

Q3 2020

Alto Mayo Conservation Initiative **Impact Report**



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Strengthening the foundations for durable conservation: Deepening partnerships with the community and Peruvian Government during the ongoing COVID pandemic

The Alto Mayo REDD+ project continues to be a source of resilience in the face of sustained economic and social disruption. Relying on community-based surveillance and support, the project is addressing the complex challenges presented by new in-migration to the project area from migrants seeking a basic livelihood. Building on years of technical support and market linkages, the project is helping conservation subscribers to earn a sustainable livelihood based on diverse, high value crops for local and international markets. And the project continues to help its principal stakeholders – the community and the National Service of Protected Areas – to weather the COVID storm and position for long term, durable conservation success.

✓ Community-based efforts to address COVID-driven migration into the project area

✓ Diversity and resilience of the local economy

✓ Fifth REDD+ Verification (2018 – 2020)



Community-based efforts to address COVID-driven migration into the project area

COVID has driven significant new migration into the project area, part of a broader wave of urban-to-rural migration taking place throughout Peru, where at least 7 million people have lost their jobs. This has resulted in new deforestation pressure in the Alto Mayo Protected Forest (AMPF), mainly from illegal coffee.

It has been a challenge for AMPF rangers to protect the area from new migrants, who are poor and seeking a chance to earn a livelihood from growing coffee. In this context, aggressive enforcement cannot be the principal solution. Instead, the project has helped to form four “surveillance committees,” comprised of local villagers who themselves are former migrants, to engage with new migrants to the area, identify and address illegal activities, socialize migrants as to why land use change is forbidden within the area, and help support them with alternatives. During the quarter period, 98 patrols were jointly implemented by the AMPF rangers and surveillance committees.

As local villagers, the four committees have been effective in preventing migration into the protected area. They have also shared their own land with migrants and provided other opportunities to help migrants with their pressing livelihood challenges.

Media article informing AMPF’s ranger intervention to halt deforestation:

<https://www.gob.pe/institucion/mpfn/noticias/304904-fiscalia-constato-deforestacion-de-cuatro-hectareas-de-bosque-protegido-en-alto-mayo>



Highlights



Diversity and resilience of the local economy

Rural areas of Peru have faced extremely tough economic times – millions of Peruvians have lost their jobs. Strict lock downs in the project area were lifted in early September, however, the local economy was effectively shut down for nearly 200 days.

The project is taking special attention to increase concrete alternatives for economic reactivation. The project continues to prioritize the expansion of support to coffee and dragon fruit, as well as a newer initiative focused on local vanilla. In addition to 400,000 kg of organic and fair trade-certified coffee delivered to international markets this year, more than 15,000 kg of dragon fruit were produced by subscribers of the conservation agreements and sold to local markets. Dragon fruit alone has brought approximately \$450,000 in revenue to about 100 families.

Local vanilla (*Vanilla pompona*) has been a new focus area: Vanilla demand for this varietal is rapidly increasing and is projected to become an important economic activity for the Alto Mayo landscape. The project is coordinating with regional and national authorities to boost vanilla as one of the main economic opportunities to reactive the economy at the local level. Twenty plants alone can generate about 3 months of full income for a household, and already 40 families within the AMPF have sold all of their production in an initial pilot.

These results have helped demonstrate to local people that even in this very tough context, conservation is essential for a thriving livelihood.

*Quarterly report of dragon fruit production by ECOAN.
Coopbam 2020 sales record*



5th REDD+ Verification (2018 – 2020)

REDD+ has provided the principal financial mechanism to sustain the project and its successful protection of the AMPF. Millions of verified emissions reductions have been already issued and sold, funding the implementation of all field activities and results.

As part of this mechanism, during Q3 the formal process of the fifth verification commenced with the opening of a public comment period on the Verra web site.

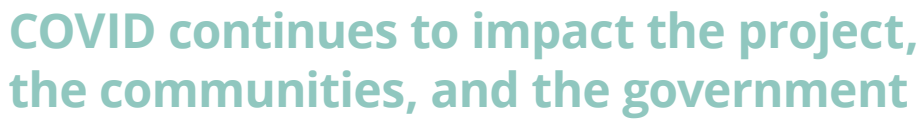
This verification, covering the period 2018–2020, is very special for the project: This is the first time it has been done remotely, requiring huge efforts from the field team to gather the information needed to prepare the monitoring impact report during the COVID lockdown. Special recognition must be given to the Technical Coordination of the Administration Contract at CI Peru, Fernando Guerra, who led the planning and field implementation.

