

Project Update: July 2018

Context

This project has as its main mission to implement six led-by-local conservation campaigns at six coastal communities of the Guatemalan Caribbean, nurturing community members with the skills and abilities to plan and execute their own campaigns towards nature. This programme has different training workshops which lead to actions that motivate participants to take care of the environment.

Besides the workshops sponsored by The Rufford Foundation, a specific programme about plastic pollution is being held with the financial support of the European Outdoor Conservation Association (EOCA), which aims at reducing 30% of the single-use plastic emissions in the same communities we are working this project at.

July

This month has come to an end with great achievements! During July 2018, the first community service campaign was held in Punta de Manabique. Teachers from last and this year's project implemented a way to reduce solid waste at school. They created a small exchange store where children can bring their cans and plastic bottles and exchange them for healthy food. To do this, the local teacher begun with an awareness and educational campaign with their students, he taught them the importance of recycling and how many products have been thrown away when they still have a value. With the children and their parents, they collected 39 pounds of cans that were on the beaches.

Furthermore, the reforestation campaign was held with more than 500 locals of Puerto Barrios. All of them planted more than 6000 trees at Cerro San Gil, the watershed that supplies water to this city and some of their towns.

To finish the month, a small beach cleanup was also held as another community service campaign. To do this, one of the last year's project educator, took children of the coastal communities to clean up the beaches, teaching them the importance of it and motivating to constantly do it.



Led-by-teacher community service campaign in Punta de Manabique - The exchange store

After many weeks of planning, the first community service campaign was successfully executed. Three educators from last year's programme, and one teacher from Punta de Manabique (a coastal community in the Guatemalan Caribbean) opened a small exchange store to gather the community recyclable materials at school.

To do this, they had to plan how they will motivate students and parents to collect products that could be still recycled.

Local teacher, Edin Lem, taught his students about the importance of recycle and, as a classroom project, they collected tin cans for one month! Meanwhile, Ana Ramirez, Jaqueline Morales and Yajaira Najarro (all of them participants from last year's project) searched for local gathering centers in Puerto Barrios, collected the data of how much this centers were paying for recyclables and negotiated with them so that they could support this project with better prices.



Presenting the exchange store with teachers from our previous Rufford program.

They all bought some healthy food (to also support healthy nutrition in children) like cereals, milk, sugar, beans, rice, etc. to "sell" at the exchange store, which exchanges healthy food for recyclables such as tin cans and plastic bottles.



El chino has Downs Syndrome but he was the one who collected more cans and exchanged them for beans, oat, milk and his favorite chocolate cereals.

This month, a total of 39 pounds of tin cans were taken out of the community to a gathering centre to be recycled. That was about 1365 cans! All of them collected on the beaches of Punta de Manabique by the students and their parents.

Edin also went door by door, talking to the parents about the campaign and that they could also come to school to exchange their recyclables for healthy food. The campaign was so successful, that the store will continue to be open.

Led-by-teacher community service campaign at Cerro San Gil - The 6000 trees and the seed bombs!

At the beginning of this campaign, Julian Serrato (last year's project participant and current educator of the National Council of Protected Areas) and the team of Semillas del Océano, taught children about the importance of forests and its community management. They talked about different local species of trees and how to collect and preserve the seeds through the seed bomb method.



Reforestation had more than 500 people helping during the weekend of July 28 and 29, 2018

After the seed bombs workshop, students continued doing seed bombs to produce plants for their gardens and crops, also for the reforestation. Unfortunately, we couldn't use this method to create the balls that were going to be planted at their communities, this because they wouldn't be ready for the plantation, and also, because the plantation site changed.

The 6000 trees were produced by the local Yandin Sarmiento from El Quetzalito. He, his son, and other community members helped him raised the young trees that were planted in Cerro San Gil, Puerto Barrios (a governmental protected site of watershed recharge which is under the administration of FUNDAECO). The reason we changed the site was because there weren't community lands to plant trees, this because all the communities have sold their lands to Finqueros (farmers and livestock owners) that didn't allow us to plant the trees there.



Reforestation campaign at Cerro San Gil

To accomplish this goal, we joint the efforts of FUNDAECO, Reservas Militares de Izabal, the Ministry of Environment (MARN), The National Council of Protected Areas (CONAP) and many other people who came to volunteer at this event on July 28th and 29th. More than 8000 trees were planted which are going to be cared by park rangers who will who will also do the land maintenance to keep them alive and safe.

Led-by-teacher community service campaign in Punta de Manabique - The beach cleanup

This campaign was organized by Feve Cabnal. She participated at the last year's programme and had one of the best impacts on her community. She's now working at the Ministry of Environment, where she planned to do a beach cleanup and teach children about the importance of picking up trash. A total of 13 sacks of trash were collected and taken off the community to the municipal landfill, where it is going to be properly disposed.



Child of Punta de Manabique carrying his sack with trash. Marine debris can be seen on the sand, which was collected as well.

Feve is now in charge of a group of young people called "Líderes Ambientales" (environmental leaders) who are helping us throughout the project and have also learnt from us some activities and ideas they can implement at other communities.