

*Shampuyacu*



# The value of a standing forest





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# PRESENTATION

**F**or more than a decade, Conservation International has been working to reduce deforestation in the Alto Mayo basin, San Martín. We seek to promote sustainable agriculture and economic development that guarantees the protection of natural capital and gives value to ecosystem services such as the provision of water, food, and clean air, improving the quality of life of all its people.

This complex landscape of fertile lands, scenic beauty, and vast natural and cultural biodiversity changed with the construction of the Fernando Belaúnde Terry highway, a project that triggered the migration of farmers from the Andes to the region of San Martín in the Amazon. In this quest for progress, the Awajún communities of Alto Mayo thought they would achieve their own improvement by leasing their lands to these migrants, without foreseeing that their forests would soon be reduced. The leasing income also brought monocultures, the degradation of their lands and the reduction of the biodiversity reserves that sustain their life and culture.

When only 10% of the Shampuyacu native community's forests were still standing and providing food for their families became a daily struggle, we identified opportunities to conserve their forests, transforming their fruits into marketable products and experiences: medicinal plants, cacao, seeds, vanilla. This is how we started a reevaluation process of their forest and their customs. We began an effort to develop a more sustainable management of their territory, providing support and enabling together their most basic needs using their natural resources.

The experience of the native community of Shampuyacu with Conservation International and its partners is absolutely encouraging. Witnessing a process in which the community members begin to look at their trees with different eyes and see them as an essential part of their personal and spiritual development is really heartening. We have seen changes in the community that emerged from their own initiative and motivation, generating more benefits than initially expected, which

**Witnessing a process in which the community members begin to look at their trees with different eyes and see them as an essential part of their personal and spiritual development is really heartening.**

today has become an reference for many other communities in San Martín and throughout the Peruvian Amazon.

The Awajún women, determined to transform their future, prompted our organization to change our approach, rethinking equal opportunities and reducing deforestation, based on the transformation of lifestyles, work practices and the value of their culture, so intrinsically connected to their forest. This experience has been very valuable for us and one we wish to share.

This compilation brings together the experiences of the native community of Shampuyacu, Conservation International and its partners with the objective of preserving this amazing path of mutual learning. The land became greener, shame turned into pride, hunger into food security, and invisibility to leadership. We hope to sow that inspiration the people from Shampuyacu get from nature to the entire Alto Mayo landscape. ●



**Luis Espinel**

Vice president of  
Conservation International Peru

# INTRO *DUCTION*

In November 2012, the National Protected Areas Service (SERNANP), an entity of the Ministry of the Environment of Peru, signed an Administration Contract with Conservation International Peru, to conserve of the Alto Mayo Protected Forest, in the region of San Martín, for a period of five years. This consolidated the participation of the private sector in the management of Protected Natural Areas.

**Conservation International Peru was committed to promote research and implement conservation agreements with people within and around the Natural Protected Area, which included communities located in the buffer zone of the Alto Mayo Protected Forest, such as the Shampuyacu Native Community.**

As stated in the agreements of the communal assemblies since 2011, the community had become aware of their natural resources' precarious state, therefore, prior to Conservation

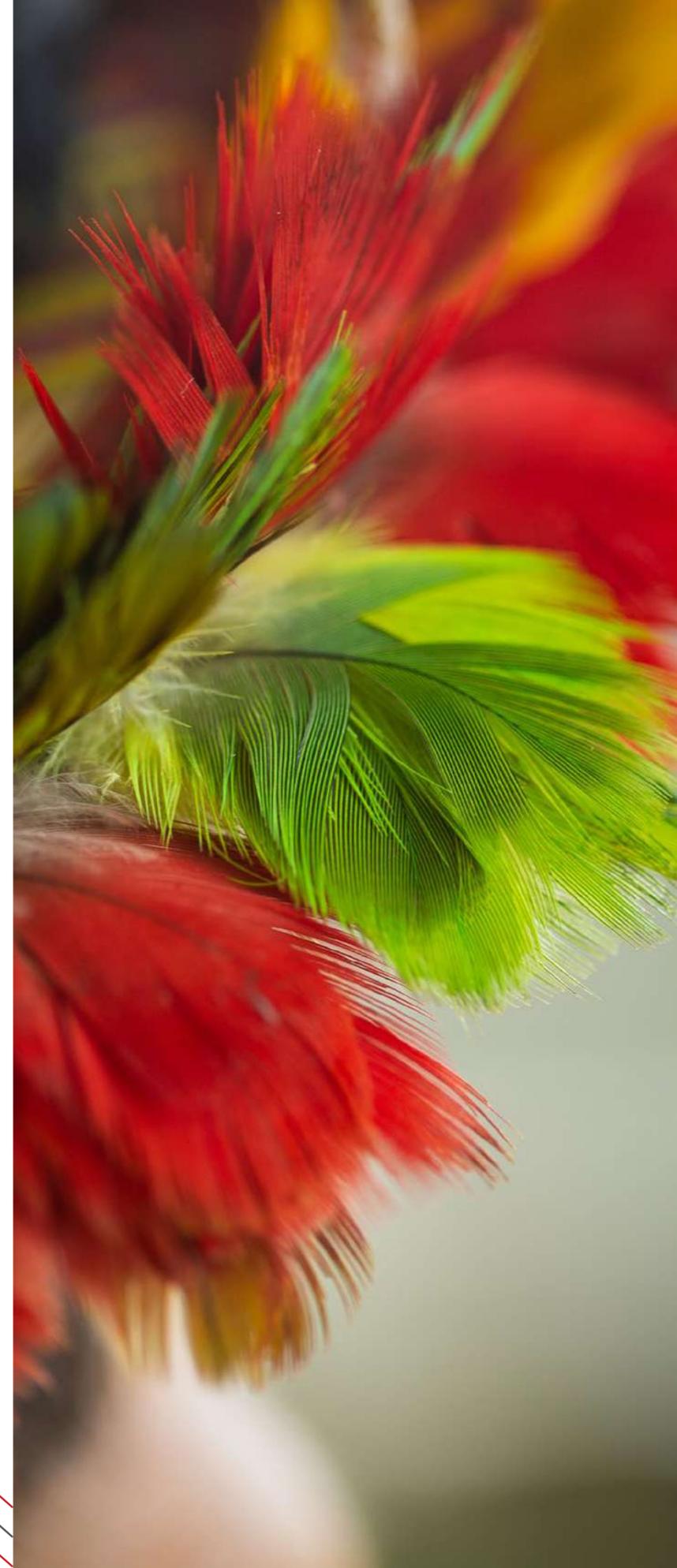
International Peru's participation in the community, they had already agreed on the need to protect the remaining areas of forest, designate community members for their surveillance and prohibit the lease of further lands for the cultivation of coffee within these areas.

At the end of 2013, Conservation International Peru began its work in the community applying and improving restoration practices, alongside the community's riverbanks, involving traditional knowledge and scientific methods while improving the

governance of the community's water resources. It is through this project that the relationship between the team of Conservation International Peru and the community originated, and the trust necessary to fulfill the activities and objectives starts to grow.

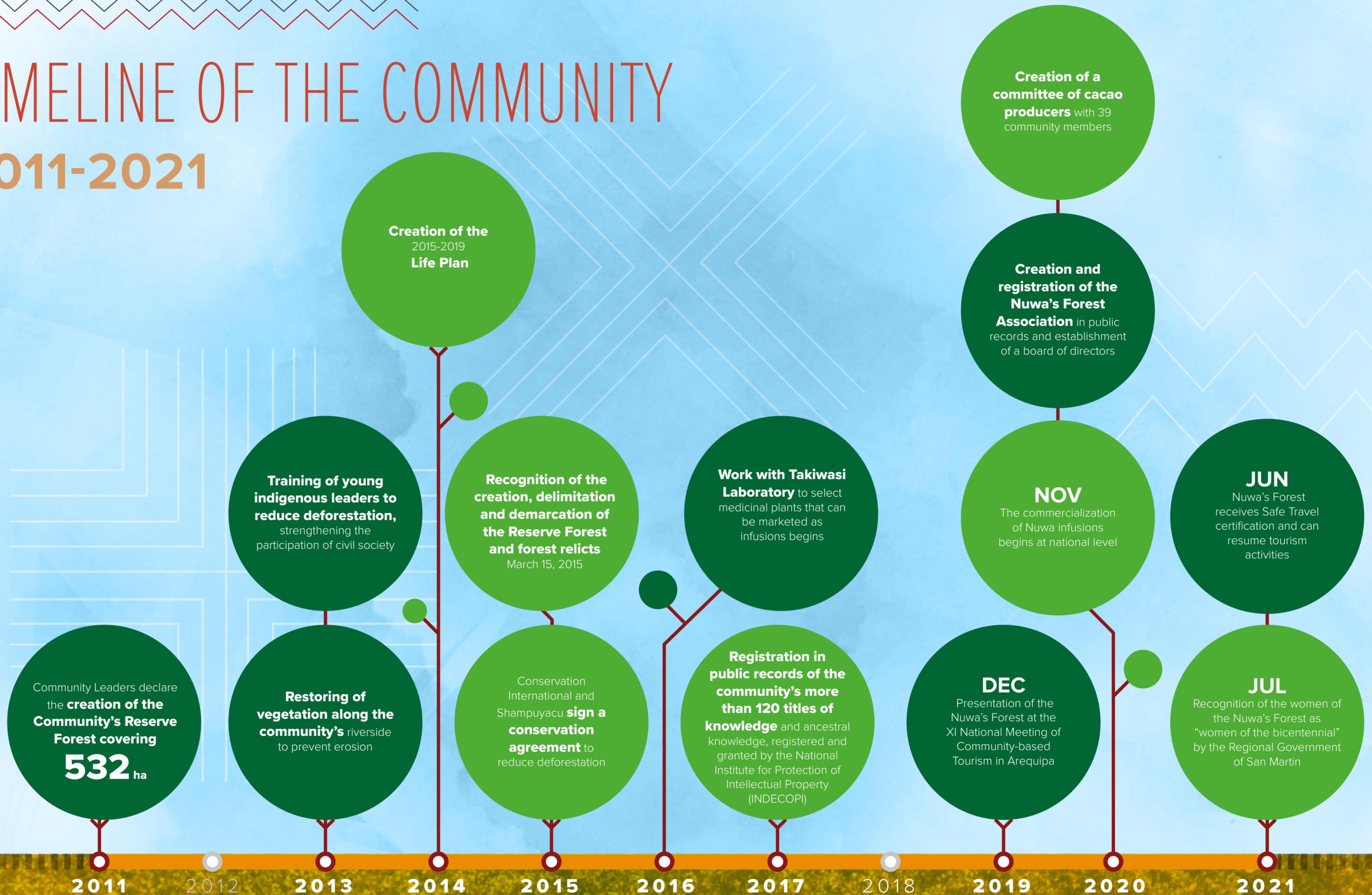
**The transformation of the community member from a "spectator tenant" to a "manager of the territory" is possible, they are motivated, but the process is long. We learn the cultivation techniques, and they feel capable of carrying out the activities themselves, however, their short-term interests such as food security and complementary productive economic activities must continue too.**

The establishment of an intercultural participatory process, the strengthening of capacities and the awareness of the community's state of its resources, prior to the implementation of activities in which both men and women participate, helped the community realize and value the importance of being part of all the process. ●



# TIMELINE OF THE COMMUNITY

## 2011-2021



# SUSTAINABLE LANDSCAPES: *HAND IN HAND* WITH ANCESTRAL KNOWLEDGE



● ● ●  
**Claudio Schneider**

Senior Technical Director at Conservation International Peru

Since 2008, Conservation International Peru has been promoting the sustainable landscapes approach in the upper Mayo River basin, with the main objective of building a model in which nature conservation is the key element to guarantee the sustainable development of a territory.

