



# Engagement of the indigenous communities in the Amazon to the contingency plan for indigenous peoples in isolation in Colombia

*“The Issue of the indigenous peoples in isolation is an issue of inclusive participation ...”*

**Bora Antonio, ranger of the Cahuinari Parks and indigenous leader**



For nine days experts on indigenous affairs of the Member Countries of the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO) participated in a Technical Field Mission to Amazon areas near the Rio Puré and Cahuinari National Parks in Colombia. During the period 19 to 27 July, 2014, delegates learned about progress in the formulation of public policy for the protection of indigenous peoples in isolation in Colombia, the different protection methodologies used by the

Rio Puré and Cahuinari National Parks and their strategic allies for the protection of indigenous peoples in isolation. During the mission there were various opportunities for dialogue with local indigenous authorities, who are an integral part of proposed protection in Colombia. The international delegates shared the experience of their countries to enrich the Contingency Plan under discussion in Colombia.



The “Technical Mission on Protection and Contingency Plan Methodology for Indigenous Peoples in Isolation in the Amazon, Colombia” comprised 29 people, including delegates from Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, Colombia, representatives of non-governmental institutions, Colombian indigenous associations, communities and their organizations. The City of Leticia was the starting point of the expedition. Participants received information about linguistic research on the Yuri Passé isolated peoples by Dr. Juan Alvaro

Echeverri and conclusions about the connections between (a) the language of the Yuri indigenous peoples (in isolation) with the Tikuna (in contact), and (b) the language of the Passé indigenous peoples (in isolation) with the Yucuna peoples (in contact). A brief history of the village of La Pedrera and its relation to isolated indigenous peoples of the region and an introduction to the work being carried out in the National Parks of Rio Pure and Cahuinari were also presented.

## Condolence Note

With great sorrow, we share the tragic news of the death of Franco Roberto García (1952-2014) and Daniel Matapi Yukuna “Chunupi” (1970-2014) representatives of Amazon Conservation Team-Colombia (ACT), who died in a plane crash on Saturday September 6, 2014 between Araracuara and Florencia (Caqueta, Colombia) ..

The two researchers on indigenous peoples in isolation in Colombia took part in the ACTO Technical Mission, held in the Colombian Amazon region between 19 and 27 July this year under the Programme for Protection and Initial Contact with Isolated Peoples ACTO / IDB.



Daniel Matapi



Roberto Franco





On the Next day the delegations flew to the township of La Pedrera, located in the district of Amazonas, to work for two days. A meeting was held in the longhouse of the Community Board of Barrio Nuevo with representatives of the Association of Indigenous Authorities of La Pedrera, Amazonas (AIPEA), the Organization of Indigenous Peoples of the Colombian Amazon (OPIAC), and with teams of the Cahuinari and



Rio Puré National Parks. The meeting addressed issues concerning indigenous peoples in Colombia, their main institutions and organizations, the conservation work carried out by the National Nature Parks of Colombia (PNN) and the way in which these interact with indigenous visions and the protection of indigenous peoples in isolation. The specialists of the Amazon Conservation Team (ACT) presented their experiences, accredited by

the Ministry of the Interior, in identifying isolated Yuri and Passé peoples in the Rio Puré National Park, emphasizing strategies to protect their rights. Presentation was also made on the indirect methodology used to obtain information about the presence of isolated peoples, including measurement and progress of the investigation, and debate on the relevance and effectiveness of methodologies based on the no-contact principle. The representative of the Ministry of Interior gave an overview of progress in the formulation of public policy for the protection of indigenous peoples in isolation in Colombia, an issue that



is being addressed in coordination with regional and local indigenous organizations in the Colombian Amazon. The team of the Rio Puré National Natural Park presented the programme of environmental and cultural education in the township and surrounding areas, which aims to raise awareness among indigenous and non-indigenous populations on the importance of protecting their territory and indigenous peoples in isolation. The two working days ended with a description of the health system in the township of La Pedrera, its strengths and weaknesses, shedding light on the work planned with the Ministry of Health for the protection of un-contacted indigenous peoples in the area.



