



2022 TOP 100 GOOD PRACTICE STORY

Title of the Story: Bahuaja Sonene and Kotsimba, the road to understanding for the conservation of headwater watersheds

Destination Name: *Bahuaja Sonene National Park*

Country: *Perú*

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Submission category: *(Please check one of the boxes that indicates the focus of your story)*

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Address each aspect of your good practice story in the different sections being specific including relevant quantitative and qualitative information.

Issues faced

What was the problem/issue solved with the good practice?

The Department of Madre de Dios is located in the south-eastern area of Peru and is considered the "Biodiversity Capital of Peru" for its immense natural wealth and records of birds, butterflies, dragonflies, and endemic species. We can find 13 life zones, of the 117 worldwide, 06 Natural Protected Areas (NPA) in different categories and other forms of conservation. It is also home to 10 indigenous peoples, some in voluntary isolation. On the other hand, several threats have been identified, such as deforestation, pollution, extinction of wild flora and fauna, and loss of cultural identity of indigenous peoples, among others. These threats have advanced into the indigenous territory (Native Communities - NC), Buffer Zones (ZA) of the Natural Protected Areas (NPA), and in some cases even into the interior of these areas.

The natural potential of Madre de Dios is reflected in the biological diversity of the PNAs, where the Bahuaja Sonene National Park (PNBS) is the core of the Vilcabamba-Amboró Conservation Corridor, a conservation strategy that strengthens the PNAs of Peru and Bolivia, and we can find up to 08 types of ecosystems that register around 680 species of birds (37% of the birds of Peru), 173 species of mammals (34.05% of the mammals of Peru). It is also estimated that the Bolivian yungas ecosystem contains 60% of the bird species, more than 35% of the amphibian species, 41% of the mammals, more than 3,000 species of vascular plants in Peru, and the headwaters of important river basins in the Amazon, such as the Pamahuaca River, which provide ecosystem services such as water supply for the local population, among others.

The Kotsimba Native Community, descendants of the Pukirieri ethnic group of the original Harakmbut people, is located in the Inambari district of the PNBS. Due to ancestral rights, they carry out subsistence activities (hunting, fishing, and seed collection, among others) in the Pamahuaca sector of the NBSP.

With the inauguration of the Inter-Oceanic Highway (2007) and the establishment of "La Pampa," a human settlement whose main economic activity is illegal and informal mining, illegal activities and pressure on the BSNP increased. Furthermore, the low level of articulation between Bahuaja Sonene NP and Kotsimba NC added to the expansion of illegal activities in the BSNP and its ZA. In 2008, the Pamahuaca sector of the BSNP was affected by illegal logging and the Buffer Zone (Kotsimba NPP) by illegal mining; according to the Environmental Prosecutor's Office, these activities were carried out by invaders and some Kotsimba community members. Due to the area's vulnerability (headwaters of watersheds), State intervention was urgent.





Methods, steps and tools applied

How was the good practice implemented?

To eradicate the increase of illegal activities in Bahuaja Sonene National Park (BSNP) and its Buffer Zone (BA), actions were initiated to strengthen the Surveillance and Control strategy in the Pamahuaca sector and continue dialogue with the Kotsimba NC. The surveillance and control strategy is the methodology used to counteract the impact of informal and illegal human activities that affect the integrity of the Natural Protected Areas.

The surveillance and control strategy consisted of acquiring assets, building a permanent infrastructure, and increasing routine and special patrols. Because of the geographic difficulty of the area, a military vehicle (Unimog) was acquired, which allowed personnel to enter the area in less time. Personnel was hired (from 04 park rangers to 08). Finally, with the progress of negotiations with Kotsimba NPP, the construction and implementation of the Pamahuaca PVC, located at the mouth of the Pamahuaca River, was achieved. All of these actions were supported by FZS Peru and AIDER.

In the first year, from 03 routine patrols per month, the number of patrols increased to 06, and from a special patrol per year, the number of patrols per month increased to 02. In the second year, we had the support of park rangers from other Natural Protected Areas in the Madre de Dios region.

The actions of the CN Kotsimba, such as restricting access to authorities and park rangers and refusing to dialogue, where they repeatedly had to wait for a change in the Board of Directors (2 years) to resume dialogue, turned them into a community that threatened the conservation of the PNBS and the headwaters of the Amazonian River basins.

The interdictions against illegal mining increased, and the Community was denounced by the competent authorities in environmental matters, which put at risk its title of Native Community, so after 07 years, as a result of the strategy of dialogue and institutional rapprochement, it was possible to achieve the first achievement by obtaining permission from the Community to transit through its territory with materials for the construction of the Pamahuaca PVC (2015).

With the restored dialogue, the PNBS and the CN Kotsimba agreed that the promotion of tourism was important for the economic development of the community. To this end, the PNBS headquarters provided technical assistance to the community members to access competitive funds to finance tourism projects.





Key success factors

What helped you tackle the issues?

As part of the commitments generated at the dialogue roundtables, technical support was provided to access non-reimbursable funds (competitive bidding), as well as for the activity's evaluation process and their environmental management instruments, ensuring sustainability in execution.

According to the Kotsimba NC Life Plan (2013-2020), the sustainable activities to be carried out are tourism, aquaculture (fish hatchery), agriculture (crops and shaded animal husbandry), and reforestation and conservation. In 2018, technical support was provided in the Community's application to the MINAM + CAF Program, a competitive fund of the Ministry of Environment to mitigate the environmental and social effects of the interoceanic Highway, which financed the Eco business Plan "Experiential Tourism Pukirieri - Harakmbut in the Kotsimba Native Community" for an amount of S/ 200, 000.00 soles and with a counterpart of the Community of S/148, 896.95 soles. This project allowed the opening of the access path to the Pete stream, construction of a maloka (for reception), 05 bungalows, a kitchen, a dining room, and a toilet, contributing to its insertion into the tourist activity of the area.

