

Hacienda Tranquila, SA (Peaceful Ranch): Creating value in the rural highlands of Charles Darwin's island, Galapagos

Baquerizo Moreno Port, San Cristobal, Ecuador La Soledad, Highlands of San Cristobal, Ecuador



Geovanny Sarigu

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X6ilBg3Wvy0>



Year Founded:

2004

Organization type:

hybrid

Project Stage:

Scaling

Budget:

\$10,000 - \$50,000

Website:

<http://www.haciendatranquila.com>

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/112206327398/>

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Project Summary

Elevator Pitch

Concise Summary: Help us pitch this solution! Provide an explanation within 3-4 short sentences.

Hacienda Tranquila is a local organization in the Galapagos that employs reforestation, organic agriculture and community action projects to help the environment and people. The team of three, international volunteers and locals share their talents for a more sustainable, food secure community.

WHAT IF - Inspiration: Write one sentence that describes a way that your project dares to ask, "WHAT IF?"

What if we could inspire locals to come back to the land and guarantee food security for Galapagos?

About Project

Problem: What problem is this project trying to address?

Living in Galapagos today is paradoxical: permanent residents follow their daily routine in a World Heritage Site, behaving as if they lived in the big city. People are losing more and more contact with the natural environment and its cycles. If local agriculture cannot support local and tourist food needs in the Galapagos, food must be shipped in from the mainland, which results in potential food insecurity for the islands.

Solution: What is the proposed solution? Please be specific!

Hacienda Tranquila works with locals, visitors and government agencies to promote organic agriculture and bring people back to the land, creating community sense. Hacienda Tranquila is bridging relationships and helping revalue both organic agriculture and applied science. We also work with local children and international volunteers to promote cultural understanding and entrepreneurship. Many of our volunteers are so inspired by their experience on the Hacienda that they replicate parts of it back in their home communities.

Awards

Nat Geo Geotourism Challenge 2010, WYSE Volunteer & Travel, Outstanding Volunteer project 2012, Reconocimiento por la Comunidad de la Soledad en proyecto de eficiencia y ayuda comunitaria, Reconocimiento por parte del Galapagos science center el 2014.

Impact: How does it Work

Example: Walk us through a specific example(s) of how this solution makes a difference; include its primary activities.

In addition to clearing invasive plants and nurturing native and endemic ones on Hacienda Tranquila's own property to improve agricultural yield, the organization is helping 15 neighboring family farms reclaim their crop fields. All Hacienda Tranquila asks in return from these farmers is their pledge to nurture a small patch of native and endemic species which Hacienda Tranquila plants on their land, thus instilling conservation values. This strategy eliminates invasive species before they spread, benefits struggling farmers, and creates positive relations between locals and the environment. We also provide weekly hippotherapy (therapeutic horse-back riding) lessons and environmental education for local children and families.

Impact: What is the impact of the work to date? Also describe the projected future impact for the coming years.

Hacienda Tranquila has done much in the 10 years since it has been in operation: reforested a significant portion of highly vulnerable abandoned agricultural land; helped farmers remove invasive species which threaten their livelihoods; replaced an aging eight kilometer water pipeline; refurbished a local school; sequestered thousands tons of carbon; and provided an educational and therapeutic outdoor escape for disadvantaged children. In the future we plan to expand our operations into the urban area to reach more community members and help them connect with nature on a daily basis, as well as encourage youth to study agriculture and return to the land. We are also interested in promoting local entrepreneurship, for example, supporting a local school initiative to use invasive species that threaten Galapagos diversity to our advantage making guayaba cake, toothpaste, tea and wine.

Spread Strategies: Moving forward, what are the main strategies for scaling impact?

As a tried and proven project, we are ready to scale up and support similar ventures throughout Galapagos and Ecuador mainland. Over the next 5 years we plan to involve more of the local community in San Cristobal, start a hippotherapy program in Santa Cruz, promote hacienda models on Isabela and Floreana, and, once all Galapagos is involved, replicate the project in Salasaca, Tungurahua Province in the Ecuadorian sierra. Through our network of volunteers, we are identifying potential partners to start their own similar ventures to benefit local communities throughout Ecuador and the world.

Sustainability

Financial Sustainability Plan: What is this solution's plan to ensure financial sustainability?

