

Almanac of the **Future**

A STORY OF SUCCESS

Motivational Experience Nr. 33



ABC's: Classroom forest coexistence

ABC's: Classroom forest coexistence

Bosque Escuela Pambiliño (Pambiliño Forest School), project of life of a family in the tropical forest of the Ecuadorian Chocó. A symbiosis between restoration and sustainability of the forest and an alternative education to development.



Path to a life project

Almost ten years ago, Oliver Torres, with his mother and brother, decided to buy a farm in the Mashpi area, in the tropical forest of Ecuadorian Chocó. In that phase of his life, Oliver was pursuing a master's degree in Social Sciences in Quito. But for some time he felt the need to refocus his life. During this time Oliver participated in a course on permaculture of the Red Guardianes de Semilla (Network of Seed Guardians). The course and history of life made Oliver reach a turning point in his life; then he decided to leave the world of academia, of abstraction and of the city, to learn directly from the Chocoano forest. He moved to Mashpi, an area he had known from his defense of the territory in face of mega-mining. During the first two years, Oliver camped in a tent on the farm that did not have a house nor even at least a shed. He wanted to know and live with the forest and define what to do. Javier Carrera, of the Network of Seed Guardians, accompanied Oliver in moments of this time: "Remembering this time, I feel again the admiration before the decision of Oliver, accepting a total shortage of any comfort in his life in exchange for achieving his self-determination" Oliver, on his way to self-determination, became a seed keeper and today forms part of this collective. "Oliver is an important proponent of the guardians in the area, full of ideas and with the ability to shape them" complements Javier. Oliver remembers his first years on the farm: "The person without a partner, hardly manages to fully devote himself to his life project. With María Emilia we combine in this life project". Today they are a family with two children. The life project of Oliver and María Emilia was born in this period. María Emilia had studied environmental communication and, speaking of her life in the countryside, rescues a personal element: "I discovered, from my experience with nature, my femininity within me".



Pambiliño Forest School



Oliver and María Emilia opted to give a preferably educational sense to the farm, creating the Pambiliño Forest School. The farm of 27 hectares, when Oliver assumed it, had paddocks for livestock; today coffee, cocoa, cardamom and many other fruits are planted in a small part, in the other three quarters restoration and regeneration is carried out. “The Pambiliño School Forest is a learning space where, in connecting with nature, we remember the wisdom that we have inside. We work to transform people through education and contact with nature, in order to create the true sustainability of forests and water. We dream of creating a better world for everyone”, say Oliver and María Emilia on Facebook (www.facebook.com/pambilino.bosquescuela).

