



The Women of the Napo River initiative is a comprehensive conservation and women's empowerment project implemented across six Amazonian riverine communities in the Ecuadorian provinces of Napo, Orellana, and Sucumbíos. Executed by Rainforest Partnership, the project recognizes women as central actors in environmental stewardship, cultural preservation, household food security, and community leadership. Their ancestral knowledge and active participation are essential for conserving Amazonian ecosystems, strengthening community resilience, and ensuring sustainable local livelihoods.

Throughout 2025, the project focused primarily on strengthening women's leadership and advancing productive activities that support both family economies and biodiversity conservation. The most developed component during this period was fish farming with cachama (tambaqui), implemented through six community-managed ponds. Each pond produced an estimated 150–250 kilograms of fish annually, generating between \$300 and \$800 USD per cycle for the communities, depending on environmental conditions. Beyond income, the project improved food security by providing families with fresh protein and offering women additional fish for home consumption and individual sales. Technical training on pond management, commercialization, and record-keeping helped build organizational capacity, while the involvement of young women as technical assistants fostered intergenerational leadership and skills transfer.

The project's empowerment approach centers on strengthening women's economic autonomy, social participation, and cultural identity. Through training in leadership, financial management, commercialization, and sustainable production, women developed the confidence and capacity to manage community enterprises and assume decision-making roles. This empowerment is rooted in their ancestral role as knowledge keepers: guardians of medicinal plant traditions, sustainable agriculture, native bee management, and forest stewardship. Their cultural memory and ecological understanding not only enrich project activities but also reinforce community resilience and sustainable land management.

Beyond fish farming, the initiative integrates multiple complementary components that diversify livelihoods and reinforce cultural heritage. Women produce handicrafts that reflect Amazonian identity using traditional techniques, supporting cultural revitalization while generating income. Community-based tourism highlights Kichwa culture and Amazonian life, offering immersive experiences that value women's leadership and local knowledge. Agroforestry systems promote sustainable cultivation of cacao, guayusa, vanilla, coffee, and native fruits, enhancing soil health and long-term productivity. Meliponiculture—the care of native stingless bees—supports biodiversity conservation while enabling the production of medicinal honey and other natural products.

Looking ahead to 2026, the project seeks to expand and strengthen these components to ensure long-term sustainability. Planned activities include the installation of new meliponaries (for Amazon stingless beekeeping), agroforestry plot establishment, expansion of fish ponds, continued training, and deeper community-led monitoring. These advancements aim to increase household income, strengthen food security, elevate women's autonomy, and reinforce sustainable resource management across all participating communities.

To achieve these goals, additional funding is needed to cover infrastructure, supplies, technical training, and organizational development. Investment in the Women of the Napo River project represents a commitment to empowering women leaders, improving the well-being of Amazonian families, and conserving one of the planet's most biodiverse ecosystems. The initiative offers a path toward resilient communities, sustainable livelihoods, and long-lasting protection of the Amazon rainforest.













