

Development Projects of Non-Profit and Bilateral Cooperation Organizations Targeting Indigenous Communities in the Ecuadorian Amazon

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Abstract

Indigenous people (who sometimes seem to be forgotten) are part of many national and global societies, and have been living around the world for millennia. But problems such as environmental destruction, discrimination, lack of access to basic needs, etc., place them in a vulnerable position, as is the case for the indigenous communities living in the Ecuadorian Amazon. This situation has awoken the interest of many organizations to work with indigenous communities in order to provide them with better living conditions, through the implementation of various development projects. This research shows different development projects that have been carried out by these organizations, targeting indigenous communities in the Ecuadorian Amazon; namely Cofan, Shuar, Secoya, Kichwa, Waorani, Achuar, and Siona. One hundred and sixty-nine projects implemented by 32 different organizations, including national, international, religious and bilateral cooperation organizations, are analyzed in a systematic way.

Keywords: *Indigenous Communities, Non-Profit Organizations, Green Business, Sustainability, Ecuadorian Amazon*

Introduction

Indigenous communities have been living around the world for millennia, with specific life styles, languages, cultures, traditions, and religions; which differ from one community to another, even if they are living in the same country. Indigenous communities

are widely present in Africa, America, Europe, Asia and Australia, and have often been the first inhabitants in these regions. These communities have not grown parallel to the social and economic developments of the countries they inhabit. Instead, they have often been set aside by governments, citizens and the world in general.

One of the places where this is the case is Ecuador- a middle income country with four different regions: the highlands, where the Andes Mountains are, the Pacific coast, the Galapagos Islands and the Amazon rainforest. Alongside all of this magnificent nature there are more than 15 million inhabitants, including 14 indigenous groups, half of which live in the Ecuadorian Amazon. As in other regions of the world, these communities face many problems. Despite the Ecuadorian governments' effort through history, results do not show an improvement in the welfare of indigenous communities. Besides, the intensive oil extraction that mostly takes place in the Ecuadorian Amazon, and on which the Ecuadorian economy and government budget depend, affects directly indigenous communities. With oil extraction come other issues, such as colonization, and pollution of soil and water resources, which affects the indigenous communities' ways of living and behavior. These issues are building on further problems such as: discrimination, lack of protection, lack of education, non-recognition of rights and territories, destruction of habitat and environment, and little or no access to basic needs, e.g. electricity, drinking water, shelter.

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These problems have sparked the interest of non-profit organizations (NPOs), religious organizations (ROs) and bilateral cooperation organizations (BCOs) for designing and implementing projects in the Ecuadorian Amazon to improve the social and economic development of the indigenous communities. With development assistance coming from these organizations, projects are now continuously targeting the problems that indigenous communities face. Millions have been invested in areas such as the environment, indigenous rights, economic development, children's rights, food security, and the empowerment of women. This research focuses on presenting various projects that have been implemented by these organizations targeting indigenous communities in the Ecuadorian Amazon and aims to show what is actually happening, by providing relevant data.

Indigenous Communities in the Ecuadorian Amazon

The indigenous community worldwide represents about 5% of the global population, accounting for 370 million people spread in 70 countries (See Figure 1). There are several names given to the indigenous peoples, such as: first peoples, tribes, ethnic groups and aboriginals. In fact, indigenous peoples have populated their native lands for thousands of years, preserving their cultures, lands, languages, ways of living, biodiversity, and beliefs. Sometimes they have even isolated themselves from the “outside world” as a voluntary act to safeguard their knowledge and cultural survival (United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 2007).

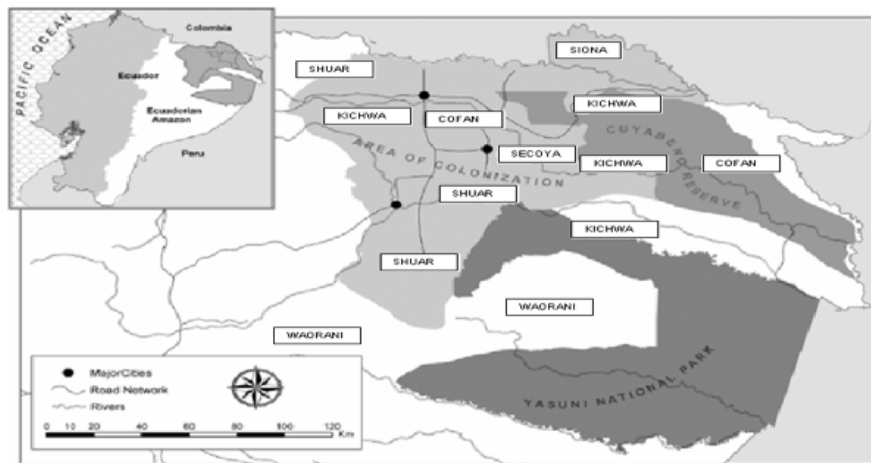


Source: Own elaboration.

Figure 1. Location of Indigenous People Around the World

Latin America is home to 522 indigenous groups distributed from Mexico to Argentina. In the Amazon region, shared by Brasil, Ecuador, Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, Venezuela, Guyana, Surinam and French Guyana, there are 247 different ethnic groups (UNICEF, 2010). Out of a total of 522 ethnic groups in the Latin American region, approximately 200 groups are isolated indigenous communities (Colleoni & Proaño, 2012). In Ecuador, with a total population of 15.49

million (The World Bank, 2012), about 5 million are represented by 14 ethnic groups spread around three regions: highlands, coast, and the Amazon rainforest. From those 14 ethnic groups, seven live in the Ecuadorian Amazon (figure 2), which is divided into six provinces. These indigenous groups are: *Cofan*, *Shuar*, *Secoya*, *Kichwa*, *Waorani*, *Achuar*, and *Siona* (Abya Yala, 1998).



