SCOLEL TE

ANNUAL REPORT

2004

Introduction

2004 has been the most successful year for Scolel Te for sales of carbon offsets, with 12,000 tonnes of carbon (40,000 tonnes of CO_2) purchased. Considerable progress was made in the recruitment of new communities into the project but it was not possible to plant all the areas identified because of shortages of suitable seedlings of high quality. The project team is seeking to rectify this through an agreement with CONAFOR (the National Forestry Commission).

Significant progress was made in strengthening the project team with training courses for community technicians and participant farmers in topic areas including; agroforestry / forestry planning, tree establishment, management and pruning. The project also hosted an international training course supported by IUCN to assist a number of other NGOs from Latin America and Africa to develop similar projects.

The trustees would like to thank community representatives and local technicians for their continued support and hard work, we commend the team at Ambio for their professionalism and dedication and we also thank ECOSUR and ECCM for valuable technical inputs.

We thank all purchasers of Plan Vivo Certified Carbon Offsets for their continued support and custom.

The trustees,

Elsa Esquivel Richard Tipper

1. Project Development in 2004

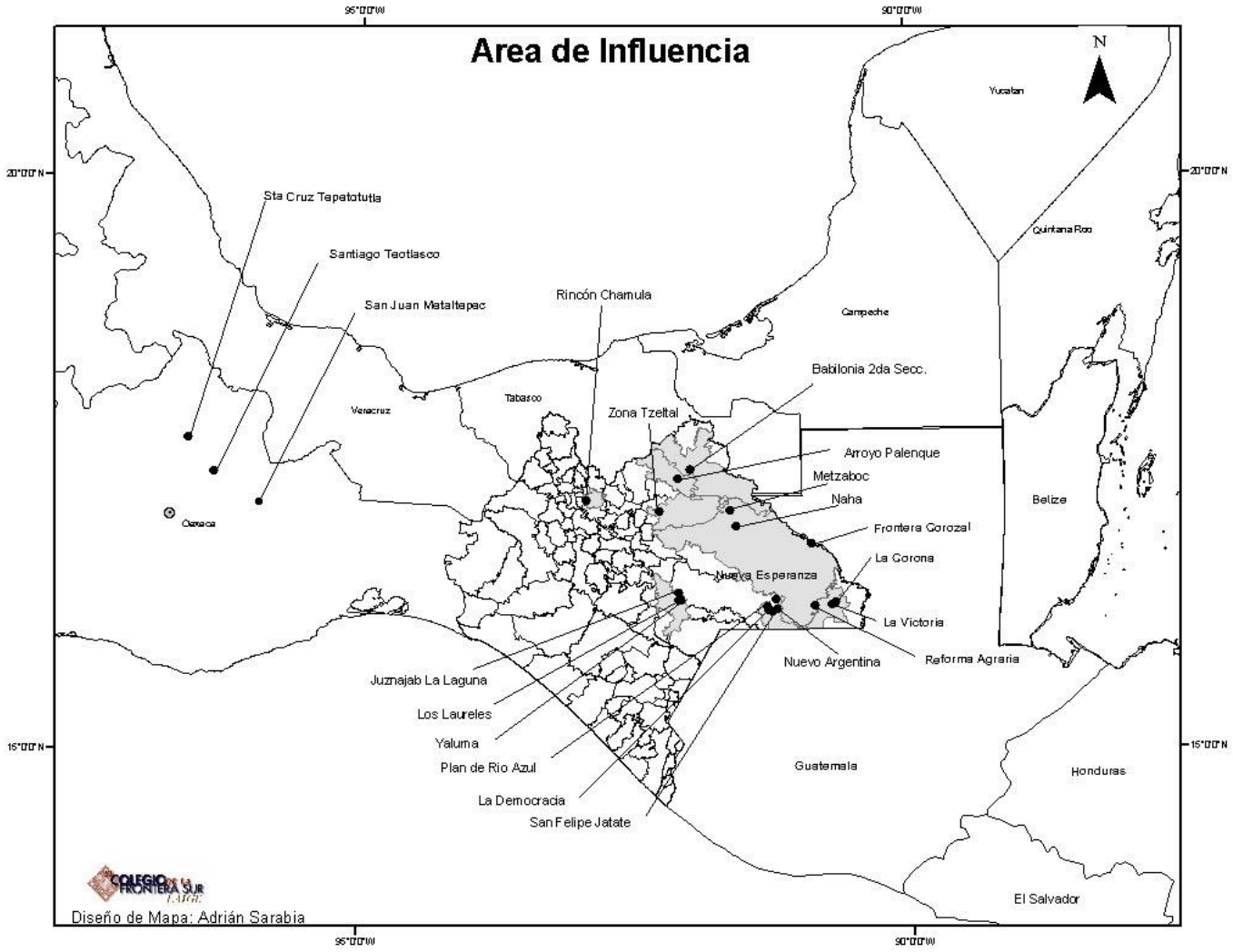
In 2004 the project welcomed a number of new communities from the vicinity of the Montes Azules National Park (Plan de Río Azul, Nueva Esperanza, La Democracia and San Felipe Jatate). Despite a strong level of interest by farmers in this area the actual level of establishment was limited by the availability of suitable seedlings. Project staff members are currently developing a strategy to rectify this during 2005.