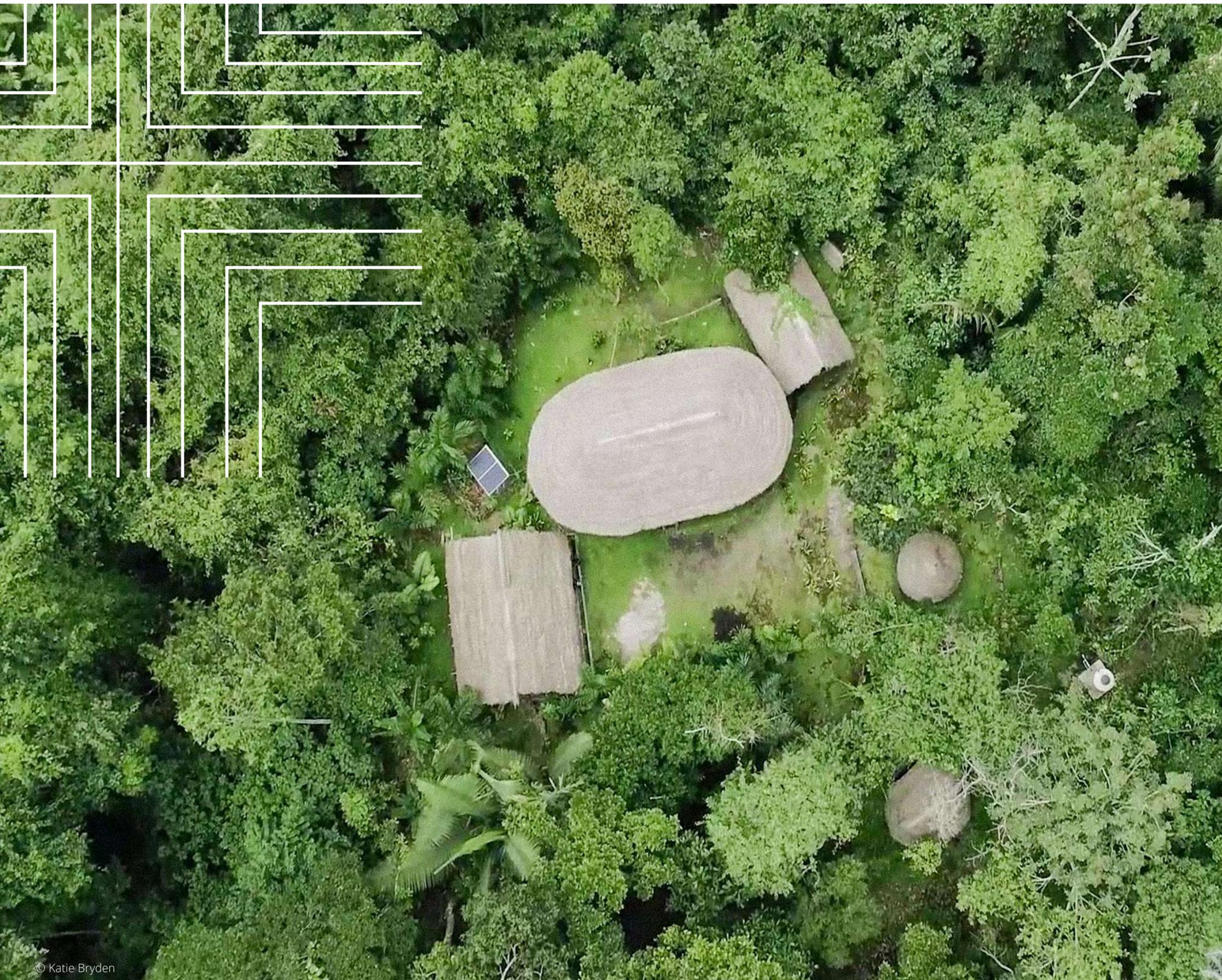
We seek to work with native communities to avoid deforestation and implement sustainable economic alternatives that are in line with the context of the Awajún communities and the diverse populations that live in them.

In 2013, Conservation International Peru began working with the Shampuyacu native community. There we were already working on a project financed by Norwegian cooperation to support the San Martín region to reduce deforestation by strengthening the participation of civil society. One of the components of that project was the training of young indigenous leaders. In these sessions, while looking for ways to integrate traditional knowledge and strengthen all these skills to confront the major threats of deforestation, we met Awajún leaders who invited us to support them in their communities. That is when we began to identify where we could focus our work.

The leader of the Shampuyacu native community requested our support in the recovery of their forests. We started with a participatory mapping technique to identify their resources, as well as the community's problems. We chose to restore the riverbanks, as there was a lot of erosion due to deforestation, rice cultivation, and by neighboring municipalities that were entering the river to extract stones as quarries for construction. All these impacts were causing the land of the community to erode.

● ● ●  
**2013**

**Conservation International Peru starts working with the native community Shampuyacu.**



© Katie Bryden

Having identified the resources and problems, we worked with them to develop a system to strengthen the riverbanks with different techniques, in which we incorporated plants and trees that are important to the Awajún for food and other uses. In this way we were able to recover many kilometers of land alongside the river, preventing it from continuing to erode agricultural land.

It was during this work that the women became interested, and we organized *mingas* (communal work) so that the entire community could participate collectively in reforestation. This is how the motivation arose to work on the protection of 600 hectares of forest and to give the women an opportunity to recover and preserve their ancestral practices. They created nurseries and we built a facility where they could share their knowledge and generate their own resources. These actions resulted in the creation of the *Nuwa's Forest*, which means "women's forest".

*Nuwa's Forest* is an important milestone for us in our work with the Awajún people because it is where they have begun to organize more consolidated communal conservation initiatives. This work has allowed us to build a relationship of trust with them, and to expand activities to other communities.

For us, the Awajún are among the main actors in the Alto Mayo landscape. We don't only work in their territories but also in the protected area (Alto Mayo Protected Forest), and where coffee and other agricultural products are grown to achieve the sustainability of the Alto Mayo landscape, by integrating conservation with the appropriate use of resources as a model for the development of the Amazon.



Aerial view of a part of the *Nuwa's Forest* where we see three traditional buildings (malocas) where they work with meliponiculture, prepare their food and receive tourists.

It is a big challenge because native communities in Peru have mostly been neglected by the State; they have many needs and scarcities. Conservation International Peru helps by advocating with the governments and supporting the community in preparing documentation and connecting them with the government when they need to resolve the lack of access to a public service, such as water or electricity. But there is still a lot to be done, and if these needs are not addressed, it is very difficult to initiate others, because these are a priority.

Our strategy is to link projects or try to continue the work with different funds. We have reached this progress in a certain way, up to the point of achieving a large project that we now have with the BHP<sup>1</sup> Foundation, which

is committed to the Awajún communities. Together we are creating a fund to generate economic opportunities (cacao, medicinal plants, infusions, cassava rescue, etc.) and support the communities so that they can prosper and establish partnerships with companies, developing other economic alternatives that will allow them to improve their living conditions.

It is possible to have business and cooperation models that respect rights and ancestral knowledge and can benefit everyone. Governments benefit because good policies of nature conservation and sustainable agricultural development are applied; the community benefits economically and recovers ancestral knowledge; and the company gets the opportunity to do responsible business.

This is the model we want to promote, a new form of cooperation and work with communities where, logically, there is a commitment from the the company to bring the technology, commitment from the community to provide their territories and their knowledge, and the government's commitment to support this process with the necessary policies for its development. We need to strengthen the business and administrative part of the communities to achieve this development, continue to work hard with young people and try to help them find opportunities in their communities. ◦

**Our strategy is to link projects and continue the work with different funds. We have been doing so until we secured funding for a much larger project we now have with BHP\* Foundation**

\* BHP is a leading global natural resources company. Its purpose is to create long-term value for shareholders through the discovery, acquisition, development, and commercialization of natural resources.



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## Margarita Cumbia Sawau

*Nuwa's Forest*

# We want the world to know about us

**Shampuyacu women's work has been strengthened with the incorporation and guidance of Conservation International Peru in the creation of Nuwa's Forest (women's forest).**

We have now established our organization and we make medicinal plants, necklaces, pottery, etc. People come from far away to discover our work. We can make our own medicine to cure ourselves without buying medication in drugstores. We have several varieties of medicinal plants in Shampuyacu, such as ginger, toe, piripiri, annatto, clavo huasca, oregano, basil, etc.

We want to be recognized, to raise the visibility of the work that we as women have been doing to sell our products, so that the people of the city can appreciate our heritage, and the world can discover our achievements in the forest with handicrafts, experiential tourism, and medicinal plants.

We have also improved our diet, as we recovered many varieties of cassava that we were losing due to ignorance. I feel very proud of my ancestral roots, and I have learned this from my mother since I was a child. But we were losing our identity, so we focused on a small project to teach young girls and children how to prepare masato. I am teaching

girls from 6 years old and up how to combine cassava with sachapapa, squash and pituca. We are wise women, and we have the responsibility to teach them so that they can teach their children in the future. I will continue working despite my advanced age, I have strength and I must continue teaching our culture for the good of my community. ●

“I feel very proud of my ancestral roots, and I have learned this from my mother since I was a child.”



CHAPTER II

# THE SHAMPUYACU *NATIVE* COMMUNITY





Since the 20th century, the Awajun people have faced several threats (oil exploration, border conflicts, military presence, land occupation from Andean farmers, highway expansion) that intensified their migratory movements in the Northern Amazon.

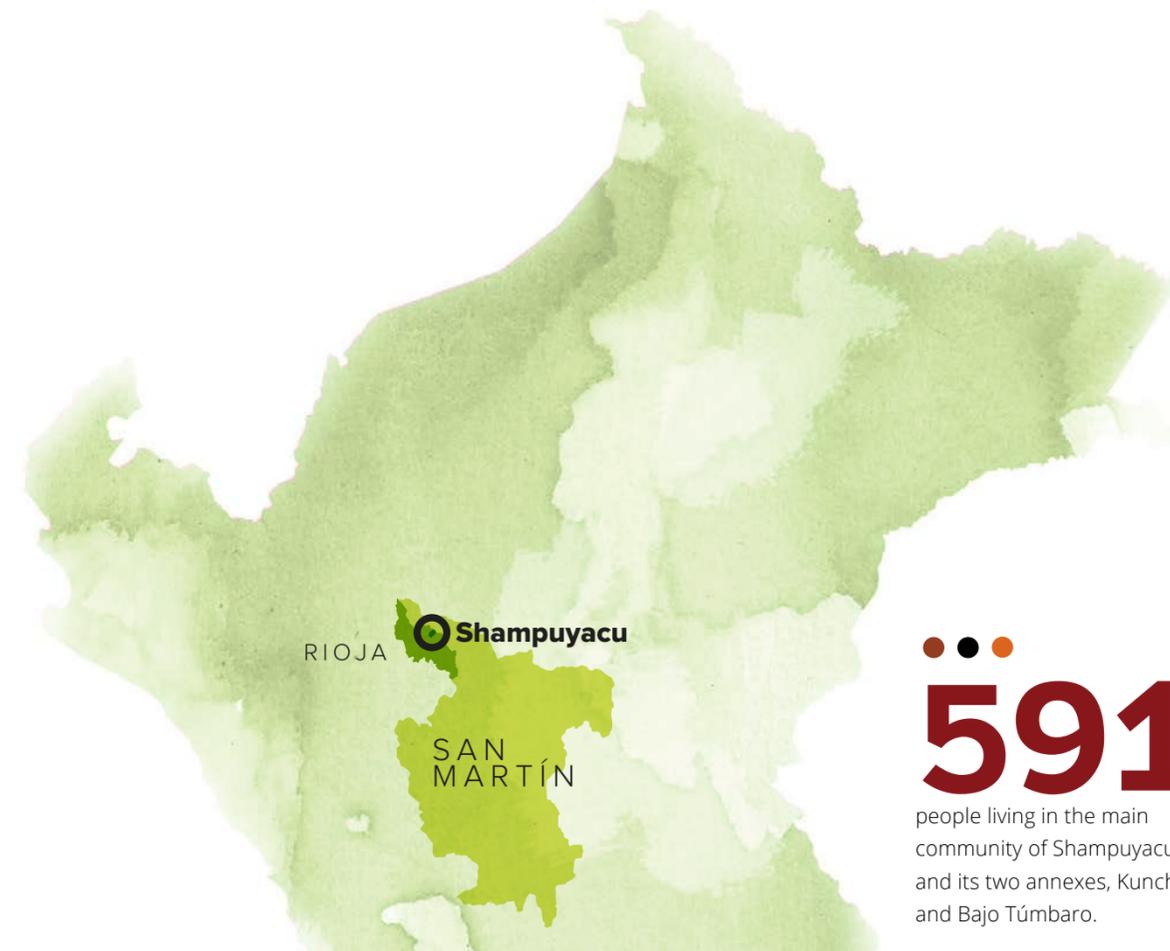
**These pushed clan families into the Alto Mayo basin.** Their permanence in the area was possible because of their organizational skills, as well as a deep knowledge of access to forest resources such as meat and fruit harvesting.

Shampuyacu is located in the district of Awajún, province of Rioja, San Martín region, and belongs to the Jíbaro family and the Aguaruna ethnolinguistic group.

The native community has a titled land surface of 4,913.9 ha distributed as follows: 4,381.93 ha for agricultural use and

531.97 ha for the Community's Reserve Forest. According to the 2014 Communal Census, there are 591 inhabitants living in the main community of Shampuyacu and its two annexes Kunchum and Bajo Túmbaro.

In Shampuyacu, Awajún is the mother tongue, but young people also speak Spanish, a language that is less spoken by the elders. Men represent the highest percentage of bilingual speakers, while women are least likely to understand Spanish. Traditionally, the role of men has been the preparation of the land for farming and hunting to support their families. On the other hand, women are responsible for cultivating the fields, preparing meals, keeping their families healthy, doing household chores, and eventually creating handicrafts.



**In Shampuyacu, Awajún is the mother tongue, but young people also speak Spanish, a language less spoken by the elders.**

The community has a communal administration center where personnel and administrative records are made. It maintains acceptable access roads within the territory, and has the proximity to the Fernando Belaúnde highway which connects it with the non-indigenous towns.

The educational system comprises preschool and elementary school. The nearest high school does not have a bilingual system, which means that the education is poor.

Water service for human consumption is intermittent and unreliable, people cook using firewood and gas, and toilets are basic latrines, so hygiene is a daily struggle. This situation should improve in the short term with



the implementation (in progress) of the project "Improvement and expansion of drinking water service and installation of sanitation service in the community of Shampuyacu" as part of the National Rural Sanitation Program.

Health care is restricted, because they do not have health centers and they usually use natural medicine, which is very important to them.

The household diet includes unconventional products such as chicken and, in a smaller quantity, bushmeat (wild animals). Vegetables are not part of their daily diet. The nutritional needs of the population are high and there is dependence on few commercial crops, losing the habit of consuming ancestral products, or they have no knowledge of diversified preparation.

