



# The Climate Partnership between Yarinacocha (Peru) and Cologne (Germany): Involvement of civil society actors on both sides is crucial



## Background and objective

Yarinacocha is located in the Ucayali region of the Peruvian Amazon. The city of around 100,000 inhabitants is close to the regional capital Pucallpa. 26% of Yarinacocha's population live in poverty, 3.6% in extreme poverty. A large proportion of the urban population has no access to clean drinking water. All the district's wastewater is discharged into the Ucayali River and the Yarinacocha Lagoon untreated. This has a negative impact on the environment, health, tourism, and economic development in the region.

To meet the increasing challenges of climate protection and climate change adaptation, the Yarinacocha district administration has developed an action program in collaboration with their German Partner City Cologne. This program includes the planning and implementation of improvement measures in areas such as the provision of municipal, climate and environmentally relevant basic services, the use of renewable energies, the preservation of biodiversity and local economic development through value chains. The district administration is working on building appropriate planning and project management capacities in the administration and establishing mechanisms to increase the participation of relevant interest groups from civil society, in particular indigenous actors, and universities, in local planning and decision-making processes. To support these objectives, an expert is supporting the district administration and the climate partnership between Yarinacocha and Cologne in the framework of the program "Experts fund for Municipal Partnerships Worldwide", which is implemented by GIZ and SKEW.



## Methodological approach

To become more effective in the above-mentioned sense, the district administration of Yarinacocha has chosen the following approach to build networks and cooperation structures with local, national, and international civil society actors: First, a stakeholder mapping of non-governmental organizations, universities, and other organizations in the Yarinacocha district and the Ucayali region was carried out. Municipal administrative staff and the local coordinator of the climate partnership then contacted the identified institutions with the support of the international expert to exchange information about the respective activities, introduce them to the ideas and objectives of the climate partnership and build trust. Once their interest in working together had been aroused, a joint analysis of the current challenges and the question of how their own project work could be improved took place. During the joint identification and development of topics for the potential projects to be applied for, a stakeholder-specific capacity development strategy was developed based on a careful systematization of all information using the available expertise. In particular, the development of skills in the following areas was addressed: Gender and interculturality, citizen participation, project management and climate protection as well as adaptation to climate change. The focus was put on strengthening institutional structures and know-how with the aim of independently developing and implementing projects and financing strategies.

At the same time, the partners in Yarinacocha and Cologne undertook research at local, national, and international level regarding national and private funding sources and mechanisms. On this basis, the process of content-related and financial project planning, application, implementation, and monitoring began in the form of specialized working groups, participatory planning workshops for all local stakeholders and numerous consultations between municipal and civil society actors.



## Implementation and challenges

Due to a lack of cooperation between municipal and civil society actors in the Yarinacocha district, there had been no concrete projects with civil society and indigenous participation until then. Therefore, the initial aim was to get to know the institutional landscape of civil society associations and organizations in the Yarinacocha district and the Ucayali region with a focus on indigenous organizations and to analyze the potential for cooperation. Furthermore, the identification of funding lines for the implementation of projects in cooperation with civil society organizations imposes a lot more challenges than the funding of projects with municipal actors. Therefore, the priority was to strengthen civil society organizations through capacity development and to diversify know-how before considering joint project development and application. The interest in cooperation among the newly acquired civil society actors was very high and was accompanied by the establishment of close network relationships with one another and with the municipal representatives.



## Outcomes for the target group and the involved stakeholders

An indigenous health initiative in Ucayali works based on the medical application of medicinal plants and natural medicine of the Shipibo-Konibo Xetebo ethnic group. In an international network with the climate partnership, a German, and a Belgian NGO, the initiative is currently carrying out a project to set up a center for indigenous medicine in Yarinacocha in the medium term. The vision is for indigenous healing methods and traditional medicine to be used on an equal footing in indigenous areas and to become part of the officially recognized healthcare system.

Another NGO acts as a relevant partner for the implementation of projects benefitting the indigenous population in the areas of local governance, biodiversity, and autonomous indigenous energy supply. It is supported internationally by the climate partnership and a German-Peruvian friendship network.

The international network consisting of the Climate Partnership, a German university and a renowned Peruvian state university is working with Peru's only intercultural university to set up an institute for adaptation to climate change and protection of biodiversity in rural, indigenous areas.

A local indigenous association that represents more than 30 indigenous communities and campaigns for their rights, in particular land rights, is receiving support from the climate partnership and a German non-profit nature conservation organization committed to the preservation of tropical rainforests to expand its project portfolio.

All projects run by indigenous actors in cooperation with international partners contribute to greater consideration of the concerns of indigenous communities and their participation in local development processes. By reviving indigenous traditions and promoting intercultural exchange and education, the actors are working to promote the rights of indigenous peoples, environmental justice and socio-economic development in the Ucayali region.



## Learnings and conclusions

The improved relationship between the municipal and civil society actors required a high degree of sensitization work and awareness-raising on both sides for the added value of jointly supported development initiatives and for the expansion of the climate partnership's local scope for action through multi-actor approaches. Even in the case of changes in the political landscape due to new municipal decision-makers, a partnership of different local actors can help to provide the new local government with existing knowledge and experience.

Committed organizations and technical know-how at the civil society and indigenous level are urgently needed to meet the various challenges of climate change in the Ucayali region. Partnership-based cooperation with indigenous communities and their organizations as well as the commitment of political decision-makers are important success factors. Especially at the beginning of the cooperation, it is advisable to develop manageable pilot projects that produce visible and tangible results and have a motivating effect on further engagement.