



Darwin Initiative, Darwin Plus and Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund Covid-19 Rapid Response Round - Final Report

Due within two months of the end date of the Rapid Response Round project

(maximum 6 pages)

Project reference	CV19RR15
If linked with an ongoing project, please include that project reference here (e.g. IWT001)	24-011 Wildlife-friendly agroforestry and sustainable forest management in Bolivian indigenous territories
Project title	Strengthening tourism to combat COVID-related threats to Bolivia's indigenous territories
Country/ies	Bolivia
Lead organisation	Wildlife Conservation Society
Partner institution(s)	Rurrenabaque Madidi Pampas Tourism Council (CTDS). Tacana People's Indigenous Council (CIPTA) T'simane Mosekene Regional Council (CRTM)
Start/end date of project	01/01/21 – 31/03/21
Which fund was this project relevant to?	Darwin Initiative
Grant value (£)	£54,797.00
Project Leader name	Oscar Loayza
Report author(s) and date	Oscar Loayza & Lilian Painter 31/05/2021

Project Summary

Madidi, Pilón Lajas, Pampas del Yacuma, Rhukanrhuka, Tequeje-Tudaray, El Tigre-Alto Madidi and Bajo Madidi national and municipal protected areas and T'simane - Mosekene, Uchupiamona, Tacana and Esse Eja indigenous territories and communities face increased threats as a result of COVID-19, which has led to a reduction in local employment linked to tourism, and reduced demand for local products. With this project, we updated the Strategic Plan for Tourism for the Destination to include an analysis of post-COVID tourism trends, developed local capacity to apply biosecurity protocols, designed new tourist circuits and promoted national tourism.

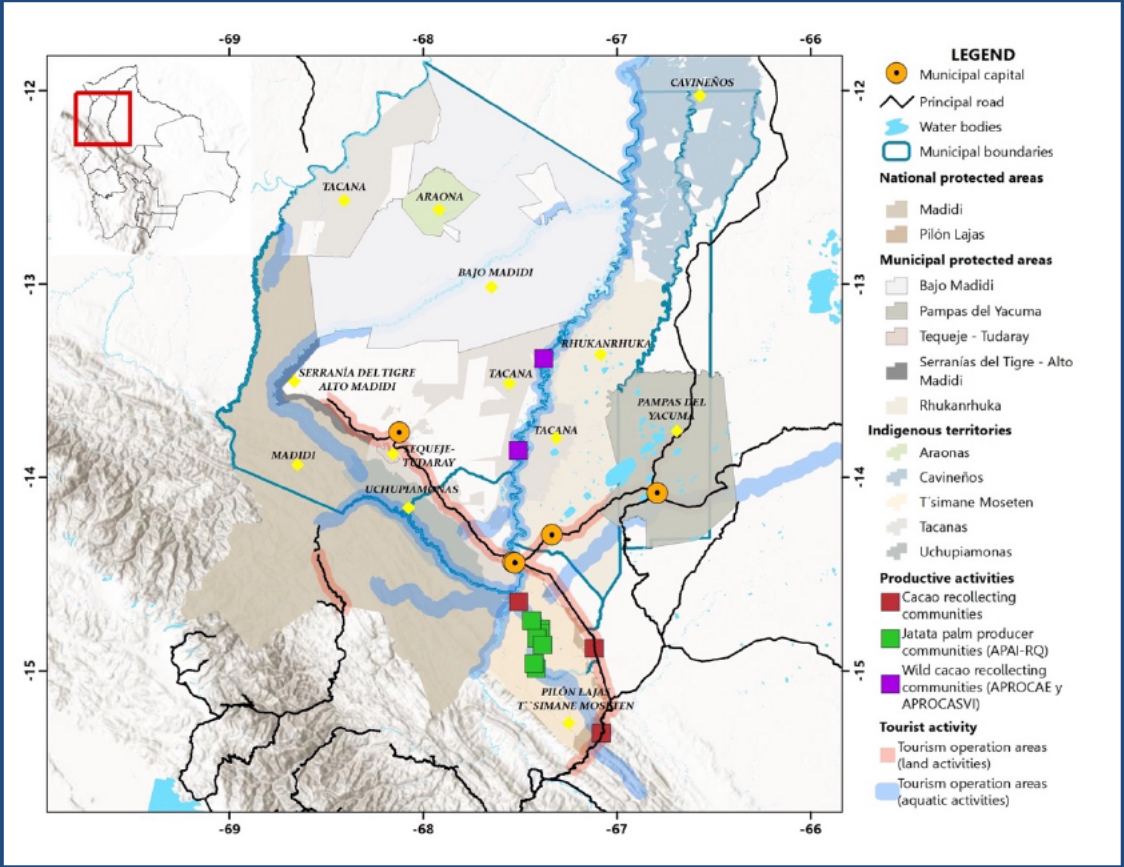
Biodiversity and local livelihoods in the Rurrenabaque are threatened by forest loss due to illegal agricultural clearing and settlements, timber extraction, and gold mining. This degradation negatively impacts community livelihoods, which depend on forest resources and are therefore particularly vulnerable to climate change. These threats have increased as a result of the COVID-19 global pandemic and its impact on employment and markets linked to tourism, reducing opportunity for alternative income and leading some local people to accept the presence of illegal extractive activities, like gold mining, on their land. The increased pressure from illegal mining has been denounced reiteratively by the indigenous territorial organizations.

