

# COMMUNITY ACTION IN ECUADOR

A collaboration with Pachaysana to promote reforestation and Kichwa-language education

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## INTRODUCTION

Indigenous communities in Ecuador are currently affected by **loss of cultural heritage** and **diminishing access to clean water** due to massive water pollution from **Texaco**.



We collaborated with the Ecuadorian non-profit **Pachaysana** to help preserve Kichwa communities in the Amazon and restore **forest biodiversity**.

## PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

My Leadership in Action Project demonstrated the importance of language and cultural connections for empowerment and leadership. During the trip, my connection and ability to contribute was strengthened by my Spanish skills. Even in Mushullakta, where some people exclusively spoke Kichwa, intentionally learning basic phrases drew me closer to the community members teaching me.

This experience helped me refine how I communicate with people from different cultural backgrounds. This experience also showed me the value of community and its ability to drive local change.

Water access is further hindered by rainwater contamination through illegal natural gas flares, known as **mecheros**. These mecheros are commonly found hidden in the Amazon.



## MOST OF OUR TIME WAS SPLIT BETWEEN PINTAG AND MUSHULLAKTA

### PINTAG

Pintag is located in the Andes Mountains. Pachaysana collaborates with the community organization Casa Amaru to combat environmental degradation in the area and retell history. Despite its proximity to clean water sources, water is often diverted toward Quito, the capital, during the dry season, leaving Pintag without water for weeks at a time.



### MUSHULLAKTA

Mushullakta is a Kichwa village located in the Amazon. Prior to the community's collaboration with Pachaysana, the village faced a dwindling youth population, partly as a result of the lack of secondary education in the village, and environmental damage from guayusa monoculture. Community members feared a loss of their cultural heritage through the movement of youths to larger cities to access municipal high schools.



## MAJOR PROJECTS

Casa Amaru is currently using bioconstruction methods to sustainably build a community center. A water reclamation system using epiphytes is also being developed to replace Casa Amaru's current dependence on the local water supplier.

During my time in Ecuador, I assisted with reforestation and bioconstruction. This portion of the trip was primarily spent learning about local cultures and methods of retelling history from local community members.

## MAJOR PROJECTS

Mushullakta has developed La Escuela del Bosque (*The School of the Forest*), run by community members and educators, as well as international volunteers, to enhance education within the village. Mushullakta is also actively reforesting cleared parts of the forest and transitioning to *Chacras*, sustainable, mixed-use farms.

I was primarily involved with La Escuela del Bosque and designed children's literature and interactive toys based on Kichwa folktales. In the process, I collaborated with community educators and other Cornell volunteers.

