

conservation agreements private partnership platform

COLOMBIA - Sea turtle hunters turned guardians

ACTIVE
until May 2019



Colombia's northern Caribbean coast has long been an important area for turtles; five out of the seven species of sea turtle worldwide travel to eat the seagrasses that grow there. Since pre-Columbian times, the indigenous Wayuu and Arijuna people of the Bahía Hondita community have been eating these sea turtles, as well as using and selling their parts for use in folk medicine and religious rituals.

After centuries of uncontrolled exploitation on La Guajira Peninsula, sea turtle numbers diminished, drastically endangering local sea turtle populations. Once local people realized this, they decided to contribute to their conservation. In 2011 Conservation International (CI) Colombia partnered with Cerrejón Coal, Fondo Acción and Corpoguajira (the local environmental authority) to implement a "conservation agreement" with the Bahía Hondita community, aiming for this small local example to amplify to other communities of the La Guajira Department.

What is a "conservation agreement"?

It is a deal between a community and a group or person funding a conservation project. In exchange for making specific conservation commitments, communities receive benefits from the funder.

THE COMMUNITIES AGREE TO:

- Not hunt, kill or mistreat sea turtles
- Not market, receive or give away sea turtles or products derived from them
- Return the sea turtles caught on fishing operations
- Participate in community monitoring
- Not consume sea turtle meat or eggs

IN RETURN FOR:

- Direct wages for monitoring sea turtle nesting beaches during the season
- Trainings to improve handcrafted bags
- Trainings to create and improve local associations
- New fishing gear and materials for sustainable fishing activities
- Alternative livelihoods such as ecotourism activities

INVESTMENT

CAPPP: \$21,420

Cerrejón Coal: \$142,772

IMPLEMENTER

Conservation International

Colombia uses science, policy and partnerships to protect the nature people rely on for food, fresh water and livelihoods.

PARTNERS

Cerrejón Coal

- Open-pit coal mine located in the southeast of the La Guajira Department and key private sector partner

Mas Diseño

- Small business enterprise

Corpoguajira

- Regional environmental authority



MONITORING

This conservation agreement is embedded in CI Colombia's Conservation for Development (C&D) program, which has its own impact indicators, including:

- Number of sensible species protected (relative abundance)
- Number of hectares protected in strategic ecosystems
- Number of direct beneficiaries
- Number of institutional alliances created
- Quantity of funds over a 2016-2017 baseline
- Percentage of income per capita change over each conservation agreement baseline
- Number of informed persons (e.g., likes on social media)

RESULTS TO DATE

- 31** nesting females detected
- 175** sea turtles rescued from fishing nets (87 survived)
- 5,293** hours patrolled between 2012 and 2016
- 3,521** newborns released
- 57%** of sea turtles released from lobster nets

- 53** local rangers, up from 18
- 83%** perceive human well-being improvement
- 70%** of the community has been trained in monitoring or in some economic alternative
- 32** women are direct beneficiaries of the local backpack marketing company Aa Imaja â and increased their sales by 45%

PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT

The initiative has been funded by Cerrejón Coal since 2012 though formal agreements with Conservation International. This is part of Cerrejón's corporate social responsibility, and they are interested in building local capacities linked to sustainability efforts in the region.

WHAT'S NEXT?

We are working on an exit strategy for this agreement, supported by Cerrejón Coal through May 2019, that involves scaling up to other communities as part of a Regional Environmental Authority action plan. Additionally, there is a lack of clarity on ethnic Wayuu authorities, but by evaluating both ecological and social impact over the past five years, we are changing the strategy together with the local communities and the regional authority.



Contact

ALEJANDRO ROSSELLI | arosselli@conservation.org
www.conservation.org/csp