

# Lessons from the field

December 2017

## HIGHLIGHTS

**Adaptive management useful for small, community focused NGO**

**The Open Standards helped prioritize strategies & funding with low budget**

**Strong leadership allowed team to stay on track as they institutionalized the use of Open Standards tools and Miradi Software**



FOUNDATIONS  
OF SUCCESS

# Making the most of Conservation Dollars

## Prioritizing as a small NGO



This month, we bring you an incredible example of adaptive management in action, complete with cute, charismatic monkeys. [Proyecto Tití](#) has worked since 1985 to conserve cotton-top tamarins and their habitat, the tropical dry forests of northern Colombia. The project, funded by the small organization *Fundación Proyecto Tití*, has successfully prioritized strategies and budget allocations due to strong leadership supported by adaptive management.

The [Wildlife Conservation Network](#), a *Fundación Proyecto Tití* partner and supporter, introduced *Proyecto Tití*'s team to the concepts of adaptive management. The team then developed their 5-year strategic plan using [Miradi](#) software and the [Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation](#). Over the past few years, the team has taken their project's strategic plan through three annual iterations of the adaptive management cycle of the Open Standards.

The *Proyecto Tití* team has identified two major benefits of using the *Open Standards*. First, the team has been able to learn from their experience and adapt their approaches and resources accordingly. Second, the adaptive management process encourages team building. Each team member understands where they fit into the project and how their work contributes to achieving *Proyecto Tití*'s goals.

# criticize

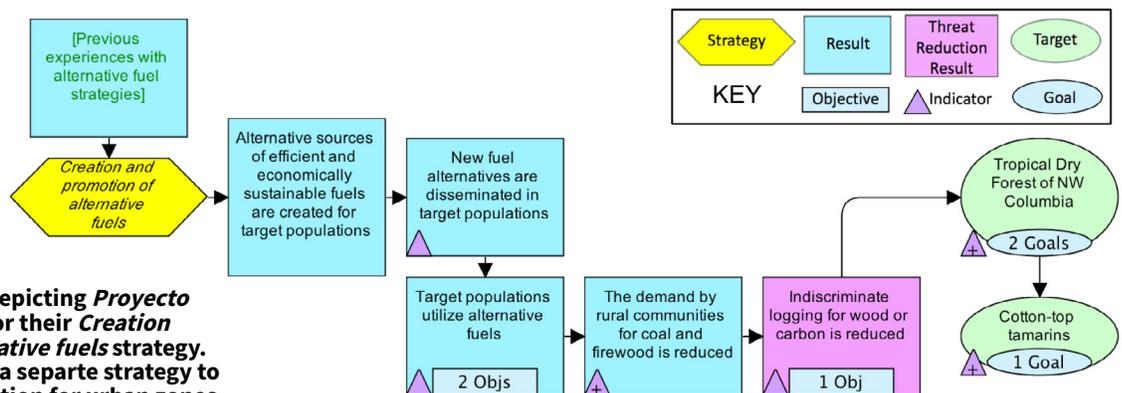


## Learning and Adapting

Adaptive management has allowed the team to dynamically assess the effectiveness of their strategies, re-prioritize these strategies, and manage funding appropriately. *Proyecto Tití* has tracked their strategies over time using the *Open Standards* monitoring and evaluation processes. These processes include setting objectives and goals along a theory of change and tracking the progress of these achievements with indicators (Figure 1). As the team tracked the progress of their strategies towards achievement of objective and goals, trends began to emerge.

The *Proyecto Tití* team made an important discovery while reviewing their monitoring data last year. One of their strategic approaches focused on offering fuel alternatives, such as natural gas, to communities in order to reduce logging for firewood (Figure 1). In 2013, the team surveyed the communities on firewood use to better understand trends in the area. Firewood consumption was slowly reducing, but not as quickly as expected. Anecdotal testimonies from the team and community members shed more light on forest use trends in the area. This qualitative and quantitative testing of a key assumption of the strategy indicated that local logging for firewood is a minor driver of the logging threat; the more substantial driver is demand for charcoal from urban restaurants. The team recognized that offering fuel alternatives to local communities was not the best approach for reducing the threat, and will shift their resources toward control and enforcement of the charcoal production for urban areas.

**Figure 1. Results chain depicting *Proyecto Tití*'s theory of change for their *Creation and promotion of alternative fuels* strategy. They have since created a separate strategy to address charcoal production for urban zones.**



### PROYECTO TITÍ

Conserving the Critically Endangered Cotton-top Tamarin in Colombia

Founded by Dr. Anne Savage in 1985, *Proyecto Tití* is managed by the small non-profit organization, *Fundación Proyecto Tití*. The project works to guarantee a long-term future for the critically endangered cotton-top tamarin and its forest home in northwest Colombia. To do so while ensuring that conservation activities are in harmony with the economic needs of local communities, the project combines the following:

- Field research and scientific assessments of populations and habitats
- Forest management including protection and restoration of habitat and connectivity
- Environmental education and awareness raising initiatives
- Community programs which involve local people in culturally relevant, action-based programs



Photo by: Suzi Eszterhas

# Team Building

An equally important component of project success lies within the team dynamic. With strong leadership supporting them, the *Proyecto Tití* team is encouraged to be highly engaged in the adaptive management process. Every year, the team meets to review the monitoring data and to reflect on the progress of their strategies towards the achievement of their project objectives and goals. These gatherings allow the team to examine what has been working and what needs to change in order to achieve the project's goals. The process also provides a venue for the team to understand where their work fits into the larger project scope, and how their individual strategies complement one another.

## What's Next?

*Proyecto Tití* has come to the end of their first 5-year strategic plan using the *Open Standards*. The use of the *Open Standards* as a strategic planning framework contributed to the success of the project and offered hope to the cotton-top tamarin population. As a result of this success, the team will continue to use the framework to develop future plans, including their new 5-year plan in February, 2018. Running a successful project means evaluating your work and adjusting your actions based on new information. The conservation community is looking forward to the lessons this pioneering team learns as they continue to practice adaptive management with promising outcomes!

**Interested in learning more about *Proyecto Tití* and their adaptive management journey?**

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