



ACTO member countries technicians' first-hand experience in the methodology applied to protect isolated indigenous peoples in Yasuni Park

- *The participation of several ministries strengthens Ecuador's protection methodology for isolated indigenous peoples by ensuring a more coordinated and encompassing effect. Land patrol teams include social practitioners (sociologists, anthropologists), local community members (from the Waorani indigenous peoples) and Forest rangers. Police and military personnel escort each group. Joint actions are also coordinated with forest rangers from Yasuni National Park.*



Alicia Cawiya, Vice President of Ecuador's Waorani Peoples (NAWE) – an organization that brings together all of the Waorani communities – making a presenting during the "National Workshop on Interinstitutional Coordination and Health, to Protect Indigenous Peoples in Isolation and Initial Contact" held in El Coca prior to the field mission to Yasuni Park.



The Mission

On 7-15 November 2013, government representatives from the institutions responsible for protecting the indigenous rights and health in ACTO Member Countries participated in a technical mission to the Tagaeri-Taromenane Intangible Zone in Yasuni National Park. The expedition was coordinated by the Office for Precautionary Measures as counterpart for the program “Strategic Framework for Developing a Regional Agenda for the Protection of Indigenous Peoples Living in Voluntary Isolation and Initial Contact” developed by the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO) with support from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB).

The Field Mission provided the opportunity to the delegates from Bolivia, Peru, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador and Suriname to share and gain firsthand knowledge and experience about the methodologies for protection policies for isolated and recently contacted indigenous peoples (PIACI for the Spanish acronym).

Objectives

- Demonstration of the field methodology used by the Precautionary Measures Plan team to monitor isolated indigenous peoples and the pressures on their territories, to the MC delegations.
- Identification and networking among the different stakeholders involved in the protection of the Isolated Indigenous Peoples (PIAs for the Spanish acronym) in the region (ministries, military, police and indigenous communities).
- Collection of information about isolated indigenous peoples from stakeholders and communities in close proximity to the isolated indigenous peoples.
- Identification of signs / evidences of PIAS presence in the border zone between Ecuador and Peru.
- Monitoring and Identification of possible signs of social and environmental conflict in the region.
- Sharing of experiences and information with the technical mission participants.
- Security of the mission team.

PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES PLAN

The Ecuadorian State created the Precautionary Measures Plan for the protection of indigenous peoples in voluntary isolation to take immediate action to protect the lives and territorial rights of Indigenous Peoples in Voluntary Isolation.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES:

- Promote the development of protection agreements with Waorani communities and organizations that capable of influencing on the situation of isolated peoples and their territories.
- Coordinate and execute monitoring and forest control activities in the Tagaeri-Taromenane Intangible Zone (ZITT).
- Develop capacity-building programs for employees, military and police forces that participate in ZITT monitoring and forest control processes.
- Identify and drive alternative livelihood initiatives guided by the Waorani indigenous on the principle of ‘living well’, thereby minimizing their dependence on economic activities that pose a threat to isolated peoples.
- Drive a national consultation process about the National Policy for Indigenous Peoples in Voluntary Isolation.
- Promote binational agreements with the Peruvian State to protect isolated indigenous peoples.



Workshop

In preparation for the expedition, the delegates attended the “National Workshop for Interinstitutional Coordination and Health to Protect Indigenous Peoples in Isolation and Initial Contact” held on November 5-6, 2013 in the city of El Coca, Ecuador. The National Workshop produced a number of recommendations for the protection of PIACI, including local community participation in decision making and collaboration with oil companies.



National Workshop for Interinstitutional Coordination and Health to Protect Indigenous Peoples in Isolation and Initial Contact held in El Coca in preparation for the mission to Yasuni Park.

Expedition in the Tagaeri-Taromenane Intangible Zone, Shiripuno Station



The Expedition team travelled to the Tagaeri-Taromenane Intangible Zone Monitoring Station (EMZITT) located in Shiripuno, where they were introduced to the methodologies and conditions of the Precautionary Measures Plan.

On departure from EMZITT, the delegates were divided into four canoes of smaller teams: Front Team, Logistics Team, Technical-Medical Team and Interinstitutional Monitoring Team.

