

Youth info-brief

Your work in a nutshell



Global
Landscapes
Forum



The Youth Infobrief series on Food and Livelihood, published by the Global Landscapes Forum (GLF) and the Youth in Landscapes Initiative (YIL), is meant to put a spotlight on some of the remarkable work being done by young people around the world on food and livelihoods.

Casa Congo's Centre of Agroecology

Bio

My name is Lucas Sebastián Worsdell. I am of Chilean, Portuguese, and British heritage, and was born in Switzerland. I enjoy learning from the incredible social movements around land rights, indigeneity and sovereignty, and I am currently completing my studies at Wageningen University & Research (Rural Development & Innovation). I believe in the importance of integrating agroecology into a larger context of regenerative communities through a growing engagement with Deep Ecology, landscape governance, and social and environmental justice. I am passionate about analog photography as a medium to engage with art, agroecology and the imagination.

Introduction

The small fishing village of El Astillero, located in the tropical dry region of western Nicaragua, faces nutritional and food-related challenges. Fruits and vegetables are not readily available in town. Cattle grazing and conventional monocultures, which are extremely vulnerable to droughts and flooding, have contributed to extensive deforestation, erosion and pollution. This pollution has also created knock-on effects on fish stocks. Because little agricultural production is geared towards local consumption, children often go hungry when fish stocks fall. Drought also poses a threat to crop harvest.

Project Description & Outcomes

Casa Congo aims to support holistic community development in El Astillero. The centre's primary focus is on promoting food sovereignty, and the ecological integrity of the community is of the utmost importance,

especially as climate change and global crises make the food system ever more vulnerable, and the tourism industry in Nicaragua has fallen short on its promises of prosperity. Additionally, we address factors in community development beyond the direct scope of agroecology: the NGO also protects sea turtles, runs educational programs with youth, and supports other women-led initiatives in town, sustainable construction programs and surfing lessons for the local children. Our approach allows us to engage with a wide range of community members of all ages to help grow a more resilient community and landscape.

The centre serves as a community garden, with the aim of developing uniquely local agroecological practices by incorporating expertise and research with traditional methods. The beating heart of the Centre of Agroecology is coordinator Anielka Aguirre, a single mother of four. She runs the Women's Agroecology Group, a collective of 15 women who manage the centre's budget, run outreach programs with the local school and organise free workshops. These women share their farming knowledge and their time to help others grow more food in town. The community finance project developed by the collective subsidizes water tanks and school equipment for local children. Additionally, we have planted over 9,000 trees, supported the creation of 37 family gardens, and built ten greywater filters that contain and purify the water used in activities such as washing and showering. This work has been supported by the Rockflower foundation, who have been key partners.

The centre's objective is to be an entirely community-driven initiative that can provide support to all those interested in growing home gardens and

Project outline

The geographic area of the project

El Astillero and the Chacocente Wildlife Refuge, Rivas, Nicaragua

Year of Establishment

2017

Target people

Women, Youth, Children

Main theme

Sustainable Food Systems/ Conservation

Organization

Casa Congo Conservation Society

Contact person

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implementing ecological practices in their fields. The centre wishes to host international workshops and researchers who can help support knowledge-sharing, allowing the local community to encourage young people who dream of becoming stewards of their environment to pick up the necessary tools and start planting!

Upscaling

The development of effective, locally-relevant agroforestry techniques requires integrated watershed management and ecological restoration plans at the landscape level which can help prevent deadly floods in the rainy season, and droughts that can kill the remaining crops during the dry season. The local community, with the support of the right

resources and expertise that enable farmer innovation, must develop these plans. Once established in the community of El Astillero and its surrounding area, the centre aims to expand its focus to promoting a regional landscape approach.

Challenges

1. Access to a wide range of organic seeds and traditional varieties has been extremely difficult.
2. Cattle, pigs and chickens roam the streets of El Astillero, destroying even the most protected gardens.
3. Land disputes and insecure tenure rights limit the community's ability to move forward with ecological restoration, conservation and guaranteeing the health of their landscape.
4. The instability of the tourism industry has had drastic effects on the economy, which undermines conservation efforts. Building economic resilience that is independent of the tourism industry is a challenge.

What is your tip for young people developing their own project?

Humility and honour. You must be humble enough to understand that the experiences of others are truthful and cannot be ignored or denied, and honourable enough to stick to your principles. Do what you love, and know that both your principles and what you love can change.

Link to the platform: www.casacongo.org
Instagram: @casacongoconservation

Global Landscapes Forum

The Global Landscapes Forum (GLF) is the world's largest knowledge-led platform on integrated land use, dedicated to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and Paris Climate Agreement. The Forum takes a holistic approach to create sustainable landscapes that are productive, prosperous, equitable and resilient and considers five cohesive themes of food and livelihood, landscape restoration, rights, finance and measuring progress. It is led by the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), in collaboration with its co-founders UNEP and the World Bank and Charter Members.

Charter Members: CIAT, CIFOR, CIRAD, Climate Focus, Conservation International, Crop Trust, EcoAgriculture Partners, EFI, Evergreen Agriculture, FSC, GEF, GIZ, ICIMOD, IFOAM - Organics International, INBAR, IPMG, IUFRO, Rainforest Alliance, Rare, RRI, SAN, UN Environment Programme, Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation, part of Wageningen Research, WFO, World Agroforestry, World Bank Group, WRI, WWF International, Youth in Landscapes Initiative.

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