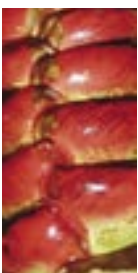

Social Profit Network



ANAI

ANAI, an organization lead by a handful of agronomists, foresters, biologists, economists, and educators, provides living proof that economic development and environmental conservation can happen hand-in-hand. Long before “sustainable development” became a familiar term, ANAI was successfully helping the people from Costa Rica’s Talamanca region—home to 3 percent of the world’s species—improve their quality of life while preserving the area’s rainforests and other natural wonders.

Background on ANAI

Since 1978, ANAI has been pioneering ways to economically diversify and grow the Talamanca region of Costa Rica, by creating localized, environmentally friendly economic opportunities and occupations. To do this, the staff of 13 people—all Costa Rican except for the three founders—works closely with local communities to identify issues and needs, and then develops and implements long-term solutions that are economically and environmentally sustainable. The name, ANAI, was born out of an old acronym for *Asociación de Nuevos Alquimistas*.

ANAI started as an experiment. Its founders wanted to address people’s basic needs in ways that are ecologically sustainable, using methods such as crop diversification, agro-ecosystem development, forest management, development of community infrastructure, and community approaches to nature conservation. ANAI’s model of engaging local communities in these kinds of solutions has proven to have lasting positive effects on both the economy and the preservation of Talamanca’s natural resources.

ANAI began as a loose coalition of North American biologists and Talamanca farmers. Its leaders include:

Benson Venegas, Executive Director

- Born and raised in Talamanca
- Holds a degree in Marine Biology from Costa Rica’s National university
- Director of the Gandoca Manzanillo National Wildlife Refuge
- Directs ANAI’s programs in conservation and grassroots organizational development

Dr. William O. McLarney, Founder, Treasurer, Co-Director of Biomonitoring Program

- Led programs for U.S. Bureau of Commercial Fisheries, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute, the U.S. National Aquarium, and Appalachian State University
- Founder of the Little Tennessee Watershed Association and the Land Trust for the Little Tennessee
- Holds a B.S. degree in biology from John Carroll University
- Holds M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in fisheries from the University of Michigan



ANAI works across the areas of conservation, economic development, training and education, organizational development, and advocacy in order to create holistic solutions for community and conservation issues. To date, ANAI has:

- Established the Gandoca-Manzanillo National Wildlife Refuge, which stretches 30 kilometers along the Caribbean coast, protecting many species of endemic plants, and the last remaining refuge for manatees in the area. The refuge is uniquely co-run by local communities and government agencies.
- Created the Talamanca Marine Turtle Conservation Program, which protects one of the world's main nesting beaches for the endangered leatherback turtle. Local income is up 700% as a result of the program, and egg poaching—once a mainstay of the community—has nearly ceased.
- Developed one of the tropics' only participatory biomonitoring programs, based on watersheds and fresh-water stream ecology.
- Developed a regional farmers' co-op, which is the largest producer and exporter of organic products in Central America. This cooperative has proven the important role that small farm agro-ecosystems can play in biodiversity conservation.
- Worked to complete and consolidate a forested corridor, the Talamanca-Caribbean Biological Corridor Association, that stretches from the Continental Divide at 12,533 feet to the Caribbean Sea.
- Launched 12 locally owned ecotourism ventures.
- Fostered the development of more than 20 additional grassroots conservation and development organizations, dedicated to enabling thriving communities and a healthy natural environment.
- Organized over 1,600 farmers to reforest native tree species.
- Launched projects throughout the region to improve basic community needs, including community potable water systems serving 10 communities, as well as other infrastructure for schools, community centers, etc.
- Won the U.N.'s 2002 Equator Prize for the best community-based conservation in the tropics.

Jim (“Diego”) Lynch, Executive President

- Has spent his entire professional life with ANAI, managing agroforestry, biodiversity conservation, youth training and grassroots institutional development programs, as well as organizational management and fundraising, since 1979
- Holds a B.S. degree in biology and an M.F.S. in forest science from Yale University

Elena Sandoval, Cofounder and Secretary

- Born and raised in Talamanca
- Led initiative to create the Gandoca-Manzanillo National Wildlife Refuge
- Leads Talamanca's ecosystem protection initiatives

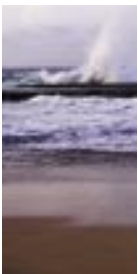
Didiher Chacon, Director of the Sea Turtle Conservation Program

- Joined ANAI in 1987 as a researcher, carrying out inventories and ecological investigations of Talamanca's coastal ecosystems
- Holds a degree in marine biology from Costa Rica's National Autonomous University
- Serves on the boards of several national and international sea turtle and marine conservation groups
- Manages all aspects of ANAI's coastal and marine conservation work

Page Nelson

- Has volunteered with and served on the advisory board of ANAI since 1979
- Founder of Shelterbelt, an environmental design and construction company
- Director of Farallones Institute's Intergral Urban House in Berkeley, California, from 1978 to 1980, and served on the Farallones' board of directors until 1986
- Founder of Working InConcert, a facilitation, mediation, and consulting company in Berkeley

www.anaicr.org



About Talamanca

Costa Rica is one of the world’s most biologically important areas due to its high level of biodiversity—Talamanca alone contains at least 3 percent of the world’s species. But it has one of the highest deforestation rates in the world, even though more than 10 percent of the country has been designated as “protected areas.”