## PRODUCTIVE ACTIVITIES

The main agricultural crops in the community are coffee, corn, tubers, bananas, peanuts, fruits, and vegetables. The community members sow according to their empirical or ancestral knowledge passed down from generation to generation. However, traditionally, the Awajún indigenous peoples are not farmers but hunters and harvesters.

Overall, agriculture is the most important with 41% of the population engaged in it, followed closely by forestry with 39%. Although only 20% of the population leases their land, this activity is detrimental to land and resources management, including forestry.

## ORGANIZATION

Shampuyacu is one of the 14 Awajún communities affiliated with the Awajún Regional Indigenous Federation from Alto Mayo (FERIAAM), an organization that brings together the communities of the Alto Mayo basin and maintains close coordination for the implementation of activities in these communities.

The whole community is represented by the *Pamuk* (chief) and the Community Leaders, elected by secret ballot in the Community Assembly for a three-year term.

Social relations within the native community are weak due to population distribution between the central community of Shampuyacu and the annexes Kunchum and Bajo Túmbaro, which weakens the efforts. This condition individualizes interests, affecting communal development and integral management activities.

## VALUE OF THE TERRITORY, FORESTS, AND NATURAL RESOURCES

The first Awajún families arrived in the Shampuyacu territory in the 1950s, looking for productive lands without slopes near rivers so they could have access to the diversity of fish in the Amazon. There was a family relationship, since they were brothers, first cousins or brothers-in-law. In those years, the election of leaders did not involve a voting



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process but rather the development of certain capacities to reproduce, in a new territory, a certain social and productive structure that would allow the coexistence and reproduction of the families.

The relationship of indigenous peoples with their territory has changed over time, showing a flexibility that allows them to respond to every historical context they have had to face. Some components of this relationship have worn out, others remain or transform, and some new ones are incorporated. The main events that have generated these changes are the delimitation of the community, the migrations of farmers from the Andes, and the integration into agricultural markets.

## PROCESSES THAT AFFECTED THE SOCIAL AND PRODUCTIVE ORDERS

During the 1960s and 1970s, three state policies influenced the transformation of the sociocultural, institutional, economic, and environmental landscape of the region of San Martín in the Amazon. Such policies were: the titling of native community lands, the construction of the highway and the creation of natural protected areas.

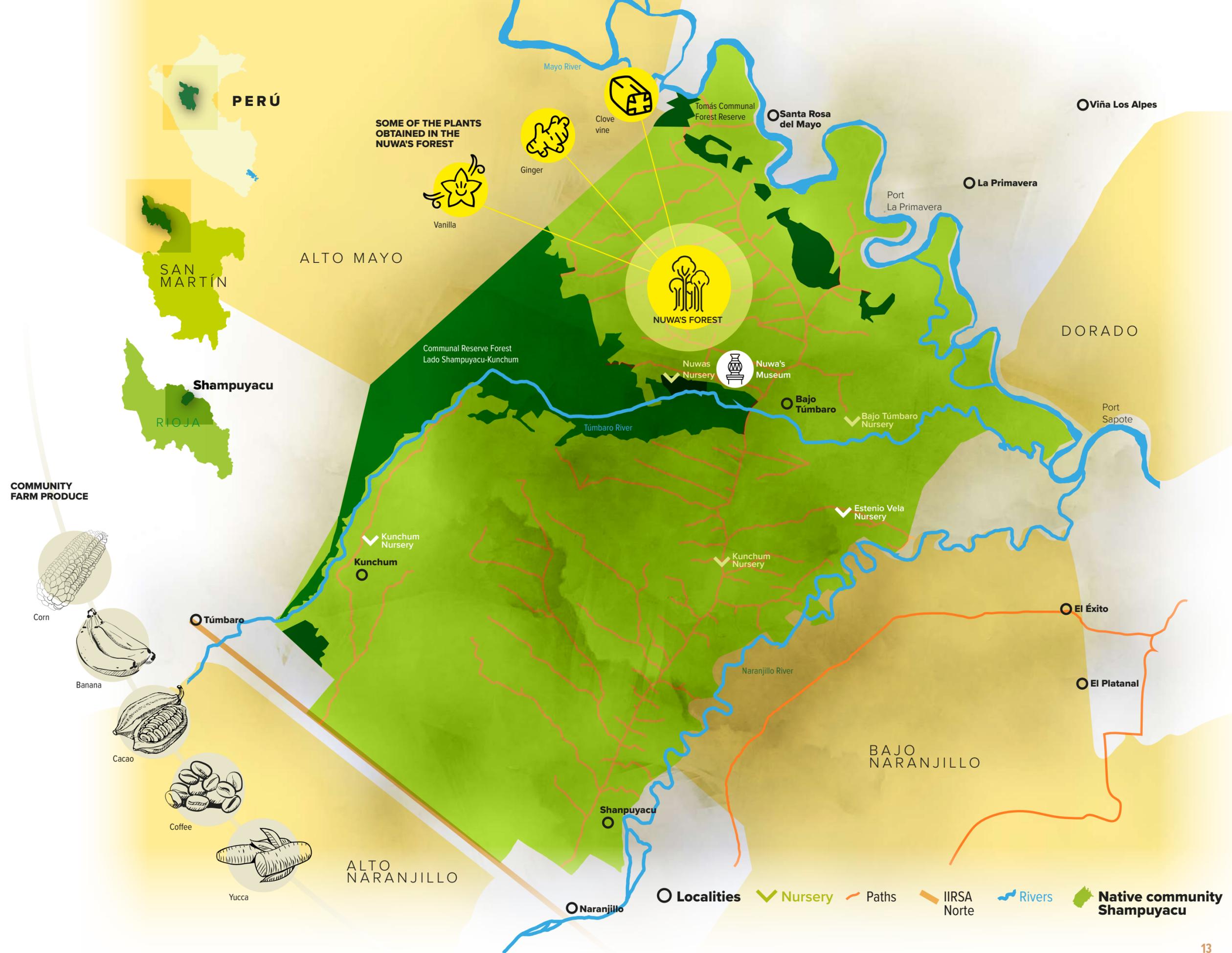
The creation of the native community brought new elements whose impact would be felt in the following years. The first was the limitation of a territory that was thought to be abundant, a land belonging to a population

that was constantly moving in search of new spaces. The counterpart to this loss was to obtain a title that granted them the right to a land and ensured the existence and physical reproduction of the land. The second was the existence of a State and its institutional apparatus that people had to communicate with to access services that would allow them to enter the new scenario.

Highway construction in the northern Amazon began in the 1960s. Towards the end of the decade, the region became a major migration destination for farmer populations. This process was further promoted during the 1980s and occupation along its entire extension took place, releasing economic and social tensions in northern high Andean areas. In the countryside alone, the population grew each year nearly 25%, while the rate in the cities was 11%.

The creation of natural protected areas in the region and in the country began in the early 1960s, but the incorporation of issues related to the role of biodiversity and ecosystems in sustainable development into public policies has been quite slow.

These three processes changed the dynamics of the Shampuyacu community's organization of its social and productive life. (Insert MAP!!)





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## THE IMPACT OF LEASING ON PEOPLE AND THE FOREST

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Awajún families mainly cultivated half or one hectare to support their own consumption. Some families saw how the migrant farmers produced and sold the coffee. In their own way, they tried to do the same and cultivate the plants without fertilizers or pesticides. But entering the market would not be immediate. It was not easy for them to find buyers, and they had difficulty understanding this income-generating system based on land cultivation, with certain technology and productive cycles, as well as entering local markets.

The relationship between Awajún and migrant families with greater confidence was the main factor of change in the productive system of the community. In the middle of the construction of roads and trails, relationships were forged among workers, farmers and natives that were strengthened with the growth of populated centers and the settlement of many other families along the highway.

The farmers continued to settle along the highway and began discussions to lease the community lands.

When the new productive order was established, great changes occurred in the native people's livelihoods; rotating agriculture for self-consumption, hunting, fishing, and harvesting. In the case of agriculture, most families leased all their plots, separating, in the best cases, 1 or 2 hectares to ensure

the cultivation for self-consumption. The few Awajún families that had land available started growing coffee, but due to its annual nature, they also grew papaya, banana, pineapple, beans, corn or other short-term crops. In this way they ensured income in the short and medium term. The commercial cultivation and trading houses of agricultural products also influenced the purchase and application of agrochemicals on the plots. The crops of the farmers had a direct impact on the quality of the land, because of the intensive use of agrochemicals, as well as the time they didn't leave the land to recover.

Unfortunately, the implementation of commercial agriculture by leasing land has not been able to generate the economic resources to supply for the daily diet that native families were accustomed to. The situation worsened for those families that had leased their

entire plot. Families that kept 1 or 2 hectares to ensure their own food crops were better off, but only accessed cassava-type crops.

To include protein in their diet, fishing is carried out by families or groups. The damage to this resource with the use of dynamite, lack of waste management, pollution from agrochemicals and riverbank cultivation has sharply decreased its quantity and diversity.

Similarly, hunting and fruit harvesting have been dramatically reduced because of timber extraction and the expansion of agriculture.

The vulnerability of traditionally collective activities such as fishing and hunting, due to the damage to the forest, has also influenced close relationships of collaboration, exchange, and mutual help, giving way to individual family relationships. ●



•••  
On the other side of the Tumbaro River, in the Nuwa's Forest, are the nurseries where they rescue their medicinal plants.

# LOOKING TO THE FUTURE: CREATING COMMUNITY AREAS FOR CONSERVATION

In 2003, the leasing of land to foreign populations began and became the main cause of deforestation in the community, which has lost around 90% of its natural forest to date.

**Since leasing provides the highest economic income to the population, it is difficult to uproot it.** This leasing process has undermined the community's own cultural identity.

The remnants of the Community Reserve Forest are at risk due to unauthorized timber and animal extraction. By 2013, there had been 37,75 ha deforested within this conservation area. But this trend stopped since Conservation International began its work in the community and the reserve forest area was delimited and demarcated. For this purpose, there is also a Community Vigilance Committee made up of young indigenous people who are in charge of patrolling their forests and alerting the community and authorities about deforestation, illegal logging and hunting, among other threats to their territory. Although this is a real committee, it has been difficult to effectively carry out the work, since going out on patrols means "losing" days of work, food, water, and so on, because it is not a paid job, and their members

still lack the appropriate equipment to patrol the area.

Erosion and landslide problems exist in the communal territory along the riverbanks due to deforestation and the intensive use of land bordering the riverbanks for agricultural purposes. As a result, erosion reduces productive areas and generates economic loss.

Crop management (mainly coffee) is scarce or limited, and plots have low productivity, earning little income from their commercialization. At the same time, the community practices conventional agriculture and uses many agrochemicals that affect land quality. There are not any productive facilities in the community and most of the products are sold to intermediaries.



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In response to these shortcomings, the community decided to create the Community Reserve Forest and the *Nuwa's Forest*, covering a total of 517 ha designated for the conservation of forest areas. The *Nuwa's Forest*, which has an area of 10 ha, has an association registered in public records and a Board of Directors that are in charge of coordinating actions with Conservation International. The Community Reserve Forest is managed by the community.

**The Nuwa's Forest covers an area of 10 ha and has an association registered in public records and a Board of Directors that coordinates actions with Conservation International.**

## THE COMMUNITY'S RESERVE FOREST

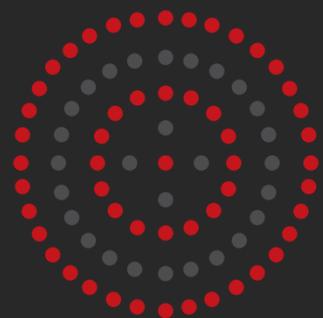
The creation of the Community Reserve Forest took place in the midst of a change in land use due to the leasing of land to migrant farmers. To obtain the Assembly's approval, it was necessary that it was created in order to ensure future generations would know and learn about their forests, its animals, and plants; and secondly that the area would belong to the community and not just to one person.

### THE NUWA'S FOREST

The *Nuwa's Forest* is an initiative that has emerged as a consequence of enabling Awajún women within their communities. It is strategically located in a very productive portion of the forest where a great variety of plants and medicinal herbs flourish. There are more than one hundred varieties of traditional plants, which have been catalogued by the *nuwas*. Here, each woman has a plot of land with her own name to cultivate her medicinal plants. ●

...  
Awajún pride and culture is transmitted through the wise men and women of the community to younger generations.

The Nuwa's Forest is an initiative that has emerged to support Awajún women within their communities.





