

Learned Lessons in environmental education and Wildlife investigation with Costa Rican peasants and natives

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MERALVIS (NGO non-profit association)

*Conservation and empowerment together with local
rural communities*

**Favor citar este documento de acuerdo a la información del texto
en el resumen (abstract).**

MERALVIS Mission

*Improving Regional Rural Development
through Wildlife Conservation*

To empower with gender focus Latin American rural communities, by means of enhancing and exchanging information about current conservationist trends regarding biodiversity and Wildlife.

Central and South America



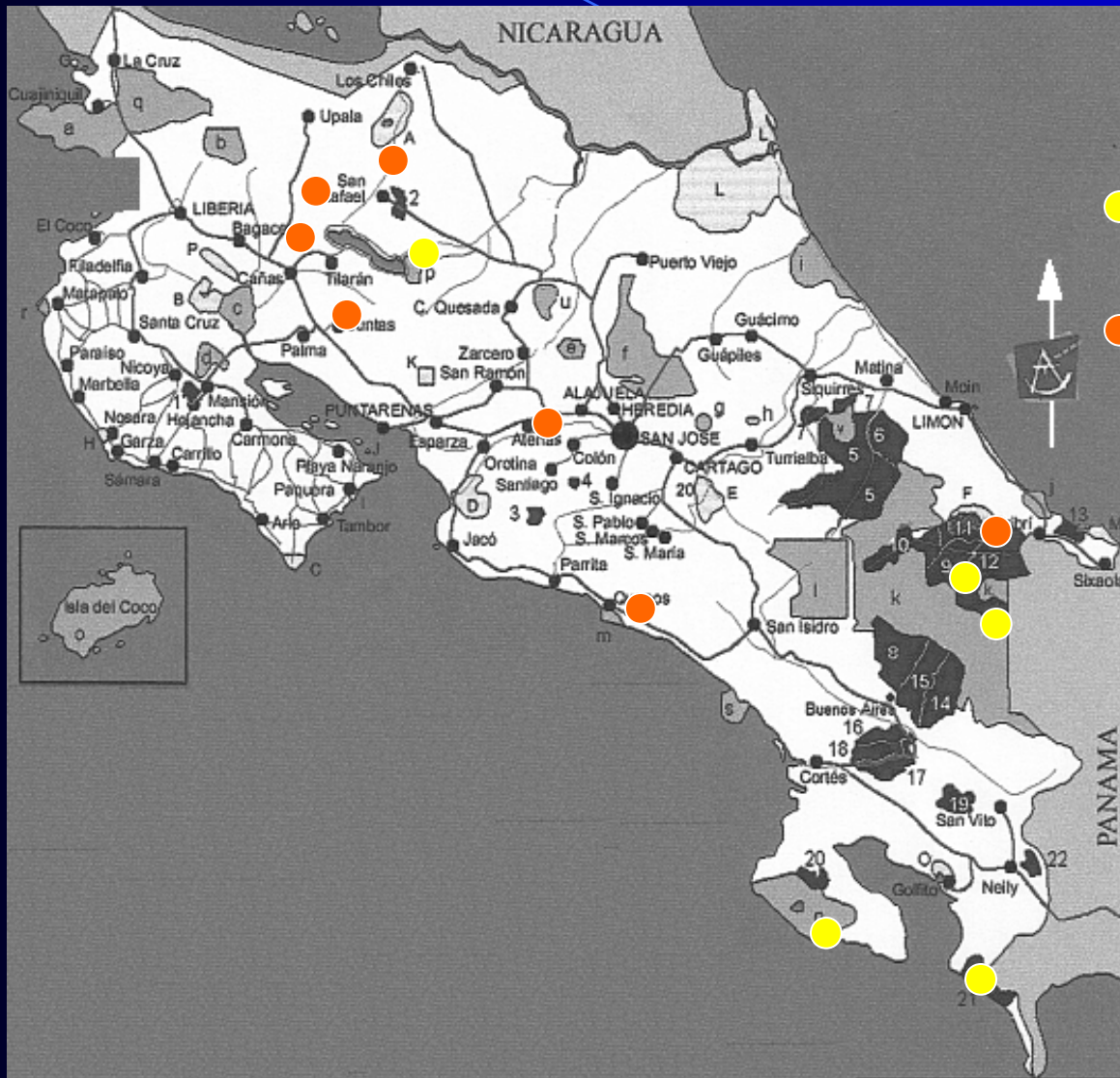
Projects with Indigenous People

1. *Ngöbes* animal's use and conservation (CR-Pan)
2. Supporting indigenous leaders (*Ngöbes-Bribris* CR)
3. *Aymaras* wetlands valuation (Pe-Chi-Bol)
4. Participative educational materials (*Ngöbes*-CR)
5. *Bribris*' activities and Wildlife in the Talamanca-Caribe Corridor (CR)
6. *Huétares* home-gardens improvement (CR)
7. Threatened habitats and fauna conservation in a *Malekus*' Reservation in Arenal area (CR)