Costa Rica has long been the most stable democracy in Central America, but turmoil in neighboring countries has turned it into a magnet for poor, landless peasants who have immigrated in search of a better future. The lack of infrastructure and resources to support these immigrant communities has put at risk Costa Rica’s hard-earned gains in education, economic development, and protection of its natural resources.

Even so, as an emerging developing country, Costa Rica promises to be a model for Central America and the rest of the world.

Biodiversity and virgin forests

Talamanca, located in the southeast corner of the country, is the poorest of Costa Rica’s regions socio-economically, but the richest in biodiversity and remaining virgin tropical forest ecosystems.

The region encompasses the full range of Costa Rica’s altitudes, from the highest point in the country, Mt. Chirripo at 12,533 feet, to sea level. This range incorporates steep mountainsides, rich alluvial plains, large expanses of wetlands, and a variety of marine ecosystems, including Costa Rica’s only coral reef.

The lower altitudes and coastal areas in particular are under increasing pressures from the growing population and development. Talamanca is one of only two areas in the country with significant areas of virgin forest outside of declared protected areas, so pressure to harvest its wood is incredibly high.

The people and their income

Three ethnic groups make up the region’s population of 35,000:

- Bribri and Cabecar Native Americans—the largest concentration of Native Americans in the country
- English-speaking blacks with roots in the West Indies
- Hispanics and mestizos, mostly from other Central American countries and other regions of Costa Rica

All three groups have traditionally been reliant on growing food for consumption at home, supplemented by hunting, fishing, and a small service economy.

Today, the three main generators of income are agriculture, forestry, and tourism. In this context, ANAI’s community-based programs, aimed at economic and environmental sustainability, face stiff competition from development pressures—such as logging and clearing large areas of forest for monoculture-based export crops—that offer short-term benefits, but unsustainable solutions to poverty.





Sustainable development

ANAI works across five main areas to address development pressures in ways that support both economic and ecological sustainability:

- **Agriculture and agro-ecosystems**
- **Marine and coastal environment**
- **Land conservation**
- **Ecotourism**
- **Education**



Agriculture and agro-systems: Helping Talamanca become Central America's largest exporter of organic agricultural products

Historically, the major cash crop in Talamanca was cocoa, a relatively low-impact agriculture system that closely resembled the structure of the natural forest. However, in 1979, a cocoa disease known as monilia pod rot virtually eliminated this local economy.

In search for alternatives to the most obvious new options—logging, ranching, selling land, and chemical agriculture—ANAI worked with local farmers to establish diversified agroforestry systems (including cocoa). These systems would mimic the functions of the natural forest, but produce enough income from a small area to enable each farmer to preserve a portion of natural forest. This effort resulted in the formation of APPTA (*Asociación de Pequeños Agricultores de Talamanca*), a farmers' cooperative that has become the largest exporter of organic agricultural products in Central America.



To create an organic agriculture option in Talamanca, ANAI:

- Identified and quantified market potential for organic crops
- Identified and developed markets, locally and worldwide
- Founded the first organic certification program in Costa Rica, arranged for certification of the first 500 farms, and extended the program to other regions
- Assured the continuation of the organic certification process by facilitating the creation of ANAO (*Asociación Nacional de Agricultura Organica*)
- Facilitated the construction and management of the first cocoa-processing plant, later building an extension to handle other crops
- Provided technical assistance and guidance throughout every phase of the process

In 1995, a major breakthrough occurred. At that time, world chocolate prices had dropped 50 percent, threatening to cancel out the progress ANAI had made with farmers. Working together with the Organic Commodities Project, they identified a buyer for all of Talamanca's organic cocoa.



A year later, Newman's Own began making their Organic Chocolate Bar with Talamanca's beans. The higher price of these contracts, combined with fair prices paid by the farmer-owned co-op, resulted in farmers receiving three times as much money for their cocoa than they had previously received.



Cocoa is just one of many successes. ANAI, APPTA, and the farmers of Talamanca have developed processing and marketing methods for other crops, including organically grown bananas, tropical fruits, and ginger. A decade ago, family farms in Talamanca looked like they would soon become history. Now they are one of the most vigorous components of the Talamancan economy and part of the solution to the biodiversity crisis in one small, but very important, part of the planet.