## Wagner Achayap Sekejam

Andean Ecosystems

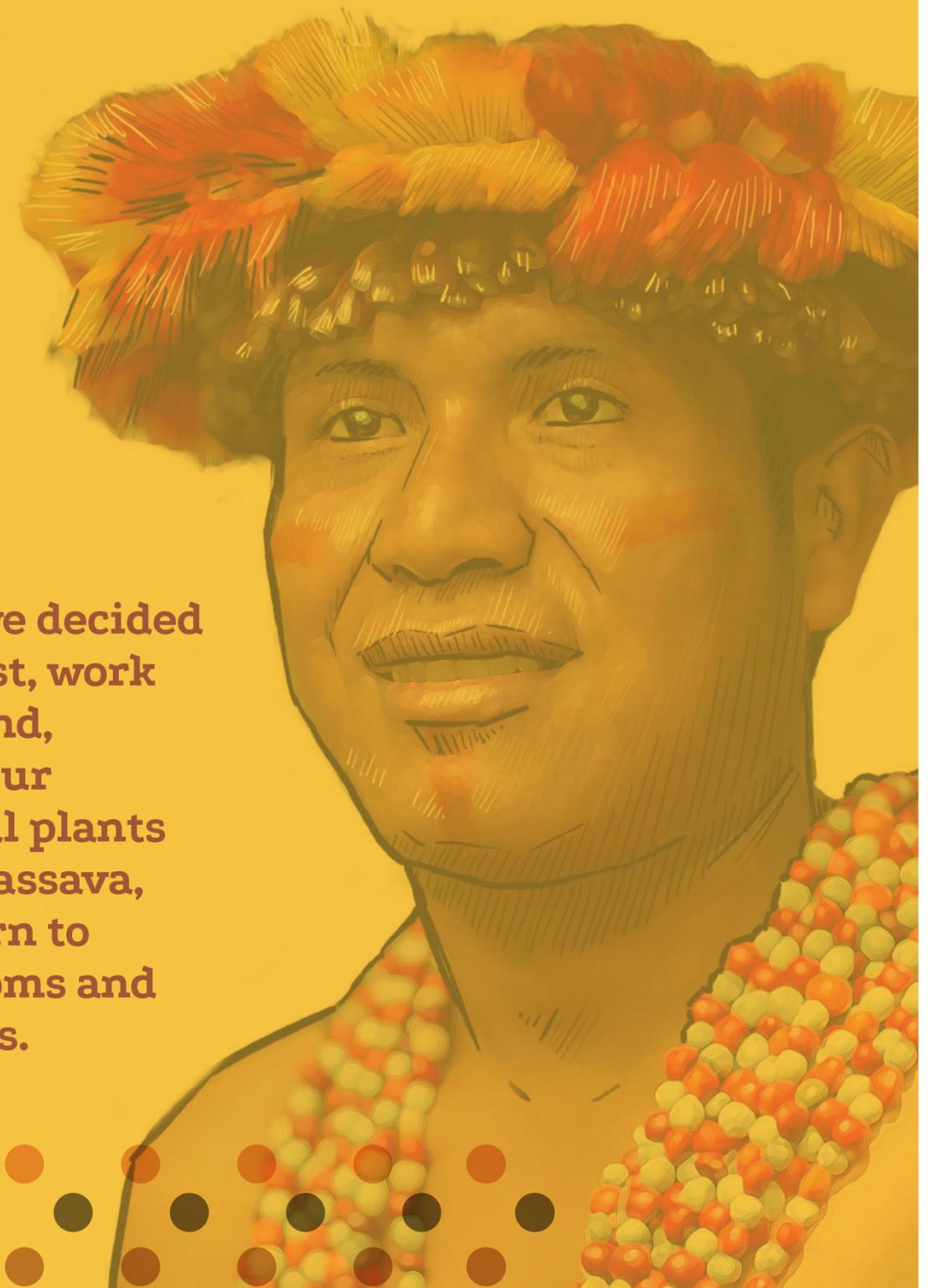
# Back to the forest

**The concern of the community of Shampuyacu comes when resources start to become scarce, after having lost 90% of our forest, which was our market, our pharmacy, our tools.** Personally, I had the opportunity to receive training with ECOAN and Conservation International Peru and to travel to learn about other experiences. I was encouraged by the interest of reconnecting with the forest and

recovering plots to work on, because we had leased our land and, without other economic resources for education and other services, we were still dependent on that income. But in 2013, we decided to reforest, work the land, recover our medicinal plants such as cassava, and return to our customs and traditions. The idea that inspired us was to provide technical support and training to produce cacao, coffee, banana, vanilla, medic-

inal plants, and dragon fruit. We have entered an organic and sustainable scheme, under agroforestry systems, with trees such as tornillo, capirona, moena, and cinnamon, in order to obtain short and long-term fruits. I have my own productive plot which produces cacao, vanilla, dragon fruit, under the agroforestry system. I'm very happy to be part of this journey because it's a way to protect the environment and conserve our forest. ◉

“**In 2013 we decided to reforest, work on the land, recover our medicinal plants such as cassava, and return to our customs and traditions.**”



# A MATTER OF TRUST: THE CONSERVATION AGREEMENTS

Conservation agreements are instruments that seek to encourage communities towards conservation in exchange for benefits. Conservation agreements can help conserve and restore forests, which are essential for the well-being of everyone.

**These agreements are implemented in geographic areas where a natural resource, ecosystem, or ecosystem service of interest is threatened.** The idea is to create connections between people and the forest for the benefit of both, for example: to reverse the trend of deforestation by compensating those who choose to change their relationship and production practices and adopt new ones, whilst revaluing their ancestral knowledge in the process. The task is not easy; both institutions and people who will have to work hard to: (a) build, maintain and respect a new framework of relationships and (b) ensure advantages of this new scheme to fulfill family aspirations in comparison to the previous status quo.

The Shampuyacu community is one of the native Awajún communities in the San Martín region that has lost most of its forest in the last 20 years. The conservation initiatives it has been participating together with

Conservation International Peru and partners such as Takiwasi<sup>1</sup> and ECOAN<sup>2</sup> have helped reduce deforestation by 90% from 2010 to 2020.

Conservation International Peru signed the Conservation Agreement with the Shampuyacu Native Community in September 2017 and simultaneously with the creation of a Communal Association for the commercial development of its products, whose benefits will be used to improve the living conditions of the community members. As a result, Conservation

<sup>1</sup>. Takiwasi or "the house that sings" in Quechua language is a non-profit civil association (NGO), located in the city of Tarapoto in the Peruvian Upper-Amazon. It was founded in 1992 as a result of a research work started in 1986 on the millenary practices of traditional Amazonian medicine, in one of the regions of Peru with the greatest wealth in terms of ancestral knowledge related to the use of medicinal and sacred plants that contribute to the physical, mental and spiritual healing of people.

<sup>2</sup>. ECOAN is a non-profit organization committed to the conservation of endangered species and threatened Andean ecosystems, which works in partnership with local communities to protect the habitat of these species, improve the use and exploitation of natural resources and restore degraded areas. Originally from Cusco, it currently directs conservation and development projects in other regions of Peru, and coordinates initiatives to protect high Andean forests in 6 South American countries.

International Peru has worked together with the Shampuyacu Native Community on techniques that improve productivity while taking care of the environment. Likewise, through its partner ECOAN, they have sought to sign conservation agreements that included an environmental care commitment from the community.

## THE APPROACH

During 2014, baseline studies were conducted, and the Feasibility Analysis served to identify deforestation agents, alternative activities to deforestation and the feasibility of implementing conservation agreements as benefit-sharing mechanisms.

That same year the trust between the implementer and the community was strengthened, and around fifty community members signed up to carry out such activities. The most important were:

- **Identification of sustainable business opportunities** in the communities, including the interests of men and women.

- **Participatory development of the community's "Life Plan"** instrument to determine the problems and seek solutions related to their livelihoods in the medium and long term.

- **Participative delimitation and georeferencing of the Community's Reserve Forest**, the forest remnants, and the Nuwa's Forest. The cadastre served to quantify the exact area of the community members and plan the intervention area.

In 2015, we worked with ProNaturaleza to train community members in order to ensure implementation of the following field activities:

- **Building two new communal nurseries and the capacity of the nursery that had been built in 2013** was expanded to produce forest seedlings that were used in the riparian restoration of the Naranjillo River, as well as in the conversion of pure coffee plantations to agroforestry systems. Intercommunal workshops were held to learn the techniques.

- **In 2015, the georeferencing of the Nuwa's Forest** showed it covered a total area of 3 ha. However, after several community meetings, it was decided to increase it to 8.90 ha as requested by the women, and it is currently managed entirely by them. The construction of a medicinal plant nursery, and later the subdivision of plots to be assigned to each woman who took responsibility for its care. The women are organized to ensure an adequate management of their forest.





© Adrián Portugal

**Due to the threat of deforestation in the few remaining forests, a Community Vigilance Committee was created to monitor and oversee the remaining forest.**

- **The project promoted the creation of a Community Vigilance Committee** to monitor and supervise the remaining communal forest due to threats of deforestation; however, a communal discussion is necessary to identify the funds needed to put it into practice given that it involved very time-consuming activities that should be compensated.
- **The project conducted constant training on topics related to the implementation of conservation agreements**, climate change, and the benefits of REDD + activities to ensure greater community awareness.

Carlos Bustamante, conservation agreements coordinator for Conservation International Peru, highlights the women's participation as a fundamental value:

*“In Shampuyacu there are 125 families that participate directly in the conservation agreement activities. Women were the main participants. Men initially said they wanted to work, but then became discouraged., whereas the women, on the other hand, complained that they had not been invited. Because of their interest, little by little, small projects were implemented to consolidate the work with the women of the community, and the men, once they saw the women participating, were able to recognize the value of the conservation agreements. The most popular activities are the productive ones: cacao, medicinal plants, and the Nuwa's Forest,*



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● ● ●  
**125**

families from Shampuyacu participate directly in the activities of the Conservation Agreements.

*as an initiative of inclusion and empowerment of Awajún women, especially regarding cultural rescue. All these activities are based on trust and commitment and can only be achieved by creating productive activities that are attractive. One of them is the management of cacao, learning how to manage and market their production, with the support and technical assistance of Conservation International Peru, and our partner ECOAN. The idea is to develop complementary activities that they are interested in, without imposing anything.*

## HUMAN RESOURCES: A CULTURAL EXCHANGE

The team in the field has been key in ensuring trust between the organization and the community. This has allowed us to work together in building a management philosophy for a conservation project that responds to the context and its challenges.

An important factor for the success of the conservation agreements has been the

constant support of the technical team and the fluency in strengthening skills through workshops and field schools.

The use of the native language and understanding of the culture and traditions has been key. The workshops on governance, climate change training and REDD+ were carried out with Awajún translation, which facilitated communication.

The community members have many needs and managing expectations is an important factor to consider, as the beneficiaries' demands increase.

**The use of the native language and understanding of the culture and traditions has been key.**



# 2020

Thanks to the support of our partner ECOAN, native vanilla such as the 'pompona' is growing again within the community.



## AGROFORESTRY SYSTEMS

### Organic cacao

First, we started reforesting along the sides of the river, building defenses and planting trees in plots that had been completely deforested, then we started working with cacao. At the beginning there were 39 community members participating in 58,5 hectares but making the change was not easy, some of them became discouraged and today there are 32 who want to make the change for their families and the forest.

The work was mostly done in *mingas* (communal work), and those involved received training in mother plants development, grafts, organic fertilizer, agroforestry pruning, maintenance of cover crops, phytosanitary control, diversification with other alternative crops. In total there are 46 hectares, 30 already harvested and 16 currently growing. The members have formed an association of organic cacao producers and they are in the process of registering it so they can enter the market. Between 2020 and 2021 they had a local buyer who bought all their organic cacao pulp

but seeing that they were paid as ordinary cacao producers, the members decided to look for other opportunities to commercialize it. The goal is to export their organic cacao.

Today, the agroforestry systems include bananas, dragon fruit, vanilla, and native crops such as peanuts and wild potatoes. The members of the cacao association are thinking about the future, providing better nutrition for their children, and recovering the forest.

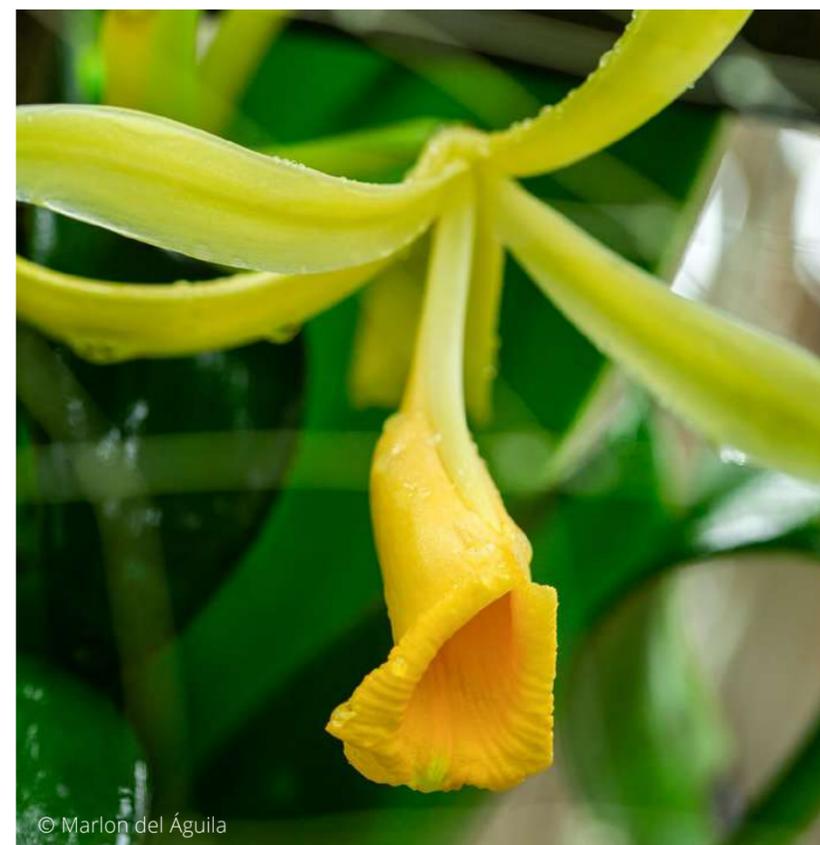
### Vanilla

Work with vanilla began in 2020 with an initiative of ECOAN, that buys native vanilla, such as pompona, which has always grown in the forest and is now being regenerated. A market for vanilla has been identified in Moyobamba, where there is a buyer. The Shampuyacu community currently sells it to neighboring communities for its medicinal and aromatic properties: it is analgesic and antiseptic, and also used in the past by women as a perfume. The price of fresh vanilla in the market is US\$70 per kilo. According to Warren Wajajai, reforestation promoter of ECOAN, the price of vanilla in the Brazilian market ascends to US\$250 to US\$300 per kilo. ●

**The partners have formed an association of organic cocoa producers that are registering their association to access the market.**



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●●● Both organic cocoa and vanilla are two species grown in the Shampuyacu community. Given their different properties, these products can obtain excellent value in local and international markets.