8. Conservation in indigenous territories (*Br-Ca* CR)

Projects with rural communities CR

1. Use of Wildlife and conservation in the surroundings of protected areas
2. Working with rural communities for Wetlands conservation and management
3. Supporting rural leaders
4. Tapirs' conservation in Arenal
5. Arenal's threatened habitats and conservation
6. Wildlife hunting trends in Costa Rica
7. Bio-archaeological heritage conservation in CR
8. Butterflies' farms: conservation and integrated pest management in Arenal

Costa Rica: Main areas focused



- Indigenous
- Peasants

Main Costa Rican indexes

- ✦ 51,100 km², 4 million inhabitants, GNPpc: US\$ 6,000, Poverty: 20.6%, Social welfare: everyone, **NO ARMY**
- ✦ CR is placed among the 48 Nations considered as “highly developed” by the UNDP.
- ✦ Since 1994 CR has followed a **sustainable development** style (government)
- ✦ Considered among the top 10 countries in the World for mega-biodiversity
- ✦ 25.5% of its territory is in protected areas with a whole country governmental management system focussed towards conservation (**SINAC**)

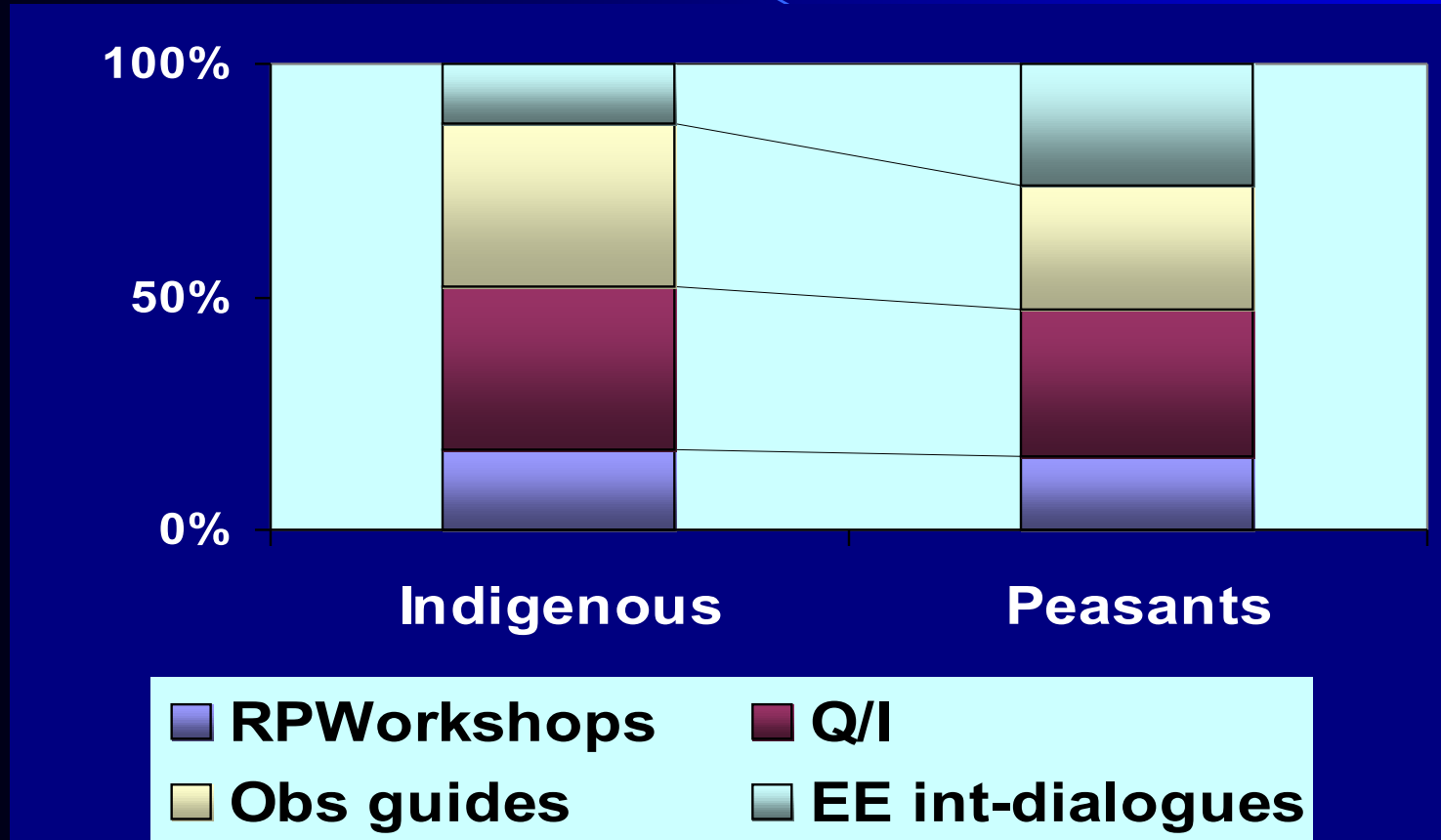
Methods:

- The foundation of the **biological** component of our projects is the *scientific method*, while within the **social** component we have utilised several *participative* methodologies, with the *investigation-action* method utilised most frequently.
- Each project includes an **integration** of the social and the biological components, through a retrospective analysis.

Biological techniques:

- Wildlife population size assessments (track-transects, radio-telemetry, scent-stations, ...)
- Wildlife habitat uses (GIS, coverage, ...)
- Wildlife diet studies (fecal samples, observations, ...)
- Integrated Pest Management methods (samples collection and identification, bio-physical variables analysis, ...)

Social techniques



Values: dialogue, participation, gender, respect for rural intellectual rights and local idiosyncracies

Main results

From 16 projects completed in the past 5 years (8 w/peasants + 8 w/indigenous) using methodologies that mixed **applied ecology with social research**, our main results have shown:



Interest and commitment

1. Both groups have people compromised and actively interested in empirical experimentation
(reproducers of Wildlife research - environmental educational processes)



Conservation perception

1. Wildlife conservation in protected areas is perceived as a constraint for local forestry and agricultural development.



Wildlife uses: farms

1. Wildlife management outside protected areas is undertaken mainly by farming at a local scale.

Wildlife ranching in larger areas and in semi-captivity is rare.



Wildlife uses: hunting

1. In more than 30 communities in four Latin American countries subsistence hunting and Wild pets are the norm. Even when allowed under certain conditions, illegal actions are the rule.



Co-management information

1. The establishment of non-governmental reserves, animal sanctuaries and other Wilderness Areas



under a collaborative administration promoted by rural communities for Wildlife management still is not perceived as an important need.

Future trends

6. These experiences allow *MERALVIS* to improve its role in promoting *upwardly* sustainable rural development, together with sound natural resource's management.



Management guidelines I:

Wildlife and conservation management currently should be urgently improved and re-adapted regarding the preservation of natural resources and their sustainable usage by the people.

Co-management.



Management guidelines II:

Even in countries seen as strongly conservationists as Costa Rica and Ecuador, environmental policies declared (2002)

concerning Constitutionally Environmental Guarantees, there is room and need for Wildlife Management training in order to benefit conservation and human well-being. **EE.**



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*Conservation
Areas in
Costa Rica*



Thank you

Any question ?