

**Global Forest Generation Report to Oblong Trees
January 2022
Acción Andina Season 2021/22**



Planting *Polylepis* in a reforestation campaign, Vilcanota, December 2021. Credit: ECOAN

Global Forest Generation (GFG) is enormously grateful for Oblong Tree's support of *Acción Andina* in the 2021/22 season. Your generous donation allows GFG to provide strategic, management, financial and technical support to on-the-ground implementing partners across the Andes to protect and restore a uniquely important forest ecosystem.

In the 2021/22 season, which runs through March 2022, *Acción Andina* partners across five countries have grown and planted 1,005,785 native trees so far. Approximately 1 million more native trees will be grown and planted by the end of March. Oblong Trees supported the planting of 2,000 native trees in the Vilcanota project in Peru, *Acción Andina's* flagship project and inspiration for the *Acción Andina* holistic ecosystem restoration model. This report details activities completed by *Acción Andina* co-founder and implementing partner Asociación Ecosistemas Andinos (ECOAN) in Vilcanota in 2021 and Oblong Trees' contribution.

ABOUT GLOBAL FOREST GENERATION

Global Forest Generation is a co-founder and the lead strategic partner of *Acción Andina*, a multi-country network that encompasses six countries. GFG creates large-scale initiatives and enables their growth and success through technical, management and finance mobilization support to all local partners. GFG specializes in project development, bringing together the resources, partnerships and capacities necessary to create and sustain initiatives that scale, resulting in long-term, sustainable impacts. GFG also serves as the main point of contact for donors, investors and the international conservation and development community: it ensures quality, long-term sustainability, and effective implementation during all project phases and provides key communication and reporting capacities.

ABOUT ACCIÓN ANDINA

Acción Andina is a Latin-American led, native forest landscape restoration initiative created to respond to the pressing needs of Andean communities to protect their forests, restore watersheds and support local livelihoods affected by the climate crisis. *Acción Andina* aims to protect and restore one million hectares of high Andean, native forest ecosystems in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela over the next 25 years. *Acción Andina's* prime objective is to establish fully-functioning high Andean forest ecosystems in strategic landscapes across the Andes through a unique model building on the particularly successful conservation work of Peru-based Asociación Ecosistemas Andinos (ECOAN) over the past 20 years.

Acción Andina creates a network of grassroots conservation organizations and local communities committed to creating forest ecosystems that endure for generations. Significantly, communities in the areas targeted for landscape-level restoration are in agreement that the best and highest value of the targeted, denuded landscapes is to return them to forest and wetlands to provide long-term water and land security. The long-term benefits of this initiative include increased water security, biodiversity conservation, carbon sequestration, enhanced livelihoods, and support and protection of cultural and spiritual values.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ACCIÓN ANDINA IN THE HIGH ANDES

Climate change is making life progressively more difficult in the Andes, especially due to its impact on water stability¹. High Andean forests, particularly *Polylepis*, capture water from glacial runoff as well as mist rising from the cloud forests below, and slowly release the water to build permanent streams and wetlands, as well as carbon-rich soils and ecosystems. They also serve as natural water reservoirs and provide freshwater to hundreds of thousands of people in local communities and cities below, including major Latin-American metropolitan areas. As the glaciers disappear due to climate change, these forests take on outsized importance: areas without these protective forests are increasingly experiencing disastrous cycles of drought and flood. These impacts are linked to migration out of communities and into urban centres or the Amazon rainforest, putting more pressure on natural resource use in those areas while local economies dry up. High Andean forest restoration thus helps increase water security, provides new incomes, boosts community health, and counteracts cultural loss.

¹ De Haan, S. (2019) *To Protect the Amazon Rainforest and Beyond, We Must Start in the Andes*. Available at: <https://time.com/5702556/climate-change-andes-mountains/>.

Harnessing local and indigenous principles of “*Ayni and Minka*”, which in high Andean cultures comes close to the meaning of “reciprocity and shared communal work” to collaboratively create a forest conservation model driven by and for local and indigenous communities is ECOAN’s unique innovation. It results in forging trusting, enduring relationships with the people planting and protecting the forests as a communal service where every villager participates, and a particularly cost-effective, as well as a profoundly culturally-respectful approach to restoration. Successful restoration requires intimate knowledge of culture and language in the high Andes as most communities are indigenous and Quechua-speaking, and live predominantly agrarian lives where they share everything communally. Their traditions and ways of living are centuries old and are actively protected by community leaders. After centuries of deforestation, ECOAN’s model adopting local principles and values to motivate and organize communities has brought people together to bring native forests back.

High Andean forests are culturally significant, particularly *Polylepis* forests which are called “enchanted forests” in Quechua. They provide the overstory and main structure for forests that contain a diversity of plants valued by these communities as native foods and medicines as well as provide water for agriculture and general livelihoods. Trees are also harvested for fuel and construction, a scarce resource at high altitudes that *Acción Andina* is working with partners and communities to manage sustainably and reduce pressure by providing alternative energy sources such as solar panels, gas stoves or fuel wood from sustainable fuelwood plantations.