Preliminary results indicate that the project has successfully avoided the deforestation of nearly 2,500 hectares of primary forest, resulting in the avoided emission of nearly 900,000 tonnes of CO₂e.

The final verification report is expected during the first quarter of 2021, and is anticipated to be the last verification undertaken before the project “nests” into the Peruvian national REDD+ program.

*MIR for 5th Verification
2018-2020 main achievements poster.*





The ongoing pandemic continues to pose new challenges, pushing all stakeholders to rise to the occasion. The project continues to serve as a source of resilience by supporting the improvement of stakeholder relationships, helping communities to access government and other resources, and supporting the long term viability of the Peruvian National Service protected area staff.



- ✔ Maintaining strong relationships between villagers and AMPF Head office
- ✔ Providing a bridge to public resources to bridge the economic downturn
- ✔ The National Service will require more support in 2021 and beyond



Maintaining strong relationships between villagers and AMPF Head office

The project area has been in strict lock down for nearly 200 days, and during most of this time the only people able to enter the field were AMPF staff, who have been focused on preventing additional encroachment into the AMPF. The presence of rangers, along with a decrease in technical assistance, has put a strain on relationships with some communities – especially in light of the previous dynamic of open conflict during the years before the project began.

In fact, this is the first time that AMPF head office staff have been alone in the field with protected area settlers since the project began, offering both a challenge and an opportunity.

Considering the negative impacts caused by the lockdown, the project, through the AMPF, has delivered PPE to all villagers within the protected area and its buffer zone, whether or not they are subscribers to the conservation agreements. This raised the visibility of AMPF staff, helped build their capacity, and provided new opportunities for engagement -- offering the chance to share their philosophy for managing the protected area directly with the communities in the AMPF.

This trust building opportunity is an unexpected outcome of the COVID situation, and highlights how important the alliance between AMPF staff and community members is for achieving and sustaining the conservation outcomes of the project.



Providing a bridge to public resources to bridge the economic downturn

Uncertainty is one of the worst results due to COVID: People are deeply concerned about the immediate future, especially as most community members rely on multiple sources of income.

Since the lockdown started, ecotourism, honey-bee production, embroidery, among other minor activities have been very affected, and are currently generating no income. It is critical to reactivate the formal economy in order to avoid the increase of illegal activities.

The project is helping link stakeholders to available but hard-to-access resources to weather the downturn, including accessing public funds and subsidies to support the project's economic activities, and helping conservation agreement subscribers to access various government subsidies. This is aimed at keeping people economically supported so that they can weather the COVID shock and be well positioned to re-commence economic life when the formal economy begins to rebound.

Local people are struggling with COVID, and it is complex and time consuming for local people to get connected to these alternatives/solutions. These project activities have helped provide a critical bridge between available government resources and the rural communities within the AMPF.



The National Service will require more support in 2021 and beyond

As part of Peruvian Government plan against COVID, public funds have been prioritized for health and economic reactivation. For 2021, the budget for the National Service of Protected Areas (SERNANP) will be reduced by an estimated 30%.

At the AMPF level, public funds cover 16 key positions, including 14 rangers, the AMPF Head and the AMPF administrator. All these positions are key for effective management of the protected area under normal conditions; with COVID, the AMPF faces greater risk of illegal activities is higher, putting further pressure on AMPF law enforcement capacity.

During Q4 2020, SERNANP will confirm how the AMPF will be affected by the budgeted reduction, and currently the project is budgeting an extra 30% of funds to cover the anticipated reduction. In parallel, and in addition to REDD+ marketing activities, the project is focused on applying for public funding aimed at economic recovery from COVID for rural communities, including such as a US\$300K public fund to increase operational capacities of the protected area coffee cooperative.

This situation, one seen the world over, reinforces how crucial sustained REDD+ funding is to ensuring the effective protection of threatened forests.



