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Special Volunteer Session

Poster

THE ProTECTOR – GHI - SIMS PARTNERSHIP: A MULTIDISCIPLINARY APPROACH; SAVING TURTLES, HELPING PEOPLE

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A secondary goal of sea turtle conservation is the development of programs within communities which will introduce economic and educational benefits as alternatives to the consumptive use of sea turtle species. Such programs may introduce ecotourism and handicraft

development as means of persistent economic income for members within the community. While economic stimulation is an important factor in assisting conservation efforts in developing nations, there is great need for other forms of direct community assistance. The ProTECTOR – GHI – SIMS partnership is unique in the field of wildlife conservation in that it approaches sea turtle conservation and community assistance from a multidisciplinary perspective. The partnership takes into consideration the whole person, the environment, and the rich natural resources of the local community and region in a manner that develops a stewardship framework. This approach rests on the concept of holistic care, which is concerned with caring for the integrated health and welfare of both the environment and the person. Supported by the Global Health Institute at Loma Linda University, the first ProTECTOR – GHI – SIMS volunteer project took place from August 19 – 29, 2012 in the community of El Venado, in the Gulf of Fonseca, Honduras. The volunteer group accomplished medical, dental, and nutrition education outreach, as well as health screening and treatment. Furthermore, the partnership has provided funding and logistical support for the installation of a much-needed water catchment system to facilitate running water for visitors to the turtle center. These first steps in meeting health, social, and development needs of the community were accomplished with a unique, multidisciplinary approach, all within the context of sea turtle research and conservation undertaken by ProTECTOR working together with the community of El Venado.