Tourism in the Rurrenabaque region, the third most important tourism destination in Bolivia, came to a standstill between March and October 2020, representing a loss of ██████████ to the region and affecting more than 800 direct jobs as well as all local producers of coffee, cacao, dairy, fish, meat, vegetables and fruit. Local demand for coffee and cacao in particular has suffered a decrement of 70%. The jatata palm managers (50% women) and essential oil and soap producers (100% women) in Pilon Lajas had no sales between March and August. The livelihoods of women have been particularly affected as many of these activities are women-led.

With Darwin funds, WCS supports indigenous efforts to develop sustainable agroforestry initiatives. We complemented these interventions by working with the Council of the Madidi-Rurrenabaque-Pampas Sustainable Tourism Destination (CTSD) to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on tourism and thus reduce local participation in illegal resource extraction. This project was relevant to the current project, 'Wildlife-friendly agroforestry and sustainable forest management in Bolivian indigenous territories (24-011)', and its outcome: Sustainable cacao and shade coffee production by indigenous communities in Bolivia results in increased protection of collective lands, strengthened livelihoods, reduced forest loss and increased avian biodiversity in agroforestry areas.

WCS provided technical support to the CTSD to respond to the challenges of COVID-19 by reviewing the tourism strategic plan, establishing new tourism products, marketing the destination to the national market and improving capacity for implementing biosafety protocols. The CTSD is the inter-institutional coordination platform representing local governments (5 municipal local governments), national protected areas (2 protected areas of national importance), community (3 indigenous territorial organizations) and private stakeholders (ecotourism service providers), with the support and monitoring of the national service of protected areas (SERNAP), the vice ministry of tourism (VT) and the autonomous departmental government of Beni (GAD Beni) and the technical support of WCS.

The location and the area of intervention of the project can be seen in the following map.



1. Project Achievements

The aim of the project is to mitigate the impact on forests and rivers within indigenous lands threatened by increased illegal activities linked to reduced employment and income resulting from COVID-19 by supporting the recovery of Eco-tourism in the Rurrenabaque region.

The main activities carried out and their level of compliance are:

1. Update of the Strategic Plan for Tourism for the Rurrenabaque-Madidi-Pampas Destination including an analysis of post-COVID tendencies of world tourism and national trends.

With the support of the same team that led the formulation of the Strategic Tourism Plan (PET) for the Rurrenabaque Madidi-Pampas Destination (2018 - 2027) and in permanent coordination with the Sustainable Tourism Council of the Destination (CTSD), a document was prepared that adjusts the PET considering national and international trends due to the impact of COVID-19 and also due to the political and social conflicts that took place in the country in the last months of 2019. This document includes a diagnosis of the situation of the tourism supply in the Destination since the preparation of the PET (2018), the progress made to improve its competitiveness before the start of the health restrictions due to the pandemic (March 2020), what happened in supply and demand during the months of COVID-19 in its various waves and its potential impacts on sustainability. It then assesses post-COVID-19 tourism trends according to various studies and analysis, and finally proposes actions for each main area of sustainability (economic, socio-cultural, environmental and health) to overcome the current crisis and face a still uncertain future in better conditions. This document is available as ANNEX 1 in the following link:



2. Establishment of a new tourist circuit in the habitat of the endemic titi monkeys.

With the leadership of an expert in nature, community and ecological tourism and a biologist with years of work in the study of the endemic lucachi monkeys (titi) in the region and the support of the entire project team, the members of the CTSD and, especially, the participation of the communities involved (Aguaysal and Montecarlos), a proposal has been developed for the establishment of a new tourism circuit, centred on the observation of these endemic monkeys. This proposal, included in ANNEX 2, is made up of the following: Annex 2.1. A basic diagnosis for the design of a new tourism product associated with the observation of *Plecturocebus modestus* and *Plecturocebus olallae*; Annex 2.2. A proposal for a new tourism product associated with *Plecturocebus modestus* and *Plecturocebus olallae*; Annex 2.3. A protocol and/or manual of good practices for the implementation of the proposed tourism product; Annex 2.4. A training programme for the development and implementation of the proposed tourism product; Annex 2.5. A report on the socialisation of the tourism product and Annex 2.6. the presentation made for the socialisation of the proposal. All these documents can be found in the following link:



3. Training of tourism operators and indigenous communities linked to tourism operations, for the application of biosecurity protocols against COVID-19.

With the support of a senior expert in occupational health and safety and biosafety, a training process was developed for tour operators and indigenous communities linked to tourism operations for the implementation of biosafety protocols linked mainly to COVID-19. This training process, which can be found in ANNEX 3, has the following stages and products: Annex 3.1. Elaboration and agreement of a Work Plan with the CTSD and the stakeholders involved in tourism activities; Annex 3.2. Survey and compendium of existing biosafety standards and protocols for tourism service providers at national, departmental, municipal, international and even private initiatives levels, and consolidation of this information in a folder contained in Annex 3.3; Annex 3.4. Design of a training plan and programme for tourism service providers and *Covid-19 Rapid Response Round Final Report Template 2021*

indigenous communities linked to tourism operations, for the implementation of biosecurity protocols within the framework of the standards, protocols and procedures established by current regulations and international parameters; Annex 3.5.7 training events, directed at young leaders, workers and guides, hotel and restaurant operators, park rangers, motorcyclists and boatmen, and two events in indigenous communities; Annex 3.6. Establishment of agreements with tour operators and indigenous communities, to ensure continuity in the implementation of the biosecurity protocols established in the training events and using the biosecurity support material provided to them.

These annexes can be found at the following link:



4. Promoting the certification of the tourist operators in the Rurrenabaque Madidi - Pampas Tourism Destination based on the Biosphere sustainable tourism standards

With the support of a specialist in tourism and certification within the framework of the Biosphere protocols, a training process was developed directed at tourism operators to promote their interest in accessing, within the framework of the current Certification for the whole Destination, the specific certification of their tourism initiatives or enterprises. This training process, which can be found in ANNEX 4, consisted of the following stages and products: Annex 4.1. Development and agreement of a Work Plan with the CTSD; Annex 4.2. Final report of the capacity building process for certification; Annex 4.3. Support documents including: Design of a training plan and programme for tourism service providers in the Destination, for access to certification in the framework of the standards, protocols and procedures established by Biosphere; Memories of the implementation of training events (directed at operators, hoteliers, guides, protected area staff and local youth); Establishment of agreements with tour operators to access the Biosphere certification process; Establishment of a Work Plan with the CTSD for the renewal of the Destination Certification and; Minutes of Approval of the Work Plan by the CTSD; and Annex 4.4. Certification training support booklet.

The above-mentioned annexes can be found at the following link:



5. Development and implementation of a marketing and communication strategy and development of communicational products to promote tourism to the Rurrenabaque Madidi Pampas Tourism Destination, with emphasis in the national market.

