

Defining Strategies to Incorporate Women into the guayusa (*Ilex guayusa*) value chain

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Guayusa (*Ilex guayusa*) is an endemic tree from the Ecuadorian, Colombian and Peruvian Amazon. Even though it has a restricted distribution, many indigenous groups in this area have cultivated. Through the combination of indigenous knowledge, scientific research progress and technologies, Runa Foundation in collaboration with the Kichwa from Ecuador, have expanded the production of guayusa towards a final tea product that is marketed internationally. Consequently, this research will contribute (1) create job opportunities for indigenous women and empower them, (2) increase the production of guayusa for local and international markets, and (3) diversify an agroforestry system, strengthening them with native species, such as guayusa. This will strongly contribute to the sustainable development of the livelihoods, of the indigenous communities, and of the forest (through its management and use).

This research will be based in the northern Peruvian Amazon (Lamas, San Mart n). Where I will develop a gender assessment for the incorporation of indigenous Kichwa Lamista women into the creation of Guayusa Value Chain (GVC), as a sustainable alternative to prevent forest loss and empower women. I will begin this project by analyzing the situation in Tena, Ecuador, where women already work with guayusa within an agroforestry system and farmer's associations. My main task will be to identify the best practices to adopt for Peru. Once in Peru, my main objective will be to define strategies to incorporate 250 women in participating in the future guayusa value chain. I will start by doing ethnographic observations and semi-structured individual interviews, where I will be able to engage with women, for further collective participation.

This initial contact will allow me to do participatory observation for the current indirect participation that women perform in the cacao and coffee cooperatives. During this phase, I will collect qualitative information that will help me understand women's perspectives on the introduction of guayusa. As a second phase in Peru, I will arrange 3 workshops, which I will use to enrich my information and define the strategies to be proposed, as well as to keep women acquainted with the research I will be then progressing.