Our operating budget is \$25,000 annually and currently is covered through volunteer lodging and project participation. The fixed costs were covered through an initial seed investment and variable costs through profit. We seek to autofinance the operational costs of the project through agriculture sales and ecotourism. However, we still need donations and investment help for infrastructure and professional services to scale up the initiative.

Marketplace: Who else is addressing the problem outlined here? How does the proposed project differ from these approaches?

The Galapagos National Park Service works to reduce the spread of invasive species. The Ecuadorian Ministry of Agriculture promotes organic agriculture and local sales. The FUNDAR - Pajaro Brujo initiative in the highlands of Santa Cruz works with rural communities and volunteers to control invasive species. Our private initiative in collaboration with these groups has been more effective and efficient on the local level because we have gained the trust and established reciprocal relationships with local community members, asking local farmers and ranchers to pledge commitments to their land.

Team

Founding Story

After meeting my current business partner and investor, David Essoyan, as a surf guide, we shared an inspirational sunset and common dream of creating a place where people could go to commune with nature and give back to their community. In 2004 Hacienda Tranquila was born. After working at AMEN Foundation in Quito with horses and children in 2007, we recognized the opportunity to work with international volunteers and promote hippotherapy with children in need. Gradually with the positive ideas shared between international volunteers and local community members, we've built the current Hacienda Tranquila project with daily community outreach activities that promotes community sense.

Team

David Essoyan, a United States citizen raised in Asia and the Middle East, is the owner. Presently residing in Westport, Connecticut, he is employed in the hedge fund industry, focused on Asia. Geovanny Sarigu, Hacienda Tranquila S.A. Partner and General Manager coordinates daily work with two local cattlehands turned volunteer coordinators. Born in Pelileo, Ecuador of Italian father and indigenous mother, Geovanny moved to San Cristobal at age twelve and has worked in sustainable tourism and social work for over fifteen years. In addition to being a Certified Surf Guide by the Galapagos National Park, Geovanny has also received vocational training in project management, sustainable tourism, and outdoors education from the University of Indiana in the United States of America. We hope to expand the team with local talent on San Cristóbal (a Strategic Partners and Growth Manager to scale up the initiative to the urban area and island outreach) and partners on the other populated islands: Santa Cruz, Isabela and Floreana. David and Geovanny would remain the project managers but over time bring in more support and empower further entrepreneurship and the eventual creation of a strategic action committee.

Background

Please confirm how you heard about the Unilever Awards:

I received an e-mail from consultant Candela Justribo.

Please confirm your role in the initiative (eg Founder/co-Founder) and your organisational title:

co-Founder, General Manager

Which of the 8 UN Global Goals (Sustainable Development Goals) pre-selected for this competition does your solution relate most closely to? [select all that apply]

Zero Hunger, Decent Work and Economic Growth, Responsible Consumption and Production, Climate Action.

Leadership and the Unilever Awards

Please provide examples of any previous entrepreneurial initiatives you have pioneered.

In 2007 I brought specialized-tourism operations to Galapagos for people with disabilities. The initiative was positive and has since been adopted by other tourist operators now that I focus mainly on the Hacienda Tranquila. In 2014 I established the first cattlemans' association in the Galapagos (affiliated with the mainland Ecuador's Ranchers Association of Coastal Ecuador and Galapagos) with 17 local members from the La Soledad community. Since our founding we have met with the President of Ecuador to stop cattle theft and the Minister of Agriculture to promote genetic improvement of cattle to supply quality beef and milk products to the local market. Our ranchers are increasing their yield and we are often invited to participate in community improvement and outreach activities on San Cristobal and throughout Galapagos.

Beyond your existing team, who else are you working with to achieve your objectives, eg partners, advisors, mentors?

Our partners include: Marcelo Meneses of Ecuador Adventure/ Opuntia House Hotel who purchases local products for his tourists; the Galapagos National Park Service in the fight against invasive species; the Galapagos Science Center - University of San Francisco Quito on natural science research using the Hacienda as a meteorological station to monitor weather and provide real time information for the local farmers and ranchers. We cannot forget all the amazing volunteers, aged 08 to 80 who have stayed on the Hacienda and contributed their incredible talents. This project is definitely a team initiative and owes its success to all involved!

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