Source: (Bremner & Lu, 2006)

Figure 2. Indigenous Communities in the Ecuadorian Amazon

There are one thousand *Cofan* people in the Ecuadorian Amazon and they live in the areas surrounding the Bermejo, Aguarico, Guanues and San Miguel rivers, in the Province of Sucumbios. *Cofan* are defined by their language called A'Ingae or Cofan, together with their traditional dresses and feather perforations in ears and nose. They were considered an isolated group until 1955, when a group of North American missionaries arrived at their settlements and tried to evangelize them, taking away some traditional rituals like the "Yagé", through which they used to communicate with their ancestors. Nowadays, most of the members of the *Cofan* communities also speak Spanish (CONAIE, n.d.). One of the most important rituals for Cofan people is the "Ayahuasca ritual", where a Cofan "Shaman" or wise man, communicates with their God, Coan-Coan in order to receive advice for respecting life, nature and the world in general (CODENPE, n.d.).

The traditional territory of the *Shuar* ethnic group is located in the Province of Morona Santiago, however nowadays they have spread to different provinces like: Napo, Pastaza, Zamora Chinchipe and Sucumbios. The group's population totals 110,000 inhabitants, making Shuar the largest ethnic group in Ecuador, with more than half living in the Ecuadorian Amazon. Their language is the Shuar-Chicham (CONAIE, n.d.). The family is the most important part of this community, and an important element of their tradi-

tions is polygamy- one man can be married to several women- which is socially accepted. However, nowadays, due to marriages between different ethnicities, polygamy is not widely practiced.

For millennia, Shuar people have been practicing fishing, and hunting and gathering, as part of their economy, as well as harvesting for their daily needs. Shuar religious beliefs are an important element of their culture. They believe in a trilogy formed by "Arutam" (Shuar God), "Aents" (Shuar person) and "Nunka" (land). Shuar find Arutam in the sacred waterfalls and through specific rituals; they can purify their souls and bodies, leave bad energies and load good ones. Aents, as a persona, is related to great harmony and respect to the cosmos, making it a creative, rational and clever human being. The land, Nunka is the provider of shelter and food for Shuar people (CODENPE, n.d.).

The *Secoya* ethnic group, also known as "Angotero" or "Encabellao", is settled in the Province of Sucumbios, near the Aguarico River and its population totals 380. Their language is the "Paicoca". Their society is based on gathering, agriculture, fishing and hunting. Like most indigenous groups, Secoya people contribute to their economy by producing handicrafts. Men usually make canoes, flutes and arrows which are used for activities such as fishing and hunting, as well as for transportation along the Shushufindi, Aguarico and

Cuyabeno rivers. Women instead make necklaces, bracelets and clay pots. Necklaces and bracelets are widely used among their clans as part of their outfits and for decoration, while clay pots are used for their daily cooking tasks and are usually shared among women (CONAIE, n.d.). Their social organization is based on families and a group of families make a community. In the Ecuadorian Amazon, there are three different Secoya communities and they organize themselves to divide their resources equally among each other (CODENPE, n.d.) **Kichwa** (also written as: “*Quichua*”), is the largest ethnic group living in the Ecuadorian Amazon, reaching close to 80,000 people. Originally, they settled in the Ecuadorian highlands, however due to colonization through the years, they have moved into the Ecuadorian Amazon, Peru and Colombia. Nevertheless, there are some differences between the Kichwa from the highlands and the Kichwa from the Amazon, especially in their language. The Kichwa from the Amazon speak “Runa Shimi”, which means language of the people. While the Kichwa from the highlands speak Kichwa. However, all Kichwa speak Spanish as a second language in order to communicate with the white and mestizo (mix between Spanish and Indigenous) population.

The Kichwa population living in the Ecuadorian Amazon is distributed along the provinces of Sucumbios, Napo, Orellana and Pastaza, usually settled around the rivers where they are able to use the water resources. Their main economic activities are equally shared between men and women, these are: fishing, hunting, gathering and harvesting. However, only women are in charge of artisanal activities. Nowadays, the ceramic handicrafts made by Kichwa women are sold in national and international markets. Kichwa people have been living in the Amazon even before the Spanish colonizers arrived in these lands. Therefore, Kichwa people as well as other indigenous ethnicities, have the right to own humid rainforests, gold, crude oil, waterfalls, rivers, lakes, medicinal and ornamental plants, wild animals, and infrastructure like health centers, schools, roads and cars (CODENPE, n.d.).

The **Waorani** (also written as *Huaorani*) ethnic group call themselves “Wao”, which means “people” and their language is the “Wao Terero”. They have a total population of 3,000 in the Ecuadorian Amazon and

are located in three different provinces: Orellana, Napo and Pastaza (CONAIE, n.d.). They live in extended families, usually in groups of 10 people, which are led by an elder man or woman. First cousins can marry within these extended families, which represents a socially accepted Waorani tradition (CODENPE, n.d.). In 1987, Waorani people had their first contact with outsiders. A mission was led by the Spanish priest Alejandro Labaka and Colombian missionary Inés Sarango, who were committed to and constantly fighting for indigenous peoples’ rights (Vicariato Apostólico del Aguarico, 2012).

The **Achuar** population is around 6,000. They are located in the provinces of Pastaza and Morona Santiago in the Ecuadorian Amazon. This ethnic group has been present in the area since the year 1500. Since the arrival of the Spanish conquerors, they have managed to live in the jungle preserving their ways of living and rejecting any outsider from their territory. Their language is the “Achuar chicham”. Nowadays, they still live by fishing, and hunting and gathering food from the rainforest, but they have also managed to interact with the outside world, bringing salt, batteries, clothes, and schooling products into their territory; as well as selling their handicrafts and medicinal products. Achuar drink wayusa, sometimes called the “coffee of Achuar”, with positive effects for several illnesses. Although, they have rejected all Catholic and evangelist missionaries, they still believe in their God, which is the highest power and the jungle protector. As part of their culture, the most valuable qualities are honesty, solidarity and perseverance. It is permitted for one man to have more than one wife according to his means, however adultery is highly punished (CODENPE, n.d.).

