

Conservation of earth's land, water, plants and animals can only occur if we are aware of and respect the complex diversity in the world around us. Being exposed to the planet's amazing flora and fauna at a young age is crucial for us to understand and value them. The roles plants and animals play in the environment, as well as their purposes for human use, must be realized for proper conservation actions to be put into place. Ceiba recognizes the importance of educating children and inspiring them to love the wildlife around them. We want to make an impact on the youth in the communities where we work and educate them on the issues that are threatening the environments that they and their families depend on.

Marine ecosystems are constantly being threatened by climate change, coastal development and unsustainable harvesting practices. Sea turtles and other bycatch are regularly caught in fishing nets where they often drown or are killed by fisherman. Nesting habitat on beaches is being developed and turtle and shorebird eggs are often predated by humans or dogs. Shark finning is decimating wild populations of sharks, and fisherman are not respecting the fishing seasons that ban the exploitation of certain species at certain times of the year. All of these practices are threatening the marine environment and are putting many species in danger of extinction. Local fisherman need to respect the consequences of unsustainable harvesting practices, and understand that ultimately their actions are leaving no marine life for their children to catch, consume and sell as a source of income.

The Ceiba Foundation is launching a new campaign to educate children in Ecuador about marine conservation as well as other important environmental topics that are pertinent in the country. Funny Puppets is a company that creates and sells hand and full-body animal puppets. They offer an enormous variety of animals that you would encounter in Ecuador, and they are the perfect tool to capture children's undivided attention. We will use the puppets to put on a play and tell a compelling story involving all the issues that are currently in motion on the coast of Ecuador. We want to give charismatic, economically important animals of Ecuador a voice and a personality that we hope will ignite a level of respect and love from the children we work with. These children will soon be the prominent fisherman and landowners, the ones making the critical decisions that will ultimately decide Ecuador's future relationship with the natural world.

The Ceiba foundation is dedicated to providing public education and is currently providing environmental education and teacher training in rural communities on the coast of Ecuador. Funding will go towards the purchase of funny puppets as well as books and other supplies used for environmental education.

