

WOMEN'S MICROENTERPRISE INTERNSHIP

Description: Contribute your skills to help women's groups in rural villages develop sustainable businesses and market their products.



Project Summary:

The rural communities of Camarones and Tabuga, like many other coastal communities in Ecuador have suffered from ongoing economic hardship and unsustainable poverty-driven extraction of natural resources. There is a need to generate sustainable, locally-based economic activities to enhance economic prosperity and preserve valuable natural resources. Since 2009, Ceiba has worked with two local women's groups, one in Camarones dedicated to developing a natural soap from the oil extracted from the seed of the local piñon plant (*Jatropha curcas*), and another in Tabuga that

has begun producing fabric bags to replace plastic and to provide packaging for coffee and other local products. The hope is to elevate some members of the community beyond subsistence-based living, maintain a harmonious interaction with the environment, and help women gain some degree of economic independence and opportunity. The production of a traditional soap can help supplant modern commercial soaps that are damaging local waterways, and the re-usable bags aim to reduce pollution of the land and ocean by plastic bags. The products can also provide a source of revenue through sale to tourists, and distribution to local shops and hotels. The intern will assist the women in quality control, packaging their product, promotion and marketing to hotels and other potential buyers, and business management. The intern will also collaborate with the UW Wisconsin without Borders (WWB) and UW's mechanical engineering group that is supporting the project.

What you'll do:

Time may be split between the soap project and the bag project, or dedicated to just one project. Activities may include:

- Develop new designs for the screen-printed bags
- Help the women fill out the necessary paperwork to form a legal association
- assist in writing proposals to obtain financial support for the projects from government entities
- Work alongside the women in production of their products to learn the system and help make it more efficient
- Work with WWB to package the soaps and market them
- Create a recordkeeping system for production, inventory, and orders processing
- Help women with basic financial planning, cost analysis (how much they need to sell their product for to make a profit)
- Secure product orders local hotels and shops
- Make an informational leaflet to accompany the soaps and bags. Perhaps contact Fair Trade or other organizations in the U.S. that might be willing to sell the soap and purchase the first batch from the women
- Create a campaign to reduce the use of plastic bags in the region

What you'll learn:

- Principles of asset-based community development
- Cultural awareness and effective communication with diverse groups of people
- Basic requirements and considerations for establishing a successful microenterprise
- Women's social and economic issues in a rural area of a developing country
- International experience in small business planning, product design, and marketing

What we seek: Spanish language ability; interest in marketing and business; interest in working with women in a small rural community; patience, cultural sensitivity; self-motivation; creativity; willingness to live and work in a very rural setting.