



TV

UNITED NATIONS NATIONS UNIES

U.N. IN ACTION

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Programme No. 864

Length: 4'27"

DARIEN FOREST – SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

VIDEO

JUNGLE (14")

PANAMA CANAL (13")

HIGHWAY (9.5")

HIGHWAY STOPS/PAN TO RIVER
(17")

JUNGLE (28")

AUDIO

NARRATION

This is one of the last extensive areas of pristine jungle in the Western Hemisphere. But it's a biological treasure trove that's under threat – from agricultural practices and the onrush of development.

Since the building of the famous Canal a century ago, Panama, a small Central American country, has been almost synonymous with global communications.

Slicing through the country the mighty Pan-American Highway connects North, Central and South America. But the link is not unbroken.

In Eastern Panama the highway peters out and comes to a halt blocked by rivers and the forest. This is the Darien Gap. From here travellers can only continue by canoe or foot into the Darien Jungle, a UNESCO world heritage site.

The region is one of Latin America's most

biologically diverse areas but it is also the poorest and the least developed in Panama. The government has identified Darien as a high priority for biodiversity conservation and for human development. Indigenous groups, Afro-Panamanians and white farmers live in and around the jungle.

ANIMALS (18")

In this natural paradise, insects, birds and mammals abound. But their very existence is being threatened. The majestic Harpy Eagle, the national bird of Panama, is an endangered species. So is the famous iguana.

HIGHWAY (13")

Discussions are underway to complete the Pan American Highway. If and when it happens, this area will be further opened up to the threat of unsustainable agriculture and deforestation.

WOMEN CUTTING CANE (13")

As the Darien region's population grows, the search is on for agricultural practices that will preserve the fragile ecosystem and support the local population.

CANE FIELD/SLASH AND BURN (18")

Growing sugar cane has long been recognized as a threat to primary forest. Once the soil is exhausted, growers move on to exploit a new piece of land. Slash and burn agriculture can damage irreversibly the jungle's capacity to renew itself.

SUGAR CANE FIELD (13")

With the support of the UN Development Programme and Ted Turner's UN Foundation, a

local women's cooperative has learnt how to grow sugarcane in an environmentally friendly way.

C/U OF SUGAR MILL (18")

Adopting a sustainable approach has another important advantage. It enables communities to remain in one area by removing the need for farmers to go further into the forest and clear new fields from the virgin jungle. Evelia Ortega of the Indigenous Women Cooperative.

EVELIA ORTEGA ON CAMERA (17")

ORTEGA: (in Spanish)

"We try to conserve the soil, because we now work the land without burning the trees. We keep everything as it is. We plant without burning."

WOMEN MEETING (19")

NARRATION

In this way, all forest dwellers, whites, indigenous peoples, and Afro-Panamanians are developing a stake in the protection of their natural environment. Co-management is essential so everybody has a say and a share in how new ideas are introduced. Alfonso Sanabria, director of the Darien Project.

ALFONSO SANABRIA ON CAMERA (15")

SANABRIA:

"We see a lot of opportunities for sustainable initiatives, like forest management for instance. There are ways of getting resources from the

forest, without destroying it.”

NARRATION

JUNGLE

International help is opening the way to a balanced approach to the inevitable development of the Darien isthmus. The idea is to ensure that people here CAN make a living but leave the natural wonders intact for generations to come.

LOGO (20”)

This report was prepared by Niels von Kohl and Chaim Litewski for the United Nations.