

I've been in Ecuador two short months and things are going well. My initial contact has been with an organization called C-CONDEM (Coordinadora Nacional para la Defensa Del Ecosistema Manglar) which has helped with initial introductions into the community and information about mangroves and projects in each of the specific areas. The first month ended up being prolonged in Quito due to events at the C-CONDEM which I helped out with. They inaugurated the Centro Martin Pescador (Kingfisher Centre) which is a restaurant under the office building which brings in communities from the coast to cook and sell fresh seafood on Friday and Saturday. Actually, this weekend I came back to Quito to help out with "Manabí Week" which featured food and music from the province of Manabí (the province which I've been working in for the past month). I helped with serving and cooking the food and invited many of my friends from Quito which was a real treat. The food is so wonderful with fresh fish and shrimp, dishes with lots of peanut flavours. During my first month in Quito, I met with several government workers from the Ministry of the Environment to discuss protected areas and laws, to gain specific government contacts in the two communities and to learn more about work being done in each province. This delay has been a bit of a challenge since it delayed my entry into Portovelo and the time allotted to spend in each community. Co-workers at C-CONDEM wanted to accompany me to help integrate into the communities but their schedule changed frequently making it difficult to organize my time as efficiently as possible. That being said, I am getting used to "Ecuador time" and have been able to remain flexible and positive about these constant changes and delays (which no longer surprise me).

I just finished my field work in the first community of Portovelo, Manabí, Ecuador. What an amazing community! I conducted 11 interviews including four interviews regarding history of the area, and information specific to the mapping activities and final product. One of them was also with a group of seniors and involved a fruitful and lively discussion. I ended up doing three mapping activities with a woman's group, Fishermen Association, and Isla Corazon guides. The woman's group does a variety of projects in the community including making clothing, life jackets, etc. The fisherman's association has 37 members and have been working together for several decades and the Isla Corazon guides (11 in total) have been together for 10 years doing eco-tourism on Isla Corazon an uninhabited mangrove forest island. On these maps, they wrote about their knowledge and interesting areas where they have witnessed changes in the natural environment, culture and especially with reference to the El Niño phenomenon. The mapping activity ended up being very positive and exciting with lots of information-

sharing and story-telling. In the end, the maps that I had printed off initially were still too distant and at a larger scale than necessary which led to us creating and drawing new maps.

The Green mapping activity was done with the Woman's group over two afternoons because of the availability of the women. Many of them work 2 or three days a week when the shrimp farms drop off their tubs of shrimp to have the heads removed. This generally occurs on short notice meaning that within Portovelo, plans change in an instant when there is work as it is a main source of income. In the end, about 10 women participated. Snacks were offered and the maps were done thoroughly and with specific details. The women's group was more detailed than the others as they wanted to draw and name every house specifically, with specific colours and similar structures. Part of the activity also included discussion about the end product and another afternoon interview was done in order to discuss the information that they wished to include on the map. The main focus in this final interview was the culture in Portovelo, life of women in Portovelo and traditional and common food.

With the guides, we focused more on the natural environment, mangroves, changes to the natural environment (especially with reference to the El Niño phenomenon). The Isla Corazon is just down the road and off the coast of the community thus having an impact on the community in general. The guides are very well informed, many of them are also fishermen who have lived in the community for 30 years and have witnessed the many changes. They played a large part in discussing the end result and figuring out some options for the final map. They provided much of the information about the natural environment, mangrove species, etc that will also be included on the map. The mapping took place from mid-morning to mid-afternoon and included lunch and snacks. Approximately 8 of the guides took part in the project that day but two others reviewed the maps and added to it later on.

The Fishermen's group focused on the estuary and the changes in their fishing habits, the fish species, etc. They also helped design the end map product. There were 25 men and a few women present and lunch was included. This was also a very interesting project as the fishermen's group is multi-generational and included much story-telling and discussion.