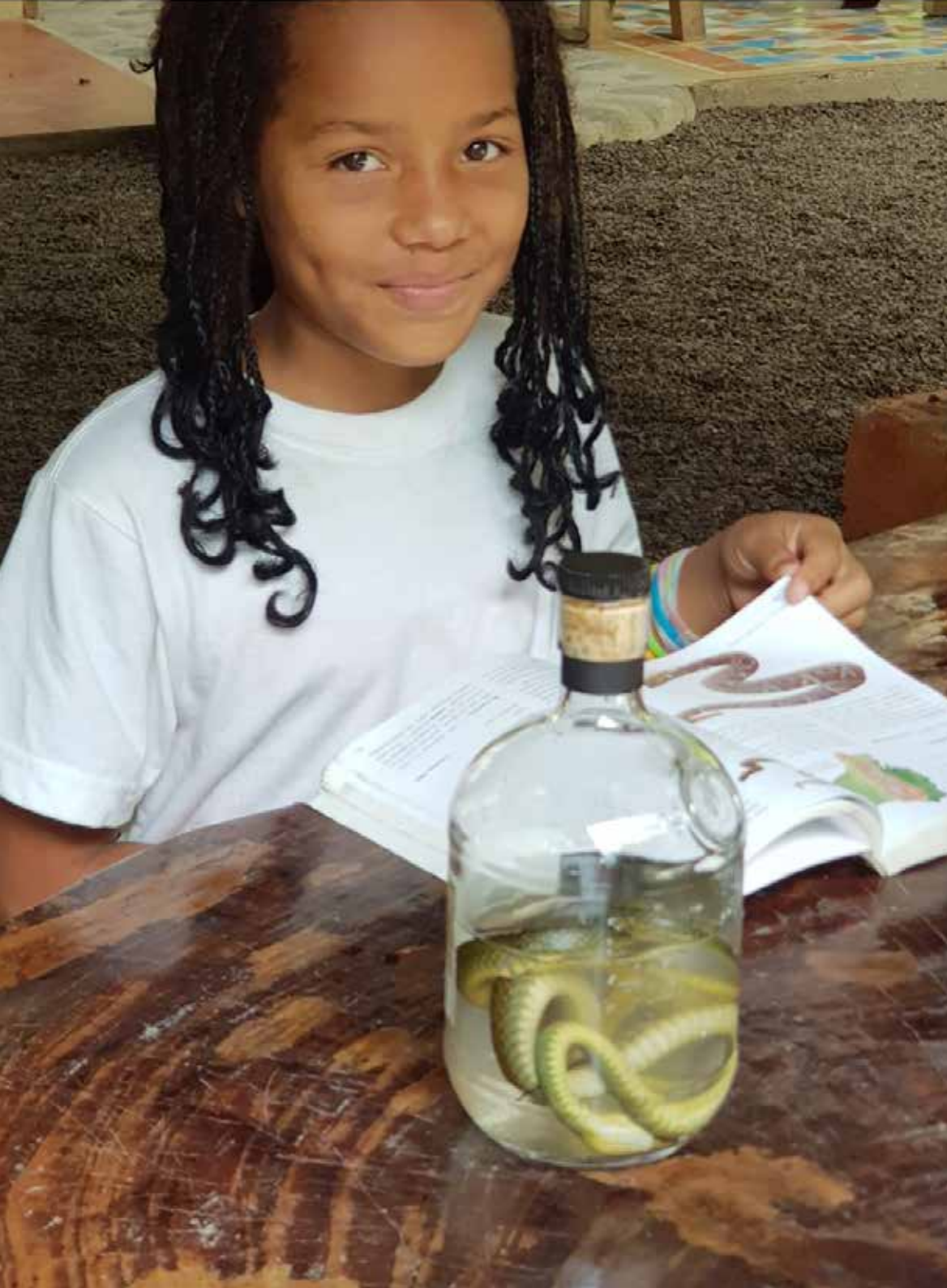
Pambiliño is part of the Forest Schools of the Andean Chocó Network (<http://www.bosques-modelo.net/bosques-escuela-mancomunidad-choco-andino>). Several families with farms in the Chocó area have formed this community to “influence education and benefit the local population and ensure ensuring socio-ecological sustainability ... as well as impact on education, nationally and internationally.” The farms, grouped in the commonwealth to the northwest of Quito in the Andean Chocó, have complementary approaches: education and coexistence, research, ecosystem restoration and regeneration, sustainable production, among others. Some of the families of the participating farms are relatives; in most cases they are people who decided to put an end to their city life by becoming neo-farmers. But there is no shortage of local farming families who joined the collective and others who went from forest ranchers to conservationists. Despite living in rural areas, not all families have their own land. From the different ventures of the farms of the Forest School Network, many of the people without land of their own have joined as collaborators. Oliver, referring to his neo-farmer being, explains: “We are bringing new instruments to the field, making them accessible to all at local level: IT, other languages, youth camps, art workshops and environmental education.” In order to achieve advocacy and local governance around conservation and research in the Andean Cho-

có bioregion, the Imaymana Foundation was established in 2006. Oliver along with other young people of the first generation of neo-farmers, have assumed the leadership of the foundation, which currently supports the BESCHOCO Network, socio-environmental governance and the conservation of the territory with the strengthening and support of its people to live with dignity, joy and peace.

In the threshold to formal education

María Emilia referring to the public school in Mashpi, in the village near the farm: “Formal education in rural schools is deficient. We have started working in 2014 with the local school, with its students, and teachers”. Oliver complements: “Pambiliño is at the threshold of formal education. The Ministry of Education is almost without resources but with a lot of openness to our proposal of environmental and holistic education. Without being recognized, it is very delicate to be able to work in formal education”. In the case of the Pambiliño Forest School, the dialogue has been a resounding success: currently fifteen pupils of the Mashpi public school spend a day each week in the school forest. There are trails to encounter the natural regeneration of the forest and the ecological restoration. Oliver and María Emilia, supported by voluntaries, nationals and foreigners, and other collaborators attend the forest school. “There’s a lot to change,” says Oliver. “The young people, studying technical high school in tourism, end up working in tourism agencies in Quito while there are no local tourist offers. We here can offer a training with content for these young people to be managers of sustainable farms, sustainable tourism, or innovative to solve the great challenges of the future”. Using Oliver’s words: the challenge is “to train the muscle of intuition to appreciate nature”.





