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Promoting Transformations by Linking Nature, Wealth and Power

Case Study:

The Women of Isoso: Livelihoods, Governance and Natural Resources in the Gran Chaco, Bolivia

TRANSLINKS

TransLinks is a 5-year Leader with Associates cooperative agreement that has been funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to further the objective of increasing social, economic and environmental benefits through sustainable natural resource management. This new partnership of the Wildlife Conservation Society (lead organization), the Earth Institute of Columbia University, Enterprise Works/VITA, Forest Trends, the Land Tenure Center of the University of Wisconsin, and USAID is designed to support income growth of the rural poor through conservation and sustainable use of the natural resource base upon which their livelihoods depend.

The program is organized around four core activities that will be implemented in overlapping phases over the life of the program. These are:

1. **Knowledge building** including an initial review, synthesis and dissemination of current knowledge, and applied comparative research in a number of different field locations to help fill gaps in our knowledge;
2. **Identification and development of diagnostic and decision support tools** that will help us better understand the positive, negative or neutral relationships among natural resource conservation, natural resource governance and alleviation of rural poverty;
3. **Cross-partner skill exchange** to better enable planning, implementing and adaptively managing projects and programs in ways that maximize synergies among good governance, conservation and wealth creation; and
4. **Global dissemination** of knowledge, tools and best practices for promoting wealth creation of the rural poor, environmental governance and resource conservation.

Over the 5-year life of the program, TransLinks aims to develop a coherent, compelling and, most importantly, useful corpus of information about the value of, and approaches to, integrating Nature, Wealth and Power. To do this, TransLinks is structuring the work around two core issues – 1) payments for ecosystem services and 2) property rights and resource tenure.

Case Study

The Women of Isoso: Livelihoods, Governance and Natural Resources in the Gran Chaco, Bolivia

Report prepared for WCS TransLinks Program

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Acronyms

APCOB	Apoyo para el Campesino-Indígena del Oriente Boliviano/Support to the Indigenous Peasant of Eastern Bolivia
ATV	Asociación Territorios Vivos
BID	Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo/Inter-American Development Bank (also IADB or IDB)
CABI	Capitanía de Alto y Bajo Isoso/Capitancy of Upper and Lower Isoso
CIDOB	Confederación de los Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia/Bolivian Confederation of Indigenous People
CIMCI	Central Ínter comunal de Mujeres de la Capitanía de Isoso/ Women's Intercommunity Center of the Capitancy of Isoso
FCBC	Fundación para la Conservación del Bosque Chiquitano/Chiquitano Forest Conservation Foundation
FII	Fundación Ivi-Iyambae/Ivi-Iyambae Foundation (technical arm of CABI)
FONAMA	Fondo Nacional de Medio Ambiente/National Environment Fund
FUNDESNAP	Fundación para el Desarrollo del Sistema Nacional de Áreas Protegidas/ Foundation for the Development of the National Protected Area System
GTB	GasTransBoliviano, S.A.
INRA	Instituto Nacional de Reforma Agraria/National Agrarian Reform Institute
IPDP	Indigenous People's Development Plan
KINP	Kaa-Iya National Park
LMA	Ley del Medio Ambiente
MDS&P	Ministerio de Desarrollo Sostenible y Planificación/ Ministry of Sustainable Development and Planning
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
PDPI	Plan de Desarrollo de Pueblos Indígenas/Indigenous Peoples Development Plan
PPL	Ley de Participación Popular
SERNAP	Servicio Nacional de Áreas Protegidas/National Protected Area Service
TCO	Tierra Comunitaria de Orígen/Native Community Land (term used to refer to indigenous territories as defined by ILO Convention 169)
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WCS	Wildlife Conservation Society/Sociedad para la Conservación de la Vida Silvestre

Background

This case study builds on over 15 years of experience of an indigenous territorial organization and an international NGO working collaboratively in the eastern Bolivian lowlands to put in place durable mechanisms for economic development through sustainable community-based management of natural resources[1]. Among the outcomes of this collaboration, the Isoso Guarani, in negotiations with the Bolivian state, have established the Kaa Iya National Park and the Isoso Tierra Comunitaria de Origen (TCO) within the larger Gran Chaco area of Bolivia (see Figure 1).

The objective of this TransLinks case study is two-fold: 1) to document the evolution of the role of women within the Isoseño indigenous people's organization CABI (Capitanía del Alto y Bajo Isoso) and characterize their growing influence on the governance of natural resources for sustainable economic development within the Isoseño TCO; and 2) to help inform the direction of the next five-year Management Plan for the Indigenous Territory, development of which is due to commence in the coming months. As stated in TransLinks' overall Program Description, "Because gender issues vary greatly across communities and cultures, gender analysis is crucial for understanding power dynamics, resource access and control, decision-making, and participation in civil society. This understanding can then be applied to the design and ongoing management of activities."

In this case study, we specifically look at: a) the creation, political evolution and income-generating activities of the Isoso women's organization - Central Intercomunal de Mujeres de la Capitanía de Isoso (CIMCI); b) how this organization of *capitanas* influenced the development and function of CABI; and c) the evolving role that Isoso women play in community decision-making, natural resource management, and livelihoods.

The information for this case study is based on a collection of previous studies and publications, key informant interviews in Santa Cruz and Isoso, and conversations with Isoseño people in their communities. Much of the information is based on interviews that required informants to remember past events and processes. The publications also rely upon much oral history. As a result, there are some contradictions in chronology and dates of events, particularly prior to 1990.

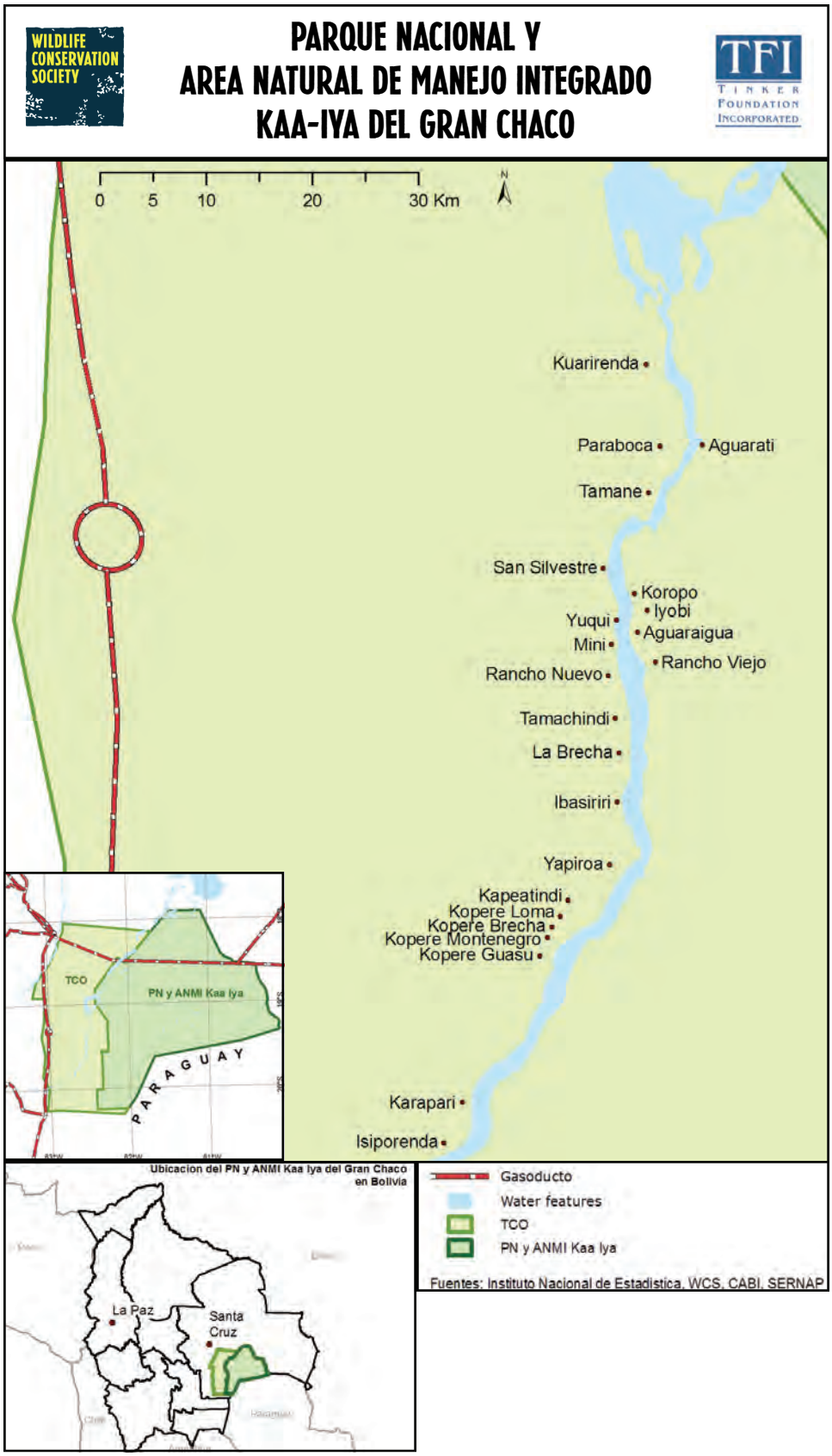

Figure 1. Map of Isoseño communities along the Parapetí River with inserts of Kaa Iya National Protected Area and the Isoso TCO.

Socio-Cultural Context of Isoso Communities

Along the southeastern border of Bolivia, in the dry tropical forests of the Gran Chaco, the fiercely independent Isoso Guaraní have lived and worked since at least the 17th century, and have formed small communities along the Parapetí River (see Figure 1). A community consists of extended families that work together and enjoy reciprocal exchanges of food and other basic goods. Their vision of life is to live in harmony with their surroundings and to "not be owned" by anyone. Nor do they own, in the proprietary meaning of the word, the land where they live and farm, the forests where they hunt and gather, and the river where they fish. This system of non-ownership or common property is called Ivi Iyambae (CIMCI 2002). The production logic that has driven farming, hunting, fishing, and gathering activities is based on the use of natural resources to cover their basic subsistence needs with no goal to accumulate either wealth or capital. As we shall see, however, this production logic has been changing with the growing influence of a market economy.

When a community grows too large for the area they occupy, several families leave and form a new community along an area of the Parapetí River that is not occupied. In 2004, there were 25 communities with a total of 1,248 families (Barahona et al. 2005). As of July 2008, with the extension of communities to the north, there are 28 communities.

There are many signs that cultural and production practices, if not norms, are changing as a result of greater participation in the market economy, Protestant and Catholic evangelism, increasing wage labor opportunities, and increasing levels of domesticated animal husbandry.

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Women of Iyobi

The Isoso—An Independent People

The Guaraní peoples have successfully resisted outside influences, beginning with colonial efforts to convert them to Catholicism and into workers for European settlers. Many of them migrated from Brazil and Paraguay westward to the Gran Chaco areas in southeastern Bolivia as they fled from these settlers. Starting in the mid-1800s, however, their territory in the Bolivian Chaco witnessed the arrival of ranchers and large landowners from the western highlands and valleys of Bolivia, as well as the arrival of Catholic clergy, as the state adjudicated and sold land (Combes 2005). Particularly since the early 1960s, when the Bolivian government gave out large tracts of land to both Bolivians and foreigners to settle this sparsely populated area, the Guaraní in the Isoso area have seen their land occupied and its resources degraded. In the past few decades, Protestant evangelism has also been very active in Isoso. Large cattle ranches, agri-business enterprises such as sugar-cane and cotton producers, and Mennonite settlements are close neighbors of the Isoseño communities. The most recent intruders have been petroleum and exploration companies seeking large reserves of natural gas. But the Isoseño people are also politically pragmatic and have learned to adapt to the inevitable forces of cattle ranchers, soybean growers, and natural gas transporters, and to negotiate with them. In the last few decades Isoseño leaders have arrived at agreements with most of these newcomers to establish a natural resource management plan that will protect their territory from further outside encroachments and degradation.

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Solar panels, Ibasirriri

Economic penetration of the Bolivian Chaco has brought railroads into the eastern lowlands and opened roads into Isoseño territory. This has not only provided access to some modern-day manufactured goods and Western values, but has also led to the migration of Isoseños to regional cities including Santa Cruz, the largest city in the region, and to seasonal outmigration to find work on large farming and ranching enterprises.

Infrastructure and basic social services are minimal in Isoso. The roads leading to Isoso and connecting the communities are unpaved, dirt roads that become practically impassible to vehicular traffic during the rainy season. Most communities have primary schools and there are secondary schools in Iyobi, Kopere Brecha, and La Brecha. None of the communities have a medical post, but there is one hospital in La Brecha. Most communities have wells with manual pumps and some have distributed public water taps among the houses that use diesel or solar-powered pumps. There is no sewage system in the communities nor is there is electricity. One of the most recent developments is the establishment of solar powered cellular phone service in many of the communities.