## Warren Wajayay Rojas

Andean Ecosystems

# Plant nursery, sustainable production center

**The plant nursery was built to produce trees for agroforestry systems. There is a production of tornillo, mahogany, cedar, mashona, lagarto caspi, cinnamon, moena, and fruit trees such as oranges and aguaje.** They also make the organic fertilizer called bokashi with coffee pulp and cassava and banana peelings, which each member brings from their homes, alongside other organic material. Bokashi is used to fertilize the cacao, bananas, coffee, vanilla, and dragon fruit crops. It is also used for the nursery module and non-fertile land. In addition, it is useful to recover the land degraded by chemical fertilizers. In 2020, they produced 100 tons

of bokashi that were transported to 70 hectares of coffee, cacao, banana, and dragon fruit.

The nursery's mission is to produce trees and plant them to capture more air and water from the environment. Moreover, this production provides food security and health to the beneficiaries, as the trees provide oxygen and medicinal plants. We even benefit economically because, if we plant a thousand trees, once they grow, we can cut down three or four and sell them, always keeping in mind that it is better not to cut them down. In addition, when we recover trees, we also recover animals. We also know that,

**“The nursery's production provides food security and health to the beneficiaries.”**

with reforestation, we are reducing the impact of climate change. In the past, we didn't feel the heat as much as we do now. The trees grow around 10 and 30 years, and during all those years the tree accumulates water in its roots. This gives the land more humidity, cools the air and purifies it.

Now I am very happy because since 2013, in Shampuyacu, we have planted trees in about 80 hectares of forest from this nursery. For example, we have already sent about three thousand seedlings to the *Nuwa's Forest*. In the future, this work will benefit the families, the community, and the whole planet. ◉





CHAPTER V

# ***STRENGTHENING A FULFILLING LIFE***

## LIFE PLAN

The native community of Shampuyacu approved its 2015-2020 Life Plan, which is currently being updated for the period 2021-2025.

A life plan is a community planning document that is developed with the entire population and enables them to organize themselves for a better quality of life. According to the indigenous vision, everything must always be in balance, that is why, the life plan explores and seeks harmony between these five aspects: the economy, the social and cultural aspects, the natural world, and politics. These plans always start from a reflecting on their history, and based on this process, they plan their future. Unlike Western planning, which tends to be linear, the process is circular for indigenous peoples. They do not see their future without looking at their past; their history is the reference point to think about their future, and for that reason, it is important to

**The main function of a life plan is to strengthen the communities' internal planning and management capacities.**

highlight the value of the ancestral knowledge each community.

The main function of a life plan is to strengthen the internal planning and management skills of the communities. Working on a life plan allows them to develop their 5 to 10-year vision of the future based on their way of seeing the world and adjust it with other visions that may exist within the territory. Hence, based on the priorities set out in their plan, community leaders can engage in a horizontal dialogue with the authorities of their regions; for instance, requesting specific support that is a priority for their entire community and not something that benefits only the community leader. On the other hand, the process of developing a life plan helps to change the perception of the indigenous community as poor or weak and recognizes the value of its culture and own resources. Thus, by highlighting the strengths of each community, its relationship with the outside world is also benefited.

One of the most important achievements of the process of creating the Life Plan in the Shampuyacu community was the discussion among the community members about the concept of *tajimar* (organizing to move forward). It was also possible to initiate a process in which male and female community members have equal opportunities in community planning and participation. Progress has been made in strengthening traditional community governance, which has made it possible to initiate a dialogue on the role that the authorities must fulfill and





their rights and duties as well as those of the community members, and to clarify the roles of the different levels of governance. In this regard, the participation of all community members, including those living in the annexes, was important.

Thanks to the work carried out with Conservation International through the Life Plan, Shampuyacu has a medium-term planning instrument that prioritizes activities with the conservation agreements internally as well as with public and private actors. The *Nuwa's Forest* future plans must also respond to a communal goal or vision. This document is fundamentally important for the entire community, since it provides a route for the participation with and coordination at the federal, regional, and national levels (regional federations and national organizations).

## INDIGENOUS GOVERNANCE

Conservation International Peru aims to ensure good indigenous governance in the Shampuyacu community, characterized by participation, transparency, responsibility, and effectiveness together with a fair and equitable redistribution of resources and benefits.

Conservation International's strategy was to strengthen partnerships with indigenous peoples and support the full and effective participation of their members. On the other hand, it also sought to ensure the tenure of land management and strengthen conflict resolution abilities.

In order to achieve these objectives, Conservation International Peru facilitated

and supported the participation of women from the Shampuyacu community in workshops related to gender and empowerment issues. In addition, they supported the FERIAAM to hold meetings with the leaders of its community bases. As part of this initiative, a manual was prepared for local leaders to reinforce their political advocacy actions and to achieve greater organization to achieve their objectives. They also provided support

**The future of the Nuwa's Forest must respond to the community's objective or vision.**

to FERIAAM in the elaboration of its Strategic Plan for the years 2019-2023, drafted in a participatory manner with the intervention of leaders of the Awajún communities.

Prior to Conservation International's support, the efforts had mainly focused on technical issues rather than on governance. This situation required the adoption of a real alternative, generating a transition between the monetarist model in which the community was immersed with land leasing, and considering that money is necessary, but at the same time considering necessary the autonomy as community members and as human beings. Conservation International is a conservation organization that understands that there is an ancient wisdom that can help restore some social processes that can allow them to achieve conservation goals.

Braulio Andrade, Project Director of Conservation International Peru highlights governance as a strategy:



*In 2013 we saw the importance of working on indigenous governance with very punctual projects with small funding, before going into conservation issues. By the time we got to interact with the population, they were already at the breaking point because of the negative impacts generated by leasing and other decisions. What they could obtain economically from the lease had generated internal divisions, loss of communal practices and a total alteration of their vision as an Awajún community. Since money was not a lack, as they could obtain large sums from the rent, we began to work on issues of identity, self-esteem and motivation. I really appreciate having started a ver solid process of revaluing their ancestral knowledge.*

*The success of the projects relies heavily, almost entirely, on the colleagues who have been leading these processes, whose human quality is unmatched. That human quality has been the key to really adapt the project with criteria of governance, social aspects, community impact, rather than productivity issues or more conservation aspects. Our logic is that if we work with the population and generate this change in behavior, the other indicators will respond in the medium term. We are confident that we are generating processes that will take time, but that will be sustainable.*

Norith López, Community Development Coordinator of Conservation International Peru considers that collective work is the greatest strength of the Shampuyacu community:

*I believe that the native community should take advantage of its organization, the know-how of its inhabitants. They have learned from their ancestors that individual work does not generate as much benefit as collective group work, where everyone helps each other to generate a little more wealth and accelerate the result of activities such as planting, harvesting. And we as an organization also have a lot to learn, there are many things to value: they keep their knowledge, and it is from this knowledge that we will be able to develop, improve and technify all the wealth they have.*

## COMMUNITY POLICE AND PATROL

The community police consists of young indigenous people who are in charge of patrolling their forests and alerting the community and authorities about deforestation, logging and illegal hunting, among other threats to their territory.

Conservation International Peru trained community police officers in the use of new technologies for remote sensing, drones, GPS, and mapping. Consequently, the community police included the use of drones in their patrols to locate those areas where forests are being lost. The advantage of this equipment is the time efficiency in patrols, because in



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**The community police consists of young indigenous people who are in charge of patrolling their forests and alerting the community and authorities about deforestation, logging and illegal hunting.**

one day it is possible to travel six kilometers, while with the drone this same distance is monitored in just 20 minutes.

Community police officers trained in georeferencing have helped the Shampuyacu community and other Awajún communities with the delimitation of plots. This has made it possible to reduce internal conflicts between their landowners and tenants. In addition, the trained police officers have provided theoretical and practical training to a group of *Nuwas* in the use of GPS, so that they can

collect spatial information about the 10 plots of medicinal plants that some of the beneficiaries have in their homes. An unexpected result has been the young community policemen, who have become expert advisors in georeferencing as a result of the GPS training. Thanks to this, three young members from Shampuyacu have provided georeferencing services to other Awajún communities.

**In 2019, a team of five young people from the Community Police were trained in the use of camera traps. They placed each of these devices in the forest and programmed the cameras.**

## CAMERA TRAPS

In 2019, there was a team of five young people from the Community Police, who were trained in the use of camera traps. They placed each of these devices in the forest and programmed the cameras. Out of the 24 cameras assigned, six were placed to monitor prohibited activities, while the other 18 were used to register the diversity of the fauna. As a result of this activity, 25 different species of mammals and four species of birds were tracked. It was also possible to track people who entered their Community's Reserve Forest with weapons and axes to hunt and cut down trees.

It was possible to monitor the entire forest of the Shampuyacu community and to learn which sectors have a greater diversity of fauna, information that will serve to improve surveillance. ●



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## Edward Isla Ramirez

Conservation International Peru

# There is no integral development without happiness

**The purpose of the conservation agreements is to diversify the economic activities in the community, in such a way that they do not depend on just one product: cacao, medicinal plants, cassava, tourism, and handicrafts, so that when the prices of any product fall, that does not affect them economically.**

In the *Nuwa's Forest* initiative, there are 70 women now, but sometimes there are 80, according to the dynamism of the activity. Before the pandemic there were 80 because they had tourist visits and had established a rotation system. The *Nuwa's*

*Forest*, with community tourism, has provided income in the short term. In addition, it is an opportunity for them not only to manage their own income but to ensure the permanent conservation of this forest through the activities that they carry out; receiving tourists, rescuing their plants, and offering handicrafts. This allows them to connect the economic income they receive from the forest with the benefits of well-being, and the preservation of their culture by conserving the forest.

Cacao represents a long-term business. We are starting the production and in 2020 we had our first

income of over \$USD 13,400 for all partners. This year (2021) it should triple because we are beginning to commercialize it. However, measuring success only from a monetary or economic point of view is biased. For instance, cassava provides food security and has been a key factor during the pandemic, as income dropped significantly. That was one of the objectives when promoting cassava: conservation of traditional knowledge, food security,

conservation of local germplasm and income generation.

I previously worked in Condorcanqui (Alto Marañón, Amazonas) and I remember that we identified up to 60 varieties of cassava, I had studied six or seven at university. When I came to work here, I saw that they hardly used the crop, only by older women who knew 18 to 20 varieties, while the young women knew four or five. We did a little work to rescue local

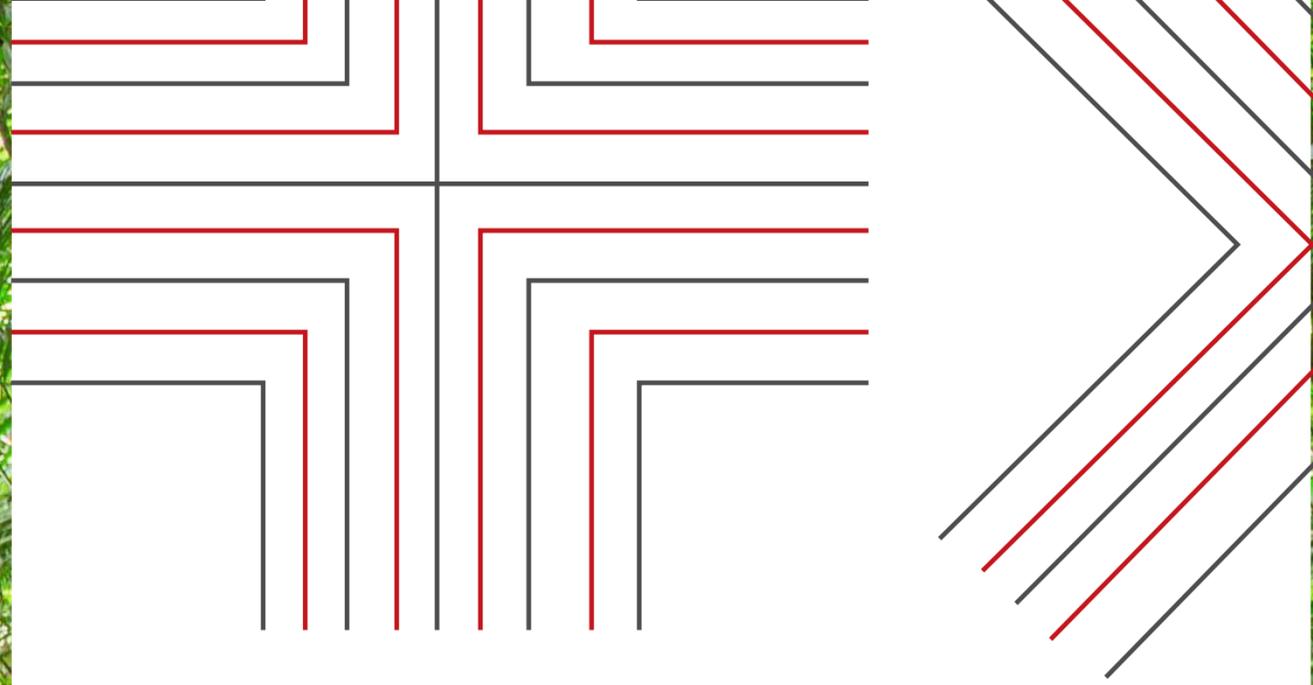
germplasm and we have identified 38 varieties.

