Marine spatial planning to support sustainable geotourism development.

Costa Rica
Alejandra Pacheco
Organization type: nonprofit/ngo/citizen sector

Budget: $1 million - $5 million
Website: http://www.marviva.net

- Citizen participation
- Cultural preservation
- Community development
- Conservation
- Employment
- Income generation
- Sustainable development

Project Summary

Elevator Pitch

Concise Summary: Help us pitch this solution! Provide an explanation within 3-4 short sentences.

The aim is to establish participative processes with solid scientific information and political support in order to plan human activities in the ocean and to consolidate sustainable coastal tourism in selected geotourism destinations in Costa Rica, Panama and Colombia. MarViva Foundation has developed strong relationships with communitarian groups in the four working areas proposed for this project: Nicoya and Osa (Costa Rica), Chiriquí (Panama) and Chocó (Colombia). Partnerships and agreements with companies, communitarian councils and local governments have been established in order to promote the spatial planning of the marine-coastal area. Socio economic diagnoses have been carried out as well as an inventory of companies and communitarian groups that offer tourist services in these destinations. Participative processes with state communities and agencies in Chiriquí and Chocó have been generated in order to plan the tourist and production activities in mangrove swamps. Eleven micro tourist companies in Chiriquí were supported thus strengthening their administrative capacity and developing a cluster which offers a wide range of tourist services. Ten tourist companies in Osa were strengthened thus managing to set up business and marketing strategies, and at present efforts are being made to develop a communitarian tourist companies cluster in the region. Seven community credit corporations have been set up and supported which by means of community capital provide their members with soft loans aimed at promoting tourist initiatives. Five of them are already operational in Osa and there are two in Chiriquí. Over four hundred individuals are directly benefited by its development. Forty tourism operators have been trained on best practices for "Cetacean Watching". Support has been provided to two communitarian groups applying traditional fishing techniques in order to strengthen their production chains. On of these groups, formed by fifty five traditional fishermen in the Chocó Colombia is at present selling its products directly to restaurant thus achieving a 15 times higher profitability after having strengthened its value chain. Similar results have been achieved in Costa Rica, with a group of twenty eight traditional fishermen which sell their product directly to tourist cruises which visit the Gulf of Nicoya. In both cases we managed to focus the production chain on sustainable traditional fishing techniques, the product marked a difference, intermediaries have been eliminated, in this manner improving the value chain and developing partnerships with community groups and companies, which have strengthened a sustainable tourism in both areas.

About Project

Problem: What problem is this project trying to address?

Coastal communities are marginalized by external tourism development within centralized decision processes with little local participation. Mega projects influence the possession of land, displace local residents and transform the environmental and socio cultural background. Over exploitation and pollution of marine resources reduce development alternatives. Communities are not able to engage in market activities due to scarce training. Their fragile organization structure hinders the possibility to influence in the decision making to develop their coastal areas. The absence of standards and sustainable practices in tourism increases the uncertainty of long-term public and private investments. The fact that each activity is not regulated increases the conflict among users and the environment, and the resources which promoted these activities are damaged. Marine coastal planning allows the coexistence of several socio economic interest and activities, preserving previously vulnerable ecosystems. The active participation of communities in this process is essential to improve resident’s quality of life and to consolidate long term sustainability to geo tourism destinations.
Solution: What is the proposed solution? Please be specific!

This is an innovative project because it sets up local processes for social consensus based on scientific data and community participation and political support, while it emphasizes the importance of value chains for community tourism activities. In addition to zoning the marine coastal space, this approach turns community members into key players within the decision taking processes regarding tourism development in the area. The participation of public entities, private companies and community groups guarantee a broad support to the decisions and regulations generated therein. This proposal is unique due to its regional and integral feature, the generation of inter-sector partnerships and the promotion of community tourism clusters. The marine coastal spatial planning method guarantees the introduction of clear and politically supported regulations aimed at the responsible coastal tourism management, which offers a long term sustainability guarantee to public and private investments carried out in the tourism sector. This initiative can be scaled and replicated at global level, since it provides governments and users of the ocean with a reliable process to promote sustainable development, the condition of the costal and marine areas and the improvement of the quality of life of coastal communities.

About You
Organization: Fundación MarViva
Website: http://www.marviva.net
First Name: Alejandra
Last Name: Pacheco
Country: SJ

About Your Organization
Organization Name: Fundación MarViva
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Organization Country: SJ

Your idea
Country your work focuses on
Website URL: http://www.marviva.net
Would you like to participate in the MIF Opportunity 2010?
Yes

Innovation
Do you have a patent for this idea?