Siona ethnic group, is formed of 360 people distributed in the province of Sucumbios in the Ecuadorian Amazon. They speak “Paicoca” and Spanish (CONAIE, n.d.). Due to colonization and inter-ethnic merging, Siona peoples have lost most of their traditions, legal lands and ways of living. Nowadays, some specialists relate to the Secoya as one group: the *Siona-Secoya*, but they insist in the separation, as they are different ethnic groups. They are usually associated with cheap labor for multinational oil companies present in the Ecuadorian Amazon. As part of their traditional culture, they make emphasis on the way

they look and they give special importance to body painting, their specific hair style, earrings, the use of 80 necklaces, including one made from 32 jaguar teeth, and they wear aromatic leaves as bracelets which has given them the name Siona, meaning “the perfumed ones” (CODENPE, n.d.).

Besides these seven different ethnic groups living in the Ecuadorian Amazon, there are two more clans who are voluntarily isolated from the outside world and its “civilization”. These groups are the *Tagaeri* and *Taromenani*, who started moving deeper into the jungle when colonizers were trying to reach them (Colleoni & Proaño, 2012). To this day, these groups are voluntarily isolated in the area of the Yasuni National Park, known as one of the richest wildlife regions in the world in terms of immense biodiversity, as well as for its unextracted crude oil (Wildlife Conservation Society, 2014).

Problems of the Indigenous Communities

According to their specific circumstances and situation, indigenous communities face not only poverty but also many other problems which are strongly interconnected. For years, these ethnic groups in the Ecuadorian Amazon have been vulnerable, especially due to the intensive petroleum exploitation, the disruptive influence of the Western world, the lack of protection by the Ecuadorian government, and the non-recognition of their rights. All these problems have led to some interest for development projects, from national NPOs, international NPOs, ROs and BCOs, in order to improve the living conditions of indigenous communities.

Problems Related to Oil-extraction

One of the main threats for indigenous communities living in the Ecuadorian Amazon is the extraction of crude oil, which brings several other problems as well. Oil has been the main source of income for the Ecuadorian economy, representing from 40% to 60% of the country's exports since the 1960s when the first oil fields were discovered in the Ecuadorian Amazon (Guaranda-Mendoza, 2011). Since the 1960s, the Ecuadorian government has given access to oil resources, through concessions, to multinational companies such as Shell, Texaco (now Chevron), Petrobras,

Andes Petroleum, among others. These companies had to get involved in the construction of railroads, pipelines and infrastructure, destroying the natural environment in the Amazon, where the indigenous communities live. However, this infrastructure was only for oil extraction, and did not bring any positive effects to the development of the indigenous communities (Vera, 2007).

Furthermore, oil extraction has negatively affected water resources through oil pollution. One such example is Chevron-Texaco which started oil drilling operations in the Ecuadorian Amazon in 1962, after signing a concession with the Ecuadorian government, valid until 1992. The company claimed it spent more than USD\$40 million in environmental remediation after its operations (Chevron U.S.A. Inc., 2010). However, these environmental remediation procedures were not done with high standard measures. After drilling oil from the Amazon ground, oil waste was either re-injected underground or it was put back into the wells, rivers and other available water resources.

According to Donziger (2004), during its operations, Chevron-Texaco dumped approximately 4.3 million gallons of oil waste per day into the rainforest. After years of pollution, the soil is not good for agriculture anymore. The carcinogenic properties of oil waste in the soil and water have damaged the environment and the indigenous communities living there. This has made activities like fishing and hunting, and daily consumption that depends on clean water resources, almost impossible to provide. The natural water resources remain polluted even 22 years after the company left, and a large number of cancer cases, genetic malformation, dermatological diseases and extinct flora and fauna species have resulted from the massive oil spills (Donziger, 2004).

In order to solve the problems of oil extraction and all the consequences that it brings to the indigenous people, and following the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change-UNFCCC, the Ecuadorian government implemented a new model for social and economic development for the country, the Yasuní-ITT initiative strategy, aiming to keep the oil which is underneath the Yasuní National Park underground (Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office-United

Nations, 2014). However, the initiative did not work and it was discontinued³. Briefly, oil extraction has become the main threat to these communities due to the destruction of biodiversity and consequently, indigenous peoples' livelihoods, as many depend on hunting, gathering and fishing. Together with oil extraction, the intrusion of Western culture has also immensely influenced these indigenous groups and weakened their unique native cultures.

Other Problems

During the colonization of Ecuador, from the fifteenth until the nineteenth century, indigenous people were considered inferior beings with no rights to own land. Afterwards, lands were nationalized by the government and later on, privatized by some multinational corporations, which received lands full of natural resources, that were previously owned and still inhabited by indigenous communities. Although they lived there, the indigenous peoples had no participation in the privatization decision-making processes, forcing these communities into poverty. After their lands were destroyed, some of them had to migrate to the biggest cities looking for better economic opportunities. However, since the time of colonization, indigenous people have been highly discriminated by