Other communities where the area of land under forest management or agroforestry included:

- Naha, in the municipality of Ocosingo (Northern Jungle Zone, Chiapas)
- Los Laureles, in the municipality of Comitán (Central zone of Chiapas)
- Yaluma, in the municipality of Comitán (Central zone of Chiapas)
- San Felipe Jataté, in the municipality of Maravilla Tenejapa (Reserva Montes azules)
- Nuevo Rodolfo Figueroa, in the municipality of Maravilla Tenejapa (Reserva Montes azules)
- Babilonia 2da. Sección, in the municipality of Palenque (Northeast zone of Chiapas)
- Frontera Corozal, in the municipality of Ocosingo (Zona selva, Chiapas)
- Santa Maria, in the municipality of Salto de Agua (Northeast zone of Chiapas)
- San Juan Yagila, in the municipality of Ixtlán de Juárez (Sierra de Juárez, Oaxaca)
- Santa Maria Zoogochi, in the municipality of Ixtlán de Juárez (Sierra de Juárez, Oaxaca)

Again, the expansion of tree planting activities in these communities was limited by the paucity of suitable seedlings.

The communities and zones of the project are shown in Map 1 and the full list of participating communities is shown in Table 1.



Map 1. Communities participating in the Scolel Te project, December 2004.

Table 1. List of Participating Communities:

Community	Municipality / State	Activity in 2004	Ethnic/ cultural group	Number of families
Rincón Chamula	Pueblo Nuevo Solistahuacan, Chiapas	Expansion of area under forest management	Tzotzil	1000
Frontera Corozal	Ocosingo, Chiapas	Expansion of area under forest management	Chol	32
Naha	Ocosingo, Chiapas	Expansion of area under forest management	Lacandón	29
Metzabok	Ocosingo, Chiapas	Continued management of existing area	Lacandón	15
La Corona	Marques de Comillas, Chiapas	1st Monitoring of carbon stocks	Mixed	45
La Victoria	Marques de Comillas, Chiapas	Continued management of existing area	Mixed	45
Reforma Agraria	Marques de Comillas, Chiapas	Continued management of existing area	Mixed	39
Nueva Argentina	Maravilla Tenejapa, Chiapas	Continued management of existing area	Chol y Tojolabal	15
Santiago Teotlaxco	Ixtlán de Juárez, Oaxaca	Continued management of existing area	Zapoteco	300
San Juan Metaltepec	Santiago, Zacatepec, Oaxaca	Continued management of existing area	Mixed	380
Playón de la Gloria	Marques de Comillas, Chiapas	Continued management of existing area	Mestizos	9
Yaluma	Comitan, Chiapas	Expansion of area under forest management	Mestizos	80

Los Laureles	Comitan, Chiapas	Continued management of existing area & planned for expansion	Tojolabales	8
Arroyo Palenque	Salto de Agua, Chiapas	Management of existing area	Chol	41
Babilonia 2da. sección	Palenque, Chiapas	Expansion of area under forest management	Chol	4
Tzeltales, 12 comunidades	Chilón, Chiapas	Expansion of area under forest management	Tzeltales	98
Plan de Río Azul	Maravilla Tenejapa, Chiapas	New entrant – initial planting		5
Nueva Esperanza	Maravilla Tenejapa, Chiapas	New entrant – initial planting		5
La Democracia	Maravilla Tenejapa, Chiapas	New entrant – initial planting		8
San Felipe Jatate	Maravilla Tenejapa, Chiapas	New entrant – initial planting		5