Impact
What impact have you had on your clients and the tourism sector?
After two years of work, twenty one community companies have been trained on administrative, technical, environmental sustainability and marketing aspects. All cases evidenced an improvement in the level of its operations and revenues. Setting up seven community credit corporations in addition to negotiations with state entities have guaranteed financing sources for more than fifteen of these companies, thus allowing the growth of their activities. Over four hundred people are associated to these businesses benefiting through training, credit, business partnerships and an increased competitiveness of their companies resulting in an improved sustainability due to the increase in the number of tourism contracts and direct customers. The creation of tourism clusters has benefited both local businessmen as well as tourists who are provided with an integral service with
strong environmental sustainability. The economic strength of these clusters generates greater stability as well as a better negotiation position with local authorities and foreign tourism companies. The introduction of sustainability and environmental responsibility criteria benefits the environment. For example, cetacean watching has been regulated by law, tourism operators have been trained and the impact on cetacean population has been reduced. Both in Chiriquí as well as in Osa, tourists now have an organized and environmentally sustainable community tourism proposal.

**Actions**

Out intention is to promote sustainable geo tourism destination on the Pacific Coast in Costa Rica, Panama and Colombia. Three programmatic themes: i) to strengthen value chains in the community tourism sectors in the selected areas: to identify priority chains. To elaborate participative working plans and processes that guarantee competitiveness, differentiation and environmental sustainability. Create partnerships between community groups and private companies to promote product and services. ii) to promote spaces for social consensus in order to reach an agreement regarding these areas’ planning: to promote political incidence to strengthen the legal framework and the operational capacity of the consensus mechanism among players interested in marine coastal tourism development. Guarantee political support in order to implement agreements, resolutions and executive decrees. Provide technical scientific information to generate policies aimed at sustainable tourism activities. iii) Strengthen the community capacity to participate in consensus spaces: training. Generate partnerships with companies in the sector. Implement monitoring and feedback processes regarding measures’ effectiveness.

**Results**

At least 2 value chains in each of the four preselected areas in Colombia, Panama and Costa Rica will be strengthened. Working plans will include training and technical advisory to improve production chains and marketing schedules. There will be 8 value chains fully inserted in the tourism markets operated by communitarian groups, with differentiated products and sustainability criteria in all their operations. By means of political negotiations, at least 4 spaces for local consensus will be developed/strengthened. State agencies, community groups and other interested parties will discuss potential tourist development projects or those that affect existing destinations. Geo referenced technical information shall be collected and summarized in order to support the work carried out by social consensus groups. There will be at least 8 community groups participating in local governance processes to ensure the representation of their needs. The process developed in the three countries will be documented and disseminated to demonstrate a successful marine spatial planning with broad community participation, which can be replicated to promote sustainable tourism.

What will it take for your project to be successful over the next three years? Please address each year separately, if possible.

**Year 1:** Political support for social consensus spaces. Political Incidence Program: workshops will be carried out, authorities visited and the generation of a legal framework will be promoted to support local commissions management aimed at planning tourism activities in the region. Communities Program: It will organize partnerships among existing communitarian tourism and among community, business and state agencies sectors to discuss shared interest tourism issues. Workshops, inter sector meetings, advisory, communitarian training, institutional procedures, local trips will be performed. Science Program: geo spatial data will be gathered in our Geographic Information System, including data that benefit or damage tourism development. Equipment, software, existing data digitalization and field trips will be required. Community monitoring processes will be initiated to measure the impact of key variables on the environment and the tourism in the area.

**Year 2:** Technical training and partnerships with potential partner companies to develop tourist companies and clusters and to identify critical deficiencies in the value chain. The development of commercialization, marketing and administration planning will require training, advisory meetings and visits to suppliers and clients as well as printed material and educational and promotional material on the website. Reciprocal local and international visits among the different communities will be carried out as well as advisory sessions to strengthen the already set up community credit corporations. Improved training to community leaders aimed at their participation in the consensus processes. Training on conflict solving, legal aspects and coastal planning will be provided. Audiovisual equipment will be required as well as issuing publications for the workshops, trainings and consensus process. Support will be provided to implement the participative monitoring process and to disseminate the results.

**Year 3:** Strengthening of communitarian tourism companies and participation of groups in consensus processes. Geo spatial information generation. Summarize and spreading of community monitoring processes. Advisory and support to consolidated value chains. Visits and workshops. Process description to publish printed and digital material to spread its dynamic and results to replicate it.

What would prevent your project from being a success?

Lack of Commitment by communities to adopt sustainable tourism practices and responsible exploitation of costal and marine resources. Political will to set up the regulatory framework that delimits human activity in the ocean and allows the effective implementation of the management plans – development of mega tourist projects sooner than communitarian initiatives and political consensus processes are strengthened.

How many people will your project serve annually?

101 1000

What is the average monthly household income in your target community, in US Dollars?