ABOUT ASOCIACIÓN ECOSISTEMAS ANDINOS

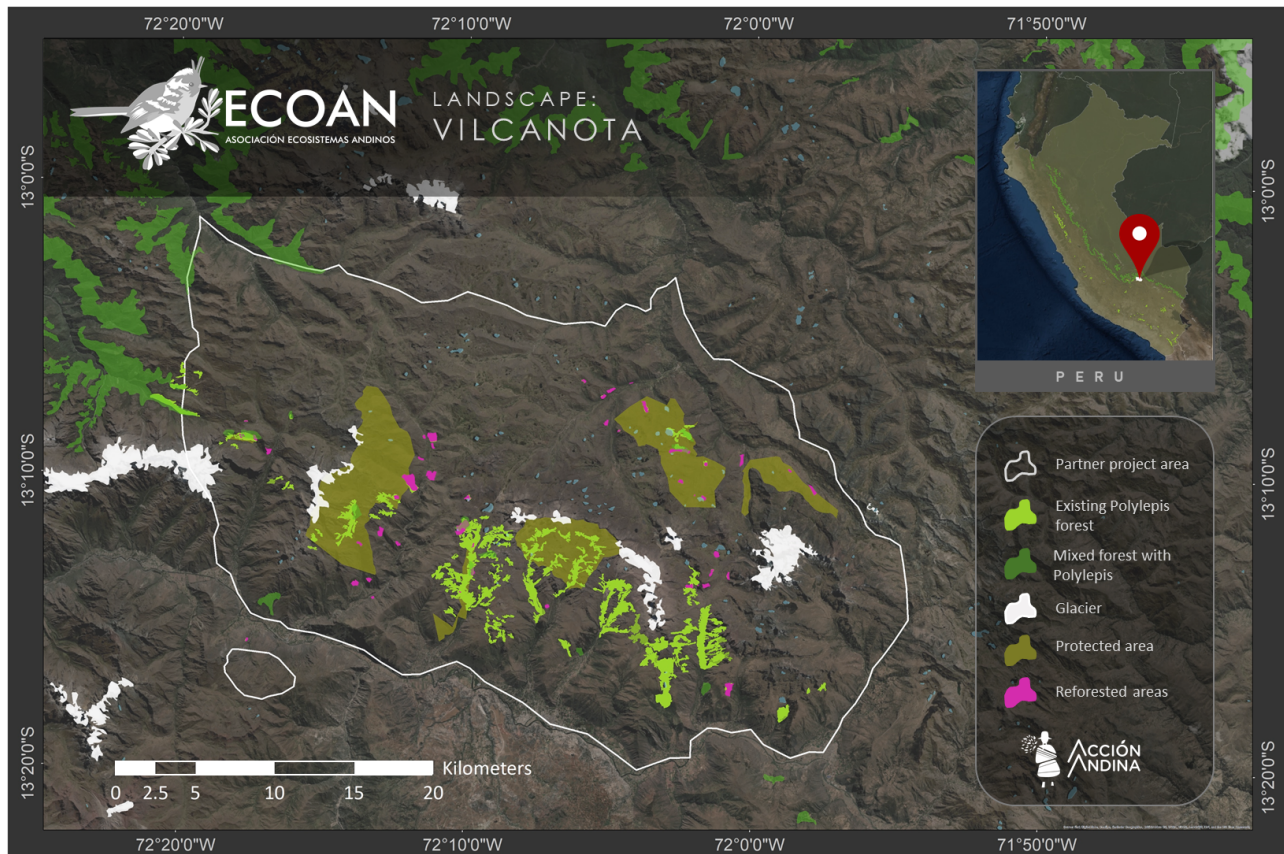
[*Asociación Ecosistemas Andinos*](#) (ECOAN) is a visionary South American conservation nonprofit and the lead implementing and administrative agency of all *Acción Andina* projects. Its President, Constantino Auccha Chutas (Tino), is the Executive Director of *Acción Andina*. For over twenty years, ECOAN has been partnering with indigenous communities in the Vilcanota mountains to provide long-term restoration and protection of native *Polylepis* forests in the high Andes of Peru. Since 2014, when they launched their renowned reforestation festival *Queuña Raymi*, ECOAN planted over three million native trees. ECOAN currently has three projects in *Acción Andina*: in the Vilcanota mountains, Nor Yauyos Cochas Reserve, and in Huaraz. Vilcanota serves as the model project for the entire *Acción Andina* network. Other *Acción Andina* partners are following Tino’s and ECOAN’s leadership to replicate his successful collaboration with Andean communities to bring back forests.

ABOUT THE VILCANOTA PROJECT

Carried out in one of the most emblematic Andean mountain landscapes above the Sacred Valley of the Inca in Cusco, the Vilcanota Project covers 102,000 hectares where 21 indigenous communities are restoring their degraded and deforested communal lands with native *Polylepis* forests, primarily for increased water security. Launched by ECOAN in 2001, this project is the model and inspiration for the entire *Acción Andina* initiative, representing the most advanced community engagement and forest restoration program of *Acción Andina*. Every year, thousands of people from local indigenous communities gather to celebrate *Queuña Raymi*, a massive collaborative tree planting festival gathering up to 1000 people per day. Villagers -- from young to old -- climb steep mountain paths together to plant hundreds of thousands of trees across festival days. Over the last decade, ECOAN’s Vilcanota project has become one of Peru’s most successful forest conservation projects.

