

Iwokrama International Centre

Since its foundation in 1996, the Iwokrama International Centre (IIC) has developed an international reputation as a pioneer in the sustainable use of rainforests and in local community relations. It is now transforming itself from a purely scientific institution into a new commercial business model with significant potential for growth in income generation by putting its precious assets (certified sustainable timber, eco-tourism, forest management training and intellectual property and other services) to more effective work, while retaining an important research role, with the emphasis on climate change.

- Business revenues have risen from 23 % in 2005 (before the 2006-2010 business plan began) to 27 % in 2006 and 80 % in 2007 (the Centre received its first income from sustainable timber in 2007). The forecast for 2008 is a further growth of 25 % on a constant budget. This demonstrates the drive of the business plan.
- In February 2007, Iwokrama embarked on a unique five-year experiment in sustainable timber harvesting where the local communities are all shareholders (the only one of its kind in the tropical world). About half the workforce is from Fair View village which has titled land to part of the Iwokrama Forest.
- In January 2008, the Iwokrama Forest achieved Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification making it the only institution in the Guyana Shield countries to have this achievement.
- In 10 years of existence, Iwokrama has brought to Guyana some US\$13.5 million in foreign exchange.
- Iwokrama has launched significant capacity-building initiatives for local communities.
- Iwokrama currently employs around 70 members of staff; about 70 % are from the local communities.
- Iwokrama contributes to the local economy at its field station through monthly salary payments to local community staff totalling US\$70,000.
- Iwokrama is gradually positioning itself to help play, in collaboration with Guyana's national agencies, a role in supporting Guyana's participation in the international and regional climate change agenda. It is embracing overseas involvement in this work.

The Iwokrama International Centre for Rain Forest Conservation and Development is an autonomous non-profit institution established by Guyana and the Commonwealth. The Centre manages the nearly one million acre (371,000 hectare) Iwokrama Forest in central Guyana to show how tropical forests can be conserved and sustainably used for ecological, social and economic benefits to local, national and international communities.

Other Facts

- Iwokrama continues to play a leading role in the development of tourism in Guyana.
 - Iwokrama's 900-metre airstrip at its field station, funded by the Government of Guyana, became operational in January 2007, thus providing greater access for visitors to the area.
 - Recently, Iwokrama was highly praised by an independent USAID report which said that "Iwokrama is one of the most, if not the single most important site for birding and nature tourism in Guyana". To support this niche market, in January 2008 Iwokrama started to upgrade its facilities to include an additional 3 cabins, thus meeting the requirements of 8 double occupancy cabins by birding groups. Iwokrama is also now training 17 birding guides with funding from the European Commission.
- Iwokrama has established a solid reputation within Guyana and beyond for its training programmes, particularly in the field of protected area management.
- Iwokrama has built up an extensive library of scientific research into biodiversity conservation, sustainable forest management, eco and nature tourism, protected areas management and participatory approaches to business development.
- Iwokrama received funding from the European Commission for three research-based projects – developing a forestry research network in ACP (Africa, Caribbean and Pacific) countries, investigating payments for environmental services and examining the use of chainsaws in sustainable forestry practices.
- The Iwokrama Forest is also home to the "giants of El Dorado" including harpy eagles, black caimans, jaguars, giant anteaters, giant otters, anacondas, bush master snakes, capibaras, giant river turtles and the arapaima fishes amongst others.

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