The next day, the mission travelled along the Caquetá River to the Borikada community located on the Curare Los Ingleses Reservation, through the community of Curare, home of the Cordoba water jets, a geographical icon of the resistance of the indigenous peoples of the lower Caquetá. In the Borikada community a meeting was held with the traditional authorities and community members, where each delegation shared the problems and actions for the protection of Indigenous Peoples in Isolation (PIAs) in their respective countries. Bolivia presented the context of uncontacted peoples in isolation in their country and Ecuador introduced the Precautionary Plan for the Protection of the Isolated Tagaeri-Taromenane Peoples. The Brazilian delegation presented the approach to health care for Indigenous Peoples in Isolation and Initial Contact (PIACI) and in particular the recent episode in the state of Acre, where a group of isolated indigenous peoples from Peru contacted an Achaninka community living in Brazil. Guyana explained its government's position in relation to the rights of indigenous peoples, government structures, NGOs involved and the system of health care. Finally, Peru presented the situation of indigenous peoples in isolation and initial contact, and the tools that the Government had designed for their protection.

Representatives of the Curare Los Ingleses Reservation presented initiatives for the protection of isolated *Passé Yuri* peoples living in a part of the territory of the Reservation and explained the zoning exercise in which an inviolable piece of territory had been marked out for isolated indigenous peoples.

The AIPEA indigenous association presented the programme "Guardians of Conservation", operating in coordination with National Parks, Conservation International and the NGO ACT, including the operational side of the checkpoint at Puerto Cayman, which is intended - inter alia - to protect the territory of indigenous peoples in isolation. The delegations also participated in a traditional "mambeadero" exchange

of views, in which indigenous authorities share their ideas about their concept of territory and the way they conceive the protection of indigenous peoples in isolation.

The delegations then travelled again along the Caquetá River to the community of Puerto Remansos del Tigre in the Mirití Ward-Paraná Reserve. They took the opportunity to visit the Bernardo checkpoint and the Bocas del Cahuinarí Cabin, located within the Cahuinarí National Park.

In the community of Puerto Remanso del Tigre, the representatives of the Cahuinarí National Nature Park, the Interior Ministry, OPIAC and AIPEA had talks with delegates of the Association of Miraña Bora Traditional Indigenous Authorities (PANI) about socio-organizational problems, conservation of natural resources and protection of the PIAs.

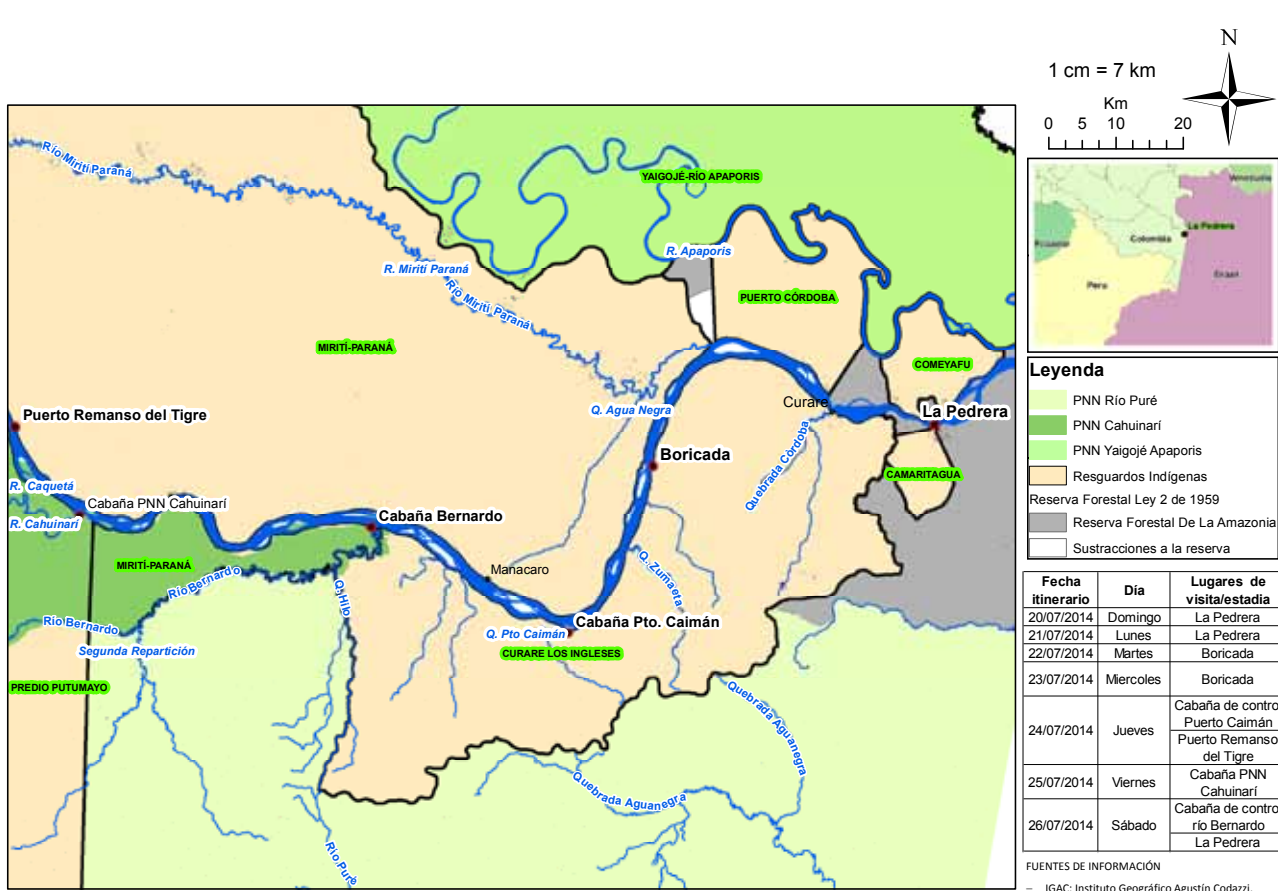
Subsequently, each delegation shared their experience and lessons learned in managing contact with isolated indigenous peoples. The day ended with a review of the "Emergency Contingency Plan in case of contact with Indigenous Peoples in Isolation in the Rio Puré National Park", including valuable feedback from community leaders and members of delegations.

