

Sustainable Development Education for Indigenous Communities in High States of Vulnerability in Colombia

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The current is the abstract of a project being implemented by the foundation that we believe may be replicable and a good example of education on sustainable development for indigenous vulnerable communities but that also improves their life, health, income and quality of life.

This is a project to guarantee food safety and sustainable development for indigenous families -in high states of vulnerability (poverty and malnutrition)- in La Guajira, Colombia where they are trained in cultivation, production and commercialization of the Nopal Cactus. The Nopal is highly nutritious and mitigates climate change effects on dessert soils.

This projects has been to train wayuu indigenous families from “Resguardo Indígena Provincial” at Barrancas, La Guajira in Colombia, in all related matter of cultivation, production, use , commercialization and marketing of the Nopal cactus. Experts from Guayaacanal Organization are involved in teaching with a practical approach (teaching while doing) the most advanced techniques to produce Nopal and a variety of derived products from nopal with the main objective being to leave installed capacities, abilities and tools within the Wayuu communities in order to finally break the poverty cycle. This would guarantee food safety, not only by consuming the nopal as part of their regular diets but also by selling the different products derived from nopal (jam, natural medicines, among others).

Also, the nopal can be safely consumed by the community cattle. Ensuring their regular livelihood by guaranteeing productivity.

Furthermore, cultivating nopal in these lands would help improve the fertility of dessert soils. It grows easily in these conditions, therefore, few inconveniences are met for the crops. A fact that has been proven scientifically everywhere the cactus grows. Therefore, it would help mitigate climate change effects in the area, improving the quality of life of these indigenous families. The intervention lasts 3 years in order to guarantee its sustainability. It will be executed in 3 phases: 1-Orchards Plan (Cultivation and Production). 2-Associativity (Small Business, Entrepreneurships). 3-Marketing.

It is scientifically proven in Mexico and in some parts of Colombia that the nopal cactus affects positively the soil where it is cultivated. Besides providing for a source of food and income for the indigenous communities, the nopal cactus improves the fertility of the soils, reducing significantly the erosion of the dessert lands in la Guajira where our participants (wayuus indigenous families) live.

Reducing the erosion mitigate the long droughts that these communities go through every year, making it possible to cultivate with very small amounts of water. Not only the participants have a

source of food for them and their cattle that is highly nutritious (high source of energy, carbs, calcium, vitamin C). But the nopal is very versatile and many products (including natural medicine, jams, varied salads, sweets) can be easily made from it. Therefore, it presents an opportunity for entrepreneurship for the indigenous communities to start small business where they could sell these products to other indigenous communities and local colombians.

This guarantees the preservation of a community in high state of vulnerability that is in danger of disappearing more and more every year. And the organization with this initiative is ensuring their food safety, income and development by the use of a cactus that grows naturally in their lands and is part of their culture but has been undestimated by them.