Brief Review of Isoso Culture

The Guaraní that reside in Isoso are not ethnically "pure", a truism for most indigenous peoples in Latin America. The present-day Isoseños are a mixture of at least two indigenous groups, the Guaraní and the Chané (Combes 2005), and non-indigenous people, mostly mestizos called *karai* in Guaraní. Isoso Guaraní culture, like all other living cultures, has changed and continues to evolve as Isoseños pick up and integrate "modern" goods, norms, and practices into their lives and communities (Beneria-Surkin 2003).

Culturally, Isoso society does not appear to be strictly patrilineal or matrilineal; Beneria-Surkin (2003) indicates that Guarani society was structured around matrilineal families before the arrival of Catholic clergy. Certainly, women are important social actors: the Isoso Guaraní culture is said to be kept alive and transmitted to the next generations by women. Some of the most important mythical personages are Kaa Poti, a legendary woman warrior, and Yari (Grandmother) who lives in the river, the source of life. But currently, patrilineal norms and practices seem to dominate: men hold most positions of power and although land is not privately-owned, agricultural parcels are handed down from father to son. In addition, some cultural practices inhibit women's empowerment. Once young girls reach puberty, for example, they are secluded (*guardada*) in their homes for a time and able to interact only with women in their family. Traditionally, this seclusion would

last for several years (CIMCI 2002; Barahona 2003). Recently, with school education becoming more accepted for girls as well as boys, this seclusion lasts for shorter periods of time.

Guaraní women, in comparison to men, face more constraints when they deal with the world outside of Isoso. They are less educated and few of the older women are literate or able to do simple arithmetic. They tend to be monolingual (speaking only Guaraní), do not have the official Bolivian identification document, and are not aware of their formal legal rights (Barahona 2003).

In addition to gender differentiation, Isoseño society is strongly differentiated by age. Elder women and men speak for the family and the community. Their opinions and judgments are not challenged. Young women, particularly, do not speak in public or with outsiders and do not contradict their elders. Possibly as a result of generational deference and seclusion (mentioned above), adolescent girls and young women behave timidly, seldom voicing their opinions. When they do speak, it is in a very soft and non-assertive voice. With education becoming more prevalent, there are the beginnings of conflict between younger educated persons (particularly men) and their elders as youth challenge decisions made by older generations.

Marriage among the Isoseños is not an occasion for ceremony or celebration; a man and woman are considered a couple when they start to live together. Nor are there strict rules about where the couple will live: marriage seems to be neither matrilocal nor patrilocal[2]. The Isoseños are also in many cases not monogamous. Men often have multiple families with different women, and they are expected to take care of all their children. In fact, one source of power for men within Isoseño society is to have numerous family members. Women also pair with men other than their husband and this is usually not criticized. It seems, however, that women who aspire to be community leaders, such as *capitanas*, are expected by men to be monogamous. So, while both men and women are not monogamous in practice, men are less accepting of the practice among women. There are many unmarried mothers who do not receive support from the children's fathers. The role of public defender of women (or *defensora*) has evolved to help these unmarried mothers obtain support from fathers to support the child.

Both men and women have access to natural resources: forests and trees, rivers and fish, land and wild animals. Both women and men may use and collect natural resources freely for their consumption and that of their families. However, agricultural land parcels (called *chacos*) located along the shores of the Parapetí River

are allocated to men and, when handed down, go from father to son[3].

Division of Labor and Wage Labor Opportunities

The gender division of labor is very clear and rigid. Women and girls are responsible for carrying out all of the domestic and reproductive tasks that sustain the extended family. These include the bearing of many children, care of children and other dependents, processing and cooking food, cleaning the home and surrounding area, washing clothes, weaving, and collecting water and firewood. Men and boys (over the age of 15) are hunters, an activity that is done individually or with one or two partners up to 7 or 8 times a month (Beneria-Surkin 1998). Women clean and process the animal meat the men bring back. Men also prepare the *chaco* (land for cultivation), build and maintain irrigation canals, take care of the family's cattle (although not all families have cattle) and fish. After men prepare the *chaco*, women and children plant the crops, weed, water and irrigate[4], harvest the crops, and carry them back to their home[5]. Women also fish, take care of the smaller household animals, and process agricultural foods and fish.

As women take on more responsibilities as community leaders and participants in micro-enterprises, the family may need to modify this division of labor. At this point, it is not clear what modifications will be made. There is anecdotal evidence that some men are willing to take on some household chores, sometimes at night under the cover of darkness to avoid embarrassment. It seems that more generally, however, it is other women in the family and the community who step in to fulfill household responsibilities.

Many families also participate in the seasonal wage labor market on farms in the area. The most common type of labor is the cutting of sugar-cane, but they also work in other harvests (such as cotton) and as "cowboys" in neighboring cattle ranches. While seasonal migration is mostly done by men, it is not uncommon for wives to also participate in which case the whole family migrates.

While the economic differences among Isoseño families are not great, there is stratification based on political power and economic wealth. The *capitanes* and *capitanas*[6]- the men and women who represent the communities and vote in the Assembly of Capitanes and Capitanas- tend to come from these "founder" families. As mentioned above, natural resources such as wild animals are not privately owned but domestic animals (cattle, goats, pigs, and chickens) usually belong to a family. While there are some communal cattle herds, most cattle belong to individuals or families (Villaseñor 2007). As of 2005, the more than 8,000 head of cattle

were owned by approximately 500 people. Beneria-Surkin (1998, 2003), Barahona et al. (2005) and Villasenor (2007) found that some families have many more cattle than others, an important wealth item for Isoseños. Families with cattle utilize more community land and natural resources (mainly water and vegetation) than their neighbors.

High status families also tend to be engaged in commerce, have higher monetary income and are more educated (Beneria-Surkin 1998, 2003). The relation between education and monetary income is particularly clear for those families that have a member holding one of the few professional jobs in Isoso. Beneria-Surkin (2003) found that wealth accumulation (most evident in cattle) is higher among those families that have stable local employment such as teachers and technicians. Local employment opportunities in Isoso are jobs offered by public institutions (schools and hospital), CABI and NGOs. All of these positions require at least moderate levels of education. On the other hand, families that migrate in search of seasonal manual work generally have low education levels and do not own significant numbers of cattle.

Education in Isoso

There are primary schools (grades 1-8) in most of the communities which most children, both girls and boys, now attend (Beneria-Surkin 2003). In earlier generations, only male children were sent to school. Because boys had to fulfill their military obligation when they were older, it was felt that they should be able to read and write. In addition, if a girl did attend school, there was tendency to drop out of school at puberty because she would go into seclusion (Barahona 2003). A survey of households from five typical Isoso communities in 1998 found that girls and women in all age categories had less education than boys and men; the discrepancy was particularly large after age 15 where the difference varied between 1 and 3 years of education (Beneria-Surkin 2003). Since 1997, there are three communities that offer both primary and secondary education (*Centros de Educación*): Iyobi, La Brecha, and Kopere Brecha.

Among those who do finish secondary education, a small number go on to university or other post-secondary school. Most of them go to Santa Cruz, but some go to other cities in Bolivia. For example, a number of young women and men from Isoso study education at the university in nearby Camiri and return to Isoso to teach in its schools. As a result, there is a small but growing number of young women and men from Isoso who become professionals and technicians. A number of the persons we interviewed commented that with education, women are more aware of their rights. Those

children who are able to obtain secondary and post-secondary education tend to come from the better-off families in Isoso—those who hold important leadership positions such as *capitán* or *capitana* and/or those who have a significant number of cattle (Beneria-Surkin 2003).

Governance Structures in Isoso

The Isoso communities have a well-defined and hierarchical governance structure. Their mobilization activities, combined with those of other indigenous groups, were instrumental in bringing about official recognition from the Bolivian state of their status as indigenous societies with their own territory.

CABI (Capitanía del Alto y Bajo Isoso)

CABI is the political representative of the Isoseño people, as well as co-administrator of the protected area. As such, CABI represents the Guaraní Isoseño people at local, municipal, provincial and national levels, with respect to governmental agencies as well as civil society. CABI defines itself as the sole authority that can make decisions, administrate, plan, and manage its territory. It is also the historic entity that represents the cultural, social, ethnic identity and politics of the Guaraní-Isoseño people and their destiny. In order to build their capacity, CABI has sought technical assistance from outside organizations in many areas, including wildlife biology, regional land and natural resource planning and management, and administration and management. Much of this assistance has come from a nearly 15-year partnership with the Wildlife Conservation Society.

CABI has a hierarchical structure that has evolved over time (see Figure 2). From the end of the Chaco War (about 1936) to 2005, CABI had a structure of only 3 regional *capitanes*: one from the Alto Isoso, one from the Bajo Isoso, and one Capitán Grande, presiding. However, as the number of communities in the Isoso grew, and as CABI assumed more responsibility for managing the National Park and the TCO, it became clear that having only 3 *capitanes* was insufficient to meet the political and management needs of the communities and CABI *vis à vis* outside government agencies and organizations, as well as to build consensus and strengthen internal communication. From the end of the Chaco War to his death in 1985, for about 50 years, the Isoso was led by the Capitán Grande Bonifacio Barrientos the elder, known as “Sombra Grande” (Great Shade -- an image of a shade tree protecting the Isoso) who returned from Argentina to reclaim his homeland, the Isoso, after the Chaco War. The challenge then

was to reestablish (or to establish, in many cases) communities; most of today's communities in the Isoso were settled after the Chaco War. Isoso's prominent families also emerged during this time.

Victor Vaca Iyambae (a very charismatic leader and first president of the Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia, CIDOB) was his appointed successor but died suddenly, before Sombra Grande. With Vaca's death, Barrientos's own son, also named Bonifacio Barrientos, was elected Capitán Grande through the Assembly. He has led CABI for the last 23 years by mandate of the Isoseño people. At present, the Isoso is constituted by 28 communities living along the banks of the Parapetí River. The number of communities has grown in recent years as the population grows and communities are subdivided. Each community elects a community *capitán* (male) and a community *capitana* (female). In addition to his or her role as representative of a community, each *capitán* and *capitana* plays an important role in strengthening internal communications and helping to build consensus within his/her community.

Each of the three traditional regions of the Isoso (Alto, Bajo, and Central), plus, recently, the Northern zone, has a regional *capitán*;

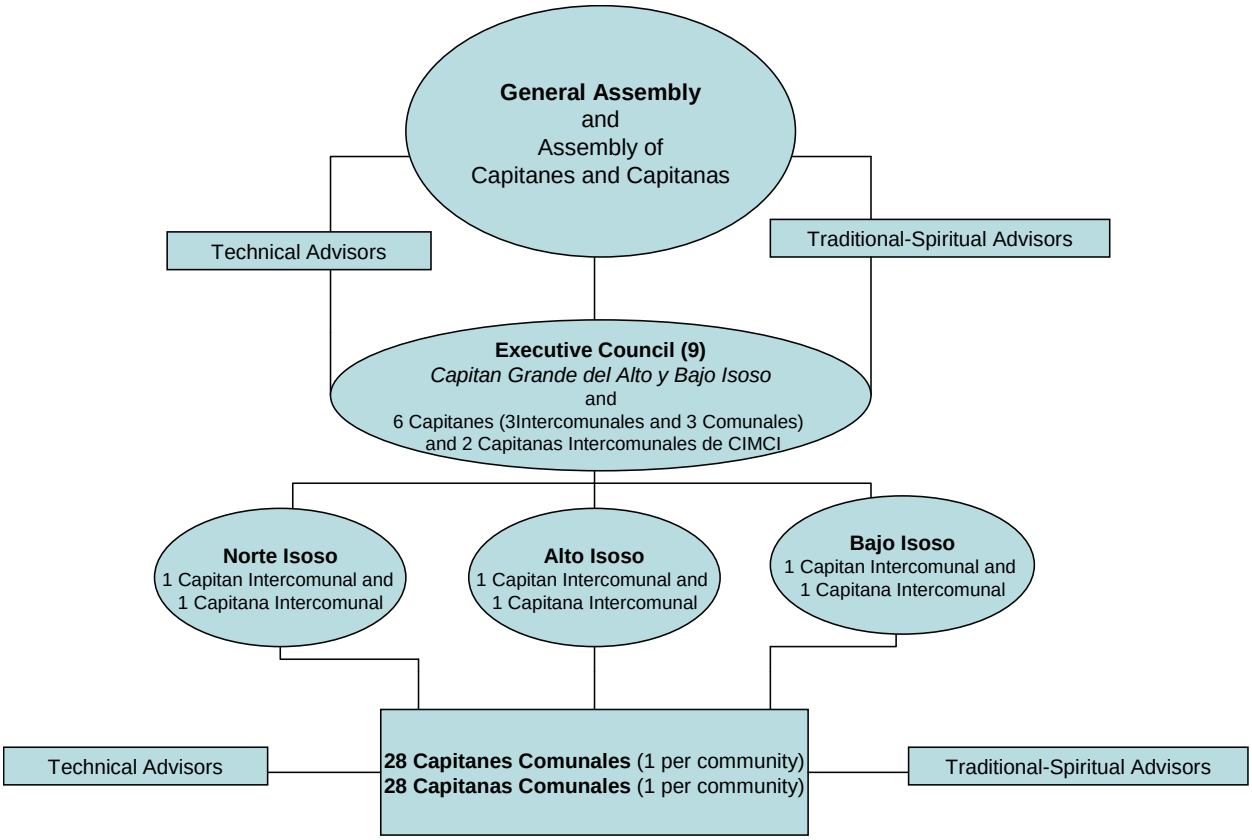

Figure 2. Organizational Structure of CABI (as of October 2008).

these are called the *Capitanes Intercomunales*. The main role of the *capitán* and the *capitana* from each community is to represent their community and its needs, and to develop support for these needs through projects. The *capitán* and *capitana* must report back to their constituent community about what has happened at General Assemblies and other meetings. There does not seem to be a fixed term for *capitanes*; communities vote for new *capitán or capitana* when they wish to replace existing ones.

