

Leadership in Action: Environmental Restoration and Cultural Exchange in Ecuador

Background

Through Cornell's Laidlaw Leadership Program, I worked with Indigenous Ecuadorian communities on environmental restoration, sustainable construction, and education decolonization. We exchanged language and culture, explored spiritual ties to the land, and witnessed grassroots leadership protecting sacred spaces.



Organizational Outcomes

- Participated in planting hundreds of trees to combat deforestation and support climate resilience.
- Helped construct a meditation room base using sustainable bioconstruction techniques (mud + natural adhesives).
- Engaged local children in a language exchange fostering cultural exchange: English, Spanish, and native Kichwa.
- Raised awareness about ongoing environmental contamination through the Toxic Tour in Lago Agrio.



Why it matters

Direct contribution to several UN Sustainable Development Goals, including SDG 13 (Climate Action) through environmental restoration and tree planting; SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) by addressing pollution and raising awareness of contaminated water sources; and SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being) by highlighting the health impacts of environmental degradation on local communities. This work advances global efforts toward a healthier, more equitable, and sustainable future.