With the support of a specialist in strategic communication and an expert in communication products, a communication and marketing strategy was developed and implemented and, based on this, communication materials were designed and disseminated aimed at promoting the recovery of tourism in the Rurrenabaque Madidi-Pampas Destination, with an emphasis on the national market. This process followed the following stages and achieved the following products, included in ANNEX 5: Annex 5.1. Design of a Communication Diagnosis as a fundamental element for the development of a communication strategy that contributes to the positioning of the Rurrenabaque: Madidi-Pampas Tourist Destination as a certified destination with biosafety measures, as a tourist alternative for the national market and with projection for a repositioning in the international market, and of an Action Plan for the design of the strategy; Annex 5.2. Communication and marketing strategy for the promotion of the destination in the national and international market with the objective of: optimising the management of all digital marketing channels that contribute to the positioning of the Rurrenabaque Madidi - Pampas destination as a tourism alternative for the national market with a projection for a repositioning in the international market; Annex 5.3. Contents for communication materials prioritised in the strategy.

Within the framework of the strategy and the proposed contents for the development of communication materials, the following have been produced and disseminated through digital media: Annex 5.4. Promotional video produced with the support of the production company *Covid-19 Rapid Response Round Final Report Template 2021*

Bolivia Extrema for dissemination through various virtual media; Annex 5.5. Banner and photo carousel with messages aimed at showing the natural and cultural diversity and existing attractions in the destination.

Finally, an agreement was reached with the "One Great Nation" Programme (UGN), which aims to promote Bolivian pride by reactivating domestic tourism in the country, which is why they carry out various campaigns in which "influencers" from the One Great Nation community travel around the country to capture the best that Bolivia has to offer. These influencers are film-makers, communicators and creators of relevant content for Bolivian and international society. Within this framework, the UGN team has managed to generate a very important base of photographic material, drone footage, edited videos and stories that have been disseminated by the media and accounts of One Great Nation and the Influencers themselves who have travelled the destination, as well as by the media available to the CTSD and WCS, Annex 5.6. includes the main dissemination materials generated by this alliance with UNG.

The above-mentioned annexes can be found at the following link:



All the activities and objectives foreseen in the project have been fulfilled and, additionally, some unforeseen results have been achieved, for example:

- In the establishment of a new tourist route linked to the observation of the endemic lucachi or titi monkeys, not only has the new tourist product been designed, as foreseen in the project, but also a protocol and/or manual of good practices has been developed for the implementation of the proposed tourist product and to guarantee a sustainable operation, as well as the conservation of the species. A training programme has also been designed, aimed at all those involved in the proposed tourism product, to guarantee its adequate development and implementation (see Annexes 2. 3 y 2.4).
- With regard to the training processes for the implementation of biosecurity protocols and for the promotion of Biosphere Certification, the project had planned to hold 3 training events, however, 7 events were held for different stakeholders. These events were aimed at young leaders (7 participants), workers and guides from operators (11 participants), hotel and restaurant operators (24 participants), park rangers (16 participants), motorcyclists and boatmen (11 participants) and indigenous communities (30 participants). Thus, the total number of participants trained was 99 participants, almost double the number expected by the project. Of these 99 participants, 44 were women (44.4%) and 55 were men (55.6%) (see Annexes 3.5 and 4.3).
- With regard to the development of communication materials, not only a video, a banner and a carousel of photos have been generated for dissemination through various virtual media, but an alliance has been established with the initiative "One Great Nation" with whom a group of 3 "influencers" and a communicator have taken a tour of the Destination (to Madidi and Pampas del Yacuma) and generated 89 stories on Instagram (33 from the UGN account and 56 from the influencers' accounts) with an average reach for each story of 2100 people with a maximum of 3500 people, and the video in Reel format was uploaded to the Instagram feed, which reached approximately 14,000 people by the end of the project. Similarly, the same 89 stories were managed on Facebook (33 from the UGN account and 56 from the personal accounts of the influencers) and the same video was published, which, with an investment, had a reach of approximately 11,000 people, reaching a population of 25,000 people on both social networks by the end of the project (See Annex 5.6).

Among the problems encountered were the difficulties of travel for the team due to sanitary restrictions; however, it was possible to complete the face-to-face training events on biosecurity protocols and certification, as well as the field visit to gather information for the design of the new tourist route linked to endemic monkeys. As a biosecurity measure, tests for COVID-19 were carried out before and after the trips, workshops were not held with the communities, and contact was only made with the representatives designated by the community to accompany the team, preferring to hold more training events, but with less participation.