During the journey, the field mission team visited Waorani communities of Ñoneno, Cononaco Chico and Boanamo. Downstream of the Bameno community, the delegates were received by community leader Pentí Baiwa, Waorani elders and other residents, and served with a traditional banana drink called “chucula.”

While visiting the indigenous communities, mission delegates had a chance to talk to indigenous leaders and understand how essential it is for contacted groups to be aware of the delicate situation of non-contacted groups. In this sense, being familiar with the specific situation of the communities with which the specialized governmental agencies communicate is fundamental to help protect isolated groups and avoid confrontations and conflicts, especially in relatively small areas where contacted groups share the territory with non-contacted ones.

The last point of the Field Mission was the border military base of Ceilan, where the group camped for two days, and visited the Ministry of Environment’s ranger station and checked for signs of isolated peoples in the intangible zone in the proximity of the Ashñamu River. Two teams of the Mission traveled the Ashñamu River to check for signs of the presence of isolated peoples in the intangible zone. Many wedge cuts normally used to mark the tracks / trails were identified during hikes through the trails, providing evidence of the existence / recent presence of isolated peoples.

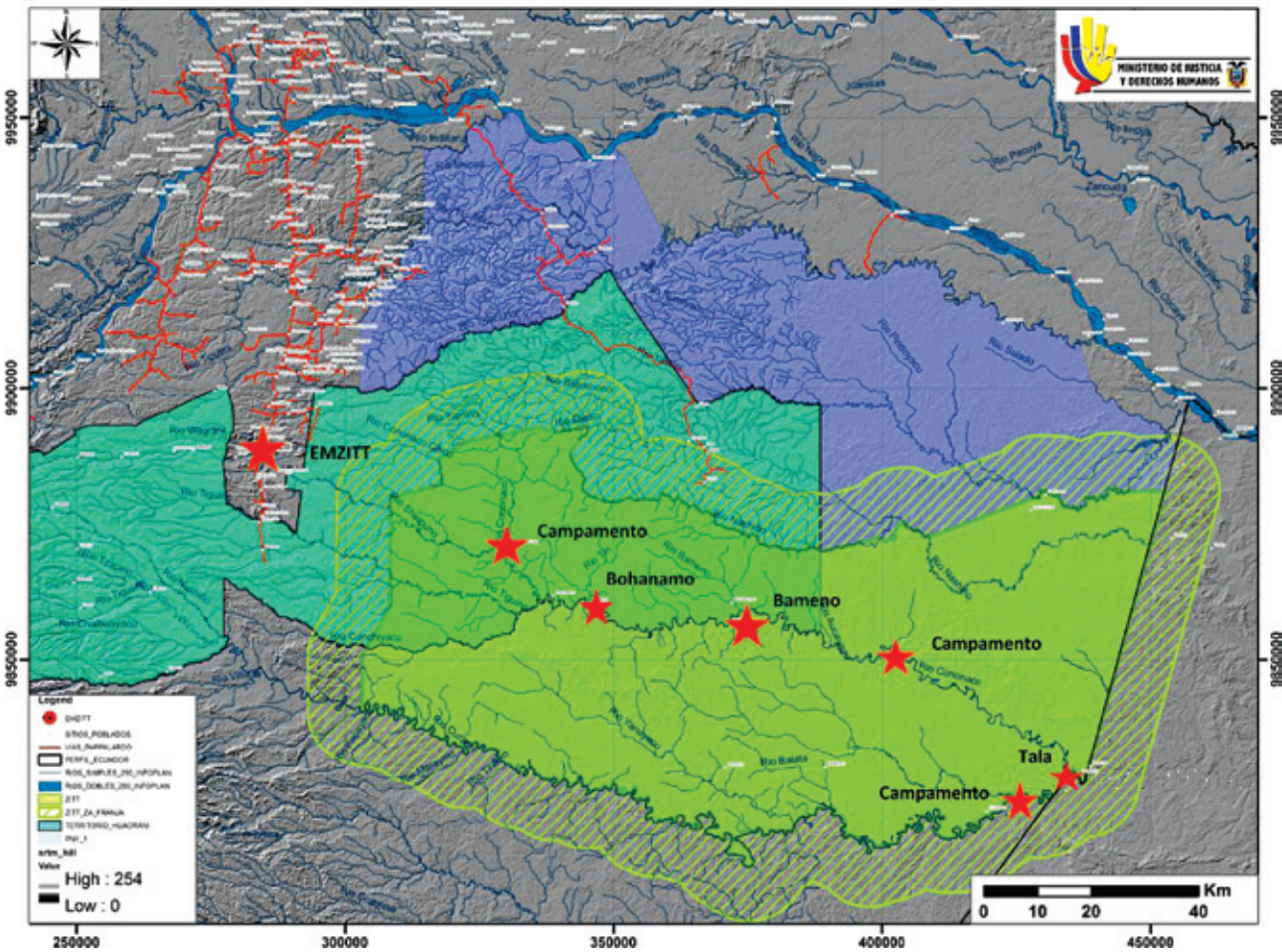
The Dantacocha Lagoon was also visited to verify information received from military detachments of Peru and Ecuador regarding illegal logging in an area of approximately one hectare. The team led by the delegates from Peruvian ministries of Health and Culture went to the Curaray military base to gather information on the situation of Dantacocha Lagoon and isolated groups in Peruvian territory.