The Assemblies, at community, inter-communal (regional) or Isoso-wide (General Assembly) levels, are the main fora for discussion and decision making. Up to 300 people from the 28 communities participate in the General Assemblies, which meet once a year and can last two days. The traditional system for making decisions in the Isoso was to reach consensus from oral repetition by community members at assemblies. If one person proposed something, other people, by turns, repeated what the previous speaker said, and rephrased it in his or her own way, adding on the point. This would proceed for as long as everyone who wished to speak had spoken, and after that, it would be noted that consensus had been reached. In that traditional context, there is no need, technically, to hold a formal vote. This is the process through which, in the general assembly, all members of the community "speak" as an equivalent to voting. Recently, however, this traditional practice is changing. With increased mobility and transport, more youths from the Isoso go to the city (usually Santa Cruz) and develop greater capacity for public speaking; there is now an inequality among community members in their ability to convince others, between youths with more oratorical skills and elders (and others) who stay in their communities. This has led to holding "votes" to make decisions rather than allowing consensus to be reached through speaking and repetition. For example, in 2007, in one community electing a new Captain, the youths monopolized the speeches; others in the assembly were not pleased and decided to hold a vote, with one vote allowed per family.

The Executive Committee (*Consejo Ejecutivo*) of CABI, created in 2007, is composed of 9 *capitanes* (6 *intercomunales* and 3 *comunales*; 2 of the 7 inter-community *capitanes* are women or *capitanas*—see Figure 2). The Executive Committee is elected by the assembly of all the *capitanes* and *capitanas* and ratified in the General Assembly. The honorary President of the Executive Committee is the Capitán Grande. The Consejo meets monthly and each of the nine members has one vote. The regional meeting (of Alto Isoso, Bajo Isoso and Isoso Central) is held in La Brecha twice a year and is attended by about 300 people who meet for two days.

In general, CABI seeks to make all political, technical and planning decisions related to its territory and its natural resources in a way that is consistent with the Isoseño people's sense of identity, culture, traditions and spiritual beliefs. CABI's stated objectives include the union of indigenous peoples, especially those who speak Guaraní, to honor the memory of their ancestors that fought for the continuity of the territory, and to conserve and promote the system of communal land. This communal land includes the integrated management zones of the protected area, which has important implications for management and for use of natural resources from this area, although it is outside of the Isoseños' TCO demand.

Since it began collaborating with CABI and CIMCI, WCS's goal has been to conserve the biodiversity of the dry forests and savannas of Santa Cruz, Bolivia, and to improve the management of domestic animals and natural resources in order to balance the needs of local communities and wildlife through a regional wildlife conservation and sustainable resource management strategy. WCS's main objectives include:

- monitoring natural resource use (game, fish, honey, fuelwood) in the Isoseño TCO;
- linking research on natural resource use with local initiatives for resource management that benefit women's groups in the Isoso communal lands;
- providing sustainable solutions to rangeland management issues faced by municipalities, indigenous communal lands (TCOs) and the Kaa-Iya National Park; and
- implementing sustainable productive activities in the context of the TCO management plan, as a model to be applied in other indigenous communal lands across the region.

Indigenous Identity and Territory

In August 1990, lowland indigenous peoples organized a march to La Paz, the capital of Bolivia "*la marcha por el territorio y la dignidad*." The main result was recognition of indigenous people's demands at a time of economic reforms and "modernization" of the state. The constitution was reformed to include a definition of the state as pluri-ethnic and multi-cultural (1994) and the same year a decentralization law was passed that promoted popular participation in local governments (Ley de Participación Popular, No. 1551). Two years later an agency was created to accelerate and consolidate the agrarian reform (Ley de Servicio Nacional de Reforma Agraria, No. 1715); it recognized indigenous territories, creating a historical opportunity for the indigenous movements (see timeline, Appendix 2). This law allowed for the existence of community land ownership and legalized the creation and titling of in-

digenous territories (Tierra Comunitaria de Origen – TCO). The Forestry Law of 1996 (Ley Forestal, No. 1700) requires that all natural resources harvested for sale from within TCOs must be accompanied by a management plan (Beneria-Surkin 2000).

These reforms coincided with growing national and international support for the environment and for indigenous peoples in general. The 1993 Environmental Law (Ley del Medio Ambiente, No. 1333) recognized, for the first time, the role of indigenous peoples in civil society. As a result, CABI and other organizations were given an active role in local government[7], which was essential to what has happened since then. CABI introduced its proposals into political processes and, wanting to have political influence, participated in large indigenous marches. Between 1993 and 1996, indigenous peoples campaigned for title to their lands and access to their natural resources. Before this time, indigenous peoples simply were not legally recognized.

As all these new laws were being discussed and passed, CABI was negotiating the establishment of the Kaa Iya Protected Area which is comprised of the National Park and the Natural Integrated Management Area (see box on the next page). The terms of co-administration for a specific site are clarified in an agreement between the National Protected Areas Service (SERNAP) and the co-administrating group, in this case, CABI. The National Protected Areas System (SNAP) of Bolivia was established by the 1993 Environmental Law; and the current institutional framework outlined in the 1995 General Regulations for Protected Areas (Decreto Supremo No. 24781) provides for the active participation of civil society (NGOs, indigenous peoples and rural groups) in administrative activities. The *Capitanías*, the traditional indigenous organization system at the community and inter-community level, own and administer the land under their jurisdiction.

Among the core objectives in the creation of the Kaa Iya Protected Area are the sustainable use of the natural resources of the area, especially on the part of the populations that traditionally inhabited it, and an improvement of their quality of life through access to the benefits and by-products of the conservation and management of the area. Other key objectives included the utilization and recovery of technologies and traditional systems of resource use, finding alternatives that increase production and thus contribute to improvement of local populations' quality of life, and the effective sustainable development of the region by means of the lasting and adequate protection of the ecological processes in the Parapetí River basin.

In 1993, CABI, along with institutions and persons allied to their

The Kaa Iya del Gran Chaco Protected Area

Total Area: The Kaa Iya National Park (IUCN Category II) and Natural Integrated Management Area (IUCN Category VI) covers 3,441,115 hectares (34,411 km^2). This protected area was officially declared part of Bolivia's National System of Protected Areas (SNAP) in Supreme Decree No. 24,122 of 21 September 1995. It is located principally in the municipality of Charagua, with portions also in the municipalities of Pailón and San José de Chiquitos, of the Department of Santa Cruz de la Sierra, in the south central part of the country. The protected area, as declared in 1995, included a core protection zone (the National Park) and three integrated management zones. The zonification and management plan of 2000 replaced that original zonification with a more complex set of zones reflecting socio-economic and biological conditions. The neighboring Isoso TCO covers 1.9 million hectares and is still undergoing a titling process.

Ecosystems: The Kaa Iya Protected Area (KINP) represents the largest remaining area of pristine Chaco ecosystem in Bolivia. The main river, the Parapetí ("where many have died"), flows into a vast area of wetlands. KINP protects an impressive sample of the Isoso wetlands (*Bañados*), which was designated a RAMSAR site in 2001, as well as the following five major habitat types: lowland sand-flats, lowland sub-humid forests, deciduous dry Chaco forests, scrublands, and Chaco xeric grasslands. There are over 880 plant species and a highly diverse array of fauna with 67 medium and large mammals (>1 kg) and over 300 birds, many of which are representative of the Gran Chaco and Brazilian Cerrado ecosystems.

goals, created an indigenous NGO, the Ivi Iyambae Foundation (FII), as its technical and administrative branch. It manages and finances, in whole or in part, community projects in the Isoso such as the women's projects in honey, *cupesí* (mesquite) flour, shampoo and fishmeal which are discussed below.

CABI Today

CABI's vision has been one of territorial consolidation consistent with its beliefs and traditions, and to a great extent it has been successful in accomplishing this. However, management challenges of governance and increased participation and the related, immediate needs to build capacity are pressing, as well as the need to reconcile their relation with national indigenous organizations such as CIDOB that CABI helped to create. And it is clear to all that now, at the beginning of the 21st century, enormous forces

are putting a strain on the traditional vision. The many pressures include the expansion of agricultural and cattle frontier, the construction of new gas pipelines and roads, people's wish to have access to better education and health (for themselves and, especially, for their children), and the changing roles of women as they gain a greater voice and participate more in public life.

Between February and March 2008, regional and national indigenous organizations that had political differences with the CABI leadership have questioned CABI's legitimacy. This has resulted in pressure on SERNAP and the ministry authorities to halt the co-administration agreement. In addition to the legitimacy argument, there have been demands for greater inclusion of other indigenous stakeholders in the region in the distribution of resources produced by the Kaa-Iya park management. Therefore, although SERNAP currently recognizes CABI's capacity and performance as co-administrator, they have halted the administration agreement in order to permit an adjustment to their current participation policy.

These conflicts are a result of the complex political situation in the country, differences in visions regarding decentralization and centralized management of protected areas, and, on a positive note, greater interest of different stakeholders for participation in protected area management and in democratic participation mechanisms at all levels. The contrasting demands, rights, and capacities of different stakeholders must be socially and technically analyzed to help the management committee, including indigenous people's organizations, SERNAP and municipal and departmental governments, reach an acceptable solution that strengthens the management of the protected area.

The case of the Guaraní Isoseños offers relevant lessons for other

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Some of the women who produce cupesí (mesquite flour) products in Ibasiriri

indigenous peoples in the Lowlands of Bolivia. The Guaraní Isoseños probably represent the only indigenous community that established early relations with the Colonial and subsequent Republican leaders yet maintained independence and autonomy as a people. They have maintained their basic systems of economic and social organization, language, traditional systems of authority and a territorial integrity rooted in a belief in the sacredness of their land and river. This paper focuses on the women of the Isoso and how they greatly increased their participation in the public sphere and developed modest productive work outside of their traditional role and home. However, this is only one part of the much larger story of what is happening in the Isoso and Bolivia today.

Natural Resource Management in Isoso

Management of land and other natural resources in the area inhabited by the Isoseño people was defined for many centuries by a subsistence mode of production and common property norms regulated and enforced by their community leaders. Since the 1930s, the leadership for the Isoseño people and its area has been the Capitanía de Alto y Bajo Isoso (CABI). The Isoseño way of living, producing and consuming is based on respect for the natural resources around them. They hold the belief that natural resources are inhabited by spirits who become angry when used irresponsibly. Women and men have farmed small *chacos* along the Parapetí River, collected fruits, leaves and wood in the forest, fished in the Parapetí River and its lagoons and hunted animals in the forest. Since all of these activities were carried out to meet subsistence needs and the Isoseño population has been relatively small, this use of natural resources was sustainable.

Isoso Land Claims

The Isoseño people have attempted repeatedly since the 1920s[8] to have their land rights recognized by the Bolivian state (Beneria-Surkin 2003). In 1945, for example, they walked nearly 1,000 kilometers from Santa Cruz to La Paz demanding formal recognition. As a result, in 1948 they obtained communal land title for two communities, Iyobi and Aguaraigua. This title was abrogated during the 1953 agrarian land reform. In 1986, these two communities and a number of others regained recognition of their communal lands and obtained titles for a total of 65,000 hectares (Winer 2003). With the 1996 INRA law[9], which recognized and specified communal ownership of indigenous territories, CABI requested title for 1.9 million hectares of its territory as a TCO (Tierra Comunitaria de Origen).

The 1996 legislation that initiated the current titling and regularization efforts recognized private land rights for small family farms and for larger commercial farms (individual, joint, or corporate titles) and provided the basis for the establishment and titling of indigenous, communally-managed territories called Tierras Comunitarias de Origen (Indigenous Community Lands)—TCO. The Bolivian agency (Instituto Nacional de Reforma Agraria, INRA), under formal agreements with CABI (including their co-financing of the process) and with the participation of all the actors, is implementing the titling process and has divided the territory claimed by the Isoseño people into 5 working areas (polygons). Between 1999 and 2006, all the technical and juridical works and procedures for the titling of the whole TCO have been completed and 560,000 hectares were titled in CABI's name by 2006 (Arambiza and Painter 2006). Within this indigenous territory 300 private landholders (mostly ranchers) are established and, of these, 153 additional private landholdings were titled by 2006 with a total extension of 213,775 hectares. From 2006 to the present, the titling process has been halted due to political conflicts (regarding land rights and access to natural resources) between, private tenants, CABI and national, local and departmental governments.

