Project Summary

Project Background
Cotopaxi province is one of the poorest regions in Ecuador, characterized by difficult production conditions, lacking infrastructure, high poverty and child mortality. Agricultural production, the main source of income, is based on smallholdings of 0.5 to 2 ha. The area’s growth potential is limited by a number of factors such as extreme poverty amongst the indigenous population, low agricultural output, difficult access due to the remoteness of the area, a fragile environmental equilibrium etc. In addition, the area was badly affected by an earthquake in 1996.

Project Objectives
The project used a multi-directional approach pursuing two main objectives:
- Completion of relief actions initiated by the EC and other donors in order to repair the damages caused by the earthquake and to reactivate infrastructure and production structures.
- Development of this marginal area taking into account the prevailing limitations and the social traditions of the population.

Project Activities
The project had five main components, namely:
- Restoring the basic infrastructure (access roads, irrigation systems etc.)
- Reactivating the local economy (marketing of products, creation of small private enterprises)
- Natural resources management (reforestation, forests with barrier function, terraces, drainage)
- Improving local and regional social services (health, education, hygiene and drinking-water)
- Strengthening rural organisations incl. women’s groups (community organisations, cooperatives, etc.)

Implementation Features
The project combined aspects of relief management, integrated rural development at communal and local levels, and natural resource management. Both, rural communal development and infrastructure & environmental measures, are closely interconnected, e.g. in reforestation activities, which at the same time serve as income generation projects on communal level. The project was implemented in 3 phases: 12 m preparation, 42 m implementation, 6 m handing over and closure.

Services Provided
- Project administrations, management and monitoring
- Project planning and re-planning
- Institutional strengthening of NGOs and communal institutions
- Technical assistance and advisory services
- Assistance toward community development in 3 target areas with a total of 50 selected communes