



## Help the Shipibo Regenerate from the Pandemic

**Objective:** To help the Shipibo Onanyabo (ancestral healers) of ASOMASHK bring ancestral healing treatment and health and safety protocols to Shipibo communities along the Ucayali River to support the regeneration of physical, mental, and spiritual health during and after COVID-19

**ASOMASHK Delegates:** Walter Ramiro Lopez Lopez, Elisa Vargas Fernandez, Claudio Sinuiri Lomas, Lila Lopez Sanchez, Mateo Arevalo Maynas

**Collaborators:** ASOMASHK (Shipibo-Konibo Association of Onanyabo), Shipibo Conibo Center, Chaikuni Institute, and Temple of the Way of Light

### What inspired this project?

The pandemic has heavily impacted Indigenous communities in the Amazon. Many are reeling from the trauma of illness and death, from mental health and psychosocial impacts (mourning, panic, psychosocial anxiety, as well as other mental health problems), and are without adequate and accurate information on health and safety. This is compounded by the systemic neglect of Indigenous communities by the state, which has consistently failed to prioritize the right to health of Indigenous populations. As a result, organic strategies of mutual aid and care are emerging and have become vital.

Since the onset of the pandemic, the Shipibo-Konibo Association of Onanyabo/Ancstral Healers (ASOMASHK), stepped up its commitment to collective health. With the support of a small grant from the Chaikuni Institute, they developed and carried out a diagnostic and treatment plan that reached more than 333 people in 10 communities. The methodical collection of diagnostic data from the fieldwork was valuable and unprecedented, and the treatments, which included both Western and Indigenous modalities of care, were massively welcomed.

The project's success and impact has illuminated an urgent need to further its reach to aid more communities along the Ucayali River. It also presents a profound opportunity for the Shipibo Onanyabo to strengthen their communities through the ancestral healing techniques and wisdom that originates from deep within their own lineage, while simultaneously creating and advocating for ASOMASHK's broader goals of medical pluralism, spiritual autonomy, and the advocacy of plant medicine.

In solidarity with their goals, this fundraising effort comes from the Chaikuni Institute, the Shipibo Conibo Center, and the Temple of the Way of Light, on behalf of ASOMASHK's pandemic effort.

## **Onanyabo in Action: Objectives and Goals**

Through their work in the first phase of the project, ASOMASHK has developed a preliminary protocol for medical care and psychospiritual and energetic renewal in hard-hit communities. Phase 2 of the project has now begun with even greater urgency and aims to expand its reach farther up and down the Ucayali River.

In Phase 2, delegates will travel to Shipibo communities and hold free sessions to provide information, promote preventive, government-established health and sanitary measures within standard medical care, provide integrated care that applies medical pluralism with an approach based on Indigenous medicine, and collect data related to the triage, diagnosis, and treatment of patients for further analysis to aid in the development of strategies for long-term care and crisis response. The funds raised through this campaign will go to ASOMASHK to cover the costs of transportation, food, lodging, supplies, materials, and stipends for the delegates, as well as to cover the costs of a weekly radio program that raises awareness about this initiative and Shipibo culture in general. A small portion (approx. 5%) will be used by Chaikuni Institute to administer the funds and promote the campaign.

Objectives of the ASOMASHK delegates:

- Travel to Shipibo communities where the most immediate and urgent need has been identified; 5 in Calleria, 1 in Manantay, 7 in Masisea, 8 in Iparia, 7 in Tahuania, 4 in Padre Marquez, and 6 in Contamana
- Hold free, open information sessions both in Spanish and in Shipibo and promote preventive health measures within standard medical care (such as hand washing, the use of masks, the use of alcohol, social distancing, etc.), and to distribute posters and information sheets with health protocols for the inside and outside of medical care settings
- Administer free ancestral medicine techniques as needed, including treatment with medicinal plants and aromatherapies, energy work (such as massages for injuries, sprains, or general body pain), tobacco blowing, the suction of negative energies, spiritual protection, energetic regeneration from trauma and fright, and song/sound healing (ikaros)
- Collect data related to the triage, diagnosis, and treatment of patients for further analysis in the development of long-term care and crisis response pathways and strategies
- Offer training to local Shipibo healers in visited communities based on the approaches and perspectives of the ASOMASHK, on the prevention of common diseases, and to ensure the continuity of their work in their communities