In native communities, women play a fundamental role and must be considered from the beginning as a determining factor in the development process. The issue of social violence is still very serious. Development is not integral if you do not achieve happiness within the family. It is not sustainable to generate income if this does not harmonize relationships but reinforces unequal power structures. For this reason, in recent years we have also focused our actions to promote gender issues. As an organization, this experience has helped us to consolidate and validate intervention strategies in native communities. The Shampuyacu community has begun to revalue its culture and knowledge. ◉

**“The Shampuyacu community has begun to revalue its culture and knowledge.”**



# EMPOWERMENT OF **WOMEN** AND THEIR CULTURE



## THE CREATION OF THE *NUWA'S FOREST*

The community members of Shampuyacu decided to create a communal reserve forest in order to safeguard the remaining forest in their territory. This was agreed by the General Assembly, establishing an area of 531.97 ha. Subsequently, after working together with the community, we identified the needs and priorities of the women, and they proposed to the Assembly that 8.9 ha of land should be used for activities related to forest enrichment, conservation and the recovery and production of traditional plants (each woman received a plot). They organized themselves into four groups to distribute the work (nursery, wood collection, trail cleaning and lot cleaning) and focused on recovering the ancestral value of the forest and becoming an example for other communities.

Since its early days, one of the key aspects of the project was to guarantee the participation of the community and its annexes, so their needs were attended too. We worked continuously with a rights-based approach, in a participatory manner. Together, their interests and priorities were identified, as well as their roles, and everyone could share their points of view regarding the future development of their community.

In 2015, after georeferencing the community's territory, the *Nuwa's Forest* was three hectares. After several meetings, the community members decided to increase the area to 8.9 ha due to a request presented by the women.

Nowadays, this forest is managed entirely by them and led by a working committee chosen by them, which represents them. The project supported the construction of a traditional plant nursery and, subsequently, the subdivision of 10 m x 50 m plots assigned to each participating

community member, who is responsible for their care. Among other initiatives, the plots are used for activities such as the recovery of cassava varieties, seed collection, cultivation of plants for infusions, sampling, rescue and planting of traditional species, reforestation and, since 2018, it has been recognized as a tourism entrepreneurship by the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Tourism (MINCETUR).

**Conservation International closed 2020 committed to work on changing harmful gender norms and beliefs about the role of women and men in society.**

## PREVENTION AND RESPONSE TO GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN THE NUWA'S FOREST

Conservation International Peru closed the year 2020 with a commitment to work on changing harmful gender norms and beliefs about the role of women and men in society, and community processes to confront violence.

Environmental degradation, loss of ecosystem benefits and unsustainable resource use are creating complex crises around the world. As billions of people depend on these natural resources and ecosystems for their livelihoods, the impact it has on people has disproportionate effects on both women and girls.

In some contexts, gender-based violence and environmental issues create feedback loops in which gender-based violence, harassment and discrimination exacerbate the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem resources. This environmental degradation triggers new and more damaging forms of violence. In other contexts, preventing and responding to gender-based violence creates opportunities to improve environmental action, as well as the empowerment of women and the community.





Against this backdrop, USAID's Office of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment designed the RISE Challenge to support the innovative application of high-potential interventions to address gender-based violence in environmental programs.

Conservation International Peru presented one of the four winning projects of the Rise Challenge. With USAID funding, we will work with PROMSEX on a project to address this issue and begin the process of generating social norm change in the *Nuwa's Forest*.

After having consulted, discussed, and understood the situation of violence in the communities, it was concluded that the women needed to count on people they trusted within the community to provide them with the necessary support. In this sense, eight *nuwas* have been trained so that they have all the necessary tools that will allow them to assist other women. The purpose is to change harmful gender norms and beliefs about the role of women and men in society, the sanctioning of violence, and community processes to address violence in the *Nuwa's Forest*, tackling the factors that promote gender-based violence.

In addition, Conservation International Peru and its partners will provide training to 70 women involved in the management of the *Nuwa's Forest* on their legal rights and the prevention of sexual violence. They will also help the community develop informal support systems for survivors of gender-based violence. Work with men and boys in the community to explore concepts of masculinity and change attitudes that promote gender-based violence will also take place. Additionally, it is intended to bring the government's gender-based violence support services into the community and to strengthen the abilities of staff, partners, and the local indigenous federation to respond appropriately to incidents of gender-based violence.



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●●●  
**29**

**nuwas got together to rescue different cassava varieties.**

## RESCUING CASSAVA, THE AWAJÚN'S MOTHER PLANT

In May 2015, after a hard work in the communal nursery, located along the banks of the Naranjillo River in the community of Shampuyacu, the leader at the time, Cristobal Wajajai Ampam, said “my mother in her *aja* (farm) had 25 varieties of *mama* (cassava), each of them for different uses”.

That same year, an analysis of the situation of the Awajún women of Shampuyacu revealed that, to ensure food security, it was necessary to rescue the cassava varieties that had been forgotten due to the loss of culture and the increase in climate change and pests.

The Awajún women knew that in the past their grandmothers used to manage up to 60 varieties of cassava, but they were only managing six with great difficulty, they did not know how to control the number of pests and some of the younger mothers had never cultivated it, or they no longer knew how to

manage their *aja* (integral farm with more than 26 products of subsistence agriculture). In fact, a group of 29 *nuwas* came together to rescue their cassava varieties. During that year, they gathered information for the elaboration of the *tajimat pujut* (Life Plan), after the community requested Conservation International Peru's support for the development of social and conservation projects that could bring welfare to the community.

During this process, it was possible to identify the potential and importance of cassava for the Awajún of Shampuyacu. Thus, the

community decided to prioritize within its *Tajimat Pujut* or Life Plan, the rescue of cassava varieties.

During the meetings with the community members, cassava varieties that the Awajún had inherited from their ancestors were presented and the elder *nuwas* of the community who provided valuable information. They shared their testimonies and knowledge about the use and properties of each variety.



## Julia Sekejam Wajajai

*Nuwa's Forest*

# Medicinal plants: from mothers to daughters

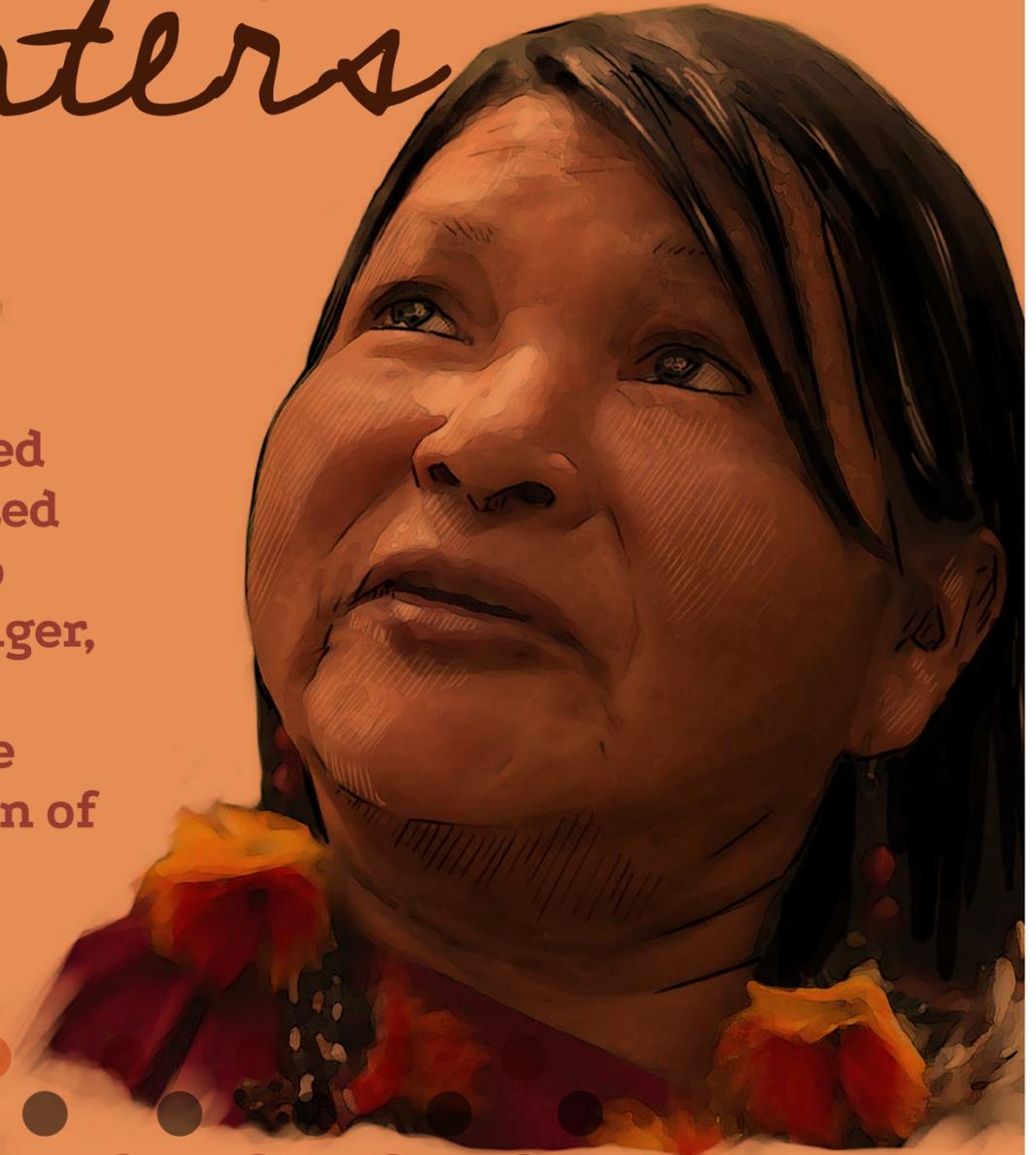
**Having received ancestral knowledge since I was a child has changed my life. I am very grateful to my mother because she taught me to sow, cultivate and all the knowledge of plants, and the purpose of each one.** My mother taught me how to classify ginger for the flu or to make a child walk. It has been a process of effort, not easy as I have had to work hard over the years. Now my job is to teach my daughter, the same way I learned from my mother.

We, the *nuwas*, have grouped and organized ourselves to produce ginger, our work is based on the conservation of the forest, because if it degrades then where are we going to live? For the *nuwas*, it is very important to conserve the forest for future generations. Our strategic partner is Takiwasi, and their support has been very beneficial for our plots, because we received economic income for our household.

We have come together to reach an agreement to conserve the forest,

sow medicinal plants and understand the importance of living in harmony between people and nature. We work together, plant and sell what we produce in order to support our children's education. Keeping in mind that we need to sell our products to help our children, we asked the *Pamuk* to provide us with a plot of land. After he gave us the land, we have been working very hard with a lot of responsibility and not only in the plants but also in the care of the animals and fish so that they do not become extinct. ◉

“**We *nuwas* have grouped and organized ourselves to produce ginger, our work is based on the conservation of the forest.**”





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••• Nuwa Infusions highlight the value of the Awajún ancestral knowledge led by the women of the community in order to provide greater value to the forest and diversify their sources of income.



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## DEVELOPMENT OF INFUSIONS

The alliance between Conservation International and the Takiwasi Center for the development of a line of infusions based on medicinal aromatic plants harvested from the forest is one of the most successful projects of the work with Shampuyacu women.

Takiwasi develops natural products and has a line of extracts, oils, infusions and collaborates with native communities which are suppliers of raw materials. Understanding this dynamic, in 2016, Conservation International Peru invited Takiwasi to become its partner in the project with the *nuwas*, to add value to the medicinal plants of the Awajún people for the transformation of infusions. The project was developed in stages.

The first stage consisted of mapping the people with the greatest wisdom, who are called the “*muntas*”, elder men and women. The proposal was to work with them and create a product, highlighting their knowledge of medicinal plants. As a result, many discussions were held with the community and concluded that they could make herbal teas or infusions. The first achievement was the registration at INDECOPI, or National Institute for the Defense of Free Competition and Protection of Intellectual Property, to safeguard the knowledge. The medicinal plants and their uses were registered, an important work done by Takiwasi in coordination with Conservation International Peru.

