

Global Forest Generation Report to Oblong Trees
January 2023
Acción Andina Season 2022/23



Community reforestation in Cucani, Vilcanota, Peru. Dec 2022. Credit: Gregorio Ferro

[Global Forest Generation](#) (GFG) is grateful for Oblong Tree's support of [Acción Andina](#) in the 2022/23 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 2022/23 season, which runs through March 2023, *Acción Andina* partners across the initiative have so far grown and planted 1,076,606 native trees, and will continue throughout January through March to plant a total of 2.75 million native trees. Oblong Trees supported the planting of 4,500 native trees in the Vilcanota project in Peru, *Acción Andina*'s flagship project carried out by *Acción Andina* co-founder Asociación Ecosistemas Andinos (ECOAN).

In November 2022, ECOAN and *Acción Andina* President Constantino ("Tino") Auca Chutas was awarded [Champion of the Earth](#) for Inspiration and Action by the UN. This well-deserved award celebrates Tino's life's work protecting and restoring the high Andes in Peru with local communities, which inspired the creation of *Acción Andina* in 2018 to take his community-driven ecosystem restoration model across the entire Andes.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ACCIÓN ANDINA IN THE HIGH ANDES

Hundreds of millions of people across South America depend on the glacial melt and humidity captured and released by high Andean forests and ecosystems. However, glaciers are quickly vanishing due to climate change, and centuries of deforestation and land use change have dwindled high Andean forests to 3-10% of their original extension. Not only does this put communities, downstream cities and major urban centers at severe risks of water stress; it also disproportionately affects the most vulnerable communities – the people of the high Andes and their unique indigenous culture — widening already-existing inequity.

Acción Andina builds on ECOAN President Constantino Aucca's 30 years of successful, community-led conservation work in Peru, where he discovered he could utilize ancestral Andean principles of "Ayni and Minka" – a technique last used by the Inka to foster community collaboration and reciprocity – to collectively mobilize thousands of community members to restore their lands.

Main activities of *Acción Andina* include: identifying, supporting and empowering local conservation leaders to implement and sustain restoration projects alongside local communities; protecting high Andean forests through the creation of protected areas, indigenous land titling, and community conservation management; conducting large-scale restoration through reforestation and natural regeneration; supporting new community income opportunities via local micro-businesses (e.g. ecotourism, sustainable agriculture, native plant nurseries) that are mostly led by young people and women.

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. 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.

2022 PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Native Ecosystem Restoration

Acción Andina is administered by 15 month seasons, from January through March of the following year. This means that *Acción Andina* partners begin new season activities while finishing the last season. Seed and cutting collection thus begin while partners are also in midst of reforestation activities for the previous season. Collection can only be done during a specific time period (January through March, sometimes April), at the end of the Andean rainy season when trees have grown more branches to collect cuttings from. By strictly following this protocol, 100-200 cuttings can be harvested from a single branch without negatively impacting the tree's growth and survival. In the Vilcanota project, ECOAN had 520,000 *Polylepis* seedlings in production by April 2022.

Across all of its projects, ECOAN uses the bare-root propagation method. It involves planting seedlings directly into the nursery's soil, eliminating the need for millions of non-biodegradable plastic bags to grow the seedlings. This method also results in healthy saplings that can be easily transported in greater numbers to the reforestation site without the weight of the soil contained in the plastic bags. ECOAN conducted a training workshop on this method with all *Acción Andina* partners in March 2022.



Tending to *Polylepis* seedlings in a community nursery in Patacancha, Vilcanota, Peru. Oct 2022. Credit: Gregorio Ferro

ECOAN is working with 21 local indigenous communities in Vilcanota. All 21 communities renewed their land management agreements this season, including plans for protection and restoration. In a series of interactive sessions with community leadership and members from April through July, communities also determine the schedule for the Queuña Raymi community tree-planting festivals, which typically begin in November. A total of 312,000 native trees have been planted so far, including the 4,500 contributed by Oblong Trees. The following table shows how many trees were planted and in which community by December 2022. Reforestation site polygons will be available in April 2023.

Community Name	Number of Trees	Number of Hectares	Number of Participants
Yanamayo	30000	6.75	130
Quellcancca	25000	5.63	160
Huacahuasi.	60000	13.50	250
Cuncani	58500	13.16	210
Huama	19000	4.28	135
Tambohuaylla	21000	4.73	130
Lares Ayllu	21000	4.73	150
Huilloc	50000	11.25	250
Pampacorral	27500	6.19	149
TOTAL	312000	70.20	1564



Community meeting to organize restoration activities for 2022/23 in Vilcanota, Peru. April 2022. Credit: ECOAN



Reforestation site preparation in Rumira Sondormayo, Vilcanota, Peru. Oct 2022. Credit: Hermogenes Quispe



Community reforestation campaign in Cucani, Vilcanota, Peru. Dec 2022. Credit: Gregorio Ferro

Conservation of Existing Forests

Conservation of existing forests through the establishment of protected areas, including titling ancestral indigenous lands and implementing long-term conservation plans by communities. Communities are driven to protect these forests for their importance to water security, but also economic value such as in ecotourism. Private Conservation Areas (PCAs) are legally recognized protected areas that need to be renewed every two years. “Private” here refers to land owned by local communities as well as by individuals. Neither ECOAN nor any other *Acción Andina* partner purchases land directly for conservation. ECOAN works closely with communities to create PCAs - the current network in Vilcanota spans 8,600 hectares.

ECOAN also combines PCAs with ecotourism activities in Vilcanota through the Vilcanota Trek, a hiking path winding through nine PCAs managed by 14 communities. Approximately 10,800 community members are affected by this work, as they use the trails themselves to travel and earn from the income of camping sites (including bathrooms, accommodation). ECOAN helped community members clean and maintain 40 kilometers of the Vilcanota Trek between October and December 2022.

ECOAN also continued its work with communities on forest fire prevention and managing, involving over 120 people in hands-on, practical workshops.



Forest fire prevention workshop with community members in Vilcanota, Peru. Sept. 2022. Credit: ECOAN

Community Engagement

Community engagement and provision of products and services remains a vital 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 400 clean cookstoves made in the Puno region to two communities, Huilloc and Patacancha, in October 2022.



Artisanal clean cookstove distribution in Huilloc community, Vilcanota, Peru. Oct 2022. Credit_ Jhon Cansaya

[Global Forest Generation](#) is a co-founder and the lead strategic partner of *Acción Andina*. 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.

[Asociación Ecosistemas Andinos \(ECOAN\)](#) is the lead implementing and administrative agency of all *Acción Andina* projects. Its President, Constantino Auccha Chutas (Tino), is also the President of *Acción Andina*. ECOAN currently has three projects in *Acción Andina*: in the Vilcanota mountains, Nor Yauyos Cochas Reserve, and in Huaraz. As *Acción Andina*'s lead implementing agency, ECOAN ensures quality project management, data collection and monitoring, and coordinates local partner communications to resolve day-to-day operational challenges and facilitate information exchange among partners.