



Yachana Foundation recognised worldwide

by Douglas McMeekin, Executive Director, Yachana Foundation

The Yachana Foundation, formally FUNEDSIN, is being recognised worldwide for its innovation in sustainable development, tourism and conservation. Increasingly protected forests are becoming more important for the preservation of species. In last year's newsletter (September 2006) we reported the discovery of a new species of Glass Frog in the 3,000 acre Yachana Reserve. The purchase of this valuable contiguous tract of land, most of which is primary rainforest, was bought primarily through the support of Rainforest Concern.

Thanks to the collaborative research of Global Vision International and the Ecuadorian National Science Museum, another species of Glass Frog was found in the reserve in April 2008, so far this rare species has only been discovered in one other place in Ecuador - Santa Cecilia. Tragically, this site has been completely deforested destroying the habitat for this species. Today the Yachana Reserve is the only known place in Ecuador where this species still has a chance.

In December 2007, Yachana Lodge, which is part of the Foundation, was recognised by the international tourism organisation Skål as the best worldwide example of Education in Ecotourism. In February 2008, the Lodge received another award for being the best example of Responsible Tourism in the world by the Educational Travel Conference. And in April and May 2008, the New York Times ran two articles on the work of the Foundation in combating global warming, with its protected forest and the pivotal role of youth education in conserving the Amazon. Last but not least in June 2008, the National Geographic and Ashoka Changemakers awarded the Yachana Foundation with the prize for being one of the three best examples of Geotourism in the world.

This valuable and much needed attention is recognition of the important social and environmental work the foundation is doing. One of



A dance performance at the Yachana Reserve

the most significant social projects of the Foundation is the Yachana Technical High School. Using the forest as their "living classroom" to learn about the value of the rainforest and how to protect it the school's innovative approach is helping to meet the needs of children and teenagers from poor families throughout the Amazon region of Ecuador.

Working closely with the students from the high school, Quest Overseas has this year embarked on a number of highly successful collaborative conservation projects. These included: trail maintenance; building a thatch roof at a spectacular look out point; working with Rob Nivison,

a UK investigator in BioChar (putting carbon into the soil to raise its productivity); tree planting and participating with the students in some of their other agricultural and conservation projects. In addition to the activities, just being with and getting to know the students was a highly rewarding experience for the Quest participants.

Yachana believes that the future of the rainforest is inextricably linked to the well-being of its inhabitants and that only through education will meaningful long-term changes begin to be made to protect this invaluable resource.



Sustainable agriculture and conservation training