$1000 - 4000

Does your project seek to have an impact on public policy or introduce models and tools that benefit the tourism sector in general?

Yes

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What stage is your project in?

Operating for 15 years

In what country?

Is your initiative connected to an established organization?

Yes

If yes, provide organization name.

Fundación MarViva (Costa Rica, Panamá, Colombia)

How long has this organization been operating?

More than 5 years
Yes

Does your organization have any non-monetary partnerships with NGOs?

Yes

Does your organization have any non-monetary partnerships with businesses?

Yes

Does your organization have any non-monetary partnerships with government?

Yes

Please tell us more about how these partnerships are critical to the success of your innovation.

Consensus processes are participative and with multi sector attendance that is why the contribution and involvement of different groups: communities, businessmen, decision making at political level, policy makers, coast guards, consumer of marine resources, NGOs, civil society, press / media. MarViva Foundation promotes and supports these processes in Costa Rica, Panama and Colombia, guaranteeing inclusion and consideration of all the stakeholders who must be involved, either in terms of design or implementation of the responsible management plans, aimed at guaranteeing its long term success.

What are the three most important actions needed to grow your initiative or organization?

1- Promote and strengthen the sustainable value in the communitarian tourism sector within the selected focus areas (Gulf of Nicoya and Osa in Costa Rica, Gulf of Chiriqui in Panamá, Chocó inn Colombia).
2- Promote the development and consolidation of consensus spaces to reach agreements on the planning of these areas and to strengthen the legal framework and operating capacity of the negotiation mechanisms among the interest stakeholders in the coastal and marine tourism development, with participative decision making processes based on scientific technical information to generate policies that ensure sustainable tourism activities.
3- Strengthened the community’s ability to actively and knowledgably participate in consensus and governance spaces and to set up communitarian monitoring mechanisms to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of the implemented measures.

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The Story

What was the defining moment that led you to this innovation?

Dr. Jorge Arturo Jiménez has already contributed with thirty years of experiences in the conservation and sustainable development in the region. He spent several months living with coastal communities when he worked in the planning of extractive activities in the Central Pacific mangroves. He has always been aware of their reality and challenges to keep a good standard of living in accordance with their traditions. Local communities are marginalized, excluded from tourism operations developed in those areas which are rich in terms of natural resources and cultural value. Dr. Jiménez met families who were forced to sell their lands upon the arrival of mega projects and at present do not have any property of their own, however, in this situation they have themselves into the dynamic of the market or to take advantage of the potential offered by the geo tourist wealth where they have lived for ages. These experiences have highlighted the cruelty of human displacement, the acculturation and loss of family income sources in the face of opportunities for projects generated by capital outside the communities. Other economic activities, such as traditional fishing or the use of natural resources for subsistence, were also affected. The availability and access to these resources were reduced, due to its unrestricted exploitation by industrial corporations who use extractive fishing techniques or systems, thus destroying habitats and damaging the sustainability of many ecosystems and thus the destinations’ tourist attractiveness. The construction of tourism-specific infrastructure without an integral planning in terms of socio economic and environmental viewpoint affects the sustainability of available resources. The uncoordinated participation of many stakeholders with varied interests (ports, fleets, hotels, tour operators, cruises, shipping companies, industrial fishing companies, sports, traditional fishing ) creates pressure on these resources and conflict in relation to its use. Likewise, the lack of support from governments to legalize the planning processes complicates its success and continuity. Achievements and accumulated learning with the implementation of sustainable development projects in MarViva Foundation supplement this belief, since we have confirmed the communities’ essential need to strengthen their governance capacities and to be incorporated in the participative planning processes of human activities in the ocean, as well as in the decision making and marketing processes which enable a progress and an improved quality of life.

Tell us about the social innovator behind this idea.

Dr. Jorge Arturo Jiménez: B.Sc. Biology. M. Sc and Ph. D. in Marine Ecology. His vast experience includes positions at Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica (Research Fellow, School of Biological Sciences, Member of the Committee on Academic Career, Program Coordinator for Ecology and Management of Mangrove Forests and Member of University Council) and at Universidad de Costa Rica (Ad-honorem Professor in the Graduate Study System, Research Associate at the Center for Marine Research). Specialist in the field of swamp forests and wild land protection in the Tropical Agricultural Research and Education (CATIE). Trainer in the Tropical Management Training Course at Instituto de Dasonomía Tropical in Puerto Rico. Trainer in post graduate courses at Organization for Tropical Studies (OET), and member of OET’s Assembly and Board of Directors Meeting of Scientific Center for Tropical Studies.


International Lecturer (United States, Latina America the Caribbean, Australia and Europe)

Publications: dozens of scientific reports, books, book chapters and numerous technical reports

How did you first hear about Changemakers?

