

THE AMAZON PROJECT

WORLD DIGNITY UNIVERSITY INITIATIVE:
CO-CREATING SUSTAINABILITY IN THE AMAZON
RAIN FOREST WITH THE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY
OF RIO BLANCO

MARIANA VERGARA
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INTRODUCTION

This initiative aims to build upon and strengthen the members of the Kichwa community to be leaders of sustainable forest management in their region, inspiring others to follow in their footsteps.

**THIS INITIATIVE IS DESIGNED IN
THREE STAGES:**

- 1) Survey of the land, giving the Kichwua community the legal rights to own their lands
- 2) Eco-tourism and Natural Medicine initiative; giving the Kichwua community a livelihood
- 3) World Dignity University to establish a branch at the Kichwua communities.

WHAT

We are reaching out to you as part our *action reflection collaborative inquiry* to guide us from your perspective about how it would be possible to develop this initiative.

WHY

Currently indigenous communities in the rain forest are experiencing the forces of globalization by the intrusion of illegal mining, and logging companies in their territories. Corporations illegally go into the Amazon rain forest and take its resources; and the livelihood of these indigenous communities is destroyed.

WHO

Under the leadership of Principal Researcher Mariana Vergara, scholars students and practitioners from around the world to support indigenous community in a pilot to co-create a sustainable intervention to protect the Amazon rain forest.

HOW

Through *action reflection collaborative inquiry*, which it is a phenomenological research approach. In order to deal with the mental demands of modern life, adults thinking needs to continue to evolve through higher level of consciousness. All of us (indigenous, scholars, students, practitioners, etc.) to co-create a sustainable mechanism to protect the environment.

PHENOMENOLOGICAL RESEARCH APPROACH



WHERE

In the Ecuadorian rain forest, we will begin with a pilot with Indigenous communities. Students will be exposed to diversity in an academic and real life experience while doing research.

WHEN WE INSPIRE OTHERS

In July 2009 this intervention began at an emergency community meeting due to the intrusion of a mining company in Rio Blanco. At this meeting, we applied *action reflection collaboration inquiry* with the Kichwa community of Rio Blanco; as a result by July 2010 this indigenous community has built a road to provide access to Rio Blanco and develop an eco-tourism initiative.





The 472 people of Rio Blanco (45 extended families) trust the intentions of this social venture. Initial consultations were done very carefully in such a way so as not to build unrealistic expectations. The next steps proposed in this initiative will enable the community to translate intention into sustainable actions. (Construction photos of an access road to Rio Blanco, 2009-2010).

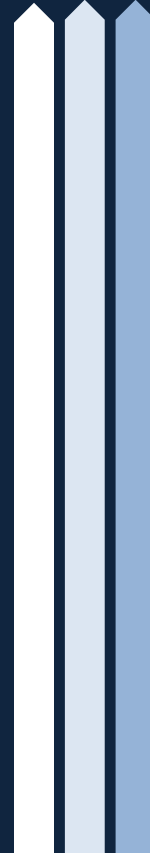
By choosing not to bankrupt their natural resource capital through short-sighted exploitation, the indigenous community of Rio Blanco can serve as a model for other communities surrounding the Amazon Rainforest in Ecuador and beyond

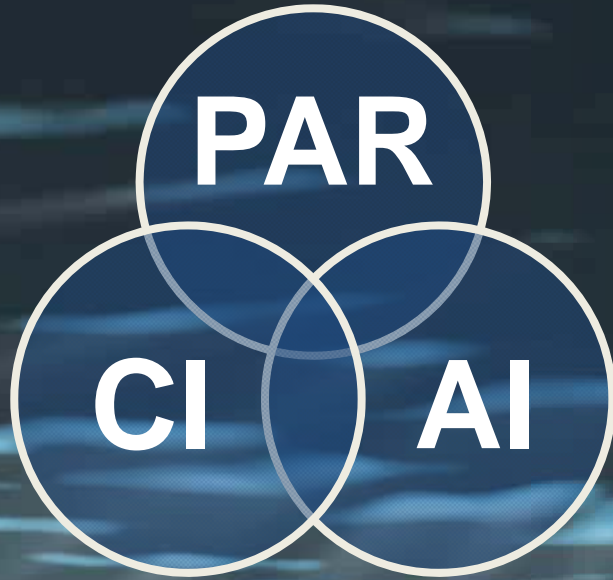
THEIR NEXT STEPS WERE ARTICULATED AS FOLLOWS:

- (a) become a non-profit entity
- (b) collect information about the mining and logging companies in their area
- (c) create a communication system to share news about rainforest encroachment
- (d) create a procedure to make complaints to the government
- (e) request the government to assist in the construction of an access road to Rio Blanco, and
- (f) craft a proposal (in English) to seek funding to realize their goals.

WE PRODUCED EXCEPTIONAL RESULTS

- (1) the community has become a non-profit entity;
- (1) they have successfully expelled four mining companies using non-violent methods;
- (1) they have begun to protect their way of life by creating jobs through eco-tourism;
- (1) the completion of a road for eco-tourist visitors,
- (2) achieving a state of readiness to receive visitors; and
- (1) currently, we submitted a proposal to compete at the Global Catalyst Initiative.





SAVE OUR EARTH'S PRECIOUS RESOURCES IN THE AMAZON

- PAR Participatory Action Research
- CI Collaborative Inquiry
- AI Action Inquiry

**WE ARE DEDICATED TO MAINTAINING A NATURAL,
SAFE AND CLEAN ENVIRONMENT...**



so that our children can enjoy the same resources
and beauty that we have for generations.