A hike around Dantacocha Lagoon showed signs of illegal logging, including tree trunks cut with chain saw, clearings and planks of wood. This left no doubt that illegal loggers, presumably from Peru, were working in the intangible area.



Due to its rich biodiversity and to the presence of Taramenane and Tagaeri peoples, in 1989 UNESCO declared the park a biosphere reserve and cultural heritage.

BASE MAP



Mission route through the Tagaeri-Taromenane Intangible Zone (EMZITT) in Yasuni Park



Exchange of Experiences



During the Field Mission, the delegates spent time together and shared experiences/information, ideas and suggestions to improve the measures for the protection isolated indigenous peoples in the region.

The delegates also took advantage of visits to the indigenous communities to interact with the local people and learned about issues and situations affecting the communities and isolated indigenous peoples, as well as the support and services offered to the communities by the government and external agents. Some of the issues were found to be common in the Amazon region.

Delegates with specialization in Medical Health, interviewed the Waorani peoples about the most common diseases, traditional medicine and access to health. Open sessions and discussions were improvised in traditional dining quarters to share knowledge about indigenous medicine in each country, problems, social aspects and national policies. Many similarities were identified in matters like indigenous family planning, pressure from extractive companies and public policies. Delegates commended the interinstitutional coordination of efforts in the Ecuadorian methodology, which enables comprehensive monitoring and surveillance of isolated and recently contacted indigenous peoples.

During the plenary session, attention was called to the composition of the country delegations and their impressions on the mission. All the members represented governmental agencies in charge of either indigenous affairs or indigenous healthcare. As a host country, Ecuador was represented by the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Defense and Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Environment, all of which play a role in the PIACI protection methodology, working towards a common objective through joint, coordinated but differentiated activities.

The team identified the actors involved in protecting isolated indigenous peoples in Yasuni Park, particularly those that participate directly such as the ministries that organized the technical meeting with the Waorani indigenous communities. No oil drilling activities were detected in the intangible zone covered by the technical mission.

All delegates of the field mission were impressed with the coordination between the various institutions directly involved in protecting PIACI and their participation in technical missions to monitor and evaluate the field situation as a fundamental part of the Ecuadorian methodology.





Considerations

Overall the Technical Field Mission 2013 into the Yasuni Park, Ecuador, achieved its objectives and provided first-hand learning experience in the application of methodologies for the protection of Isolated Indigenous Peoples in Voluntary Isolation and Initial Contact. Consequently, the delegates of the ACTO Member countries called for attention to the following considerations and conclusions:

- That the “no contact” principle is the main precautionary measure to territorial protection guarantees health.
- Establishing a sanitary block and ensuring that the population in adjacent areas is in good health through constant epidemiological surveillance offers a guarantee that isolated peoples are not contaminated and become victims of possible epidemics.
- Environmental protection provides for a healthy environment, good quality water and air, and a healthy ecosystem, all of which are basic conditions to ensure that isolated and recently contacted peoples remain healthy.
- The ministries of Defense and Interior play a fundamental role in exercising constant territorial surveillance, especially in border zones where logistical support is extremely important.
- Through visits and joint collaborative work with indigenous populations, government agencies raise awareness among neighboring populations, especially indigenous communities that share the land with isolated groups. Awareness campaigns must focus on showing how vulnerable they are and explaining the precautionary measures, drawing attention to the role of contacted groups in territorial monitoring.