Then they selected the aromatic plants to be used in the infusions, choosing ginger and huasca cloves, which are considered the “mother plants” by the women of the community. They merged them with other aromatic plants to create a blend suitable for the market, for good taste, flavor and pleasure, yet not for medicinal use, despite the fact that the Awajun women use them to relieve some ailments. Testing sessions took place and a gourmet chef was hired to fuse the secondary ingredients and create two types of teas.

Ginger was fused with vanilla and cacao husk; and huasca clove, well-known in the region as an aphrodisiac, with dried golden berry and native cinnamon. This mixture also involved a selection process of testing and tasting, participating in regional and national fairs.

There was a concern about whether the raw material would make it to a commercial level or not. At the beginning, the tests for the elaboration of infusions were carried out in an experimental plot that Takiwasi has in Bajo



# 2016

**Conservation International Peru summoned Takiwasi to become its ally in the project of infusions with the nuwas.**



**Currently 10 nuwas have established their own medicinal plant gardens to start producing tawaip or clove vine, and ajeg or ginger.**

Túmbaro. Little by little the *nuwas* began to get more involved, so an experimental plot was installed in their forest. With their work, vanilla was also included in the infusions, an expensive product on the world market, which can cost up to 1,000 soles per kilo when dehydrated.

In 2019, once the product was ready and the Nuwa brand had been registered, a new production systems was created; adapting family gardens, agroforestry systems and enriching the *Nuwa's Forest*.

Today 10 *Nuwas* have established their own medicinal plant gardens in their backyards to start producing tawaip or huasca cloves (*tynanthus panurensis*) and ajeg or ginger (*zingiber officinale*), the basic ingredients of their herbal teas, traditionally used to relieve body aches and flu symptoms. Now, with these plots much closer to their homes, they can begin to put into practice what they

have learned: the planting, maintenance, harvesting and post-harvesting of their medicinal plants.

They also receive training in the same community, and although they know how to manage their plants, they have included other exotic species such as stevia, which they did not know, or golden berry. For infusions they are using Andean golden berry, but they are already testing the Amazonian golden berry.

Currently, this activity generates income for the *Nuwas*. This initiative builds on their skills and confidence, while developing other entrepreneurial, management and financial skills.

Takiwasi Laboratory continues to be a key partner in this process. It has been involved in the product's development, and has been key in supporting the *Nuwas*, who have recognized the importance of traditional knowledge to earn income, conserve their forests and improve their livelihoods.

An important link between the forest's recovery and the Awajún women derives from medicinal plants, as women treasure their ancestral practices and transfer that knowledge to their daughters. Moreover, their knowledge has been enhanced as a means to generate an income in harmony with nature that helps conserve their forests. For this reason they have been entitled as the forests' guardians. In addition, thanks to the technical and commercial support of Takiwasi, Nuwa infusions are now for sale in a dozen stores in San Martín and Lima.





## Uziela Achayap Sejekam

*Nuwa's Forest*



I feel economically free

**The wise Nuwas and muntas (older men), who knew about specific drawings, customs, stories and myths, met in working groups to develop the packaging design of the infusions, where each group captured what they imagined.**

One group drew the *tawas* (a crown worn by men), the colorful feather necklace, traditional costumes, plants such as toe, ginger, and achiote that they used in the past to draw. Then, a designer from the Fibra agency was hired to improve the designs and create combinations with the medicinal plants. Conservation International Peru and Takiwasi were the partners that helped us with the designs, and afterwards, to enter a design contest, the Latin American Design

Awards, where we won third place in Latin America, competing with other countries such as Mexico, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Argentina, Uruguay, and Colombia. I had the opportunity to travel to Lima on behalf of the *Nuwa's Forest* with Ana, who worked in Takiwasi. I felt very proud, I loved it.

The green tin contains native cinnamon, golden berry and clavo huasca, which are harvested from the *Nuwa's Forest* and relieve inflammation. The brown tin contains cacao shell, stevia, vanilla, and ginger, which relieves flu symptoms, headache, muscle pain, or fever. In the Shampuyacu community, there are varieties of ginger to relieve stomach aches, flu, etc., used by our ancestors.

I knew almost nothing about medicinal plants until Takiwasi invited us to a training session. After that, I began to study and my interest in what mothers practiced and rescued was aroused. Thanks to the older women, we learned part of our customs, something that young women mostly ignore. So, I took the opportunity to rescue what the elders know and see what exists within our community, dedicating time and effort.

Sometimes women are discriminated. I have suffered violence, because there are men who are sexist and do not allow us to have the experience of creating a business or receive training to move forward and plan a better future for ourselves. Thanks to the guidance

of Conservation International and Takiwasi, we have advanced and now we have this product.

I must teach other women what I know so that they can be in the same place where I am, a place where they also should be. Although it is not easy to get here since every day is a struggle that I have had to fight. It is not like the settlers who went to the city and worked easily. Now we are starting with the sales. There are some mothers who have joined, so that each one can have an income and, in this way, support their families. This is important for them because they have never had the opportunity to have an economic stimulus, as well as having economic support

for their children. For this reason, I am going to learn how the products are made since I feel economically free thanks to the products, and thanks also to the teaching that our grandparents and grandmothers gave us. We must keep going by focusing on working, learning, and teaching our children and future generations. Se ha dado realce al conocimiento que tienen para generar una alternativa económica, economía solidaria con su medio ambiente, al conservar sus bosques y darles el título de guardianas de sus bosques, están colaborando con la conservación. Gracias al apoyo técnico y comercial de Takiwasi, las infusiones Nuwa ya están a la venta en unadecena de locales comerciales de San Martín y Lima grandchildren. ◉





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## COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM IN THE NUWA'S FOREST

The daily life of the Awajún women of Shampuyacu has changed since the *Nuwa's Forest* was installed in their territory as a tourist entrepreneurship. This community-based tourist initiative renews them, strengthens them, and reinforces the character that they must assume as women. Through this initiative, they can reclaim the equality conditions in the face of male supremacy to which they were relegated for many years.

For the first time, many women have received an economic incentive because of their work receiving visitor. This generates a substantial change in their daily lives, since for the first time they have money to buy something for themselves and improve their children's nutrition. At the beginning, this situation was difficult to understand by the men of the community, but then they realized that it was an opportunity for women to get involved in economic activities, and contribute to the household.

The women of Shampuyacu are aware of the environmental urgencies that their community presents. The area where they currently receive visitors is preserved in its entirety, since the felling of any trees in this forest is not allowed. They recognize that their community is

one of the most deforested in the San Martín region. Currently, they only maintain 10% of their primary forest. For this reason, their role in the community is vital for the conservation of the forest.

The *nuwas* are visited by tourists, researchers and anyone interested in learning about the Awajún culture; having contact with the community and the nature that surrounds it, discovering their stories and appreciating the effort they make to conserve their forest.

Initially, the tours to the forest took place with the participation of Conservation International's team, who promoted the creation of this initiative together with the women. Currently, only the women coordinate visits with tour operators or with the tourists themselves through WhatsApp and social

**Initially, the tours to the forest took place with the participation of Conservation International's technical team, who promoted the creation of this initiative together with the women.**



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## 2020

One more step towards formalization; the Nuwa's Forest association was registered in public records.

networks. *Nuwas* recognize the importance of tourists in their community and strive to provide the best services.

The 70 *Nuwas*, who participate in the project, have been divided into seven groups of 10 women and a coordinator so that the work benefits are equally distributed. The groups take turns in receiving tourists in the *Nuwa's Forest*, and the profits are distributed among the 11 *Nuwas* who lead the visit.

In February 2020, Nancy Fernández, who is a beneficiary of the *Nuwa's Forest*, participated in the XI Community Tourism Encounter held in Arequipa, South of Peru. She faithfully presented the work that she and her partners carry out in the community. After that, she

was surprised not only by the people's reaction, but because she noticed the great effort that she and her partners are making, which was not evident to her on a daily basis.

In November 2020, *Nuwa's Forest* formally registered their association in the public records. The association's board consists of six women: the president, vice president, secretary, treasurer and two spokespersons. The registration and formalization have allowed the *nuwas* to have a bank account in order to make all the transactions transparent.

Yet, the tourism endeavor was paralyzed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the drastic reduction of visits and activities. A year later, with the advanced vaccination process in

Peru and the world, the *Nuwas* have managed to reopen their forest to tourism, implementing biosafety protocols (masks, face shield, alcohol gel, social distance, temperature meters, disinfection of shoes, etc.). In June 2021, this implementation made them worthy of the Safe Travel certification by the regional government of San Martín, consolidating the future of the tourism entrepreneurship, ready to reactivate and open to the world again.

### Handicrafts

The beauty of the Awajún culture is reflected in the colors and ornaments that accompany their clothing and accessories, mixing seeds, beads, or feathers. Each handicraft has a history and a meaning, but above all a powerful message of conservation and nature. The

*Nuwa's Forest* has allowed the community to revalue the use of natural seeds for necklaces, bracelets, and decorative objects that Awajún women offer to tourists who visit them. This activity has allowed the *Nuwas* to reconnect with their roots and rescue an important part of their culture, since the handicrafts represent their identity, and the ancient belief that the ancestors' spirits are shielded in seeds, beads, vanilla pieces, birds' feathers, or bones painted in reds, yellow, and oranges, or hidden in the *chambira* fibers.

The *Nuwas* received two training sessions in bio-jewelry to reinforce their knowledge, perfect their finishes and designs, as well as in administrating and managing the income from their sales. ●



## Nancy Fernández Bacón

*Nuwa's Forest*

# Reevaluating ourselves to feel powerful

**We have this forest, where our grandparents and our parents ate from the flora and fauna for many years.** This was very helpful for us because we found edible fruits, medicines, and animals. In the past, we hunted everything, we killed everything without realizing that with time we were going to harm ourselves. Now with so much training, we have learned, and we have a hunting and fishing control. We were taught in which month we can hunt or fish, to allow these animals to continue to reproduce, because there is a time when they are in full breed, and if they are hunted, they will not grow in numbers. Now we have changed our method.

We have experienced a great crisis in the community. There are women who become very young mothers, at 14 and 15 they already have two to three children, and when they reach 25, they have seven children. It is sad because childhood is interrupted. In addition, since our parents began to lease their farms, the young people became very lazy. But it has been almost ten years that these customs have practically been left behind and we have begun to have a different lifestyle.

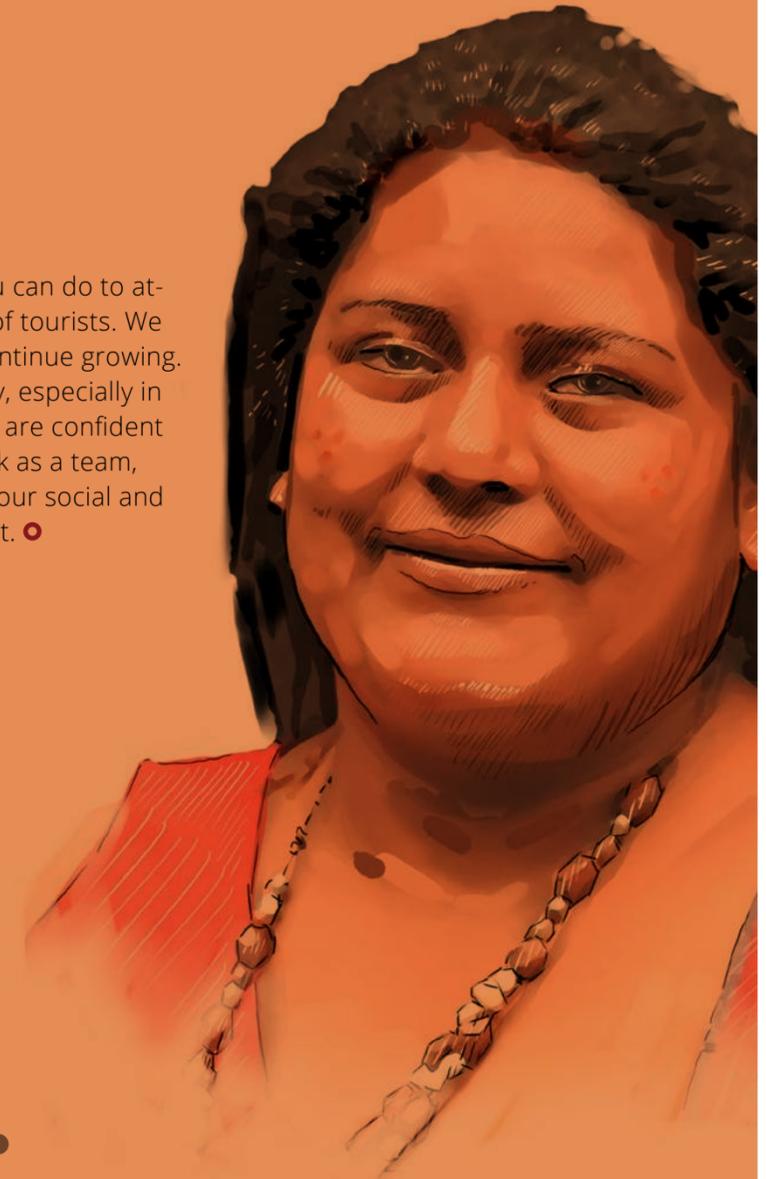
With tourism we saw the need to rescue a large part of the seeds for handicrafts from the forests and we stopped cutting down trees

**“We are confident in our ability to work as a team, always taking into account our social and natural environment.”**

whose seeds we used for handicrafts. Instead we had to buy the seeds from other places. With Conservation International we began to revalue our resources and our art, and we found a market to sell them.