From this community the delegation began the return trip by waterway, to the township of La Pedrera, through the Cahuinarí National Park Cabin and the Puerto Cayman checkpoint: which is operated by the indigenous community of the Curare Los Ingleses Reservation, who shared the work of the conservation officers with the mission delegates.

The participants returned from La Pedrera to the city of Leticia, where they met to share their impressions, reflections, conclusions and lessons that could be applied in Member Countries. One of the special features of the mission was the full participation of indigenous communities in the programme and, in particular, the presence of women in delegations and in the organization of the mission.



# Geographical Location



The Rio Puré National Nature Park covers an area of nearly 1 million hectares and is located in the area of confluence of the Caquetá and Putumayo rivers. To the west it borders the Predio Putumayo Reservation and the Cahuinari National Nature Park, while in the east it borders Brazil. The northern boundary of the Park is marked by the Curare Los Ingleses Reservation, located between the Rio Puré National Natural Park and the Caquetá River where the Kubeo, Yucuna, Carijona, Miraña and Tanimuca indigenous peoples live, represented by the association AIPEA. The Bora and Miraña indigenous peoples, who constitute the ethnic association PANI, live in the Cahuinari National Park.

To the south, between the Putumayo River and the Rio Puré National Nature Park is a forest reserve area in which there is no logging activity; this is the area of greatest risk of possible contact with isolated indigenous peoples in this territory.



The Puré river is the main water source of the park, running from west to east and continuing in Brazilian territory into the Caquetá River (called Japurá in Brazil).

On the banks of the Caquetá River, the most important settlement in this area is the village of La Pedrera, with about 4060 inhabitants, an airport and an air route from Leticia, Amazonas. Navigating the Caquetá River is the main means of communication/transportation for the inhabitants of the area.



## Background

The protection of isolated peoples in Colombia is a relatively unknown and new concept for Colombia's society and state. However, in recent years there have been significant advances in research, policy development and implementation of effective measures for their protection.

First, there has been progress in research on the existence of indigenous peoples in isolation in Colombia. To date, there have been 15 indications of isolated peoples in Colombia, with confirmation of at least two groups (Yuri and Passé) in the Rio Puré National Park (Amazon Conservation Team Colombia ACT).

Secondly, the National Government has established Standards for the Protection of Peoples in Isolation. Rio Pure National Park was created in 2002 and its Statute (# 284) identified one of the purposes of the creation of the park as the protection of isolated peoples living there.

Similarly, protection was partially regulated by Victims Decree-Law 4633/2009. The Decree prohibits activities in these territories and states that priority must be the creation of reserves for the purpose of protection. Similarly, the Development Plan (2010-2014) orders the Interior Ministry to design a public policy for the protection of indigenous peoples in isolation. In this regard, the Ministry of the Interior has, through the ad-hoc Committee for the Protection of Peoples in Isolation in Colombia, advanced with the development of a draft policy and regulatory framework for this policy. In July 2014, the Permanent Bureau for Cooperation and the Amazon Regional Bureau (round tables for official dialogue between the government and indigenous organizations) endorsed a roadmap for prior public consultation.