In addition to this TCO territory, CABI led the process of creation of the Kaa-Iya National Park and negotiated the co-administration of the park with the Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development. In 1996, CABI was awarded the management responsibility for the Kaa-Iya National Park, a territory of 3.4 million hectares adjacent to the eastern TCO. The Isoseño people consider Kaa-Iya to be Guaraní territory and, as co-administrator of the national park, will be able to ensure that it remains protected from economic use and occupation by commercial farmers, ranchers, timber companies, petroleum companies and others. In both of these negotiations with the Bolivian state (over the Kaa-Iya National Park and the Isoso TCO), WCS collaborated with CABI, providing support, information and technical assistance in developing common agendas with the Minister, INRA and SERNAP.

Land and Natural Resource Tenure and Use

In general, the natural resources within and around the communities are for the use of community members. The land along the river is irrigated (when there is water in the river) and used for growing food crops. Each family has a land parcel (*chaco*) where they grow mostly maize, rice, *yuca (*manioc) and *kumanda* beans. Many of these are intercropped. The community allocates a *chaco* to a young man when he establishes a home, often close to his father's or his father-in-law's *chaco*. This parcel, large enough to feed a family, is fenced off to protect it from large animals. A

chaco is larger than the amount planted during an agricultural season because cultivation is rotated and part of the land is left fallow for several years. A 1998 study of five Isoso communities shows that the average *chaco* size is between 2 and 7 hectares and the cultivated area in any one year is between 1 and 2 hectares (Beneria Surkin 1998). The men in the family prepare the land for cultivation (slash and burn) and the women and children plant the crops, weed and irrigate the parcel, harvest the crops and transport the production to the home. If a family stops using its *chaco* (usually because they have moved away), another family in the community may use it as long as they consult with the first family.

The forest belongs to the communities. Women gather fruit, firewood, medicinal plants and other products from the forest closest to their community. Men, with one or two companions, hunt for animals in forests further away from the communities. Women clean and prepare the meat the men bring home. If large animals are caught, the meat is shared with other families in the community.

The Parapetí River is not only the sole source of water for their *chacos*, it is also a very important source of protein: fish. Both men and women fish when there is water in the river, mostly from March to June[10]. The fish in the river running alongside the community is for everyone in that community. To allow for equitable access to the resource, men usually fish at night and women during the day. Generally, all the communities along the river fish on the same days so that every community has access to the same supply of fish. As the river grows and retracts, lagoons are formed where women often fish. As long as traditional fishing methods are used and cultural norms (such as the rule that men fish at night and women fish during the day) are followed, each member of the community may fish as much as he or she wants. Acting in a way inconsistent with Isoseño norms would incur the wrath of the river spirit (Yari) on the community. The fish, whether caught by women or men, are processed by women. In addition to preparing fish fresh, it is also dried in the sun or smoked in clay ovens. Some of the dried fish is made into fishmeal for those times of the year when there are no fish.

Until recently, the Isoseño people did not have large livestock herds. Families had a few cattle in addition to goats, chickens and pigs. The animal meat they consumed came mostly from the forests and the river (Beneria-Surkin 1998). The introduction of livestock is the result of several events and processes. First, the Bolivian government gave out large tracts of land in the eastern lowlands, including the Gran Chaco, from the 1960s to the 1980s to influential families from the highland and temperate valleys to the

west. Cattle-raising was the most common use of these estates along with agriculture of sugarcane, hybrid corn, rice and cotton (Urioste and Kay 2005). A number of these land grants were located in the Isoseño territory so that today the Isoso TCO contains large pockets of private landholdings. In addition to the cattle ranches, there are also agro-business estates growing cash crops such as cotton, sorghum, soybeans, and rice (Villaseñor 2007). Additionally, since 1984, Mennonite families have purchased large parcels of land from private landowners and set up agricultural and livestock colonies[11], particularly near the communities of Isiporenda and Karaparí, on the south portion of the TCO Isoso. Isoso families have also entered into (reversed) sharecropping arrangements on Isoso community land with Mennonite families, growing crops for the Mennonites who advance them agricultural inputs. Isoseño families have also acquired livestock from neighboring private landowners, sometimes as payment for work rendered.

Another source of livestock (both cattle and goats) includes NGOs and donor agencies that have implemented animal husbandry projects in the Isoseño communities. Some of these livestock projects had the intention of not only introducing and improving livestock for the benefit of all the community, but also to provide communal production of meat. When these projects ended, however, much of the livestock was distributed among those persons who participated in the projects (Villaseñor 2007). The norm among the Isoseños is for men to take care of cattle and for women to take care of goats and other small livestock (chickens and pigs).

The increasing size of cattle and goat herds among the Isoseño people has two implications. The private ownership of livestock is probably the largest source of individual wealth in the Isoseño society. As of 2004, there were 8,300 cattle in the Isoseño communities and 75 percent of these were owned by 393 individual owners[12] (Villaseñor 2007; Barahona et al. 2005). Not everyone has cattle or goats; consequently livestock ownership introduces a source of economic and political differentiation among the Isoseño people. The accumulation of individual wealth and the resultant differentiation based on wealth is not in accordance with Isoseño norms and is a current source of conflict.

The other implication is related to natural resource management. As of 2004, 90 percent of the cattle owned by Isoseño persons grazed freely (Villaseñor 2007; Barahona et al. 2005) as do an increasing number of goats around the communities, concentrating their foraging in the riverine forest. Our visit to a number of Isoso communities in mid-2008 revealed that much livestock, including

cattle and goats, are free-ranging. Goats are the most abundant domestic animal kept by the Isoseño households, and are managed principally by women. The adverse impact of cattle and goats grazing in the dry tropical environment of Isoso is already being felt as certain trees and bushes in the forests are becoming scarce, and sparse grasslands and soils are being degraded (Villasenor 2007). Since 2005, WCS's veterinary program has supported a participatory planning and implementation pilot project with the community of Rancho Viejo, to develop a model for sustainable management of goats. This project seeks to increase productivity while reducing negative impacts on vegetation and the potential transmission of diseases from livestock to wildlife.

A Women's Organization Grows Within CABI

CIMCI's organization within CABI began to form in 1985, but it was preceded by efforts in the early 1980s by indigenous NGOs such as APCOB (Associación de los Pueblos Indígenas del Oriente de Bolivia) and CIDOB (Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia) to work with communities to foster greater participation by Guaraní women. These efforts included the development of small enterprises and continued through the 1990s as CIMCI consolidated its organizational structure.

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Evelyn Ribero, Coordinator of women's productive activities, CABI; Zulema Barahona, WCS/Bolivia; and Felicia Barrientos, CIMCI Senior Advisor for CABI, with bottles of shampoo

Women's Activities in the 1980s and 1990s

CIMCI was clearly intended from the beginning to be *"un espacio para las mujeres"*: a space for women to learn and to participate, and to speak about their needs in an organized forum, creating a way for those needs to be expressed at higher levels within CABI. The response to many of these needs takes the form of community projects undertaken by small groups of members in the communities. The pilot projects described below represent a set of activities focused on managing and using natural resources available to women around their communities to produce goods that are processed, packaged, in some cases transported, and then sold.

Through the 1990s, APCOB pushed for inter-community organizations that allowed women to have a forum for themselves, and to develop productive activities that would let them grow into more important economic and political roles in their communities. APCOB helped start three community stores so that women could buy and sell basic food items such as flour and sugar. In 1998, women requested that PDPI (*Plan de desarrollo de pueblos indígenas*)[13] administer and fund communal stores. While men initially managed most of the communal stores, over time women became the managers of all the stores. There were initial problems in some cases, in part because the practice of sharing is an important cultural norm and thus store managers had great difficulty demanding payment from fellow community members. The cultural norm to share meant that many store goods were seen as gifts and were never paid for. Though management problems persist in some cases, many of the stores, such as the one managed by the women's group making *cupesí* flour in Ibasiriri, remain functional. At first, all community members in Ibasiriri could use the store but, due to lack of payment, now only women that are part of *cupesí* group have an account.

CIMCI: A Forum for Better Governance, Participation and Economic Organization

In 1998, the Capitanía de Alto y Bajo Isoso (CABI) supported the creation of a formal organization, CIMCI (Inter-Communal Center for the Women of the Isoseño Communities), to allow greater participation for women in political and development activities. CIMCI would focus on the need to:

a) generate economic opportunities for women;
b) strengthen Guaraní culture and traditional knowledge; and
c) ensure the long-term sustainable use of the riverine forest (and the Parapetí River itself) near the communities where women's activities are concentrated.

CIMCI's objectives are to embody, create and defend *Yandereko* (way of being) of the Isoso culture; to assemble female representatives from Isoseño communities in order to focus on women's concerns and to defend those concerns in an organized and collective way; and to create a "space" for Isoseño women to exercise their rights as people, with the same capacities and opportunities as men. Equity among community members is key to Yandereko, which in part explains why CIMCI, and the productive activities for women developed through CIMCI, have evolved very slowly and always on the basis of discussion assemblies and consensus. Unilateral decisions within CABI, and especially within CIMCI, about anything, whether of an administrative, governance, or economic nature, seem rare. CIMCI is fundamentally a political entity for Isoseño women which seeks to improve the current inequality in access to opportunities and political influence available to men and women.

CIMCI has assumed responsibility for implementing small-scale commercial projects administered by Isoseño women's groups. These include communal stores, weaving products, production of fish and mesquite flour, honey and shampoo production, and small livestock (e.g., goat) management.

Several factors are essential to understanding CIMCI's existence and ability to operate[14]. CIMCI is a women's organization within the established and powerful CABI organization; CIMCI recognizes CABI as the principal representative organization of the Isoseño people; and as part of CABI, CIMCI functions as a single entity to contribute to improving Isoseño people's lives, thereby helping CABI to fulfill its own mission.

To date, CIMCI is the organization that unites and represents all the Isoseño women. It seeks to improve women's ability to make decisions to further their own interests within Isoseño culture and in Bolivian society as a whole, to have the right to elect their own representatives (female captains, or *capitanas*), to have the right to create their own agenda to allow for activities and decisions that improve women's lives, and to reinstate Isoseño women's traditional forms of organization.

CIMCI Structure and Composition

While its structure evolved to mirror CABI's in most ways[15], CIMCI adapted its rules to suit its own Mission and women's needs (see Figure 3).

The General Assembly of CIMCI is the highest level of women's grouping in the Isoso and its stage for collective action. Its bylaws state that the assembly meets twice a year to evaluate and discuss the progress of the CIMCI organization. The General Assembly of CIMCI includes the community *capitanas*, the intercommunal *capitanas*, a secretariat and advisors. Community *capitanas* are elected in each of the 28 communities of the Alto and Bajo Isoso, and inter-community *capitanas* are representatives of four community zones. The Assembly also includes the female presidents (*presidentas*) of the producer groups organized by women, the organization of traditional midwives, female members of the Kaa Iya Protected Area Management Committee, *corregidoras* (magistrates), and advisors to the *Capitán Grande*. Additionally, the General Assembly of CIMCI is also attended by the *Capitán Grande*; in his absence a second capitán may attend. His presence guarantees the adoption of the women's resolutions by CABI.