3 Within the Ecuadorian Amazon area lays the Yasuní National Park, a unique biosphere ecosystem where, in one hectare, one can find more tree species than in all of North America. Furthermore, the Yasuní National Park is home to the *Waorani* indigenous communities, among which two *Waorani* clans are voluntarily isolated, the *Tagaeri* and *Taromenane*. Under the territory of the park lies one of the largest oil reserves (20% of the total oil reserves of Ecuador). Oil extraction and deforestation have been the biggest threats to the Park (Bass, Finer, Jenkins, Kreft, & Cisneros-Heredia, 2010). In exchange for not extracting the oil and therefore not receiving any money from it, the government asked the international community to pay 50% of the oil's value until 2023, which would be a total of USD\$3.6 billion. The contributions were expected from governments, international organizations, companies and international citizens willing to reduce climate change effects. Besides keeping the Yasuní oil reserves intact, the Ecuadorian government was willing to invest the proceedings in renewable energy projects, such as hydro energy, geothermal, solar, wind, biomass and tidal, as well as sustainable development projects in order to preserve ecosystems, diminish deforestation and contribute to social development in the country, including indigenous communities (Martin, 2011). However, from the goal of USD\$3.6 billion, only USD\$10 million was collected by 2013. Therefore, the President of Ecuador, Rafael Correa, decided to end the initiative and returned the funds through the UNDP Trust Fund. In August 2013, the Ecuadorian government approved 1% of the land in the Yasuní National Park for oil drilling (El País, 2013). To date, oil drilling operations have not started due to high opposition from the international community. Ecuadorian activists, ecologists and the society demand a democratic decision as to whether the Yasuní National Park should be exploited. There is very strong national and international pressure for the initiative to continue.

society, without rights of access to decent labor, education or public services, which exposed them to exploitation and poverty (Zúñiga García-Falces, 2008).

According to UNICEF's report (2008), there is an 80% deficit in access to public services by the indigenous population. At the same time the Ecuadorian Amazon represents the most dense area of indigenous presence. In the Amazon, 9 out of 10 homes lack at least one public service, with 1 out of 4 homes having a sewage system and 2 out of 10 homes receiving piped water (not safe to drink). Concerning education, the Amazon region received 5% of the national budget for education investment in 2009. Poverty prevents 79.4% of indigenous children from attending school. From the national indigenous community, 51.4% attend elementary school, 11% attend high school and only 3.8% reach higher education. However, during the past decade, the education system has been improving, trying to create integrative, multi-ethnic and equally distributed rights while respecting the indigenous culture, beliefs, traditions and language, as part of the New Constitution (Constitución de la República del Ecuador, 2008).

Another important problem of the indigenous people is the lack of protection by the Ecuadorian government. In 1991, the declaration of "intangible land" was applied in order to protect the indigenous territory from oil exploitation expansion. Nevertheless, the revenues of crude oil extraction have had greater power than the protection of a minority, even though this minority represents about one third of the total Ecuadorian population (De Marcchi, Pappalardo, & Ferrarese, 2013). Due to the lack of protection and the non-recognition of indigenous rights, 80% of the indigenous population is poor. This poverty is caused by different factors such as: loss of lands, oil exploitation, discrimination, and the lack of an educational system, as mentioned previously.

Lack of protection has forced indigenous people to form their own federations⁴ and organizations in order to participate actively in politics and express their inconformity with wealth distribution, poverty and discrimination, which they have been suffering for centuries. According to a UNICEF report, regarding resource distribution, the Amazon region received

4 In 1944, the first indigenous organization was formed, called: "Ecuadorian Indigenous Federation", then the "Shuar Federation" in 1964, the "Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities in the Ecuadorian Amazon" (CONFENAIE Spanish abb.) in 1980 and the biggest national organization, the "Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador" (CONAIE Spanish abb.), in 1986 (Zúñiga García-Falces, 2008).

the worst distribution of resources in the area. Also, the income disparity in the Amazon is the greatest. Even if the largest share of income to Ecuador comes from natural resources, especially from crude oil, the region receives the least from its revenues and presents the greatest income gap between the rich and the poor (UNICEF:Ministry of Heritage, 2008; The Economist, 2014).

Methodology

The organizations which became the subjects of this research were taken from the list provided by the Ecuadorian Technical Secretariat for International Cooperation - detailed in its nongovernmental organizations database (SETECI, 2014), and some organizations were added to the list from the authors' own research, and all were grouped as: National NPOs, International NPOs, ROs, and BCOs. After creating a list of the organizations targeting indigenous communities in the Ecuadorian Amazon, each organization's website and related documents were visited to get the information about the projects.

Finally, 169 projects operated by 32 different organizations were analyzed. It must be noted that there are probably more organizations and projects but these are the ones found during the research period that provided technically satisfactory data that could be analyzed. Thus, the data shown under findings must be read with this in mind since the authors are not claiming to cover all projects of all organizations.

Findings

Thirty-two organizations⁵, mostly based in Spain, Italy, USA, Germany, Belgium and Ecuador considering their countries of origin, and a total of 169 pro-

jects were listed and reported in the following sections. An overview of the four groups of organizations, specifying total number of projects implemented in the Ecuadorian Amazon, total amount invested in projects in the Ecuadorian Amazon and the average funding per project, is given in Table 1.

It was found that most of the 169 projects were implemented after 2000. As a clear start date for the projects was not always given; it is possible that some projects may date back to before 2000.

International NPOs have managed to implement the most projects (62), followed by BCOs (44), national NPOs (36) and ROs (27). International NPOs occupy the greatest share for project implementation with 36.68% of all, followed by BCOs (26.03%), national NPOs (21.30%) and ROs (15.97%). All groups have invested a total amount of €151,604,959.58 (financial data for 45 projects was unavailable) with an average investment of €1,222,620.64 per project. BCOs have invested the biggest average amount per project with €2,982,612.33 which is extremely high compared to others.

The country of origin of organizations varies. Figure 3 provides an overview of all organizations, according to their countries of origin. Ecuador shares the same number of organizations as Spain. All national NPOs working in the Ecuadorian Amazon and targeting indigenous communities have been founded in Ecuador or have their origins in Ecuador; therefore seven organizations are Ecuadorian, equal to the number of Spanish organizations. USA and Italy both represent 15%. The rest of the countries of origin vary, from 6% to 3%.