Through another organization or company

If through another, please provide the name of the organization or company

Armando Chamorro, BID (Oficina de Representación en Nicaragua)

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MIF Opportunity 2010

Has your organization been legally constituted or registered in your country or one of your target countries for at least three years?

Yes
Does the applicant organization have sufficient financial resources to guarantee the co-financing required by MIF during the execution period of the project? (This amounts to at least 50% of the project’s total budget with 25% in cash and 25% in-kind.)

Yes

Does the applicant organization have experience managing projects co-financed by international organizations? Please describe below

MarViva Foundation has a broad experience in the design and execution of projects in partnerships with for example Conservación Internacional (“Strengthening and consolidation of sustainable production alternatives in the communities of Bahía Ballena within the Osa conservation area and Palito Isla de Chira in the Tempisque conservation area”), CRUSA (“Development of Sustainable Production Alternatives to contribute with the consolidation of the Protected Marine Areas within the OSA conservation area”), UNESCO (“Marine Conservation in Baulas, Isla del Coco y Coiba”), TNC (“Feasibility study on marine conservation agreements in Costa Rica and Panama”, “Consolidation of Osa’s marine areas to safeguard its protected areas”), PNUD (“Conservatories for the validation of the environmental year.”), and during the present year he started with the execution of:

- IDB-MIF (“Development of Sustainable Economic alternatives and strategies aimed at conservation in the Marine Protection areas of Gulf of Chiriqui ATN/ME-12186-PN). General aim: to promote an integrated planning and Management of marine and coastal ecosystems of multiple use Marine Areas in the Gulf of Nicoya in order to preserve important biological diversity, to maintain the supply of vital ecosystem services and be the foundation to the sustainable socio economic development through tourism, traditional fishing and other activities which generate revenues at local level. Specific aim: to strengthen the communities’ governance structures, to promote sustainable practices from the private sector and to upgrade information for decision making.

Please classify the applicant organization according to the options below

Training and Academic Institution

What problem-area does your project address?

Access to knowledge and training, Access to markets.

How will your project address this problem?

By promoting the setting up of participative decision making processes that: i guarantee the involvement of coastal communities in the definition of planning strategies of human activities that affect coastal and marine tourism, and ii-promote the development of sustainable geo tourism activities in the long term. Likewise, the intention is to promote the insertion of community groups in the tourism market by means of strengthening the incipient communitarian tourism activities.

Who is benefited by the initiative? (Please highlight the type and number of beneficiaries, and their role in the tourism value-chain.)

- Coastal communities that will be benefited by the strengthening of value chains and access to tourism markets processes, as well as by establishing consensus processes where they are able to promote the long term sustainability of marine and coastal resources that are the basis of their income, lifestyles and traditional culture.
- Local Governments: public institutions will be provided with a reliable tool for consensus, planning and implementation of agreements that promote a tourism development in line with the conservation of natural and cultural wealth of the communities and their socioeconomic development.
- Investors: public and private institutions that will be provided with polices and socially accepted regulations that guarantee investment stability.
- Tourists: national and foreign visitors who will get to know the beautiful landscape, biodiversity wealth and cultural traditions of coastal communities while learning to value and protect those resources that generate that geo tourism experience.
- Consumers: buyers and consumers who will enjoy tourist activities and related products that have been generated from a responsible and environmentally aware approach.
- General society: national and International communities who will take advantage of the regeneration and conservation of marine species and ecosystems rendering economic or environmental services.

How will the project’s results assist the region’s tourism sector and micro, small and medium-sized enterprises?

Communitarian tourism activities will be reinforced by strengthening existing value chains. Micro companies will be provided with training, technical advisory and support in all development aspects of their tourism proposal, thus ensuring the differentiation of the product and the generation of value and quality criteria, as well as chain’s competitiveness development. Politically supported processes will be established through which coastal communities, state agencies and tourism companies discuss and reach agreements on the development of tourism activities in the are such as the implementation of planning and good management practices, the delimiting of traditional and sport fishing areas, diving or aquatic sport areas, tours and watching areas, shipping routes, spaces for the construction of fleets, hotels or commercial premises. These processes will have geo-referenced information and technical support to promote tourism development’ economic and environmental sustainability as well as communitarian participation. These will allow maintaining marine and coastal resources, the scenic beauty of the destinations and the communities’ lifestyle, economic and cultural traditions, consolidating the qualification of the geo tourism destinations and their attractiveness for national and international visitors.

A. Total Budget (100%)

US$800.000

B. MIF Contribution (up to 50% of total budget and US$. 500.000 max)

US$400.000

C. Cash co-financing (at least 25% of total budget)

US$200.000

D. In kind co-financing (at least 25% of total budget)

US$200.000

Source URL: https://www.changemakers.org/coasts/entries/marine-spatial-planning-to-support-sustainable#comment-0