Each community *capitana* reports to the group about the different activities of the organized groups in their communities. Inter-community *capitanas* report about their activities within CABI, in the FII (Fundación Ivi Iyambae), as well as their activities representing CIMCI in dealings with outside organizations and entities. The FII is the accounting and administrative office for CIMCI. The assembly considers and approves policies and proposals for new projects that benefit women and receives the financial report from the FII, which is approved by the inter-community *capitanas*. Each year the assembly evaluates these reports and new inter-community *capitanas* are elected by consensus by the women

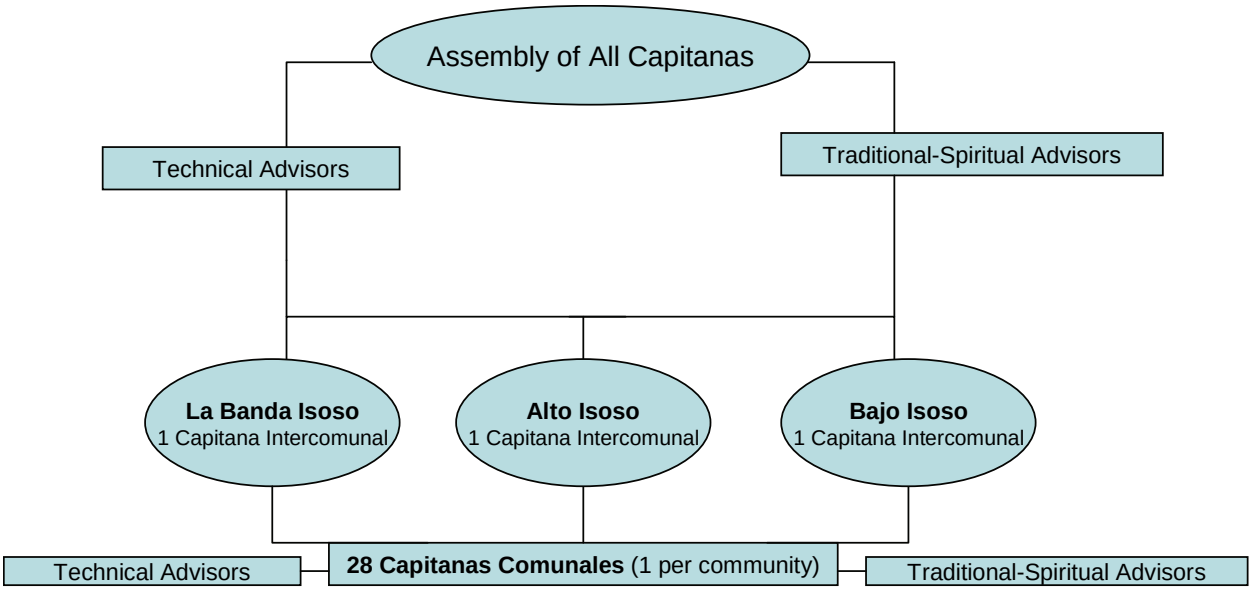

Figure 3. Organizational Structure of CIMCI (as of October 2008).

from their respective regions. The assembly can also invite other organizations that work with women's organizations in the Isoso to report on their activities.

Special meetings of the Assembly can be convened if 51 percent of the community *capitanas* call for a meeting. In the case that a new *Capitán Grande* of CABI must be elected, the women's assembly will convene an extraordinary session to nominate a female-consensus candidate.

Both inter-community *capitanas* and community *capitanas* are required to be women born in the Isoso, at least 18 years of age, and to know the statutes of CABI and CIMCI. Marital status does not matter. Their duties include convening the General Assembly of Isoseño women, meeting with their advisors every three months, analyzing internal organizational issues, receiving financial reports from the financial manager, budgeting and monitoring funds and assets of the organization, developing the annual workplan of the CIMCI organization in consultation with the community *capitanas*, and deciding which of the three inter-community *capitanas* will attend national and international events. At times this responsibility is delegated to other women in the organization who best represent CIMCI in specific fora.

Each inter-community *capitana* has the following functions: to choose her own advisors and personal collaborators, to coordinate with the other inter-community and community *capitanas* on issues that are of interest to both men and women, and to keep the *Capitán Grande* and the Second *Capitanes* informed of women's presentations before CABI. Every two months each inter-community *capitana* must visit the communities in her region and,

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Store for making and selling cupesi products, Ibasiriri

with the community *capitana*, convene a meeting of the women's groups in the community to discuss issues of interest and to inform them about her activities. She must also communicate the requests made by the women's groups in the communities in her region to CABI, FII, or the appropriate public and private organization.

Electing a female *capitana* is considered a right of the women in the community and a responsibility of all women, independent of other interest or producer groups in each community. If a community *capitana* is elected to be an inter-community *capitana*, she must relinquish her position as community *capitana* so that a new community one can be elected.

Each community *capitana* personally selects her advisors and collaborators. She must coordinate with the male *capitán* from her community on matters of interest to both men and women. She must also coordinate the different women's groups in her community so that the women in the community as a whole reap benefits, regardless of their group affiliations. She should manage projects so that they benefit women, attend meetings convened by CIMCI and keep her communities informed about activities and management decisions taken by CABI.

The Pilot Projects: Beginning and Purpose

The key moment in developing the program of pilot activities occurred in the late 1990s when the Fundación Ivi Iyambae (FII) recognized CIMCI as key to developing enterprises and economic opportunities in the Isoso. In 2000, CIMCI, with assistance from WCS, initiated a participatory study on the role of women in the management of natural resources, particularly in fishing, collection of forest resources and processing of foodstuffs.

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Store for making and selling shampoo, Aguaraigua

In early 2000 CIMCI received a small amount of funding (about US$3,000) from WCS and the USAID-funded Kaa Iya project to be administered through the Ivi Iyambae Foundation for a number of small-scale economic activities: production of *cupesi* flour in two communities involving 20 women; production of honey in three communities involving 10 women; production of *timboi* shampoo in four communities involving 20 women; and production of fish meal in one community involving 15 women. Over time, CIMCI has also used international development funds (from USAID and Spain) for these activities. A key factor through the years has been the personal support of the *Capitán Grande* for this branching out of women's work, and especially for the increased participation of women elected leaders through CIMCI and CABI. As the process for developing the pilot activities evolved, men from the communities accepted that women might want to do more economically productive work than the traditional tasks such as weaving.

From the beginning, women wanted to gain a greater voice in their communities through these economic activities, as well as earn some money. The women who became involved in these activities were taking a risk when they chose to undertake productive activities such as *cupesi* flour. The enterprise could fail, and women might be criticized for failure or bringing bad luck to the community. There was from the beginning a pressure for these pilot activities to show results, even if modest, in the form of reciprocal benefits for the communities that supported these activities.

WCS's purpose when these pilot activities were being planned in the late 1990s was to study the role of women in the management of natural resources, in the context of developing the Management Plan for the Kaa Iya National Park and Natural Integrated Manage-

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Leader of shampoo producer group in Aguaraigua with her product

ment Area, and to choose livelihood alternatives that favored women's traditional activities and roles as collectors, harvesters and processors of natural products.

CIMCI and CABI supported this goal, though they gave greater emphasis over time to the imperative that the activities materially improve people's and communities' well being, not only the management of the natural resources themselves. After its very strong focus over several years on establishing Kaa Iya as a National Protected Area and on consolidating the TCO, CABI was under pressure from communities to focus more on the needs of people of the area and not only on the natural environment.

This case study focuses most closely on a special subset of CIMCI initiatives that were established over the last seven years or so: those where Isoseño women collect (at times through cultivation), process and sell products from the natural resources that surround their homes and communities. This case study is the result of many years of experience working in the communities of Isoso, a review of studies and reports and interviews conducted with Isoseño women as well as *capitanas* and *capitanes*. We were especially interested in why the women chose these productive activities; the process by which the women developed the activities; and on the impact, whether economic or political, of these efforts on the women, both within and beyond their own communities.

CIMCI: A Mechanism for Scaling Up Economic Activities and Developing a Cross-Community Strategy?

The objective of the pilot projects has been to provide funds and technical assistance for very localized, on the ground support. In the process, much has been learned about what activities work and how they can be developed to work better. Resources may now need to be focused on helping all the communities participate in a process to elaborate a development plan for the Isoso.

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Shampoo produced in Aguaraigua

Projects often fail because of unrealistic assumptions and expectations. These pilot projects have to a large extent succeeded because they are very modest and they have proved what could be done. Many more women, however, want to participate than capacity currently allows and many needs in communities remain unmet, whether for large-scale projects such as provision of water and electricity, or smaller scale, such as income-generating activities based on sustainable use of natural resources. In order to move from pilot project to economically sustainable activities, CIMCI will need to change its strategy and provide the women's pilot projects with support for production management, marketing and financial administration.

Economic Activities of Isoso Families and Communities

In order to give a context to the productive pilot projects sponsored by CIMCI, we will give a general picture of economic activities in Isoso. As we have already discussed, the Isoseño way of being (*Yandereko*) and interacting with their environment is based on working to cover their subsistence needs. Their level of subsistence is determined by their access to and use of natural resources and monetary income from the sale of labor and sale of goods they produce. Beneria-Surkin (2003) examined household income and household production of a sample of households from five Isoseño communities. He found that income-generating activities for the average household include wage employment (mostly migrant or seasonal on surrounding farms and further away cities); sale of agricultural production (such as surplus crops, domesticated animals, and dairy products); sale of forest products (such as animal skins, honey, and birds), sale of textiles, petty commerce, and remittances from family members. Equally important, if not more valuable, is production that is consumed directly by the household. As mentioned above, households grow crops on their *chacos*, domesticate animals that provide meat and other animal products, and hunt animals and gather forest products in the forest.

The level of production (for consumption and for sale) for the majority of Isoseños is based on the use of land and other natural resources for consumption, not for wealth accumulation. Access to land and the forest is open to all residents. However, occupying more land than needed for consumption and catching more fish or hunting more animals than one's family and neighbors can eat are considered violations of Isoseño norms and values. While sale of some natural resource products (such as animal skins and forest products) is permitted, the land itself and the trees and animals in

the forest are common property and cannot be bought and sold. As mentioned already, this approach to the use of natural resources tends to be sustainable if population growth does not demand high levels of natural resource use and extraction. Certain technologies may allow for higher but sustainable levels of natural resource use, even with population growth.

Nevertheless, contact with the market economy is influencing the Isoseño way of life and work. Modern amenities such as electricity require ever higher levels of income. Education and health services demand cash incomes. Some families grow cash crops such as cotton and the renting of farm machinery such as tractors allows them to cultivate larger parcels. As cash incomes increase, more foods are purchased and subsistence agriculture becomes less important. This can have serious impacts on Isoseño livelihoods, as foods coming from outside of the Isoso often require payment in currency, unlike local foods which are grown, traded and shared with no need for cash transactions.

Productive Activities Based on Natural Resource Management

This section will focus on productive NRM-based activities undertaken by women within the managed area (the TCO), with the guidance and technical and political support of CIMCI. These productive activities are carried out in a culture that instills both a deep tradition of segregation of men's and women's domains and an extremely strong spiritual sense of connection between Isoseños and the natural resources around them, especially the river

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Interior, shampoo facilities in Aguaraigua

and the forest. In reality, however, women's role in managing and making decisions about use and access to natural resources has been minimal. Women in the Isoso have been, in large part, invisible; they do not usually participate in public life outside of strictly prescribed tasks related to their husbands, children, home and food. Women still tend to begin having children at a very young age and many women have seven or more children. Weaving has been one of the traditional women's activities that could generate an income. Many still weave and woven products are sold in Santa Cruz through a Weaver's Cooperative as well as internationally, especially in Spain.

A key to understanding the nature and evolution of the natural-resource based "pilot" activities described below is to stress that the goal of the pilot projects, begun in 2001 with fishmeal processing in one community, was always two-fold. One goal was to find ways for women to have greater participation and representation and be able to discuss their needs and aspirations in the public arena such as at assembly meetings. The second goal was to engage in productive activities using local natural resources to benefit their families and communities. The intent from the beginning was to link the economic pilot activities to increasing women's public space and voice. These activities gave women a reason to leave their domestic chores and organize themselves. It was very important, however, that these activities produce income, even if modest, so that women's absence from home was justified.

How the Projects were Chosen

These have been "experiments" and the women's groups in communities are still figuring out what works best for them. Some *capitanas* participate in these pilot projects and, even if they do not, they are sometimes called on to resolve conflicts in pilot projects. There was no set criteria by which activities were selected, but chosen activities shared a number of characteristics: they were to be decided upon and performed by groups of women, not individual women acting alone; they resuscitated "lost" roles traditionally performed by women as collectors, planters and carriers of seeds, crops and other natural resources.

The activities chosen were those that could be performed in large part near homes so women would not have to go far and the activities did not interfere with the other tasks in the home and in rearing children. Also, products resulting from activities had to be durable and have a long shelf life because the dirt roads in the Isoso between the communities and linking them with outside markets are not well maintained and become nearly impassible in the rainy season. In addition, there are no bridges to the communities

on the east side of the Parapetí River (La Banda) so, while people can cross on foot and with pack animals such as horses and donkeys, vehicular traffic to and from these communities is cut off during the four to five months there is water in the river. Economic activities have thus focused on processing resources such as seeds (from trees or plants such as *cupesi*, *timboi*, *ñetira*) or fish into a flour that can be bagged and transported from community to community relatively easily and not spoil with harsh climate such as temperature extremes and rains.

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Evelyn and Felicia of CABI with two capitanas intercomunales, Fidelia (Bajo Isoso) and Filomena (Central Isoso)

Table 1. Market-Oriented Production Activities by Isoseño Women's Groups.

production activity	communities	year started	no. women at start	no. women in 2008	sales in 2007 (Bs.[a])	Funding[b]
fish meal	Kuarirenda	2002	15	8	4000	USAID/WCS/CABI Kaa Iya Project (part of approx. $21,000).
honey	Karaparí	2002	10	8	3,000[d]	USAID –WCS – CABI (Kaa Iya Project; part of approx. $21,000).
	Kopere Loma	2002	10	7		
	Kopere Brecha	2002	10	0		2,000 USD from Programa de Relacionamiento Comunitario (PRAC) Transierra.
	Iyobi	2006	15	15	1,000	
	Koroporo	2006	10	10	500	2,500 USD NGO Asociación de Territorios Vivos
	Natividad[c]	2007	15	15	500	
mesquite flour	Ibasiriri	2002	20	20	4,000	USAID – WCS – CABI (Kaa Iya Project; part of approx. $21,000).).
	Pikirenda	2002	20	20		$5,000 USD from Programa de Relacionamiento Comunitario (PRAC) Transierra.
shampoo	Iyobi	2005	22	22	2,000	$2,000 from WCS
	La Brecha	2005	70	40	2,000	$2,000 from PROSAT
	Aguaraigua	2007	35	35	10,000	$5,000 from the Comunidad Autónoma Bérrio Plano $25,000 Yves Rocher Prize through Spanish NGO - Asociación de Territorios Vivos

(a) In 2007, the exchange rate for the Bolivia currency (bolivianos) was US$1 = 7 bolivianos.
(b) Funds utilized directly on pilot project costs; does not include WCS and CABI staff time providing technical and management support.
(c) Natividad is a Chiquitano community in San Joséé de Chiquitos.
(d) The 3,000 Bolivianos was for three communities: Karaparí, Kopere Loma, and Kopere Brecha.

