



Farmer-to-farmer exchange with members of the National Shuar Federation, funded by USAID, executed by Servicio Forestal Amazonico, facilitated by INIAP, and hosted by the Kichwa community of Campo Cocha.

**Tena, Ecuador
December 16-18**



The Shuar and the Kichwa are two distinct indigenous groups native to the Ecuadorian Amazon. The Shuar reside mostly in the Central-South Amazonian provinces of Morona Santiago and Zamora. The Kichwa live in the North-Central Amazon in the provinces of Pastaza, Napo, and Orellana.



Introductions and presentation by INIAP discussing their work in the area. They started a project six years ago to work with farmers in the Tena area to implement “integrated farms” in which traditional subsistence crops are grown with cash crops so that the farm maintains not only an economic but also an ecological balance.



Translating to and discussing in Shuar



Visit to a Kichwa farm called a “chakra” in the community of Campo Cocha. Funding for the integrated farm project has come from the Ecuadorian government, the European Union, and two Swiss organizations.



Listening to Don Milton explain his integrated farm in which he has cacao, rice, yucca, plantain, corn, medicinal plants and timber species. Later, the INIAP employees told me it was the first time they heard him speak with such confidence and knowledge about his farm work, and it gave them hope for long-term success after the project-support ends next year.



Roy from INIAP explaining their role in the integrated farm's development. INIAP first met with farmers to discuss their needs and to have them propose what kind of assistance they would like from INIAP. They then decided to focus on cacao production. INIAP gave farmers seeds and the farmers each individually raised seedlings at their farms. The farmers then planted the seedlings and have over the last 3 years or so been given guidance on how to correctly care for the crop, specifically by removing weeds in the undergrowth and pruning the cacao trees. INIAP has also incorporated tree species into the farm production and ensured that a space for food staple and traditional crops is maintained.

Milton Cerda, the owner of the farm, is in the blue shirt in the middle.



Mahogany sapling planted three years ago. Mahogany (called Ahuano near Tena and Caoba where I live in Gualaquiza), has virtually disappeared from the landscape due to harvesting for its high-quality timber. People all over the Ecuadorian Amazon, indigenous and mestizo alike, know the value of the tree and are interested in reforesting it, if not for its timber (since it is now illegal to harvest it), so that the species is not lost forever.



Un-ripe cacao pods



Clemente Chiriap, president of the Tunants Association. The Shuar have a hierarchical political structure. NASHE, the National Shuar Federation, is the umbrella organization. Under NASHE, there are a number of Associations, each of which has a president. Under the Associations are individual communities. Communities are generally quite small, consisting of maybe just a few families.



Cacao pods after they have been harvested and the seeds removed



Klever Sando, President of NASHE (Shaur Federation government) and Milton Reinoso, Director of SFA



**Ripe cacao pod and sprouting pods.
Notice how the pods grow right off the
trunk, and not at the end of branches like
other fruit.**



Drying the cacao seeds before selling to chocolate producers



Wood harvested from and processed at the farm



Taking advantage of a boat ride on the Napo River during our lunch break



Visit to a mestizo family farm which has also received support from INIAP



Roy explaining agroforestry strategies, such as keeping good quality timber trees when clearing land for production



Returning from the cacao parcel to the house



Landowner's son showing us the fuel-powered tree pruner given to them by INIAP. The pruner cuts down on labor costs and ensures that pruning is done correctly and without damaging the plant.



Trying to get the fuel-powered grass trimmer to start. The family bought the technology so that they don't have to clear out weeds but bending over and using a machete, a labor-intensive and "back-breaking" work. The grass-cutter lowers their labor expense and improves their quality of life.



Milton showing us how to use the grass trimmer



Achiote, a fruit that has a red butter inside. It is a staple in Ecuadorian kitchens and is used in everything from soup, to stir fry, to roasting guinea pig.



Taking some snails home to raise and eat



A customary round of shots, on this occasion featuring a homemade alcohol called “blue bird”



Group photo at the civic plaza on our night out in Tena, a real treat since most members of the group spend almost all of their time on their farms in the forest, some many hours walk from a road.



Visit to the community forest of Campo Cocha. The forest is enrolled in the Ministry of Environment “Sociobosques” program, through which the government pays the community about \$30/hectare to conserve their forest. From the program, the community now receives almost \$10,000 a year to invest in schools and other social works.



Roy explaining the difference between a tree, a sapling, and a seedling and how they are treated differently in their research within the permanent study parcel. INIAP is using the community forest to collect long-term data, which is much needed but has scarcely been collected in the past.



**One of the trees in the permanent parcel.
The number on the top is the sub-parcel
number; the one on the bottom the
individual tree's number.**



Angel, from INIAP, explaining what “carbon” is, how it is that trees “capture” it, and what that means for “global warming”, all terms the members of the group had heard before but did not understand. They had heard that people think their forests are valuable because of “carbon capture” and that it has something to do with “global warming”, but when they look at their forests, they see habitat for animals they hunt, seeds for making artisan goods, timber, clean water, and the beauty of nature.



View overlooking part of the 2,400 hectares of the community forest. It took three days to walk and map the boundary of the entire forest.



Members of the Campo Cocha community (the taller guys), the president of the Achunts Shuar Association (middle left), and the president of the Tunants Association (right).