Table 2. General Summary of Project Status at end of 2004

Cultural and ethnic groups:	A total of 8 groups: Tzeltal, Tojolabal, Chol, Tzotzil, Lacandón, Chinanteco, Mixe & Zapoteco
Communities:	33
Individual farmers:	650
Areas under management	
Reforestation & agroforestry	845 ha
Maintenance / restoration	3893 ha
Total:	**4,738 ha**

2. Training

During 2004 a major emphasis was placed on training of project staff and participating communities. In September a three-day training course was held to strengthen the team of "community technicians[1]" who provide an invaluable service to the project. These technicians provide farmers with support in the preparation of agro/forestry management plans and offer practical advice on establishment and maintenance of plantations and agroforestry systems. Given the large area served by the project and the small number of professional staff employed, building capacity and technical skills in the community technicians is vital to the success of the project.

15 technicians from 9 communities attended this intensive course in San Cristóbal de las Casas from 21 to 23 September. The course covered all the main aspects of the Plan Vivo management system including:

- A background to environmental services, climate change and carbon sequestration
- A description and analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the agroforestry / forest management systems most commonly selected by participants
- Development and evaluation of Plan Vivos (i.e., land use plans)
- Registration of Plan Vivos (explanation of the database and its management)
- The objectives and processes involved in monitoring
- Tree maintenance issues (with a focus on pruning)
- Administration of payments for carbon services and record keeping
- Management and decision processes of the Fondo BioClimático

As well as course work, a one-day field trip to the Tzeltal community of Muquenal was organised, where the technicians practised pruning techniques and discussed selective thinning.

[1] Community technicians are members of the communities served by the project. Most do not have formal qualifications but often have a considerable practical skills and intimate knowledge of local conditions.

Course Participants

Evaluation of Plan Vivos

Course work

Field Work

Special Training in Tree Pruning

Due to problems with pests in several tree species used in the project, pruning is often necessary if farmers are to obtain high quality timber in the future. Ambio's professional technicians conducted a number of community training courses and demonstrations in pest affected areas during 2004, using pruning equipment purchased the previous year.

The communities that received training: Frontera Corozal, Yaluma, Tzeltzal, Arroyo Palenque and Rincón Chamula.

Community technicians in the Tzeltal Zone

Pruning exercise

Pruned Pine Saplings in Rincón Chamula

Once the training had been completed, community technicians organised local pruning exercised to ensure that the work was carried out effectively.

3. Semester Meetings

Semester Meeting 1: 17th January 2004
Representatives from each community described and presented photographs of the their own experiences within the project. There was considerable discussion about the ways in which communities had overcome specific local problems. Notable contributions included the introduction of ecotourism at Naha and Reforma Agraria, the implementation of soil conservation measures in Yaluma; the problems of shoot boring pests in the Tzeltal zone and Arroyo Palenque; and the use of leguminous vines to improve soil fertility in maize fields in Nueva Argentina.

Key points:
The community of Yaluma noted that it had experienced problems with the quality of seedlings provided by the CONAFOR nursery in Comitan. Many dead / dying plants had been provided and the thus, the intended planting could not been completed satisfactorily.

Representatives of the Tzeltal zone noted that the farmers in this area had used agroforestry systems where trees could be planted over crops (e.g., shade coffee and taungya over maize) because of the limited land available.