In looking at activities that began in 2001 or as recently as 2007, we can say that they began on a very small scale and in fact remain so. Access to markets and economic benefits remain very modest. However, the activities have succeeded dramatically in the first goal stated above: they have explicitly given the women greater voice and the opportunity to represent themselves as active, valuable members of their communities and, through their elected representatives in CIMCI, in CABI itself. The women involved in these activities are visibly proud of what they have done and, though timid to talk at first, expressed clearly defined ideas of their needs and even future plans for their activities.

Felicia Barrientos, one of the founders of CIMCI and sister of Capitán Grande Bonifacio Barrientos, is a master community organizer and eager to describe the process by which she has helped groups of women organize themselves around NRM-based activities. Her entry point in a community is usually the *presidenta* of an existing community activity (like weaving). She asks the *presidenta* to assemble the women of the community to discuss a new activity without yet deciding what that activity could be; that will be the community's choice after much discussion. In principle, when an activity begins, it is open to all women in the community. Doña Felicia suggests how many women (10, 20, 40) she thinks could start the activity and a process combining self selection and the *presidenta*'s recommendations ensues. Sometimes, if some women drop out over time, new women can then join. To decide what product could be made in Ibasiriri, for example, Felicia began by asking the women what were the traditional foods there. They said *cupesi* was used as flour and could be used in a drink mixed with water or processed as a chocolate or coffee substitute.

In 2006, CIMCI received technical support from a group of MBA students from the Haas School of Business, Berkeley University, who evaluated several products and their commercial potential. With support from CABI and WCS, the CIMCI women began to implement ecologically sustainable economic activities recommended by the MBA team, resulting in increased sales, greater presence in fairs, improved products and other accomplishments:

1. CIMCI has increased sales of shampoo and cupesí (mesquite) products in neighboring Guaraní communities and other towns, resulting in bulk sales at lower prices for people who bring their own containers. CIMCI has also increased its participation in local fairs where the women set up their own stand to sell and promote their products.
2. In the city of Santa Cruz, CIMCI has made commercial contacts and is selling products in an up-scale health food and organic products store called Naturalia, as well as through a

natural goods store in one of the city markets.

3. A consultant worked with the women to develop a new trademark and logo to brand the products, because the first versions chosen and preferred by the Isoseño women were not as effective as desired with buyers.
4. CIMCI has organized training events for the women to make the production model more akin to a business operation. However, this aspect has not been fully internalized in the daily activities of the women's groups, where certain customs continue to reduce work efficiency.

Table 1 provides some basic information about these four productive activities by groups of women and how they are distributed across Isoso communities.

The Pilot Projects Today

The following sections and Table 2 offer highlights of our visit to communities in the Isoso in July 2008. CIMCI's goal has been to organize women in groups undertaking productive activities in all communities in the Isoso. They still have a long way to go to reach that goal and there are plans to start new shampoo activities in several more communities during the next year. The *presidentas*, the heads of the producer groups, do not receive any salary or a larger share of the income from sales, but they do receive funds for transportation to attend meetings outside of their community. Group members do not receive salaries either. The seller, or "*vendedora*," does get payments because she has the additional work of actually selling the goods.

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A variety of cupesí (mesquite flour) products

Isoseños often talk about finding "*salidas*" ("ways out") for their products, meaning markets and ways in which Isoseñas can sell their products. Some challenges are whether and how to scale up, finding new markets and increasing capacities to create new products.

Table 2. Characteristics of Women's Productive Group Activities in Four Communities.

Activity - Community	Honey Karapari - Alto Isoso	Shampoo Aguaraigua - Bajo Isoso	Cupesi flour Ibasiriri - Central Isoso	Fishmeal Kuarirenda - Lower Isoso
Year began	2005 with 35 beehives boxes	2007	2002 (flour first produced in 2003)	2001
Number of women involved	10 at beginning; 8 in 2008	60 at beginning; 30 in 2008	30	15 women at beginning; 5 women and 3 men in 2008
Natural resources used	Honey from native bees *(meliponinas)*; wood from cupesi tree to make boxes	Ñetira (see photo); sábila (aloe vera); both being grown now specifically to make shampoo	*Cupesi* seeds (*algarrobo* in Spanish, mesquite in English) are ground to make flour, and processed to make chocolate and coffee substitute.	Fish from Parapetí River and lagoon
Where sold	In years 1 and 2 all honey was sold to Mennonite communities in Isoso. In year 3 (2008), they hope to sell 20 liters in Isoso and 10 liters in Santa Cruz through CABI.	Mainly in Isoso; some sold in Santa Cruz through CABI at festivals and natural product shops	Mainly in Isoso; some sold in Santa Cruz through CABI at markets of crafts and natural products made by indigenous groups	Only in Isoso; no plans to sell outside
Current product price Boliviano (Bs) = US$0.14	250 ml jar: 10 Bs 1 liter: 40 Bs	5 Bs per bottle 2007 total income: 1,000 Bs (about $143)	5 Bs per 250 g. bag of coffee & chocolate, and 7 Bs per 500 g. bag of flour; considering raising their prices this year.	10 Bs per bag of flour and 7 Bs for dried or smoked fish
How income is used	Income divided by how much honey comes from each box. One woman's box yielded two liters, so she received 80 bolivianos.	Purchase of more materials and packaging; then split balance among women in group	Purchase two cows, as well as some dry goods (cooking oil, pasta, sugar, soap) to create a cooperative store	At present the women involved in the fishing activity divide the income.
Other benefits	Overall, they say there have been good results and are proud of their work. This activity seems to require less effort on the part of the women than other group activities.	On Mother's day, each woman received an additional 20 bolivianos (about $3). Community families can obtain emergency loan in case of family illness. The community *capitán* can also obtain a loan for travel to attend CABI meetings in Santa Cruz.	*Cupesi* flour is high in nutritional value (calcium and phosphorus). While the activity is led and managed by women, it involves the broader community as women, men and children collect the seeds (October to December). The group also supports community festivals from their income.	Fishmeal is high in nutritional value and has helped the community, especially children, have access to source of protein during months when the river is dry.

Cupesí flour

This project is closely linked to women's traditional practice of collecting wild fruits and seeds. They harvest seed pods from the *cupesí* tree (*Prosopis chilensis* or Chilean mesquite) in the Parapetí riverine forest during a three-week period. The seed pods are dried first in the sun, then in an oven, and then stored before processing. With the assistance of ethno-botanists and food technicians, CIMCI has produced, packaged and successfully marketed three mixes for beverage products described as chocolate, coffee and *cupesí* flour in Santa Cruz. CIMCI, through CABI, has taken out a patent and has implemented a processing technology that they can operate using solar panels.

Financing from the Kaa Iya Project (USAID funding) was utilized to contract consultants to improve the production process, as well as the machinery involved in production, packaging and to provide training to the women's group. WCS donated the machines for processing *cupesí* and the toaster. The consultants also assisted with acquiring the patent and brand name. In 2004, the Transierra PRAC Program granted 5,000 USD to build a small one-room factory in Ibasiriri. The store needs glass windows because the women cannot work part of the year when dirt blows in and makes grinding *cupesí* impossible. WCS is working with CABI to put in windows.

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Machines for processing cupesí, Ibasiriri

Thirty women in Ibasiriri and fifteen in Pikirenda participate in the program. They have processed 1,200 sacks of seed pods and have generated US$1,400 in sales through the CABI office in Santa Cruz and in the community stores in the two communities. The women's group plan is to use jars, instead of the plastic bags they now use, and make new labels to improve presentation. Women also want to build a terrace outside the store to be able to lay out the cupesi so it dries more quickly. The CIMCI women would like to extend this activity to other communities.

Honey production

This project involved five groups of women (23 families) from the Isoseño communities of Koropo, Kopere Loma, Kopere Brecha, Karaparí and Iyobi; Kopere Loma dropped out in the first year. There are also honey production groups in the Chiquitano communities of Natividad and San Juan del Norte near the northern boundary of the Kaa-Iya National Park. One group in each community is working with the native stingless bees which are appropriate for keeping and managing near homes.

Traditionally, honey was collected by cutting down the tree with the hive. With assistance from WCS, the groups figured out how much honey they could get per box, and began a honey cultivation activity. It appears that not much work is involved in maintaining and harvesting the bee-hives. The group in Karaparí, for example, meets to talk and clean the work area every 3 to 4 weeks.

Financing from the Kaa Iya Project (USAID funding) was utilized to contract a honey bee technician who taught Isoseño community members how to sustainably manage honey-producing bee-hives. Funding was also used to purchase wooden bee-hive boxes to experiment with different bee species. In 2004, the Transierra PRAC Program granted 2,000 USD to purchase 150 additional boxes. In 2008, the Spanish NGO Associación de Territorios Vivos donated 2,500 USD for technical assistance, new buildings for stores and marketing of native honey.

WCS parabiologists Tomás Martínez and Luciano Gonzáles, who offer technical support to the communities, also successfully divided existing hives in order to increase production without taking more hives from the wild and damaging or felling trees in the process. The parabiologists' roles include collecting the honey each year and putting wire around the boxes to protect them from the woodpeckers. Recently, woodpeckers have been ravaging the boxes in Karaparí and other communities, pecking large holes which allow the bees to pour out around the holes; new boxes are needed. The women in Karaparí hope to have new boxes built in

the community and we witnessed the beginnings of boxes being made from *cupesí* wood.

Like many experimental processes, the pilot activity in honey went through a period of trial and error. Cultivation of hives with several species of native stingless bees was attempted, with both positive and negative results. After one year, the most promising species was chosen *(meliponinas)* and efforts focused on its management. As it is a small bee that does not sting, it can be kept in boxes near houses.

The women in the Isoso produced their first harvest of 32 liters in 2006, increasing production to 67 liters in 2007. Each box yields between 1.5 and 2 liters of honey. Sales in Isoso and Santa Cruz brought in a total of US$402. To date, income remains low and the women are not paying for inputs (bottles, jars and boxes are donated) and they are not creating an operating fund for buying new boxes, maintenance, or transportation. The income from sales flows directly back to the women.

CIMCI groups have improved honey commercialization, promoting new containers and a new label. The demand exceeds the current supply of honey and prices have increased slightly. Another increase (to 60 bolivianos per liter) is being considered. Since demand for this type of honey continues to increase and production in the Isoso has not yet satisfied demand, production could be expanded to other communities. This year, for the first time, they will transfer the honey from large bottles to smaller jars.

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Boxes of bees producing honey, Kopere Brecha

Shampoo

The women of Iyobi and La Brecha, the first communities to undertake the shampoo production activities, proposed and implemented a project to produce shampoo from the fruit of the *timboi* tree (*Enterolobium contortisiliquum*). With support from CIMCI, the women obtained financing to build a shampoo production facility and to extend the activity to another community, Aguaraigua. Funding (US$2,000) from PROSAT, a Bolivian government pro-

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Shampoo ingredients (from top): timboi, sábila, and ñetira

gram, financed an external chemical consultant who designed and built a simple machine to process and bottle the shampoo, came up with a shampoo formula and trained the women in the production process. WCS granted 2,000 USD to buy equipment, provide further training and to purchase non-local inputs. In 2007, the Spanish NGO Associación de Territorios Vivos granted support to Aguaraigua community to set up a shampoo factory and to improve the packaging of the shampoo. ATV provided the funding through a competition, and the project won the second place in the "Tierra de Mujeres—Land of Women" prize sponsored by Ives Rocher (www.ivesrocher.com). The prize will be used to also extend the activity to the community of Kuarirenda and to the Ayoreo community of Santa Teresita, along the northeastern boundary of the Kaa-Iya National Park. The Ayoreo women requested this support following an exchange visit to the CIMCI women in the Isoso. They are planning to begin producing shampoo, but have yet to decide which plant to use. In 2008, ATV is also supporting the contracting of technical assistance and the installation of a new store in Kuarirenda to sell honey shampoo by using part of the $25,000 Yves Rocher Prize.

