



*Machalilla National Park, Manabi Province, Ecuador*

# Creating A Market For Beauty

## *Promoting Sustainable Tourism in Ecuador's Protected Areas*



*Machalilla community members contributing to the marketing plan in their area (2008).*

**How do you compete with the Galapagos? This is the challenge facing Ecuador's mainland protected areas which represents 18.55 percent of the country's total surface. Despite having major attractions, they receive far less attention and promotion than the highly visited Galapagos National Park. To further complicate the issue, many people living in these protected areas often need to turn to destructive activities such as mining, logging, and poaching to sustain their livelihoods.**



To address this challenge the Government of Ecuador planned to promote tourism that helps conserve inland protected areas while bringing jobs and income to people that live in or around them. To effectively do this, Ecuador needed a marketing plan to guide it. In collaboration with the Ecuador Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Environment, the Ecuador Alliance for Sustainable Tourism (AETS) recently created a marketing strategy for Heritage Protected Areas and has now begun implementing the plan. This marketing plan will strengthen efforts to improve management of protected areas and promote economic growth through tourism development driven by local communities.

This comprehensive marketing strategy is the result of months of work in six protected areas: Ecological Reserve Cayambe Coca, Cotacachi Cayapas, Manglares Churute, National Park Cotopaxi, Machalilla, and the Amazonian Corridor Yasuni-Cuyabeno. The process included organizing workshops with key stakeholders, consulting experts, and holding on-going meetings with various members of both ministries. Ultimately seven in-depth reports were produced: one master document detailing a national marketing

strategy and six supporting documents detailing unique strategies for each Protected Area.

The marketing strategy includes information from national and international tour operators, a thorough analysis of targeted visitors, and an historical synopsis of tourism in Ecuador. It proposes the establishment of a ground-breaking program called "Amigos de las Areas Protegidas" (friends of protected areas) that links public, private and community areas together while promoting environmental stewardship and sustainable development.

Additionally, a comprehensive website will be created providing tour operators and visitors a portal to plan their visits and access locally based services, continuously benefiting indigenous communities.

The Ecuador Alliance for Sustainable Tourism is an arm of the Global Sustainable Tourism Alliance (GSTA) which tapped the extensive expertise of its partners to develop a marketing plan that will help Ecuador ensure that it protects its beautiful land and provides economic opportunities to its people through ecotourism.