After going through all reports on the organizations' projects, 15 different development areas were defined according to the information given by organizations, namely their descriptions about the main focus of the projects: economic development, environment, capacity and organizational strengthening, intercultural governance, women empowerment, human rights (including violence), children's rights, youth, climate change, education, health, shelter, food security, welfare (including sanitation, water, and improvement of living conditions), and refugees. Figure 4 shows the distribution of these. Economic development with 28% has the biggest share in all projects, followed by 19% focused on *Environmental issues* and 10% on *Capacity and organizational strengthening*. The rest of the projects focus (varying between 1-10%) on welfare, education, empowerment of women, health, food security, refugees, intercultural governance, human rights, children's rights, youth, shelter, and climate change.

5 7 National NPOs: Fondo Ecuatoriano de Cooperación para el Desarrollo, Grupo social Fondo Ecuatoriano Populorum Progreso, Ecociencia, Ecuador Tierra Viva Foundation, Futuro Latinoamericano Foundation, Pachamama Alliance, Cofan Survival Fund; (18 International NPOs) ACSUR-Las Segovias, Centro di educazione sanitaria e tecnologie appropriate sanitarie, Associació Catalana d'Enginyeria Sense Fronteras, Fundación Paz y Desarrollo, Save the Children International, Tierra de Hombres, SNV-Netherlands Development Organization, Amazon Watch, The Nature Conservancy, Avina Foundation, Huauquipura Entre hermanos, Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, The Condor Trust for Education, Indio Hilfe-AMAZONICA, CEFA, Foundation for rural cooperation in Africa and Latin America, Norwegian People's Aid, Medicus Mundi; (2 ROs) Caritas Italian and Catholic Relief Services; (5 BCOs) US Agency for International Development, Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional al Desarrollo, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationales Zusammen Arbeit, Belgian Development Agency, Fondo Ítalo-Ecuatoriano.

Table 1. Groups of Organizations Working in the Ecuadorian Amazon

Type of Organization	Total number of org. (No. of org. providing financial data)	%	Total Number of Projects (No. of projects providing financial data)	% in total	Total amount invested (in EUR)*	Average (in EUR)
National NPOs	7 (2)	21.9	36 (17)	21.30	738,905.81	43,465.05
International NPOs	18 (9)	56.2	62 (41)	36.68	19,500,409.91	475,619.75
Religious Organizations	2 (1)	6.3	27 (22)	15.97	130,701.25	5,940.97
Bilateral Cooperation Organizations	5 (5)	15.6	44 (44)	26.03	131,234,942.61	2,982,612.33
TOTAL	32 (17)	100	169 (124)	100	151,604,959.58	1,222,620.64

* Regarding amounts of investment, organizations provided information either in Euros or Dollars. Therefore, the Euro was selected and 1,33USD/EUR exchange rate was used.

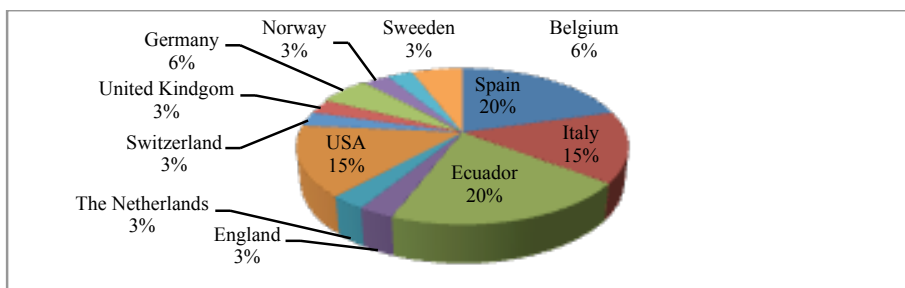


Figure 3. Organizations By Country of Origin

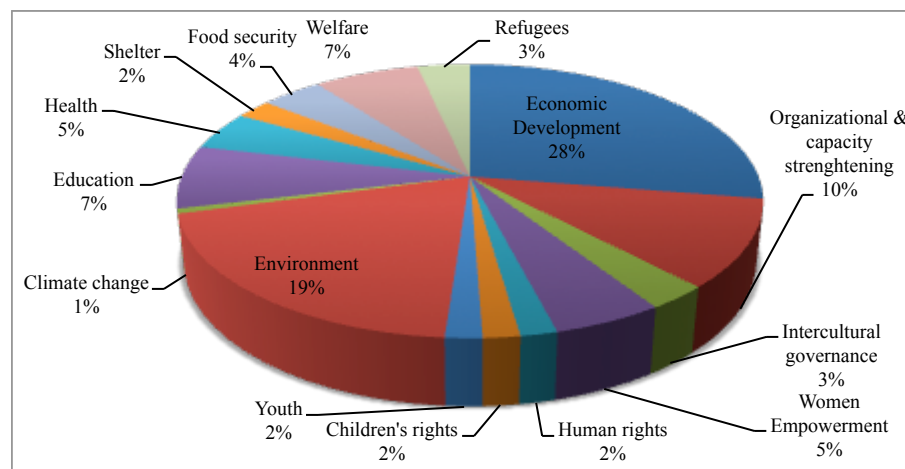


Figure 4. Focus Area of Projects

In detail, national NPOs focused 35% of their projects on the *environment*, 20% on *economic development* and 10% on *empowerment of women* projects. The rest of the projects focus with less than 10% on areas like: education, organizational and capacity strengthening, intercultural governance, human rights, youth, climate change, food security, welfare and health. Remarkably, national NPOs did not implement projects in areas like shelter, children's rights or refugees. Most of the projects of International NPOs focused on the *environment* (25%), *economic development* (17%), and *education and organizational and capacity strengthening* (both 11%). Projects of ROs focused 38% on *economic development*, 23% on *food security* and 11% on *empowerment of women*. Regarding the focus area of the projects from BCOs, 42% have an *economic development* focus, 16% are focused on *organizational and capacity strengthening*, and 9% on both the *environment* and *education*. It seems that *food security* is an issue focused on by ROs more than the other organizations.