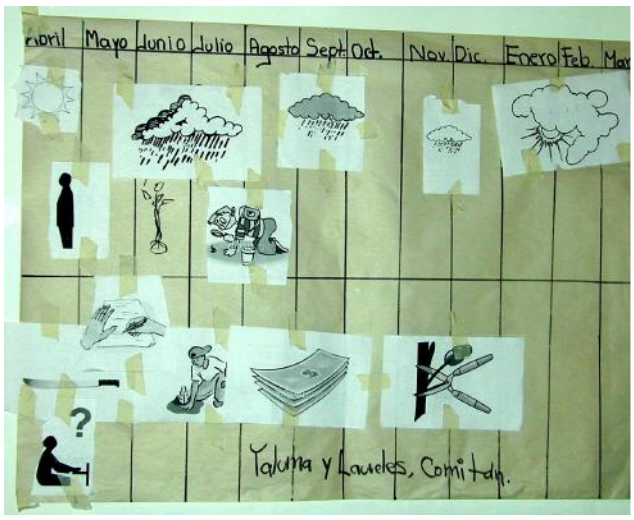
It was agreed that using proper pruning tools is necessary for the success of many plantations. It was made clear that the tools will remain the property of the Fondo BioClimático and that each farmer is responsible for returning tools in good condition.

It was agreed that approximately USD $3000 interest earned from the Fondo's bank deposits could be used for a training course for community technicians.

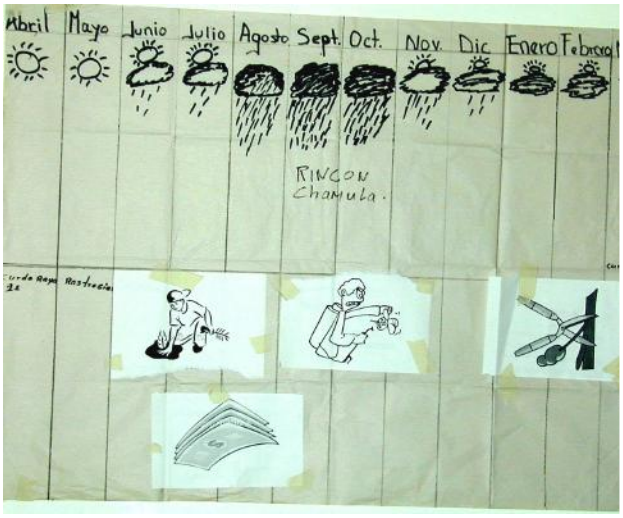
2nd Semester Meeting: 17th July 2004
Participating communities used a graphical approach in their land use planning by representing seasonal weather patterns on planning charts, as shown below.

Pictorial Representation of seasonal changes and work plans until December 2004

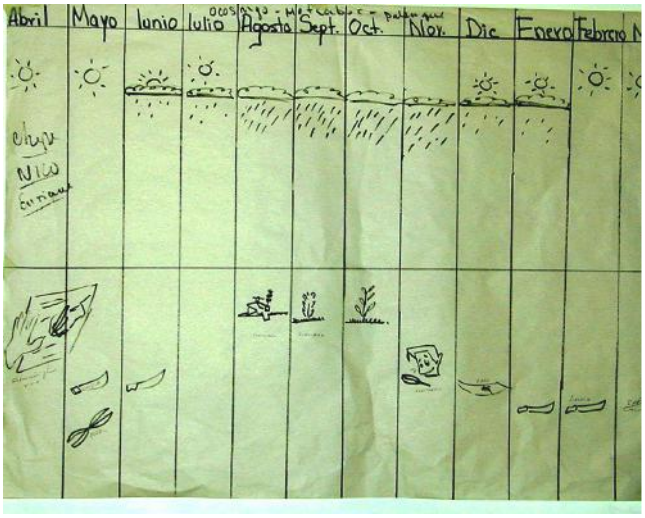
San Juan Metaltepec, Oaxaca



Yaluma y Los Laureles, Chiapas



Rincón Chamula, Chiapas



Zona tzeltal, comunidades lacandonas y Arroyo Palenque

<u>Other key points:</u>

- Due to the overall lack of response and support from the CONAFOR nurseries, a number of proposals were considered for small community or regional nurseries.

- Project participants have been informed of the proposed change of bank account from Banorte to Bansefi. It was noted that Banorte has very high fees and charges and that Bansefi appears to offer both a lower cost and more flexible services for Trust Funds such as the Fondo BioClimático.

- Community representatives were made aware of a letter from the UK NGO "Sinkswatch" which questioned the validity of carbon sequestration projects such as Scolel Te. It was agreed that a response should be drafted and signed by representatives from each zone.