In addition to reforestation and forest protection activities, project priorities encompass local conservation leadership training, food security programs, and support of microbusinesses that celebrate and promote indigenous culture. For example, distributing artisanal clean energy cookstoves, producing indigenous textiles, and increasingly supporting mountain guiding ecotourism on the ancestral Inca Trails.

The following map shows the general Vilcanota project area, including existing *Polylepis* forests and previously reforested sites.



2021 ACTIVITIES

Ecosystem Restoration

In general, the annual restoration activity schedule is designed around biological and climatological seasons with planting taking place just before or during the local wet season from November through March.

In all *Acción Andina* projects, implementing partners choose species that are endemic to the area and altitude, and that they have the technical knowledge to propagate and grow in the nursery. Other native species are chosen for their benefits to local wildlife (such as some flowering shrubs) or that are threatened and restoration is part of the species' conservation strategy. In the Vilcanota project, *Polylepis* cuttings from existing forests were collected between January and April 2021 for cultivation over the next 8-10 months in community nurseries. Funding and technical support is

provided for building and nursery materials by *Acción Andina*, in exchange for communities providing nursery sites close to water sources and helping to build the nurseries.

ECOAN currently works with 19 community nurseries across various communities in Vilcanota. This year they constructed one new nursery in the community of Yanomayo, bringing the total number of nurseries to 20, and expanded capacity at an existing nursery in Cuncani. Across all nurseries 475,000 *Polylepis* were in production from April. ECOAN conducts regular training on *Polylepis* cultivation and production across nurseries to nursery technicians, who are members of the local communities and work in the nurseries according to a rotation.

ECOAN kicked off the reforestation season with a meeting on 21 November in Ollantaytambo district with 21 community leaders. The purpose of the meeting was to concretize the reforestation campaign schedule for the season, beginning with the first campaign on 30 November. The following table shows how many *Polylepis* were planted and in which community by December 2021 (in green), and plans for reforestation campaigns through to March 2022.

Community	Number of trees	Reforestation Campaign Date
Quishuarani	24,400	30/11/2021
Huama	27,000	5/12/2021
Yanomayo	18,000	9/12/2021
Huilloc	60,000	16/12/2021
Cusibamba-Ccorcca	47,000	19/12/2022
Quellccanca	23,000	22/12/2021
Pampacorral	21,000	29/12/2022
Tambohuaylla	10,000	8/01/2022
Lares Ayllu	15,000	9/01/2022
Cuncani	40,000	13/01/2022
Abra Malaga-Thastayoc	15,000	19/01/2022
Cancha Cancha	10,000	27/01/2022
Tacllapata	10,000	27/01/2022
Rumira Sondormayo	20,000	6/02/2022
Patacancha	60,000	6/02/2022
Huacahuasi	50,000	10/02/2021
Ollanta	18,000	13/02/2022
Chupani	14,000	17/02/2022
Chauillacocha	15,000	24/02/2022
Mantanay	15,000	27/02/2022
Patacancha y Rumira Sondormayo (Microphila)	5,000	03/03/2022
TOTAL	475,000	

During reforestation campaigns, communities come together to plant during a festival, called Queuña Raymi, with traditional dances, foods, and treks up the hillside to plant the *Polylepis* saplings. Saplings are planted into bare, rocky soil without soil enrichment materials used.

By the end of December, 220,400 *Polylepis* were planted across 7 communities in Vilcanota. Between 250-380 community members participated in each campaign. The 2,000 trees Oblong Trees supported this year are included in the 23,000 trees planted in Quellccanca on 22 December 2021, which included 265 community members planting trees. Approximately 3,900 *Polylepis* are planted per hectare, making the Quellccanca reforestation site about 5.9 hectares and Oblong Trees' contribution specifically about 0.5 hectares.

ECOAN conducts annual monitoring on reforested sites. Survival rate results from areas reforested between 2018-2020 vary between 78%-85%. Monitoring results for areas reforested in 2021/22 will be available in late 2022 to early 2023.



Polylepis growing in a community nursery in July, 2021. Credit: ECOAN



Polylepis ready to be transported and planted in December 2021. Credit: ECOAN



Beginning Queñua Raymi, tree planting festival in December 2021. Credit: ECOAN



Transporting saplings for planting in reforestation campaign, December 2021. Credit: ECOAN

Community Engagement

Community engagement and provision of services to communities is a key component of the *Acción Andina* model. Together with local communities, *Acción Andina* partners identify needed services and materials that improve natural resource management, address drivers of deforestation, and support livelihoods. In Vilcanota, ECOAN delivered clean cookstoves made in the Puno region to five communities, benefiting 330 families. They also conducted forest fire prevention and management workshops to 20 community leaders.



Distribution of clean cookstoves in November, 2021. Credit: ECOAN



Forest fire prevention workshop conducted by ECOAN in August 2021. Credit: ECOAN