In 2019, with PNIPA, a competitive fund of the Ministry of Production that promotes innovation and technological development in Fisheries and Aquaculture sustainably and inclusively, we financed the development of 100 ponds to raise Paco, a hydrobiological species of the Amazon. This allowed the creation of an Aquaculture Association in the NC, formed and led by women.

In 2020, with PROCOMPITE, a competitive fund of the Regional Government of Madre de Dios (GORE MAD) to finance the improvement of the competitiveness of productive proposals, the business plan "Expansion of tourism services in the Kotsimba Native Community" was financed with the implementation of bungalows, maloka and hanging bridges to improve the accessibility and experience of visitors. In addition, technical support was provided to achieve recognition of the Fragile Ecosystem by the GORE MAD, where 30% (approx. 12,000ha) of the communal territory is incorporated into a system of management and conservation of fragile ecosystems, strengthening the process of declaring the area a Private Conservation Area.

In 2021, as a result of the actions described above, the first Mutual Cooperation Agreement was signed between the Kotsimba Native Community and the Bahuaja Sonene National Park, with the Native Federation of the Madre de Dios River and its tributaries (FENAMAD), the Frankfurt Zoological Society Peru (FZS Peru) and the Administrator of the Partial Administration Contract of the PNBS- AIDER.





Lessons learned

While implementing the Good Practice what challenges were faced, and how were they overcome?

During the years of negotiation with the Kotsimba Native Community, the main challenge has been to maintain dialogue and gain the trust of the Community towards the Bahuaja Sonene National Park (PNBS), due to the increase of interdictions to illegal mining by the competent authorities in environmental matters, which caused a negative reaction from the community's directors towards the PNBS personnel and had repercussions in the stagnation or resolution of the advances or deals made.

Another major challenge has been to maintain institutional permanence in the area, that is, to implement the strategy to strengthen Surveillance and control, because, at the slightest setback with the community, the community did not allow park rangers to enter the Pamahuaca Surveillance and Control Post, which caused an increase in illegal activities (logging and mining) in the PNBS and its Buffer Zone (ZA), by community members or invaders. These situations have been going on for 10 years, and despite the advances in dialogue, there were moments of setbacks, which were gradually resolved through dialogue between the head of the PNBS and the Community's Board of Directors.

The implementation of the strategy to strengthen Surveillance control and constant dialogue improved the relationship with the community and reduced illegal activities (mining and logging). Despite the social tension, this strategy was gradually strengthened, achieving control of illegal logging in 2019. In addition, technical support for sustainable activities such as tourism and fish farming initiatives were maintained on an ongoing basis, and support continues in the process of establishing a Private Conservation Area, which will allow the conservation of approximately 12,000 ha. of pristine forests of the Kotsimba Native Community (Buffer Zone of the PNBS).

With everything described above, we can say that dialogue, perseverance, and commitment have allowed us to overcome the challenges and effectively implement the planned strategies, which in turn has allowed us to demonstrate changes in the attitude of the members of the community, who in recent years have shown interest in leaving illegal activities (logging and mining) and venture into sustainable activities such as tourism. As a significant result, the Bahuaja Sonene National Park and the Kotsimba Native Community and allies signed a Mutual Cooperation Act.





Results, achievements and recognitions

What were the qualitative and quantitative results of the good practice?

After 13 years of hard work with CN Kotsimba, we can say that we have achieved mutual trust, strengthened institutional presence in the area, and the total elimination of illegal logging within the Bahuaja Sonene National Park, as well as maintaining 98.57% of the ecosystems of the PNBS in a good state of conservation.

With the strengthening of the Surveillance and Control strategy, illegal logging has been controlled, achieving in the year 2019 that the deforestation affectation goes from 2.8 ha to 0 ha. In the year 2021, the natural regeneration of the affected area was evidenced with a special patrol.

On the other hand, illegal mining in the communal territory has decreased significantly thanks to the intervention of the State, through operation Mercury, initiated in 2019, allowing the recovery of 98% of the area.

Concerning the tourism venture, since its official opening in 2019 until the current year, there have been 2000 visitors, except for the pandemic years (2020-2021).

The Mutual Cooperation minutes between Bahuaja Sonene National Park and the Kotsimba Native Community aims to contribute to the excellent conservation status of the Fragile Ecosystem and the ANP, it also has 04 specific goals, which are: support the legal physical sanitation of the Community, technical support in the update of the Life Plan and contests with non-reimbursable funds and the promotion of the tourist activity of the Community.

Currently, support has been satisfactorily concluded in the process of legal physical reorganization of the Community (titling) and the process of updating the Community's Life Plan has begun. Also, in the year 2021, the community's tourism enterprise participated in the Ministry of the environment's web-based program "Live as you Dream", a program to promote the tourism potential of the Pamahuaca sector and the Community, as well as the tourism services of nature and adventure tourism.

The processes of integration and alliance between the Native Community of Kotsimba and the Bahuaja Sonene National Park have allowed generating economic benefit for the Community, which shows among its tourist attractions, as heirs of the Harakmbut people, the development of an economic activity compatible and sustainable with the conservation and the objectives of creation of the Bahuaja Sonene National Park. Thus, through these development alternatives implemented, it seeks to generate a positive impact for the benefit of the local population and the indigenous family economy, and sustainable development of the Pamahuaca sector.





Additional references

Provide links to further information. Pictures and videos should be available for download either from YouTube, Vimeo or other Cloud-based (Google/ One Drive) download URL (not WeTransfer).

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