- The technical team at Ambio presented the results of a collaborative study with El Colegio de la Frontera Sur which looked at the, "leakage of carbon benefits" from the Scolel Te project. The results of this study indicate that in general there is a low probability of leakage from the project, whereby carbon storing reforestation and restoration activities in the project would cause increases in CO_2 emissions elsewhere. However, some improvements in participant training were recommended.

4. Summary of Sales of Carbon Offset

The project has sold over 67,000 tC offsets since 1997, as shown by the table below. 2004 was the most successful year for sales with approximately 12,000 tC offsets provided (See table for details).

Year of Purchase	Buyer	Tonnes Purchased
1997	FIA	5500
1998	FIA	5500
1999	FIA	5500
2000	Future Forest	1073
2000	FIA	5500
2001	Future Forest	500
2001	FIA	5500
2001	FIA	3297
2002	FIA	5500
2002	FIA	3297
2002	Future Forest	2500
2002	Future Forest	2000
2003	DFID-FRP	5.7
2003	World Bank	1215
2003	FIA Foundation	5500
2003	FIA Foundation	3297
2004	Future Forest	1909
2004	DFID- FRP	47.7
2004	World Bank	1215
2004	FIA Foundation	5500
2004	FIA Foundation	3296
TOTAL tC		**67,652.4 tC**

5. Main Local Benefits from the Sale of Ecosystem Services

For most of the participating communities Scolel Te has been one of the few or only projects to have a continual presence over a period of several years. Most participants have indicated that a long-term approach is essential for successfully establish new land use systems of the type promoted by the project.

Furthermore, unlike other projects in the region, the participants appreciate the ability to tailor the scale and type of activities to their individual / family requirements. When we asked community representatives to list the benefits from the sale of ecosystem services, they provided the following answers:

a) Improved local organisation for managing community resources. In particular it was noted that many communities had set up fire prevention teams as an indirect result of the project.
b) Greater thought and consideration was now given to land use planning. This was most evident in communities where all or a large proportion of the families participated in the project. For many communities this represents a change from the past where decisions about land use did not include careful planning.
c) The project organisational framework served as a nucleus for the development of other community initiatives, such as ecotourism, and the production of flowers.
d) The project is creating a "forest management culture". Previously many communities regarded the forest with little value, or did not see the benefits that could come from growing trees. Now there is a much greater interest in the economic benefits that can come from forestry.
e) The project has created a useful exchange of ideas within and among communities and more interest in trying new things such as techniques for soil erosion control, the installation of more efficient / clean wood burning stoves and the cultivation of trees exclusively for fuel wood.
f) Much of the income from the sale of carbon offsets has been invested in useful things such as home improvments (roofs and floors), purchasing medicine for local clinics, and buying tools.

6. Evaluation of Actions Initiated in 2003

During 2003 and 2004 a number of actions were taken to make the project run more efficiently, both in terms of technical support to farmers and in the administration of carbon offset payments. This section evaluates the progress of these actions.

Tree Pruning
During 2003 and 2004 significant efforts were made to ensure that participating farmers maintained their tree crops by pruning, both to reduce pest infestations, and to improve the timber quality. The result has been rather mixed. It is hoped that plantations that have been pruned and now have high quality trees will serve as examples to other farmers to encourage adoption of this measure.

New Documentation for Participants
During 2004 considerable efforts were made to explain the various documents required in the project such as the "registration letter", "carbon sale agreement" and "carbon account book" that are now held by all participants. Despite a significant increase in the level of comprehension, the team is aware that some farmers who do not speak good Spanish, or who are not able to read / write still find this documentation difficult to understand. It is suggested that explaining these documentation requirements to participants should be ongoing.

Payment Stages
Simplified payment schedules (5 payments over 10 years instead of annual payments) have now been implemented for all participants. This method is working well and appears to be well understood.

Collaboration with Government Agencies
The project continues to seek collaboration with government agencies for more effective and sustainable implementation of forestry systems. As a result of the persistent problems with the availability of good quality seedlings Ambio and CONAFOR are planning to sign an agreement that will give provide greater assurance of seedling availability. As part of this agreement, project participants will assist CONAFOR with seed collection and some aspects of seedling production in return for a guarantee of availability.

Ambio is also exploring the possibility of an agreement with CONAP (National Commission for Protected Areas).