Since indigenous communities usually have little income due to their way of living, establishing new ways of economic development as a source of income for indigenous communities is important. Furthermore, environmental destruction affects indigenous communities widely, because it damages their habitat and affects their living conditions. Thus, these areas are of high importance and data shows that economic development and the environment were the most popular areas of work for the organizations. But the indigenous communities still face several problems regarding

economic, and especially environmental, issues, so further projects are strongly needed in these areas.

Economic and environmental projects are followed by organizational and capacity strengthening projects, which are also of great importance for indigenous communities since representation through indigenous organizations and federations brings attention to indigenous people's problems, in order to protect their rights and make their voices heard in the political and international arena. But the political and/or organizational representation of indigenous communities still faces serious threats. A clear example is "Fundación Pachamama", a local NPO in Ecuador founded in 1995, which was established through an invitation from the *Achuar* indigenous group to work together to strengthen indigenous rights and preserve nature. It was shut down by the Ecuadorian government in December 2013 despite its great success and after 18 years of work (The Pachamama Alliance, 2013).

Education, empowerment of women and health are consecutively other areas of developmental issues. Here, empowerment of women is another strategic focus area due to the relevance of involving women in economic activities, which could help bring indigenous communities out of poverty and protect women against violence. Most of the health issues originate from lack of infrastructure, contamination of water resources, oil exploitation, etc., thus the value of projects focusing on health in the Ecuadorian Amazon is high, but these need to be implemented alongside other projects.

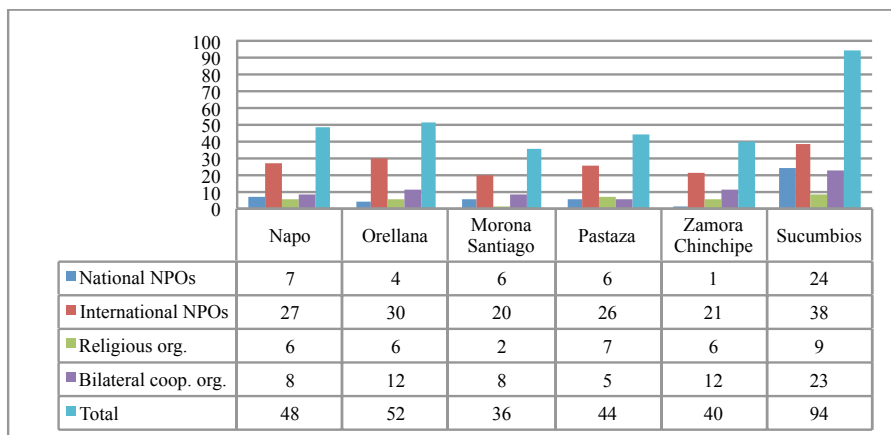


Figure 5. Provinces Targeted in Projects

Generally, the projects implemented in the Ecuadorian Amazon tend to be executed in the province of Sucumbíos, followed by the provinces of Orellana, Napo, Pastaza, Zamora Chinchipe and Morona Santiago, as shown in Figure 5. The province of Sucumbíos has been the area targeted most by projects, followed by Orellana and Napo; while Pastaza, Zamora Chinchipe and Morona Santiago were the least targeted provinces. This is understandable since Sucumbíos is the most populated province in the Ecuadorian Amazon and where most indigenous communities live.

Figure 6 presents the findings based on the indigenous community focus of the projects by type of organization. Not all organizations or project reports provided data about which specific indigenous communities were targeted. Where this data was missing, authors checked the provinces where the projects had been implemented and their indigenous community populations. In total, it was found that these organi-

zations target most of their projects to the *Kichwa* and *Shuar* indigenous communities. The indigenous groups *Siona*, *Secoya* and *Cofan* receive an average amount of development projects which reach around 80 in total. On the other hand, *Waorani* and *Achuar* are the indigenous groups who have been targeted least. In detail, national NPOs target *Cofan*, *Kichwa* and *Shuar* the most, followed by *Secoya* and *Siona*. *Achuar* and *Waorani* are targeted the least. These results could be justified by the fact that the *Shuar* and *Kichwa* indigenous groups represent the largest indigenous populations, while *Achuar* and *Waorani* are the smallest ones. Also, it is believed that *Waorani* communities cannot be contacted as easily as other groups, due to the voluntary isolation of two of their clans: *Tagaeri* and *Taromenani*. The table looks like the same as for international NPOs, but ROs direct their programs mostly towards *Kichwa*, *Shuar* and *Waorani* groups, and BCOs target most of their projects towards *Shuar*, *Kichwa* and *Waorani* groups respectively.

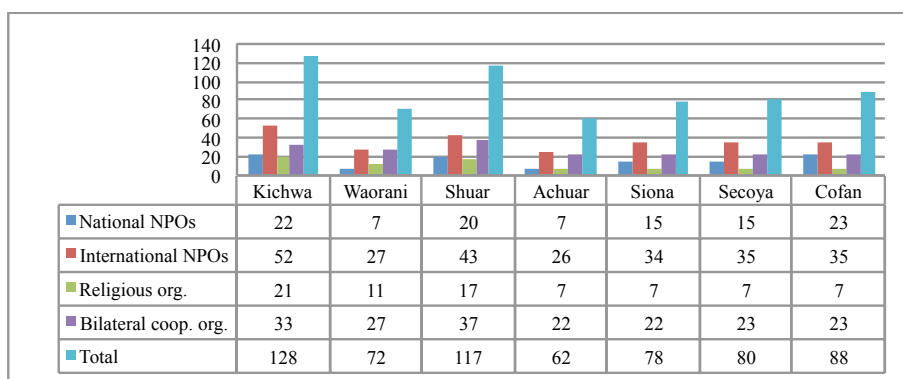


Figure 6. Indigenous Community Focus of the Projects by Type of Organization

As previously shown in Figure 4, most of the projects focus on the areas of economic development, the environment, organizational and capacity strengthening, and education. Table 2 shows the distribution of these areas by indigenous communities in detail. For the indigenous groups *Cofan*, *Kichwa* and *Shuar*, projects were mainly implemented in the areas of economic development, organizational and capacity strengthening, and environment. However, for *Siona* and *Secoya* groups, projects on economic development, organizational and capacity strengthening, and education were at the top. The *Waorani* indigenous group was targeted with projects in the areas of economic development, and the environment, as well as organizational and capacity strengthening, intercultural