In addition to *timboi*, the women use other botanical ingredients for producing shampoos, including:

- ñetira (*Ipomea muricata*)
- añil (*Indigofera suffruticosa*)
- caracoré (*Cereus dayamii*)
- sábila (*Aloe vera*)
- yuai (*Ziziphus mistol*)

CIMCI increased production from 3,500 bottles in 2006 to 6,357 bottles in 2007. This production was sold through the CABI office in Santa Cruz: 5,215 bottles at US$1.20 each, and 1,142 bottles at US$0.80 each. Thirty women from Iyobi, twenty from La Brecha, and thirty from Aguaraigua participate in this project.

The groups need machines to make shampoo more consistently and CABI has helped them by creating a written quality control plan. Women also want fencing around the store to protect it from animals; CABI can help provide fencing and the community would provide posts. Women say they want to increase their capacity to be able to create other products based on botanicals (such as hair rinse and soap). CABI is looking into developing a training program to teach them how to make these products. The women in Aguaraigua say they would like to start saving some of the income so they may be able to open a new store. They like this activity be-

cause it has helped them organize themselves and they say their daughters are also learning to make shampoo as they watch their mothers.

CIMCI has promoted these products through civic fairs in the municipalities of Roboré, San José de Chiquitos, Pailón and Charagua, as well as the BIO-EXPO 2008 and the ExpoCruz 2007 in the city of Santa Cruz.

Fishmeal production

A group of women in the community of Kuarirenda produce fish flour in an effort to reverse the decline of traditionally valued food resources and the corresponding decline in the role of women in managing the environment. Fish are harvested principally during the period of May to July when they remain trapped in pools formed as the Parapetí River recedes. Some fishing is done by men only, some by women only, and some by men and women together (net fishing in the lagoon, usually done twice a month). Processing of fish into fishmeal is done exclusively by women. Fishmeal is processed and packaged in Kuarirenda and sold within the Isoso. The women of Kuarirenda have also marketed smoked fish within the Isoso. WCS donated the machine to process fishmeal and has supported this activity since inception. WCS, with funding from the Spanish NGO ATV, is proposing a new activity here such as honey and shampoo.

One of the difficulties faced this past year was the effect of the climatic phenomenon “La Niña,” inducing the Parapetí River to flood and change course, creating new pools but giving the women little time to fish before the flooding began again. As a result, fish meal production was negatively affected.

In addition, there seems to be internal conflict and many women have left the group. At the end of July, the president since 2001 (a woman) was removed. Men have taken over certain tasks in the production process and the new president and secretary are men. These events put into doubt how women will continue to participate in this activity, whether they will retain decision making power, and who should decide how money is spent. One reason given for change is that the women heading the group do not speak Spanish, which is seen as important. However, CABI staff are all from the area and speak Guaraní, so the Spanish language requirement is not clear.

Of all the pilot activities, fishing is the one most related to a sacred element in the Isoso- the river- and fishing is the most traditional activity in these communities. There is a sense that products from

the river, such as fish and fishmeal, should not be sold because they are a resource that belongs to everyone. Socially this is the most complicated and sensitive of the pilot activities. Fishmeal will probably never be a viable economic activity in Isoso, but it is very important socially and nutritionally.

Impact of the Pilot Projects on Women and the Communities

Isoso society has strict social and moral codes of conduct, enforced by the communities themselves. Rules change slowly, but they do change and the evolution of these pilot projects shows this. Women of the Isoso still tend to be very timid. Many do not speak Spanish, which in their own minds makes them even more hesitant about taking on visible roles in public life. This reluctance may be easier to overcome at the community level since, in most communities, activities and assemblies take place in Guaraní. In the Isiporenda and Karaparí communities, which are located close to both the Mennonite colonies and the municipal capital of Charagua, women do speak Spanish and assemblies in those communities use Spanish. Although increases in household income from these activities are quite small, the process of managing the production process, marketing their goods and deciding how income is used has increased the women's self-esteem. They report on their activities with great pride at community assemblies and their participation is taken seriously. Other benefits, such as better nutrition from the cupesi and fishmeal, have also helped communities.

Men realize now that women's productive activities are beneficial to the community. For example, if someone in the community is sick and needs to go to the hospital, women can help provide transportation funds. Most activities by women such as tending the house, cultivating the *chaco* and taking care of children have no monetary value, and are therefore taken for granted. The pilot activities do bring in some income and that is important because it allows women to speak and negotiate from a different position.

A critical norm in social relations among the Isoso people is reciprocity within the community and that, in itself, has placed limits to market-based economic growth. The more income women generate, the more they feel the pressure to donate to the community. As a result, they decide instead to redistribute the wealth among the women in the group or to reinvest their profit in productive activities such as buying a cow or setting up a store. In addition to the administrative and technical issues, social relations in the community may have as an important influence over whether an activity develops and succeeds.

These activities have created some problems, as well as new dynamics. A comment heard repeatedly is that the women who started these pilots in their communities do not want women from other communities to start the same type of projects. The first groups of women have become very protective of their particular activity and see it as a zero sum game: another community starting the same activity will just take away from them and not increase the overall pie. They do not yet see that the market itself can get larger and that products can be diversified. However, to increase and diversify production in an environmentally and economically sustainable manner, it is necessary to have a better understanding of the limits and costs of the resources they use. The scale of these activities is currently so small that the impact seems marginal, but if they do choose to expand activities, the questions of pressures, cultural conflicts and limits on natural resources may arise.

Some of the activities, such as shampoo production, seem ripe for growth at a larger scale and with more capacity and technical assistance, other personal care products such as hair rinse or soap seem realistic. The main issue is that these products, to be sold at larger than artisanal scale, need to be produced and marketed more consistently. This would require safe and regular transportation, particularly out of Isoso. Additionally, products would need to pass regulatory hurdles such as hygiene and sanitary standards, and the group enterprises would need to be legally registered to be able to collect and pay taxes. All this requires an administrative capability that, at present, does not exist in any of the groups. A rigorous assessment of current capabilities and future needs of these groups and of the feasibility of producing and marketing these personal care and food products is required.

The future of the fishing activity seems uncertain at present, both in terms of women's participation and their decision-making power. There is also a cultural bias among some community members, particularly those identified with *karai*, against fish products. Fishing is important, socially and nutritionally, to the communities that fish, but a very difficult activity to expand outside of those communities. It remains a very important activity for the Kuarirenda community.

The Isoseñas natural resource management productive activities have led to several very notable positive results. The activities have succeeded to a large extent in one of their primary goals: they have allowed women to participate in the public sphere and have given them a stronger voice at assemblies at all levels. The women have been able to be productive outside the home and to

prove that they were able to rise above the considerable cultural and institutional challenges.

The Isoso is still a quite isolated and difficult place to live and work and, to a large extent, it is still outside of the market economy. Many women speak with pride and seriousness about what they are doing and are making logical and reasonable demands to improve their machines, facilities and packaging. While the amounts of goods and income produced are relatively small, they do benefit the women and communities who support them.

Implications for Management

We need to remember that these small-scale productive activities are happening in a much larger context where powerful forces are at work, such as the accumulation of cattle by certain Isoseño communities, which has changed social relations and increased stratification among families and communities. Cattle-owning families tend to have more business and personal links outside the community, are more likely to speak Spanish (both women and men) and consider cattle-raising to be a superior activity to traditional activities such as fishing or harvesting honey.

The management plan for the Gran Chaco, which is part of the Inter-American Development Bank project about to begin, would be one way to consider and address the issue of providing financial and technical support for all productive activities, from pilot projects to livestock management to cash crops such as sugar cane and cotton. Criteria need to be established for deciding whether to move forward with an activity and with what intensity.

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The Isoso is dry tropical forest landscape

CABI's present challenge is to create land management plans that respect the traditional practices and that provide opportunities to improve quality of life in Isoso communities. These new management plans should explicitly recognize women's use rights to natural resources such as *cupesi* and *timboi*. Another management issue that needs to be addressed is the growing number of cattle and goats, most of which now roam freely. The roles and rights of women in the management of animals should also be articulated in the management plan.

Recommendations for the Future

Winer stated in his 2003 Assessment, when several of the activities such as honey and shampoo production had barely begun, "Projects being promoted by CIMCI (…) require a much broader set of skills. Most of these will be organisational and business based. The current levels of technical support are insufficient for the challenges ahead." Five years on, we can say that progress has been made in certain areas, but Winer's fundamental point is still correct.

The women of the Isoso, with technical advice, must reach fundamental strategic decisions very soon so that these activities can move beyond the experimental "pilot" stage. Differing levels of investment, technical support and administrative and financial management capacity are required. They have shown that they can produce goods from the natural resources in their communities

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The Parapetí River in the dry season

and are learning what products and productive methods are likely to succeed. Now they need to deal with production problems and assessing markets. For activities that can scale up, planning, investment and capacity building at larger scale are required.

One decision to be made for each existing product is to determine its market potential. Is this a product to be sold within the Isoso and TCO only, to other indigenous communities outside but near the TCO, or to a larger urban market such as Santa Cruz? If the market for shampoo will center on the Isoso and remain small-scale and artisanal, then the concern by women who are already producing shampoo is correct: if more communities produce shampoo, even with different botanicals, the market will be saturated very quickly. If the decision is to remain at a small scale, an intercommunity strategy could consider diversifying and make other botanical-based products such as hair rinse, soap or cream. Investment then would be on training communities to make, package and sell these products.

If the communities want to reach broader and more distant markets for these shampoos, then women in other communities could also produce shampoo. However, we do not see the management capacity to do this at present. More investment is needed in managing and coordinating efforts, adhering to government hygiene and sanitary requirements, marketing and transportation to markets, as well as in the administrative and financial management of such an operation. Isoso needs to move to an intercommunal strategy for products, with CABI and CIMCI collaborating and increasing the capacity in other communities like the Chiquitanos and the Ayoreos. Traditionally, there has been little interchange between Isoso and other indigenous communities beyond association meetings and festivals.

Criteria are needed to develop these productive activities beyond the pilot phase, with a cross-community assessment of where it makes sense to scale up—requiring homogenization, regularization and dependability—and where it does not. A possible intercommunity model for the shampoo, honey and *cupesi* activities is the Centro de Mujeres in La Brecha, where women buy thread for weaving and sewing. The *presidenta* of this women's center exchanges thread for woven goods from women, then when the goods are sold she takes a part of the income to pay for the thread and gives the rest to the women who made the goods. The NGO CIDAC worked with women to create this center, an "Asociación de Tejedoras" (association of weavers), which has a store in Santa Cruz called Arte Campo. This group of women studied traditional woven designs, taught other women how to make them using tra-

ditional colors and themes and taught them about the history and cultural role of the weavings to the Isoso. There are 120 weavers in this association, 80 of whom are very dedicated to this activity.

As noted earlier, the women of Isoso have a great sense of independence of themselves and of their community. They do what they decide to do. But, it is a slow process with many steps forward and many steps back and any effort needs constant support of many types. Women are the ones that reproduce the culture and the ways of the culture and so if the Isoso culture is to survive, women must be supported.

CIMCI is an example for women in other indigenous groups of the importance of: organization, the will to increase women's participation in public life and persistence. CIMCI's experience could have great influence and be seen as a model. But to do this, CIMCI needs to expand and sustain communications and follow up with women in other indigenous communities. CABI and CIMCI's plan for the next year will be to meet with women from other communities to see what productive activities they might like to be involved with and to meet with women of existing projects to see what else they need. This is the first time CABI will work with women from other indigenous groups, like the Ayoreo, chosen because they also live in the Isoso ecosystem.

Change, Recommendations, and Cautions

In this section we point out some of the changes occurring in the Isoso communities and discuss the options these changes offer, as well as some cautions. The penetration by non-Isoseño people, the market economy and Western values seems to be influencing Isoso cultural values and norms regarding lifestyle, wealth accumulation and natural resource use. The big question is whether the Isoso people will be able to maintain their distinct culture and *modus vivendi* as they increase their contacts and interactions with Bolivia's dominant Western values and market economy. This is a particularly significant question for the women of Isoso and CIMCI, as they are considered the caretakers and transmitters of Guaraní culture. The values, norms and practices of a culture are always changing—change itself does not destroy a culture. Certainly, it is not a contradiction when the women of CIMCI aspire both to defend the Guaraní Yandereko (way of living) and to improve their status and rights within the Guaraní community. For them it is clear that insisting on equal rights for women and men does not jeopardize their culture. The following sub-sections examine the changes occurring in the different areas of Guaraní life.

Isoseño society also needs to recognize the ever increasing use of natural resources by its people, and the need to recalibrate natural resource management to take into account the influence of the market economy and wealth accumulation. One could hypothesize whether market economy influence, resulting in income inequality, wealth accumulation and increased differentiation within Isoso communities, in ever-increasing need for cash income and in competition over natural resource use (by both Isoseños and an ever increasing number of ranching and farming settlers), may push Isoso governance and CABI to become more participative and democratic.