## **Long-term Impact**

At a time when the abrupt interruption of the economic flow from foreign tourism left most of the healing centers without clients and many healers without income, ASOMASHK renews its commitment to work towards autonomy and puts into practice the principles of reciprocity in the Shipibo cosmovision.

Under a banner of Indigenous autonomy, the work of ASOMASHK rises out of ethics, knowledge, and practices that do not separate physical health from social, psychological, and spiritual well-being. (Instead, the taxonomy

of symptoms, diseases, and cures relate to their cultural context.) As plants and indigenous knowledge is appropriated and repurposed for commercial medical purposes as part of a psychedelic revolution, Shipibo healers are experimenting with a protocol of reciprocal care, starting from a decolonial perspective, and serving those most affected in their communities.

While the political debate continues within nation-states as to whether healthcare is a privilege or a right, ASOMASHK understands it as a matter of reciprocal interest and of duty. For instance, the very idea of a collective ceremony is a manifestation of the belief that individual disease is something that affects the whole community and thus its treatment requires a mutual response. Combining these principles with a vast knowledge of medicinal plants, ASOMASHK aims to elevate the collective health of the Shipibo Nation and rebuild a sustainable Indigenous network of care based on medical pluralism.

In addition, as autonomous modes of care and governance gain momentum throughout the country and current conditions favor an opportunity to claim the right to self-determination, there is the potential for ASOMASHK to gain greater institutional legitimacy, towards the possibility of collaboration with national and international health organizations within a new framework of mutual respect and advocacy.

## **About ASOMASHK**

In August of 2018, in the long shadow cast by the murder of Maestra Olivia Arévalo Lomas at the hands of an ayahuasca tourist, Coshikox (Consejo Shipibo-Konibo-Xetebo), the representative body of the 35,000 strong Shipibo-Konibo-Xetebo people of the Peruvian Amazon, called the first ever convention of their practitioners of ancestral medicine in the city of Yarinacocha. They formed a union of healers, rejecting the terms “shaman” and “shamanism” as imports that did not capture the historical specificity of their work. The Shipibo term Onanya (plural, Onanyabo) was adopted, and the union was named The Shipibo-Konibo-Xetebo Association of Onanyabo/Ancestral Healers (ASOMASHK).

Concurrently, the convention issued the Declaration of Yarinacocha, naming politically conscious and non-colonialist practices that consider power differentials, economic inequality, and the social reality of Shipibo communities.

*“The work of healing and the struggle towards self-determination are not separable. They must move forward on the same path.”*

Less than three years later, ASOMASHK brings together 120 duly registered members and 9 members of the Board of Directors, to achieve the following main objectives:

- Value the wisdom of our ancestors, spreading the essence of ancestral medicine and the spiritual knowledge of curanderismo as applied to mental, spiritual, and physical healing, the liberation from oppression, cleansing of negative energies, and transmission of the love, peace, happiness, harmony, charity, and power of the master plants to the sick, oppressed, helpless, and those who need it most
- Act as a council of high-level healers working towards the empowerment, self-governance, and self-determination of Indigenous communities, and to act as a spiritual group of ancestral teachers who defend fundamental rights and sustain life, health, and socioeconomic and spiritual well-being

- Promote the application of medical care and the establishment of outpatient centers, as well as the provision of first aid to Indigenous communities through ancestral ethnomedicine
- Ensure the protection of life and fundamental rights of the Practitioners of Ancestral Medicine, the Onanyabo
- Promote and develop all activities related to the revaluation, conservation, and intergenerational transmission of knowledge of Indigenous culture and ancestral knowledge

**In Partnership with:**



SHIPIBO CONIBO CENTER

