



AMAZON PROGRAMME:

biodiversity, indigenous peoples and the source of the Amazon River

Model Experience

Impact mitigation: oil, gas and indigenous rights

Much has been said about the richness of the Amazon. However, on occasions it seems that the value of the largest biodiversity in the world, the uniqueness of hundreds of cultures and the role of the Amazon as a provider of environmental services is rapidly overlooked when faced with opportunities to generate other types of short-term richness, for example through the exploitation of hydrocarbons. In Peru, over 70 % of the Amazon is covered by blocks for oil exploration and exploitation, which overlap with protected areas and indigenous territories.

WWF Peru works in key Amazon areas where hydrocarbon projects are carried out, promoting better environmental and social practices to prevent and mitigate their impacts.



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Hydrocarbons and infrastructure

Infrastructure - and other - megaprojects are a reality that is making its way through the Amazon. The challenge is to prioritize social and environmentally responsible planning and decision making in the region, hand in hand with the population, financiers, companies and authorities, in order to prevent future impacts and mitigate those that exist. WWF Peru promotes the implementation of international evaluation and monitoring standards for large-scale projects through tools such as the Strategic Environmental Assessment. It also provides opportunities for the government, companies and local peoples to reach agreements and policies that promote sustainability and develop local capacities so that the communities themselves enforce their rights to a sustainable development.

Recovering the Corrientes River with the indigenous communities

The Abanico del Pastaza in Loreto is the largest Ramsar site (wetland of international importance) in the entire Amazon, which houses nearly 300 fish species and is a food source for dozens of Achuar, Kichwa and Urarina communities. However, it also harbours two of the oldest and most important oil blocks in Peru, which produce 50% of the oil consumed nationally and during 30 years have also contaminated the rivers, that provide food and water sources for these peoples.

In the year 2000 WWF Peru began working intensely along with the communities around the Corrientes River, fostering studies to learn the state of their health and the water quality in key rivers. This is how it was determined, that as a result of the oil generated contamination, the lead, cadmium and barium levels found in the blood of the Achuar peoples were much superior than those permitted. This prompted the Government and the involved companies to acknowledge the serious existing contamination for the first time in 30 years.

Since then, work was carried out developing local capacities on environmental topics and institutionally strengthening these communities, which in 2006 were finally able to commit a company in Peru to reinject 100% of the contaminating waters resulting from oil production into the subsoil. Today, the communities personally monitor the quality of the water in the Corrientes River, thus enforcing their rights to a healthy and productive environment.

Improving the environmental standards for large-scale gas projects

By the end of the nineties, the confirmation of the exploitation of Camisea natural gas in the Cuzco Amazon was considered a promise in favor of national development. However, the enthusiasm and the haste to move forward with the project met with an urgent need to improve practices in order to reduce the environmental impacts and secure fairer conditions for the indigenous peoples involved.

In this context, in 2003 – as part of an alliance with important institutions - WWF was able to promote the adoption of international standards as part of the conditions required by the Inter-American Development Bank to approve the loan for the operating company. Subsequently, in 2007 and as part of a community surveillance team, WWF Peru promoted improvements in the construction of the main gas pipeline, which had experienced six spills in a short period of time. Through monitoring from the planning stage to the execution of the project, it was possible to improve the operations of one of the most important gas projects, in defense of the Amazon region and in benefit of its inhabitants.



Key facts:

- The Corrientes River is the first area in the Peruvian Amazon where an oil company is committed to reinject contaminated waters into the subsoil.
- WWF was part of the team of institutions that promoted important improvements in the execution of the largest gas project in Peru.

We work with: Shinai, Fundación Solsticio Peru, Racimos de Ungurahui, Coordinadora Regional de Pueblos Indígenas (CORPI), Federación de Comunidades Nativas del Río Corrientes (FECONACO) y Federación de Indígenas Quechua del Pastaza (FEDIQUEP). In Camisea, we work with: Instituto del Bien Común (IBC), Derecho, Ambiente y Recursos naturales (DAR), Sociedad Peruana de Derecho Ambiental (SPDA), Universidad Nacional Cayetano Heredia (UNCH), Grupo Propuesta Ciudadana, Miembros de Acción Ciudadana Camisea (ACC) and the Consejo Machiguenga del Río Urubamba (COMARU).

With valuable support from: Mac Arthur Foundation, UK Department for International Development (DFID), WWF UK and WWF CH.

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This publication was printed on Mohawk Options, 100% PCW, paper which is 100% post consumer waste, is made with process-chlorinefree, manufactured with wind-generated energy, and is certified by Green Seal and the Forest Stewardship Council.

This publication was made possible by WWF Austria.
2009



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