Education in the forest as an alternative to development

With time and punctual support as well as prizes, won by the educational concept, based on the transformation of the being, generated from contact with nature, Pambiliño currently has environments to host and serve groups of visitors: school classes, university students, families and city groups from Quito, also tourists from abroad. Didactic materials, applied bio-construction and the food plan are coherent with what is sought: feed body, mind and soul to achieve a more complete understanding of the true sustainability of the forest, water and ecosystem. Pambiliño contributes its bit by influencing the curriculum of formal education from its inspiration of an alternative education to development. Terms such as environmental services or natural resources are sought in vain in the Pambiliño narrative. The educational and coexistence offer lead the person to a paradigmatic transition: from anthropocentrism to ecocentrism. The tangible testimony of the forest school is proof that there are alternative paths to development: a family and independent project where its inhabitants are the first students, conservation, restoration, regeneration of the forest and at the same time a forest school, giving back to nature and as part, from it, to people. The income generated by the attention to the visitors, in addition to the production and ecological use of fruits and forest products, covers the expenses.

Interested curiosity

The family initiatives of the Andean Choco farms around the restoration of the forest, the analogous forestry that provides elements to restore lost forests and increase biodiversity, as well as the protection of the Mashpi river basin have aroused curiosity and interest of a different nature. NGOs and national foundations have approached offering financial resources to strengthen the associativity in the area. Cases in other areas of the country where these cooperation's ended up in an instrumentalization of the protagonists have generated anxiety. Oliver has taken over the spokesman ship of the BESCHOCO Network farms and of the seed keepers in the area, evaluating the advantages and risks that these approaches can bring. With Javier Carrera, one of the persons in the coordination group of the guardians' network, Oliver probes possible negotiation and rescue strategies. The Network of Seed Guardians, which has recently been supported by Misereor, is in these cases a very useful umbrella for its recognition as well as its belligerence in the country's situation.

We are what we eat

The biodiversity in the tropical forest is huge and the Mashpi area is no exception. A seed guardian, neighbor of Oliver and Maria Emilia, has rescued throughout his life seeds of edible tropical fruits and plants: more than six hundred varieties. In the Pambiliño Forest School, a good part of the food is produced by the forest; that is why we speak of the edible forest. Foods are produced and processed: cocoa tea, guayusa tea (an aromatic plant), chontaduro flour (fruit of a variety of palm tree), borojó chocolate (Borojoa patinoi, an energetic fruit), chontaduro in syrup with cardamom and others. The visitors frequently eat fruits and products of the tropical forest that they did not know before, such as salak, fruit of the palm species belonging to the salacca genus. The dining kitchen has a design that allows everyone to participate in the preparation of the meal. All Pambiliño spaces have been designed to learn in the forest. The students of the school who spend classes here and prepare their food with forest products themselves become aware of the vital importance of biodiversity and of the restoration and regeneration of forest and ecosystem: there is also the idea of working with women, from the local community, nutrition and identification of the food of the area. For many people, city dwellers and locals, who have completely lost their connection with the origin and preparation of what they eat these are moments of catharsis and the definitive change of their routines: the slogan is to link with food.





Messages to the future:

The text was prepared, based on on-site conversations by Jorge Krekeler, facilitator commissioned by the AGEH and Misereor and agreed with the people visited. We thank Oliver Torres and María Emilia from Pambiliño Forest School and Javier Carrera from the Network of Seed Guardians.

Personal audacity that opens the way to self-determination, leading to the life project of the person.

In connection with nature we remember the wisdom that we have inside, managing to create the true sustainability of forests and water instead of ignoring it.

Educate from alternatives to development, giving rise to the issue of care and facilitating the transition towards behavior for the future.

Reassess the importance of food from contact with healthy, clean and fair food.

Almanac of the Future

Originaltitel: “ABCdario: Aula bosque convivencia”
Experiencia Motivadora N° 33 Almanaque del Futuro

Author: Jorge Krekeler, jorge.krekeler@posteo.de Misereor advisor / AGEH

Design: Nicole Maron

Photographs: Bosque Escuela Pambiliño and Jorge Krekeler

Translation: Olaf Niemtschik

Contact information regarding the documented experience:

Bosque Escuela Pambiliño – Oliver Torres: olivertorres45@hotmail.com

www.pambilino.org – www.bosquesescuela.com

Facebook: [pambilino.bosquesescuela](https://www.facebook.com/pambilino.bosquesescuela)

Edition: October 2019

With support of:

MISEREOR
● IHR HILFSWERK

www.almanaquedelfuturo.wordpress.com



CC-BY 4.0, other licenses may be applied to logos, individual images and texts (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.21.06.2018)