Reproductive Activities

Women and girl children carry out the many reproductive activities that create and reproduce the extended Guaraní family. As women become increasingly involved in productive activities, who will carry out the family's domestic tasks when they are engaged in remunerative productive activities? There is the possibility that family welfare, particularly that of children, may decline if other family members do not take over domestic tasks. For example, a number of studies have shown that women's involvement in micro-enterprises has resulted in reduced school attendance by their children, particularly girl children. This issue should be discussed and possible solutions explored. One suggestion would be for CABI to begin a Bolsa Familia program similar to the ones implemented in Mexico and Brazil.

Productive Activities

CIMCI is looking to shift the women's productive activities described in the previous section from pilot phase to enterprise phase. This will entail a profound change in how the women organize, plan, and carry out these productive activities. Before plunging into full-scale production for the market, the groups should discuss these changes, their potential impacts, and arrive at a consensus. Producing for the non-Isoso market requires a market-oriented approach (one based on efficiency, profits and ever-expanding markets) that is at odds with the Guaraní Yandereko (way of living). They may prefer to continue producing only for the family and the local market. A discussion of what approach the women's groups want to pursue will reduce potential conflicts regarding work responsibilities, distribution of earnings and profits, and natural resource use.

Land Tenure

The Guaraní land tenure system has been one of common property with common use (forests and community land) and individual use (the *chacos*). Some families are renting out their land to non-Guaraní persons for the production of cash crops, under the guise of lending out the land. Or, they are producing certain crops for larger producers in exchange for use of machinery and other inputs (a type of reverse sharecropping). In the past, these practices often resulted in the privatization of that land by the renter or sharecropper. This practice should be discussed within the Guaraní communities and a policy regarding renting and sharecropping should be established. Care should be taken that women are involved in the discussion and decision-making to ensure that women's needs for agricultural land are not overlooked.

Another land tenure issue is brought about by the increasing number of livestock, particularly cattle and goats held by some individuals and families. Most of this livestock is free-ranging and presents a risk for the existing natural grasslands, shrubs, and young trees around the community. The grazing habits of free-ranging livestock are not sustainable in the dry tropical forest found in Isoso. In the past, communities have sometimes asked livestock owners to move their animals to areas outside the community. While this resolves the community's concerns, it does not resolve the environmental impact of free-grazing livestock. The production and maintenance of cultivated pastures is one solution. This activity, in addition to rotating the livestock, requires a sizeable amount of capital and enormous amounts of labor. And it would require the community to allocate land to livestock owners for their individual use.

Livestock and Wealth

In addition to the environmental and land tenure issues of livestock herds, there is also the issue of wealth accumulation. Livestock ownership for rural families, particularly of cattle, represents significant savings and potential capital. Again, this may be at odds with the Guaraní Yandereko (way of living). These natural resource management and social issues need to be discussed by Isoseño men and women and decisions and policies arrived at in participatory and transparent processes.

Livestock, Land Tenure, and Gender

The use of land and natural resources for livestock raising may result in changes in land tenure system. Specifically, there is the possibility that common property (land in particular) will gradually

become privatized, in practice if not legally. There is some evidence of this already happening, not only because of *karai* moving onto Isoso land but also because some Isoseño families opt for individual private property in order to raise cattle (see Villaseñor 2007 and Barahona et al. 2005 for anecdotal evidence). Since land parcels from the community are allotted to men (and handed down from father to son) and cattle are usually owned and cared for by men in the household, there is the very real possibility that when land becomes privatized, it will become the exclusive property of men. Women may retain use rights, particularly for agricultural use, but they may lose control over land and natural resources. These two developments, land privatization and women's loss of land rights, need to be recognized and discussed.

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Livestock in the Isoso; sheep and rooster

CIMCI: Example for Indigenous Organizations?

Indigenous peoples and their organizations usually consider their principal struggle to be the recognition and preservation of their culture and society in the face of dominant cultures. This is not unique to Guarani Isoso society, as a perusal of the objectives of other indigenous and peasant organizations in Bolivia will reveal. In their struggle, particularly in negotiations with the state, indigenous and peasant organizations[16] present a united front and the general impression that they are each a homogenous group. A closer look, however, shows that there are internal differences among individuals and households based on wealth, gender, age, and status. Conflicts around these differences are dealt with internally, but can threaten the organization if they cannot be satisfactorily resolved.

CIMCI is an organization created by women to address their needs as indigenous women. One of their successes was to gain representation in 1998 for women within the base community organization—each community now has both a woman (*capitana*) and a man (*capitán*) representing it within CABI. This accomplishment alone has made CABI a more democratic organization and may be a unique characteristic among indigenous organizations in Bolivia—for example, only men participate and vote in the Aymara Asamblea Comunal (*parlakipawi*). CIMCI representatives (*capitanas*) are also on CABI's Consejo Ejecutivo—the Executive Board—since its creation in 2007. These *capitanas* seem to be a stabilizing force in CABI, particularly now as CABI experiences internal conflicts and divisions within its Consejo Ejecutivo.

This does not mean that women are equal to men in Isoso. The recent decision by some communities to make community assembly decisions by vote and to limit each family to one vote should be examined carefully: the most likely outcome is that the male head will decide the vote for his household. It should also be pointed out that there are only two *capitanas* in the nine-member Consejo Ejecutivo. In addition, women in their daily life have fewer opportunities to improve their life than men because of less education, lack of Spanish language skills, and less mobility. Isoso society continues to be patriarchal and women are expected to fulfill their domestic chores. In this sense, the productive pilot projects would seem to contain contradictory elements. One the one hand, these activities are based on women's traditional reproductive tasks and seem an extension of them: cooking and cleaning. On the other hand, the women's objectives are to work independently and to earn incomes—potentially empowering objectives that may result in women's questioning of the gender division of labor and a stronger position within CABI.

The Isoso communities and factions within its overarching governance organization, CABI, have often experienced conflicts; recently there has been a resurgence of the dispute between Alto and Bajo Isoso. CIMCI, as an organization within CABI, may prove capable of bringing the communities together and managing the conflict so as to reach a positive and transformative resolution. Such a resolution may serve as an example to other conflicts plaguing Bolivia today.

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Endnotes

1. This initiative received USAID/Bolivia funding from 1995 to 2003.
2. Beneria-Surkin indicates that Guaraní society practiced matrilocal residence but that Catholic missionaries in the 18th and 19th centuries, particularly the Franciscans, prohibited this practice as well as polygamy, and encouraged nuclear families. Evangelical churches today not only prohibit these customary practices but also encourage wealth accumulation (Beneria-Surkin 2003).
3. A more detailed description of the land and natural resource tenure system is found in the section on natural resource management (page 19).
4. The Isoso have constructed an irrigation system to channel water from the river to their *chacos*.
5. Agricultural production was considered un-feminine by Franciscan missionaries (in the 19th century) who discouraged women from farming and encouraged them to engage in more "feminine" activities such as weaving (Beneria-Surkin 2003).
6. Each community names a male *capitán* (literally means captain) and a female *capitana* to represent the community in the General Assembly of all the Isoso communities. For more detailed information, see the section on governance (page 12).
7. CABI first achieved legal recognition in 1990 under the name of API (Association of Isoseño Farmers).
8. The 1932-34 Chaco War between Bolivia and Paraguay over oil found in the Gran Chaco territory dispersed the Guaraní from their territories. After the war, the Isoso Guaraní regrouped and consolidated their territory along the Parapetí River.
9. Ley No. 1715, Servicio Nacional de Reforma Agraria.
10. The Parapetí River dries up during the dry season and fills with water during the rainy season. Depending on where a community is located along the river, communities have river water for 4 months (Kuarirenda, for example) to 11 months (Isiporenda) of the year.

11. While Bolivia granted large extensions of land in the eastern lowlands to Mennonite colonies during the 1960s and 70s, these were not located in the Isoso area. The Mennonite colonies established in the Isoso are relatively recent and are based on land purchases from private landowners.
12. The other 25 percent are communally owned cattle (that are mostly fenced in) and a smaller number of family owned cattle.
13. An Indigenous Development Plan was signed in 1997 between CABI and CIDOB, on the one hand, and the Hydrocarbons firms (GTB Shell, ENRON, PETROBRAS), on the other. This Agreement established an institutional framework and a fund of 4.2 millions USD as environmental impact compensatory payment for the gasoduct pipeline constructed over Isoso territory.
14. Following section adapted from CIMCI's bylaws, CIMCI/Reglamento Interno – Carácter de Organización, 2000.
15. CABI recently designated a *capitán intercomunal* for the northern zone, the newest of the three areas of the Isoso. CIMCI, however, has not yet formed a northern zone and selected its *capitana intercomunal*. On the other hand, because travel is difficult for the communities on the eastern side of the Parapetí River during the rainy season, CIMCI has designated a *capitana intercomunal*, the La Banda Isoso, for the women of those communities.
16. There are diverse indigenous peoples and organizations in Bolivia, but they can be put into two broad categories: the highland indigenous (usually called *campesinos*—peasants) and the lowland indigenous (called *indígenas*). While there have been attempts recently to join forces, particularly at the federation level such as the Federación Nacional de Mujeres Campesinas Indígenas Originarias de Bolivia (FNMCIO-BS), the division between these two types is still strong.

TRANSLINKS

Case Study

The Women of Isoso: Livelihoods, Governance, and Natural Resources in the Gran Chaco, Bolivia

Appendices 1-2

Appendix 1. Glossary of Guarani Terms
(Adapted from *Yande Yari: Nuestra Abuela*, May 2002).

chaco	land parcel
Isoso (I-oso-oso)	the water that breaks itself
iya	owner
iyambae	without owner
kaa	forest, mountain
Kaa Iya	Owner ("Guardian") of the Forest
Kaa Poti	Forest Flower (and name of legendary woman warrior)
Parapeti	Where many died (name of the river running through Isoso)
poti	flower
yande	our
teko/reko	way of being
yari	grandmother
Yande Yari	Our Grandmother: the Iya (owner) of the fish

Appendix 2. Timeline of Key Events.

Date	Event
1979	Catholic nuns forms groups of mothers (clubs de madres), in several communities in Isoso to focus on improving the health conditions of mothers and children.
1984	Foundation of Centro de Investigación, Diseño Artesenal y Commercialization Comunitaria (CIDAC), which provided technical assistance and funding for the Isoseño association of women weavers SUMBI-REGUA.
1985	A women's group is formed inside of CABI calling itself "Central Intercomunal de Mujeres de la Capitania del Alto y Bajo Isoso" (CIMCI).
1991	WCS and CABI begin collaborating on a program in natural resources management in the Gran Chaco of Bolivia.
1993	Environmental Law passed (Ley del Medio Ambiente), which recognizes civil participation and the role of indigenous groups in managing natural resources.
1994	Popular Participation Law passed (Ley de Participación Popular), which gives municipal governments stronger planning, implementation, and supervisory functions.
1995	Kaa-Iya National Park legally established. Isoso declared an indigenous municipal district governed by CABI.
1996	Land reform and Land Titling Law passed (Ley del Servicio Nacional de Reforma Agraria – commonly called the Ley INRA).
1997	CABI asks the government agency INRA to consolidate and title the Tierra Comunitaria de Origen (TCO) of the Isoso
1998	Female captains (*capitanas*) are elected by women's assemblies to represent them in the Capitania del Alto y Bajo Isoso (CABI) and CIMCI is transformed into a political organization, with community representatives.
2000	Internal rules and regulations are developed and approved for CIMCI with the help of WCS and APCOB. CIMCI, with assistance form WCS, begins a participative study focusing on gender and empowerment through productive activities.
2001	Large portion of Isoseño territory recognized by the RAMSAR Convention on Wetlands. The Ramsar site includes the narrow strip of riverine forest along the Parapetí River where all Isoseño communities and agricultural activities are concentrated. Project for Institutional Strengthening of CIMCI begins with the support of IWGIA. Management Committee of Kaa Iya National Park elects to have a representative from CIMCI on committee; two women become park guards.
2002	Beginning of CIMCI's first pilot projects with WCS support: fishmeal processing in Kuarirenda; mesquite flour (*cupesi*) in Ibasiriri y Pikirenda, and honey production in Karapari, Kopere Loma, and Kopere Brecha. CIMCI obtains approval by PDPI for financing new women's activities such as community stores, community bakeries, and a program for breeding goats.
2004	CIMCI achieves an intellectual property patent for its products derived from *cupesi* (mesquite flour, and chocolate and coffee substitutes). CIMCI receives additional funds from the "Programa de Relacionamiento Comunitario de Transierra" to support *cupesi* and honey production.
2005	The pilot projects for shampoo begin in Iyobi and La Brecha, with the support of WCS and PROSAT.

Date	Event
2006 – 2007	An Executive Committee is formed within CABI, with 9 members, 2 of which are *capitanas* of CIMCI.
2007	The pilot project for shampoo begins in Aguaraigua. Program to strengthen capability for commercialization of CIMCI begins with support from Associación Territorios Vivos (ATV).
2008	ATV and CIMCI win second prize in a competition "Land of Women" by the Ives Rocher Foundation. The prize is used to support CIMCI's productive activities.

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