In terms of compliance with the proposed indicators, the following can be indicated:

- *Reduction of reports of illegal activities over 600,000 hectares of protected areas and indigenous lands dedicated to tourism operations.* The measurement of this indicator will be possible within the framework of the monitoring programme reports of the protected areas and indigenous lands carried out every six months, the next report is due in July (evaluating the period January - June) and the following one will be generated in January (evaluating the period July - December).
- *New tourism circuit design over 440 ha of the 130,000 hectares of endemic titi monkey habitat.* As explained above this indicator was fulfilled (see Annex 2).
- *An updated Strategic Plan for Tourism for the Rurrenabaque- Madidi- Pampas Destination.* As explained above this indicator was fulfilled (see Annex 1).
- *Agreements between municipal authorities, communities, private land owners and tourism operators for a new tourism circuit in the area of distribution of the endemic titi monkeys.* As explained above this indicator was fulfilled. Annexes 2.1, 2.2 and 2.5.
- *At least 11 indigenous communities of the Tacana (4), Leco (1), T'simane-Mosetenes (5) and Uchupiamona (1) that are linked to areas of tourism operations have preventive tools to protect them from possible contamination by COVID-19.* Due to travel restrictions and also to protect the most isolated indigenous communities, only two Tacana communities involved in tourism activities (San Miguel and Villa Alcira) were visited; however participants in the workshops to establish biosafety protocols also included Tumupasa, for a total of 3 Tacana communities. San Jose de Uchupiamonas and two T'simane Mosetene communities (Real Beni and Asuncion del Quiquibey) also participated. The CTSD has the capacities, tools, materials and support inputs provided by the project to continue the biosafety and certification training activities for the communities who were unable to participate in the events implemented during the project duration. This can be verified in Annexes 3.4. and 3.5.
- *At least 50 enterprises (including operators, hostels, hotels, restaurants, transporters and others) are able to apply biosecurity protocols against COVID-19, benefiting at least 500 people directly linked to tourism activity.* A total of 46 enterprises (including operators, hostels, hotels, restaurants, transport operators and others) participated in the training events and are able to apply biosecurity protocols. This can be verified in Annex 3.5.

2. Lessons learnt

Since the formulation of the Project we knew that it was a great challenge, due to the quantity and diversity of products to be generated and the short time to do it, in this framework, the success in the fulfilment of everything planned has been based mainly on three key elements:

- 1) The dialogue with the Sustainable Tourism Destination Council (CTSD), which has become a very legitimate and representative body in the region, and whose convening capacity, credibility and dynamics have allowed for the adequate implementation of all activities and the fulfilment of the products committed to.
- 2) The selection of a high-level technical team with extensive experience and knowledge of their areas of expertise and even of the working region, which has facilitated the generation of products with greater agility and ease.
- 3) The long-term presence of WCS in the area, which has allowed the construction of solid alliances with local actors, and which facilitates the implementation of innovative actions such as those proposed in the project more quickly and easily, thanks to the relationship of trust and partnership that has been established with most of the actors linked to the landscape and the tourist destination.

We believe that the project, in addition to providing all the tools and products that have been committed to, has also helped to lift the spirits of tourism operators, many of whom had practically abandoned their initiatives due to the crisis that has hit the sector, and to motivate them to resume their activities, The CTSD has continued to lead the communication strategy after the conclusion of the project, which has once again placed the destination in a position of relevance. The activities completed empowered the CTSD to develop the skills and tools to continue with efforts to reactivate ecotourism operations in the region to reduce threats over indigenous lands. These

Covid-19 Rapid Response Round Final Report Template 2021

efforts consist of leading an inter-institutional alliance to implement the Tourism Strategic Plan for the Destination, and as such mainstream project activities into “business as usual”. In this regard, the CTDS will continue implementation of the marketing strategy, supervise implementation of biosecurity protocols by tourism operations and continued promoting the certification for the tourist operations in the Rurrenabaque Madidi Pampas destination.