PROGRAM: STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK TO DEVELOP A REGIONAL AGENDA FOR THE PROTECTION OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN ISOLATION AND INITIAL CONTACT

The program seeks to contribute to protecting the rights of indigenous peoples in isolation and initial contact in the Amazon Basin by defining effective policies and concerted actions between governments, indigenous peoples and organizations, and non-governmental organizations with experience on the matter.

It consists of five components that aim to achieve: (i) a regional interinstitutional coordination mechanism supported by national bodies; (ii) a concerted strategic framework that incorporates physical and cultural protection measures; (iii) a territorial protection plan that includes legal and physical they occupy and adjacent areas; (iv) a regional health strategy that includes a technical health prevention standard with an intercultural approach or characteristics, and emergency health systems in the areas where they live; and (v) systematized data and knowledge about the situation of isolated peoples and capacity and commitment to protect them.

As counterpart for the program, the Government of Ecuador organized a mission to Yasuni Park for technical experts involved in protecting and promoting indigenous rights in ACTO Member Countries.

Its aim was to provide governmental stakeholders with a practical experience to promote or enhance multilateral action.

The mission’s objective was consistent with the Program’s Component 5, particularly “creating technical capacity and commitment in Member Countries to protect isolated indigenous peoples”.



EVALUATION / CONCLUSIONS OF THE MISSION

The Field Mission identified the actors that protect isolated indigenous peoples in Yasuni Park, particularly those that participate directly like the ministries that organized the technical meeting and the Waorani indigenous communities.

No oil drilling activities were detected in the intangible zone covered by the technical mission. Participants took advantage of the long hours of travel to share experience and reflect upon their own realities, what might be improved and how to introduce the methodologies in their own countries. The support team (formed mainly by Waorani people) and the delegates exchanged information on traditions and customs of indigenous peoples in Ecuador and other ACTO Member Countries.

Coordination between the various institutions involved directly in protecting PIACI and their participation in technical field missions to monitor and evaluate field situation in their territories were considered a fundamental part of the Ecuadorian methodology.

Many wedge cuts used to mark the tracks/trails were identified during trail hikes, providing evidence of the existence of isolated indigenous peoples.

Visits to the indigenous communities provided the mission delegates to interact with indigenous leaders and gain understanding of the need for contacted groups to be aware of the delicate situation of non-contacted groups. Information on the specific situation of communities is essential for specialized governmental agencies to communicate and fundamental to the protection of isolated groups; and avoid confrontations and conflicts, especially in relatively small areas where contacted groups share the territory with non-contacted ones.

The expedition in images



Bameno Waorani Kupe and Kemperi Community

Penti Baiwa receives the delegates at home accompanied by Waorani elders and residents and offers them a traditional banana drink called 'chucula'

Preparation for the mission at the Tagaeri-Taromenane Intangible Zone Monitoring Station (EMZITT)



Bameno Community, traditional painting with Wito

Ceilán checkpoint at Yasuni Park (Ministry of Environment), close to the border with Peru

Mission technicians register illegal logging in the border between Ecuador and Peru



ILO Convention 169 – Indigenous and Tribal Peoples

This was the first international legally binding instrument to specifically address the rights of indigenous and tribal peoples, recognizing their rights to work, land and territory, health and education (1989).

United Nations Guidelines on the Protection of Indigenous Peoples in Voluntary Isolation and Initial Contact

On 16 December 2005 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Program of Action for the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous People, in which two specific recommendations are made on indigenous peoples in isolation and in initial contact. At the international level it is recommended that “a global mechanism should be established to monitor the situation of indigenous peoples in voluntary isolation and in danger of extinction.” At the national level it is recommended “that a special protection framework for indigenous peoples in voluntary isolation should be adopted and that Governments should establish special policies for ensuring the protection and rights of indigenous peoples with small populations and at risk of extinction.”



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Base Map
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