Marine and coastal environments: Saving the leatherback turtle from extinction

The keystone of ANAI's work in Talamanca's coastal region is protecting the leatherback turtle—the largest of all sea turtles—which nests annually on Gandoca Beach. In 1985, the population was headed toward extinction due to overharvesting of eggs (an alleged aphrodisiac). Today, as a result of an annual collaborative effort between ANAI and the Costa Rican Ministry of the Environment, this trend has been halted:

- Loss of eggs to poachers has been cut from over 95 percent to less than 10 percent
- Establishment of hatcheries on the beach has boosted survival rates by protecting egg clutches formerly lost to beach erosion
- Turtles have been tagged since 1993 and data on populations shared with a worldwide sea turtle conservation network
- Local jobs have been created for young conservation technicians



ANAI's mission

To help the people of Talamanca design and implement a strategy linking socio-economic development with biodiversity conservation, while strengthening and preserving local cultures. We seek the emergence of a truly grassroots process within the local community that achieves a healthy mix of protected rainforests, wetlands and marine areas, managed forests, diverse agro-ecosystems, and human services like education, health care, and ecotourism. We believe achieving this will provide Talamanca's current and future inhabitants with economic stability and an attractive quality of life.

- Services provided for the more than 500 annual volunteers from Costa Rica and the rest of the world is seven times more lucrative for the Gandoca community than the sale of an average yearly lot of turtle eggs
- Managed tourist visits to the nesting beach, add a source of community income
- ANAI's project is now providing technical assistance to fledgling sea turtle conservation projects throughout Central America

Land conservation

The national parks in Talamanca occupy mostly high-altitude, uninhabitable zones. ANAI, in collaboration with the Costa Rica government, created the 25,000-acre Gandoca-Manzanillo National Wildlife Refuge in 1985. This area, which includes a 12,000-acre marine area, contains at least five ecosystems found nowhere else in Costa Rica. The refuge is pioneering a "mixed management" protected area concept, meaning that private property rights are respected and normal human activities go on, but with special restrictions to protect the environment.

In 1991, ANAI partnered with the Nature Conservancy to establish the Talamanca/Caribbean Biological Corridor, and later



connected it to the San San/Pondsak National Wildlife Refuge in Panama, which includes 33,000 acres of coastal wetlands. Fifty years from now, these refuges and corridor may be the only Continental Divide-to-the-sea forested area to exist in the world.

ANAI uses multiple tools to conserve land. These include land swaps, in which farmers receive needed agricultural lands in exchange for forests, agricultural planning that is compatible with biodiversity goals, reforestation programs and, as a last resort, land purchases.

Ecotourism

ANAI has helped more than 12 ecotourism organizations get off the ground. ANAI's work in ecotourism combines four objectives. It must:

- Benefit local people economically
- Increase their self-sufficiency in a sustainable manner
- Strengthen their organizational capacity
- Actively contribute to biodiversity conservation

The organizations ANAI has worked with, together with APPTA, are now combining their experiences, talents, and diverse cultures to begin offering tourists and those working in the conservation field the opportunity to learn about sustainable tropical agriculture and forestry, community conservation, and community development.

Education

Underlying all of ANAI's work is education. All programs contain practical training and educational outreach for landowners, school children, employees, volunteers, visitors, and the public at large. On the Educational Farm (*Finca Educativa*) that ANAI helped establish, ANAI engages deeply with all key stakeholders in the community, giving high priority to the local Indian population to help develop the practical management skills necessary for making this a self-sufficient training center that will serve Talamanca for generations.

Components of ANAI's educational program include:

- Basic biology and ecology
- Animal husbandry
- Small business management
- Ecotourism
- Reforestation
- Restoration of endangered species
- Economic sustainability—enabling individuals and groups to define their own paths to sustainability and self-sufficiency

“Because of ANAI’s efforts, Talamanca is now a region where rural economic development goes hand in hand with the conservation of biodiversity and natural resources.”

—Thomas J. Dodd, U.S. Ambassador to Costa Rica, 1998–2001



The future

ANAI's projects have been designed for economic sustainability. However, they do not generate enough positive cash flow on their own to scale to the level that ANAI knows is possible. ANAI wants to invest in technology and other resources to share best practices—in Costa Rica and worldwide—while it continues to grow its award-winning programs and innovate in the vital arena of economic and ecological sustainability.

ANAI and SPN

- SPN has helped ANAI with strategic planning to ensure self-sustainability.
- SPN worked with ANAI on legal structure and other advice.
- SPN provided funding and financial planning at critical junctures.

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ANAI's philosophy:

We seek a transformation of the management of land in the wet tropics. By creating sustainable economic and environmental benefits for the poor majority, we generate local proponents of preserving biodiversity. We founded our work in Talamanca on four core beliefs:

- 1. No inherent contradiction exists between economic development and environmental conservation. If communities and nations are to thrive, development and conservation must work together.**
- 2. The best stewards of the tropical lowlands are the campesino and Indian farmers who have dedicated their lives to these lands.**
- 3. All natural tropical areas that are not effectively protected will be radically altered during our lifetime. We must work to protect these areas and preserve their biodiversity for future generations to enjoy.**
- 4. Within 100 years, the natural forest and other unique primary ecosystems will be Talamanca's most economically valuable asset.**