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Community experts, practitioners and academics discuss status of community-based conservation in Latin America

Xico, Veracruz (Mexico) – The international conference *Community Conservation in Latin America: Innovations in Research and Practice* took place in the Mexican town of Xico, 6-9 November 2014. Organised by the EU-funded consortium COMBIOSERVE and gathering 160 participants – of which 55 are members of indigenous and rural communities– the conference’s innovative format brought indigenous and community experts, academics and practitioners in dialogue on equal ground.

Participants from all over Latin America and beyond discussed cutting-edge research on community-based management practices and their impact on biocultural diversity and livelihoods. Teams of community experts involved in conservation practice and research shared their experiences in collaborative research. Popular, expert-led workshops on state-of-the-art collaborative research methodologies developed by the COMBIOSERVE consortium provided participants with hands-on learning opportunities.

“This was a ground-breaking conference. The balance between a formal academic conference and a space of mutual and equal learning between academics, practitioners and community researchers was skilfully carried off. The outcomes of this conference will impact all scales of community conservation work in Latin America”, says Gary Martin, Director of Global Diversity Foundation and co-coordinator of COMBIOSERVE. Luciana Porter-Bolland, Researcher at the Mexican Instituto de Ecología and co-organiser of the conference, agrees, “the conference was a space for sharing information, experiences, and opinions between representatives of different sectors and contexts about community conservation and related topics. The rich three day exchange covered key issues of concern in biodiversity conservation, including complex socio-political aspects”.

Just as the recent World Parks Congress has underscored the importance of communities in worldwide conservation efforts, *Community Conservation in Latin America* contributes timely and much needed evidence of the significance of community-based approaches for the management of biocultural diversity in a rapidly changing world.

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