

C8-159

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Application of a Novel Method for Selection and Domestication
of Indigenous Useful Plants Among Food Gatherers
- in Ecuador

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by

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In 1990, two expeditions will be headed to Ecuador by the p.i., the first will leave Israel on January for a period of 5-6 weeks, and the 2nd on July, for 5-6 months.

The aims of the first expedition are: 1) To establish working relations with the Ecuadorian partners at Poteficia Catholic University, to identify specific tasks and conclude on financial expenditure. 2) To approach several tribal societies together with an interpreter for Quechua, or for any other indigenous language. This, for selecting the tribes who could be most fitted to obtain the major aims of the project, and 3) To locate the most appropriate place for establishing a nursery.

Our second expedition will stay in Ecuador for 5-6 months, during this period, interviews, germ plasm collections and a nursery will be established.

Since the financial approval of our CDR proposal (Sept. 1989), arrangements for these expeditions were all set up. These included:

- a) Selection of distinguished graduate students to join the project.
- b) Detailed studies on Ecuador indigenous Ecosystems, including tribal societies.
- c) Creation of first connections with the administration in Ecuador, whose help may be needed for a successful operation of the project.
- d) Consulting of health precautions prior leaving for Ecuadorian rain forests.
- e) Advancement of the cooperative arrangements with the US and the Ecuadorian partners.

These were manifested as follows:

After advertising in several media, we have received 25 applications to join the project: Dan Bolotin, a highly motivated graduated student in Life Sciences, TAU, had been selected. Dan's work in Ecuador will be part of his M.Sc. thesis, at the Faculty of Life Sciences at TAU. He had accumulated a considerable amount experience in field work or navigation in Israel and also in some Latin American countries. He speaks some Spanish and also Portuguese. He is now studying Spanish at our University and intends

studying Quechua with Prof. Ian Bar-Yafee, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem.

Each year of the project Dan will work in Ecuador for a period of 5-6 months. He will organize the nursery and in the coming months will gain experience in some nurseries in Israel.

We have established a group of students with interest in utilization of natural resources by indigenous societies in Ecuador and a weekly seminar was given during the 1st semester by each student.

Contacts were made with Mr. Zvi Heruti, the mayor of the Regional Municipal, Tel-Mond. Mr. Heruti has been contributing his experience in agriculture and skills of organization to establish new settlements in Ecuador, for already several years. He was very much attracted by the aims of this project and had already written to several personalities in Ecuador in regard with this mission.

To rectify various issues that may evolve in Ecuador, the Ecuadorian ambassador in Israel, Dr. Patricio Palatos, was approached; he revealed considerable interest in the project. According to his advice, the Ecuadorian Minister of Health had been contacted.

For health precautions, Prof. Dan Michael, Head of the Ichilove Medical Center in Tel-Aviv was consulted, a list of various inoculations and medicines was prepared.

Formal arrangements were done for transfer of monies to Dr. M.J. Balick, the US partner.

Soon after I cabled stating the financial approval of the project, our Ecuadorian partner, Mr. Patricio Mena, wrote me that he had already accepted new obligations - a project in Guayaquil, and is therefore unable to participate.

According to his recommendation, Dr. Henrick Pedersen, the new director of the Herbarium at Ponteficia University in Quito was contacted. We mailed our formal request, together with the CV. and list of publications of Dr. Pedersen to the AID office for approval of the proposed replacement.

In Ecuador, our new partner, Dr. Federsen, is preparing maps for approaching the most suitable tribal societies with some camping equipment. Necessary steps to transfer monies to Ecuador by AID have been done.

In New York, most activities related to the project have also been in the area of organization and administration. Recently, a letter of agreement was signed between Tel Aviv University and the New York Botanical Garden, binding institutions as collaborators in this project. Other details involved the arranging details of the P.J. visit on Jan.-Feb. 1990 to NYBG e.g., selecting herbarium specimens of the Ecuadorian flora. Steps are also taken for identification of plants collected in Ecuador.