trail in the forest by the Achiote Road, integrating an intimate knowledge of biodiversity with interest in conservation activities.

The Project is also helping communities make their own decisions regarding the protected area. They now play a key role in execution of the new Management Plan for the San Lorenzo Protected Area.

Through a change in the awareness and commitment of the communities to the forest, we are experiencing a more

sustainable way of live and they are becoming the primary defense of the Protected Area.