Impact Over Time



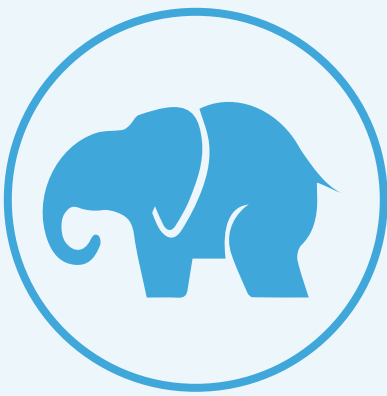
Forest Impacts



- ✓ Deforestation reduced by **75%**
- ✓ Adoption of ecological farming practices by **1,033** families has eliminated agrochemicals and significantly improved productivity
- ✓ **187** improved cooking stoves have been built, reducing **52%** of firewood use

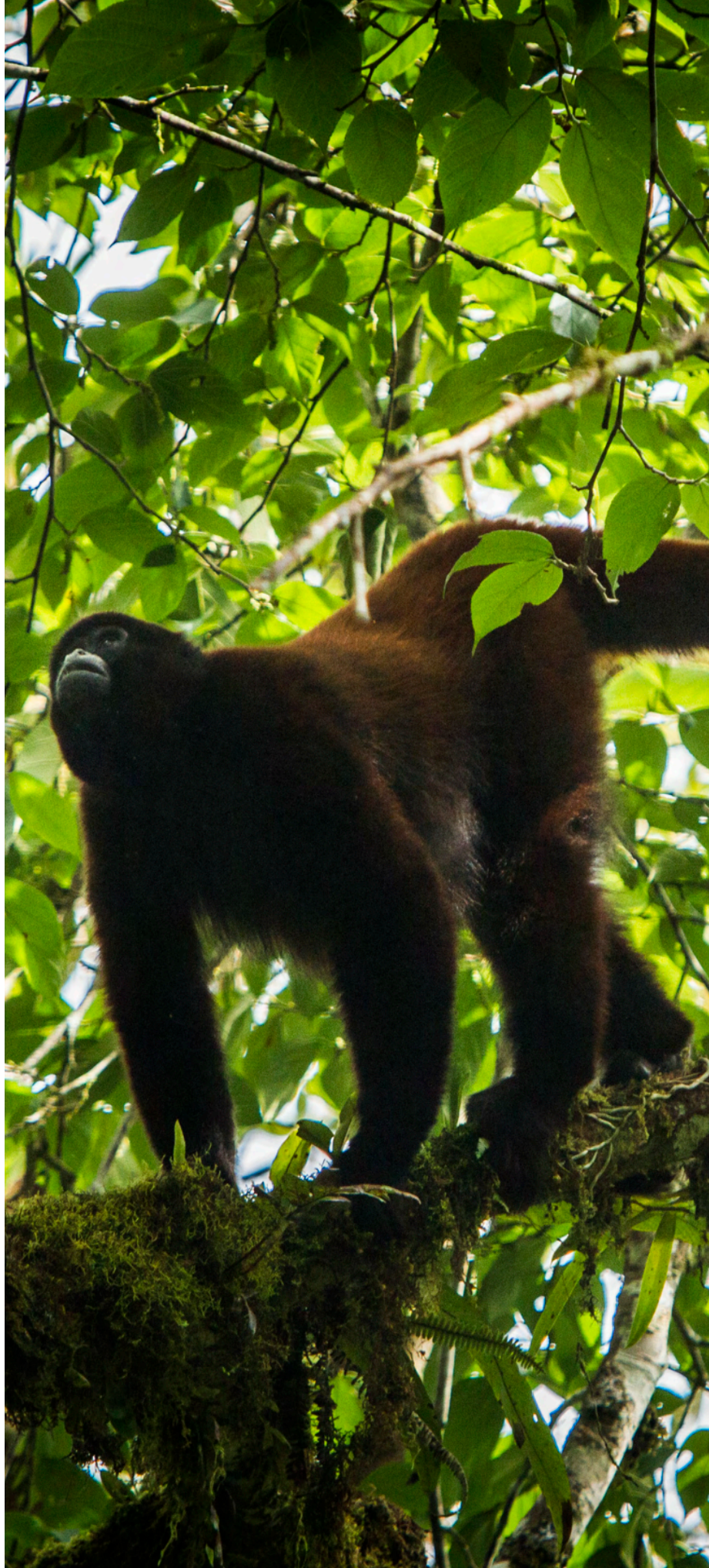


V Wildlife Impacts



V Stable protection of **1,000** unique species, including rare birds, amphibians, the giant armadillo, and other endemic plants and animals of global importance

V **Zero** incidents of orchid trafficking registered (2018-19), vs. **120** registered between 2008-18



Impact Over Time

Community Impacts



- ✓ Conservation agreements signed by **1,033** families in the protected area
- ✓ **120** formal jobs created by the project (2016-18), with **20** additional jobs created by the protected area coffee cooperative
- ✓ **\$3M** in revenue earned by protected area coffee cooperative since 2016



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