

## **Project Update: July 2008**

Between June and mid-July 2008, four researchers of the Fundación BioDiversa Colombia and six volunteers from different universities of Colombia travelled to the Santa Sofía Indigenous Reserve to carry out the Community-based educational and nests monitoring pilot programs.

### **Educational Pilot program**

The program was held in the Nuevo Jardín Community. It consisted in a series of workshops and activities with three focal groups:

#### **1. Children**

Several awareness-rising activities related to turtle conservation were held with children of the community. This included playful activities related to the turtles (carrying eggs, escaping from hunters, races disguised like turtles , etc.); drawing and clay modelling seeking to identify characteristics of the different species (shape, colour, size) and their ecology (relationship with other animals and plants, nesting, etc.); preparation of a theatre play based on traditional knowledge and turtle conservation.

#### **2. Older people**

Interviews by the young people group and workshops seeking to restore traditional knowledge regarding turtles were carried out with older people from the community. Traditional stories and myths were used for the story of the children's theatre play.

#### **3. Young people**

A group of six young people was trained to be leaders of the community in turtle conservation. They were in charge of the interviews and organising the workshops and participated actively in the play.

The gathered information and material is being used to produce printed educational material and to edit a video that will be given to the young people group to present it to the community.

### **Nests monitoring pilot program**

In order to declare a "Communitarian turtle conservation beach" in a small island of the Amazon River during the nesting period (July to November), the program was socialised in five Colombian and two Peruvian communities that have influence on the beach. Communities were invited to support the initiative by not extracting nests or turtles from the protected beach. In Colombia, two communities (Nuevo Jardín and El Progreso) showed a high concern for turtle conservation and led the initiative, while the three others (Loma Linda, Santa Sofía and Puerto Maldonado) were doubtful. In the Peruvian communities (Yahuma I and Yahuma II), the initiative was received with interest. The initiative was also supported with official letters by Corpoamazonia, from Colombia, and the Peruvian Captainship.

After socialisation, visible signs were placed on the beach and in the 3<sup>th</sup> of July the 24 hours monitoring started. Monitoring is being led by the Asociación Curuinsi Huasi of El Progreso, which is the indigenous family organisation that had the original initiative, together with members of the communities, researchers from FBC and volunteers from different cities of Colombia. The nesting season was delayed due to the unusually late appearing of the beaches; by the second half of July, turtles started nesting. Unfortunately, some fishermen are still trying to steal the eggs, even after inviting them

to support the initiative. Therefore, the program will be advertised in local radio stations and an additional promotional campaign will be held in the neighbouring communities.