In 2020 I participated in the XI Community Tourism Encounter that was organized in Arequipa, and I presented the work we carried out in the community. There were participants from all over the country, all those who have their own entrepreneurship, it was a nice experience. Apart from the workshop, we visited the Colca Valley and the farmers guided us on how to start,

and what things you can do to attract the attention of tourists. We are motivated to continue growing. The road is not easy, especially in a pandemic, but we are confident in our ability to work as a team, always considering our social and natural environment. ◉



# IMPACTS AND EXPECTATIONS



## THE HARVESTED FRUITS

The work in Shampuyacu has generally had very positive results. At the time of implementing the action plans, emphasis has been placed on the cultural issues to achieve the greatest possible collaboration from the community. On the other hand, there has been great progress to incorporate the active role of women within the community, and not only *nuwa* groups, also young and adult Awajún who have recovered the sense that their community is their territory. This has helped them to build upon their identity, which has been a trigger for this process.

For the beneficiaries, reforestation has been the activity with the greatest impact, which includes activities in the *Nuwa's Forest*, using the seeds and medicinal plants. In second place of importance are the activities derived from cacao cultivation, which include the techniques learned in the field schools, and mainly the production of organic fertilizer.

ECOAN emphasizes the activities carried out with Conservation International Peru in the reintroduction of cassava cultivation. The issue of food security was discussed by the women's group. The recovery of the *aja* (farm), as well as doing training in Condorcanqui to bring germplasm and begin to recover the varieties of cassava and medicinal plants.

We have been able to evaluate some technologies to recover germplasm in *ajas* and cassava, including the processing of plantain and mass production of bokashi.

The Awajún are now familiar with sustainable cultivation, environmental care, and reforestation techniques. Among the techniques transmitted by the technicians to the producers are pruning management, use of grafting, shade tree management, preparation of organic biols, identification of cacao varieties with greater possibilities of adaptation, nursery management, filling seedlings, among others. All these activities have increased the productivity and quality of the crops.



The development of governance workshops for indigenous leaders and the technical support provided through conservation agreements has strengthened community organization.

The land registry and inventories have contributed to the initial territorial organization and the identification of their own livelihoods; they now know how much and what is inside their plots and, therefore, they are less likely to be deceived by tenants. They also begin to quantify and materialize their field needs, recognizing that the community reserve forest and the *Nuwa's Forest* provide them with natural inputs that they must look after.

Reforestation has also had an impact on land recovery and reduced the risk of erosion, especially in plots near rivers. In June 2021, there was 39 Awajún cacao farmers was 39, while there were 26 Awajún coffee farmers, covering a total area of approximately 115 hectares. Meanwhile, the andean farmers manage 36.8 hectares, with three cacao farmers and twelve coffee farmers.

So far, more than 50,000 plants have been sown in Shampuyacu and 21 hectares have been planted with 38 varieties of cassava. A nursery and a drying module have also been installed, where the community is being trained in the production of cassava flour, which is expected to be commercialized in the near future.

It is still too early to predict success, as many of the activities are long-term, such as reforestation. What can be considered an achievement is the transition of a cultural change from deforestation and land leasing to a communal agroforestry mentality and conservation of the remaining forest, although this still needs to be consolidated. Whereas before the community only wanted to take advantage of the natural forest to gain more plots and lease to outsiders, now they want to be part of the activities, mainly because, little by little, they are learning the cultivation techniques and believe they can do it themselves.

## THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE NUWA'S FOREST PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION:

● **The Nuwas have highlighted the importance of the forest, not only for habitat purposes, but also because it is their main source of livelihood.** On the one hand, considering the food that they can collect, and on the other hand, the seeds, and other things that they can take to make handicrafts. They have stated on several occasions that thanks to Conservation International Peru's support they have been motivated and encouraged to work, conserve and rescue parts of the forest.



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**Reforestation has also had an impact on land recovery and reduced the risk of erosion, especially in plots near rivers.**

● **One of the most outstanding achievements is the beginning of a process in which male and female community members participate with equal opportunities in community planning and management.**

It was possible to identify the needs and interests of the community members, recognizing the specific role of women in the management of the community forest with a strong participation of the nuwas.

● **The progress of recent times has been so significant that women point out that they are now able to run for positions within the community's organizations.**

This was unthinkable just a few years ago, but it is a sign of the paradigm shift that is slowly taking place within the community. In addition, their increased participation in different activities of economic life has given them a higher level of self-confidence and motivated them to get more involved in the social and political life of their community. The first activity is related to the improvement and revitalization of their natural environment, where they feel spiritually connected, and the need to focus on the conservation of their ancestral knowledge. The second

is linked to the improvement of their economic income, trade and cultural transformation with the agriculture that sustains and brings them closer to the surrounding urban environment.

● **The creation of a trusted and exclusive space for women, such as the Nuwa's Forest, as well as the successes they have gradually achieved, has led the Nuwas to begin to question the normalization of gender-based violence of which many are victims, and their role in Awajún society.**

● **The intergenerational communication of traditional knowledge was promoted, as women participated with their children.** Men are also encouraged to participate in activities such as maintaining the forest, and clearing of undergrowth.

● **Ancestral knowledge and know-how were recovered,** revaluing traditional knowledge and the role that women play in its preservation.

● **Finally, the primary forest has been conserved and biodiversity and forest cover** are expected to increase in the coming years.



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● ● ●  
More and more women participate in different activities in the social, political and economic life of the Shampuyacu community.



# POSITIVE IMPACTS IN *SHAMPUYACU*



## THE OPPORTUNITIES

### **SAFE TRAVEL stamp for the tourist attraction: the *Nuwa's Forest***

The *Nuwa's Forest* obtained the Safe Travel stamp on June 9, 2021, after complying with all biosafety protocols, a tool and strategy to promote competitiveness to restore the confidence and safety of travelers to the San Martín region. This certification comes after more than a year without receiving tourists in the forest, due to the COVID-19 pandemic that in Peru has already reached more than 200 thousand deaths.

According to the World Travel and Tourism Council, WTTC, the "Safe Travel" is the world's first global health and safety stamp to COVID-19, which certifies that international hygiene and biosafety standards are met. The

WTTC endorses at least nine tourism-related industries, such as aviation, cruises, tour operators, convention centers, outdoor retail, etc., with the international certification of the Travel Safety Stamp.

The Safe Travels stamp is a set of protocols designed under the guidelines of the World Health Organization (WHO) to create a general health policy for the tourism industry and provide clear guidelines for the return of tourism activity at a global level. The goal is to align the private sector with common standards that ensure the safety of its workforce and travelers as each country or region joins the "new normal".

### **Promotion of the harvesting of non-timber forest products**

In December 2020, the first guideline was approved to promote non-timber forest

**"Safe Travels" is a set of protocols designed with guidelines by the WHO to create a general health policy in the tourism industry.**



**2021**  
Nuwa's Forest, located in San Martín region, obtained the Safe Travels stamp.



products in the San Martín region. These products are an opportunity because of their diverse uses and properties, and with proper management, they can be harvested without endangering resources. Management Resolution No. 007-2020-GRSM/ARA, “Directive for the Granting of Permits and Authorizations of Forest Products Other than Timber in Areas of Native Communities, Private and Public Lands” is especially important because it is the first initiative at the national level that establishes a regulatory framework for granting permits and authorizations to forest users who want to commercialize non-timber forest products.

This initiative provides an opportunity for indigenous communities and other users in the region to formalize their products, guaranteeing traceability and sustainable harvesting. In this way, the promotion of new value chains for products that have not been prioritized for a long time can be guaranteed, allowing forest users to access responsible markets willing to buy their products at a fair price. The regulations promote and guarantee forest-friendly activities and at the same time generate development opportunities that allow the various users to improve their living conditions.

### **Economic opportunities for Awajún women**

Conservation International Peru is working on a policy initiative for economic opportunities for Awajún women. Works are being carried out for the development of a technical report on the approval of an ordinance that promotes, values, and prioritizes the participation of indigenous women in productive initiatives of entrepreneurship and commercial exchanges. To date there are no regional policies with this approach and even less with intercultural relevance, an important topic for indigenous women, as they face the greatest obstacles in reaching power spaces and being able to express themselves. ●



# 2020

**the first directive that focuses on non-timber forest products in the San Martín region was approved.**

# THE LESSONS **LEARNED**

**T**he cultural factor is very important when working with indigenous communities. Ignoring this aspect may constitute a barrier, potentially limiting the scope of the initiatives. To obtain successful results, it is necessary to build trust so that they work and collaborate with the team technicians. It is important to respect their internal organization, the way in which they elect their leaders, work with them, support them, and strengthen these instances.

Language is also an important aspect. We have tried to work with technicians and collaborators who can communicate in their own language. This has made it possible to generate stronger ties and work better together.

Conservation International Peru's work has allowed us to learn that conservation projects influence women and men differently, based on their respective roles and responsibilities, and that this has a direct impact on the long-term sustainability of conservation efforts. In this regard, Conservation International Peru has encouraged

the participation of both men and women through the implementation of training workshops on equal opportunities for all, the evaluation of policies for men and women, and the incorporation of this approach in all their efforts.

Working with technical staff and consultants from the San Martín region, who are familiar with the cultural reality and idiosyncrasies of the local people, has been essential to the success of the project.

To achieve reforestation and subsequent conservation of recovered forests, it is imperative to generate economic incentives that reward those who apply these type of practices.

It is also important to bear in mind that most communities do not necessarily have adequate financial education, so when working with them, the parties have recommended that rewards or incentives for work well done should be in kind rather than in cash. In this way, misallocation of resources or diversion to undesirable activities was avoided.

Regarding land leasing, although Conservation International Peru as an organization may have the intention to denounce irregularities in the contracts (abuses of power, swindles, inequalities), the consequences can be negative. It is necessary to have very well-structured social safeguards so that the social platform that is going to be discovered can manage all the conflict that this generates. On that matter, Conservation International Peru has responded, but it has taken eight years to establish structures and safeguards that work, and with the pandemic they became outdated and must be readapted.

During all these years, the *Nuwa's Forest* project has received support as the needs have arisen, and this has been generating results, but there has not been a work plan or a concrete strategic plan that allows us to see the horizon. According to the circumstances, the needs have been addressed on an ongoing basis. Currently, Conservation International Peru is in the process of organizing its participation, so that it can measure its strengths, its limits, and finally, it is the *nuwas* themselves who take the baton and decide where they want to drive their association.

**Our work has allowed us to understand that conservation projects influence women and men differently, based on their respective roles and responsibilities, and that this has a direct impact on sustainability.**

## PUTTING INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AT THE HEART OF CONSERVATION

Entering the Nuwa's Forest for the first time just after the 2017 wet season, I could hear the tinkling of seeds, soft voices and musical laughter, before I could see anyone. It was a fittingly beautiful introduction to this special place in the Shampuyacu community. We were all introduced, politely shaking hands, and learned about the medicinal plants from the Nuwas. We enjoyed a feast of forest foods, trying fruits we'd never seen before, in the newly built Awajun Wisdom Rescue Centre.

Each of the elements of that day were significant – it was a valuable demonstration of the critical importance of putting people at the heart of all conservation actions, which is a simultaneously simple idea that is complex to implement well. To name a few: that the women chose to ask for an area for replanting important plants and crops; that this was granted by the community; the rekindling of traditional knowledge from spending time together in this area; the opportunity to create new income

streams from produce and tourists; health benefits and food security; and the intercultural and intergenerational sharing of knowledge.

Returning in 2018, the example of the Nuwa's Forest helped inform an idea for a project that Conservation International was discussing with the BHP Foundation. How could Awajun communities be supported to develop a comprehensive Life Plan, incorporating multiple new income opportunities that enhance biocultural knowledge and contribute to long-term sustainable conservation? We were fortunate to be invited to visit the community again on this occasion, and we heard about all the progress, including a new idea to develop a herbal tea – an enterprise that might just start to bring all those strands together. We also saw many different types of yuca now recovered and grown and heard about ideas to develop vanilla and cacao.

With a partnership in place, and an idea of how the BHP Foundation could support Conservation International to coordinate many activities in the Awajun communities and in the Alto Mayo landscape, we visited again in 2019. This time we jumped out of the cars that brought us through the fields to the Nuwa's Forest, and almost ran to the stairs that formed



the entrance. We hugged like old friends and the forest foods feast was as familiar and comforting as a dinner at grandma's house. Our visit ended with us all dancing together in the grounds of the Awajun Wisdom Rescue Centre.

The memories of that visit have sustained the link for the BHP Foundation and our understanding of the importance of the leadership that's demonstrated by the Shampuyacu community. Nuwa Infusiones Amazónicas has made

it to the shelves in shops across the country and vanilla might be next. Yuca and cacao are growing strongly and are important for the future of communities. Conservation International has assisted the BHP Foundation to learn and understand the layers that are required to support Indigenous peoples to be stewards of their own lands, contributing to sustainability and conservation for the benefit of all people. We look forward to working together and learning from you, for years to come. ●



**Melinda Macleod**

**Program Director – Environmental Resilience  
BHP Foundation**

October 25, 2021