governance, education, and health. Finally, for the *Achuar* indigenous group, projects mainly deal with problems in the areas of the environment and economic development, as well as welfare and organizational and capacity strengthening. Understandably, only the indigenous communities living in provinces that are closer to the border with Colombia were targeted for projects dealing with refugee problems. Similarly, provinces that lay within the Yasuní National Park clearly face environmental - and oil exploitation related - problems, thus indigenous communities living there (*Waorani*, *Shuar*, *Kichwa*) are the main beneficiaries of environmental projects that are being implemented in this Park and the surrounding area.

Table 2. Distribution of Project Areas by Indigenous Community

Project Areas	Indigenous Communities						
	<i>Cofan</i>	<i>Kichwa</i>	<i>Siona</i>	<i>Secoya</i>	<i>Waorani</i>	<i>Shuar</i>	<i>Achuar</i>
Economic Development	26	39	26	26	16	39	10
Org. & capacity strengthening	13	14	12	12	5	14	5
Intercultural governance	3	5	2	3	5	4	3
Empowerment of Women	3	6	3	3	3	7	3
Human Rights	2	4	2	2	3	2	1
Children's rights	2	2	2	2	2	3	2
Youth	3	4	3	3	1	4	1
Environment	15	19	7	8	11	16	11
Climate change	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Education	10	10	9	9	5	11	4
Health	4	9	4	4	5	6	4
Shelter	2	3	2	2	3	3	3
Food security	1	7	1	1	3	2	1
Welfare	2	9	2	2	2	5	5
Refugees	3	3	3	3	-	4	-

Conclusion

Nonprofit organizations operating in some special regions have been of great importance during the past decades. Ecuador is one of these areas, and the purpose of this research was to present the projects of different kinds of organizations which were implemented in the Ecuadorian Amazon targeting indigenous communities in order to address the problems that they face. Thirty-two organizations with a total of 169 projects were analyzed for this study.

Findings show that there is an active interest from organizations, in these indigenous communities which are trying to cover many aspects of their problems, and all seven indigenous communities have benefited - more or less - from the programs and/or services brought by these organizations, either directly or indirectly. Chapin (2004) indicates that often NPOs' agendas do not match indigenous communities' agendas. Therefore, there is a need to align objectives and to collaborate with each other. Still, the basic profile of the projects displays a picture that these organizations, with their efforts, can play an important role in empowering indigenous communities, helping to solve problems, as well as in improving their living conditions. Therefore, it is important for the Ecuadorian government to facilitate such organizations with optimal conditions for operation in the area.

Although NPOs have been operating in Ecuador for some decades, the source of indigenous communities' problems has not yet been tackled. The reason is perhaps due to the fact that these organizations are aiming to reduce mostly the social or environmental costs of any economic activities or political decisions. Namely, they are trying to operate in the fields where governments do not show enough commitment and where the private sector does not bring solutions because of profitability concerns. In any case, all of the NPOs' efforts which were addressed in this study are valuable, but there is still a problem.

This paper focused on the problems of indigenous communities, and the biggest problem concerning the environment was attached to the oil-producing companies causing damage to the unique ecosystem in the Ecuadorian Amazon for over 50 years and to the indigenous people living in this area. Not only in Ecuador but also internationally, oil-producing companies have been the target of several negative - sometimes damaging - campaigns, like boycotts and negative publicity, in the past decades, mostly initiated by civil society actors. For example, ExxonMobil received criticism on climate change in the UK and USA, Total in Burma about human rights abuses, and Shell in the North Sea about the disposal of the Brent Spar oil rig. The Deepwater Horizon oil spill

which happened in 2010 in the Gulf of Mexico on the British Petroleum (BP) operated Macondo Prospect is still fresh in people's memories and is considered the largest accidental marine oil spill in the history of the petroleum industry, which ended up with a huge anti-BP campaign all around the world. Thus, these companies' activities are always under the spotlight.

One thing is certain; oil is the number one source of income for the Ecuadorian government. Therefore, Ecuador needs income from oil reserves to keep its economy going, and oil drilling operations will not stop in the Ecuadorian Amazon any time soon. Currently, there are three national oil companies that account for most of the oil production in Ecuador, which operate in the region. These companies are: Petroecuador, Petroamazonas and Operaciones Rio Napo. The remaining production goes to international oil companies: Repsol YPF, Eni, Tectropetrol and Andes Petroleum (U.S. Energy Information Administration, 2015). We have witnessed some efforts by some of these companies trying to implement corporate social responsibility strategies in Ecuador. For example, Petroecuador states the implementation of corporate social responsibility strategies in its Sustainability Report in 2013. The construction of a Health Center for teenagers in Quito where USD\$400,00000 was spent was one of their actions (Petroecuador, 2013). However, since oil drilling operations do not take place in the capital of Ecuador, the problems they cause are unfortunately not remedied by such actions. Another example is ENI, an Italian multinational oil company, who have a sustainability policy as part of the operation guidelines of the company (ENI Ecuador, 2015). However, there is no information regarding the implementation of their policy or any tangible results for them found in our basic research. These must all be recognized as business efforts contributing to a change for the better, but when there are no concrete or tangible results to look at, it means that companies are missing something. Most of them are implementing projects that apparently help the general society but not touching the part of the society that is being directly harmed by the companies' operations, as is the case with indigenous people. It means that damaging somewhere and repairing somewhere else could not be accepted as a sustainable solution. Thus, more direct environmentally and socially responsible actions are needed. Such strategies, - or more generally - acting under the umbrella of green business approaches could be the answer to provide legitimacy to

the operations of such a controversial industry, and through well-established plans and results, oil companies can avoid harmful crises and instead acquire more respect, while reaching social and environmental expectations (Du & Vieira, 2012).