I have approximately 7 maps which were handmade within the communities and need to be pieced together. The focus is mainly on the community of Portovelo and the Puerto Portovelo where the dock to Isla Corazon is located. I have been recopying the maps with pen to ensure that the information does not get lost and am taking pictures of important sections as well. This will be an important part of my

thesis, more important than I initially realized and was an important part of my interaction with the community. There was lots of interest and excitement about the end product that they wish to use as educational material, promotion of eco-tourism, etc.

Some of the interesting developments were by-products of my time spent in the community and my research interests. The main events were a road race, a community park and a movie night. The road race idea came to me as I was training for the *15km Quito Ultimas Noticias Race* in June. Many individuals in the community would ask me about my training, accompany me for part of the way while I trained or tell me stories about how their kids were really fast and had once won gold but that there were few races. Having organized races in Ottawa, I decided to organize a race in the community during my last weekend in Portovelo. I held a meeting with the 12 associations in the community to discuss the race and to see what their interest might be. It was wonderful to see how excited and interested they all were and how much support they gave in order to offer prizes, water and help during race day. We were able to have 10 categories, including *kids* 6-9 years of age, 10-13 years of age, *youth* 14-18 years of age, *adults* 19-40 years of age and *master* 41 + years of age (women and men in each). It was a HUGE success and such a blast. The most heart-warming moment for me was days before the race when 25 kids came to find me saying they wanted to train and practice with me and we ran the route through the community laughing and yelling "Si se puede!" (we can do it/it can be done). The community was really positive and the majority came out to participate, cheer on the athletes or help with the race logistics.

The second great development had to do with the portion of money available for a community gift instead of individual payment. I spoke to several members of the community as well as specific groups to discuss community needs and options for the \$500. In the end, they decided that focusing on their community park around the community centre area would be the best option, especially since they were already working towards that and a community garden. The money was spent in agreement with the presidents from the 12 associations and community president to buy caña to build a fence around the designed area, benches within the park, and native plants and trees. We organized a three day event with lunch provided to encourage community members to participate in the building of the fence. The difference was so great and many people came up to tell me about how happy they were that they would finally have their park.

The third interesting event was a movie night which I organized within the community to view *An Inconvenient Truth*. We viewed the movie on a big screen T.V. at a house on the main road, open to

everyone. There was then time to discuss the movie and share some of the information that I had about mangroves and climate change on the coast and specifically in Ecuador. In the end, there seemed to be more interest beforehand and not very many people were able to attend the night of the event. I ended up leaving the film in the community for them to view at their leisure and pass on to each other. I will also be heading back to the community for a few days in August in order to answer any questions that they might have, review some of the information gained during my interviews, and possibly conduct a few more interviews.

In terms of the money spent, the main change has been to convert the budget to American dollars. The exchange rate has varied quite often making taking money out different every time. For example, taking out \$400 costs from \$460-\$490 Canadian. For the most part, I have used the budget in the same way as initially described with more money spent on communication and less on accommodation. Furthermore, there have been times where personal judgement has led me to cover costs of certain things for my host family, or co-workers in order to help out. For example, I helped with the purchase of my host mother's glasses since she was having trouble with her eyesight and wasn't able to travel to have the operation at the time.

I am heading to my second community (Musine, Esmeraldas) for the month of July and plan to use a similar methodology to integrate into the community, conduct interviews and create maps of that area as well. I got good feedback from the participants who enjoyed putting their thoughts and knowledge on paper and they are excited to receive the final product. The goal is to promote tourism in the area with the maps, but also to simply share information as an educational tool, especially for their children.

I also plan to meet with a few more people during the first week of August, including individuals from the Universidad Catolica and the Ministry of the environment. They held a conference this past week touching upon climate change in the Andes and touched upon adaptation in Columbia, Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador. I will be meeting with the organizer of the conference to discuss the summary of the event since I was unable to attend the entire time. It seems that climate change is in its infancy in Ecuador and is just beginning to become a priority and a common word at the government level, academic level and scientific level. Generally, at the local level, especially in rural areas, it is an unknown or misconstrued concept.