On the other hand, we witness a new trend in the relationships between oil-producing companies and civil society actors in the world. Chevron works with WWF on the conservation of natural resources; British petroleum with Oxfam, Save the Children Fund UK and Christian Aid on different social projects; Statoil with Amnesty International about human rights issues, etc. In the Ecuadorian Amazon, not many such business-NPO partnership cases are available. The only one is that of Repsol YPF. The company has managed a partnership with Grupo FARO, an Ecuadorian NPO that promotes transparency of information for oil companies in Ecuador, called "Extrayendo Transparencia" (Extracting Transparency). Additionally, Repsol YPF also provides training on environmental responsibility and human rights, and implements several social and environmental projects mostly focused on the needs of the *Waorani* community in Block 16. In 2001, the Repsol Ecuador Foundation was created and the company declared that they were committing fully to the implementation of socially and environmentally responsible strategies. The company works closely with several local NGOs and invested around USD\$844,000 dollars in such operations in 2013 (Repsol YPF Ecuador, 2013).

Such partnerships are strongly recommended for the companies operating in the region. National NPOs could be an effective business partner, especially in project implementations in the region, due to their knowledge of cultural, economic, political and environmental background; this could also strengthen local organizations' capacities, in turn creating a much greater impact. Of course, international NPOs and BCOs are promising also great capacities. According to Meyer (1995), these organizations recognize and are aware of the problems that beneficiaries face and they have valuable global experience in the field of development. Although such partnerships also receive some criticism from some civil society actors, many experts recognize that such partnerships, especially with international organizations, help to promote international environmental and social standards and good practices.

According to World Bank (2010), NPOs can also work as intermediaries between oil companies and indigenous communities, since NPOs are more trusted by indigenous people because of their long project experience in the area. Indigenous communities are mostly excluded from the discussion and are often just seen as the victims of the circumstances they live in; but as rights holders they can actively work for their own development and benefit (The Hauser Center for NonProfit Organizations, 2011). Indigenous communities should be recognized and participate actively as stakeholders, together with NPOs and oil companies; they can cooperate and work towards a common goal where all parties can benefit (Aboriginal Peak Organisations NT, 2013). Thus, oil companies should provide access to information for them through NPOs' representatives, while using clear and transparent communication strategies (World Bank, 2010). Therefore, NPOs can create a successful interaction among three parties: Society, Government and Companies. This interaction could be the answer to gain better sustainable solutions while using resources together and reducing constraints, as stated in the Resource Dependence Theory (Hillman, et al., 2009; Komkova, 2015). Hence, with a proper green business approach and at the same time recognizing the resource dependency, companies could start tackling the environmental and social consequences of oil drilling operations in the Ecuadorian Amazon with clear results. It must be added that establishing a well-designed green business approach in the Ecuadorian Amazon has some challenges; for instance, it would be operating in a unique ecosystem where its original inhabitants still live. Therefore, guidelines on the issue and further studies are strongly needed.

Lastly, most of the particular problems of indigenous communities are strongly connected to each other. Thus, for example, just focusing on health issues are not enough for a sustainable solution, since these are highly connected to environmental problems, as well as welfare issues, education, empowerment of women, etc. For that reason, the authors suggest in particular that a type of holistic approach should be followed by all related parties, defining the problem areas and operating together to make the change sustainable. Otherwise, it would be like patching a problem, still better than nothing, but not a complete solution.

Limitations

The biggest problem with this research was that not all, but most, of the organizations included in the research did not provide enough information about the projects they implemented, like the number of beneficiaries, exact amounts of investment, partnerships, outputs of the projects, etc. Particularly the latter point made it impossible to evaluate the projects with their results. Since these organizations are all not-for-profit, unavailability of data is notable. These organizations must provide more information not only for researchers but also for the general public, in terms of transparency, reliability, accountability and responsibility. In several cases, when the information provided in the organizations' web pages was not sufficient, the authors tried to contact each organization in order to collect all relevant information for the research. However, not all organizations were willing to provide "confidential information" or did not have the personnel "available" in order to assemble the information required. Therefore, some organizations were left out of this research⁶. Another issue was the language which the information was presented in. Some organizations presented information only in Catalan, Swedish, and Dutch, which the authors were unable to work with. Due to language limitations, such organizations were also not included and only those who presented information in English, Spanish, Portuguese, or Italian were used.

Another limitation was the fact of not physically being in the region, which made it impossible to include information about the perspectives of indigenous communities on different projects and organizations operating in the region. Still, the authors tried to reach some indigenous groups' representatives in order to get their opinions, but very few of them have connections with the outside world, and a few that were contacted refused to be involved. But a need for research from indigenous communities' perspectives must be noted down.

Finally, international organizations such as UNDP, the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank were not included in the context of this research, since the present research is about nonprofit

⁶ National NPOs: Grupo FARO, CEDENMA, Fundación Ambiente y Desarrollo, Fundación Natura. International NPOs: Latainamerika Grupperna (Asociación Suecia América Latina-SAL), Vredeseilanden-VECO. BCO: EuropeAid - has implemented 2 projects in the Ecuadorian Amazon, however there is no further information about them.

and bilateral cooperation organizations. However, all of these international organizations have also implemented important projects in the Ecuadorian Amazon targeting indigenous communities. Between them, all three organizations have invested a total amount of €187,883,099.17 in development projects in the area of focus. For example, UNDP has a total investment of €8,693,984.94 in projects in the Ecuadorian Amazon. Also, the Small Grants Program-SGP, which is part of UNDP, has invested a total amount of €524,999.93 only in its Fifth Operational Phase of project implementation. Hence, further research can (and should) include these kind of international organizations in order to see the full picture.

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