## Strategic framework program to develop a Regional agenda for the protection of indigenous Peoples in isolation and initial contact

The program seeks to contribute to protecting the rights of indigenous peoples in isolation and initial contact in the Amazon Basin by defining effective policies and concerted actions between governments, indigenous peoples and organizations, and non-governmental organizations with experience on the matter.

It consists of five components that aim to achieve: (i) a regional interinstitutional coordination mechanism supported by national bodies; (ii) a concerted strategic framework that incorporates physical and cultural protection measures; (iii) a territorial protection plan that includes legal and physical they occupy and adjacent areas; (iv) a regional health strategy that includes a technical health prevention standard with an intercultural approach or characteristics, and emergency

health systems in the areas where they live; and (v) systematized data and knowledge about the situation of isolated peoples and capacity and commitment to protect them.

As counterpart for the program, the Government of Colombia organized a Technical Field Mission to Amazon areas near the Rio Puré and Cahuinarí National Parks in Colombia, for technical experts involved in protecting and promoting indigenous rights in ACTO Member Countries. Its aim was to provide governmental stakeholders with a practical experience to promote or enhance multilateral action.

The mission's objective was consistent with the Program's Component 5, particularly "creating technical capacity and commitment in Member Countries to protect isolated indigenous peoples".



## Draft Contingency Plan for Isolated Peoples in the Rio Pure National Park, Colombia



Sets out guidelines for action in the event of contact between indigenous peoples in isolation in the region of Rio Puré and the local population.

Aims to protect the health, lives and rights of indigenous peoples in isolation once they come into a contact situation, including steps to avoid or minimize the impacts of such contact.

### Main results of the mission

- 1 Opportunities were generated for dialogue with indigenous authorities, with Member Country delegations sharing their problems and policies for the protection of Indigenous Peoples in Isolation (PIAs).
- 2 Experiences shared by the participating countries in the mission strengthened the awareness of indigenous communities concerning protection mechanisms for PIAs applied by Member Countries.
- 3 The delegations were informed of local initiatives and visions of the indigenous peoples' communities on protection for PIAs during the dialogues with communities, local authorities and traditional elders.
- 4 The neighbouring Yuri and Passé indigenous peoples shared their worldview on the protection of territory through thought with Member Country delegations and institutions.
- 5 The Colombian Government's tools (rules and contingency plans for protection of peoples in isolation) were enhanced by the experiences of ACTO Member Countries.
- 6 The delegations learned the research methodology applied in Colombia to identify the presence of isolated peoples in the country.
- 7 Information was provided on initiatives and difficulties with respect to health care in the township of La Pedrera, and working tools were offered to local administrators for protection of peoples in isolation.
- 8 The delegations helped to spread awareness on the need for mechanisms to protect indigenous peoples in isolation in Colombia in light of the realities of each member country.
- 9 The mission provided an opportunity for representatives of the Colombian government to have a dialogue with the indigenous authorities, permitting monitoring of the problem of PIAs in the regions visited.
- 10 Given the important role of the National Nature Parks of Colombia in protecting isolated peoples, the meeting promoted the initiative to set up a coordination network of protected natural areas with presence of PIAs among Member Countries.
- 11 Agreement was reached on the need to strengthen program spaces at national and regional level.
- 12 The usefulness of the tools was demonstrated such as environmental education for the protection of isolated peoples.
- 13 The mission provided inputs for implementation of the second phase of the framework programme for the protection of indigenous peoples in isolation.
- 14 The importance of indigenous grassroots organizations engagement in the formulation and implementation of policies for the protection of indigenous peoples in isolation, was evident.



## ILO Convention 169 - Indigenous and Tribal Peoples

This was the first international legally binding instrument to specifically address the rights of indigenous and tribal peoples, recognizing their rights to work, land and territory, health and education (1989).

## United Nations Guidelines on the Protection of Indigenous Peoples in Voluntary Isolation and Initial Contact

On 16 December 2005 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Program of Action for the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous People, in which two specific recommendations are made on indigenous peoples in isolation and in initial contact. At the international level it is recommended that “a global mechanism should be established to monitor the situation of indigenous peoples in voluntary isolation and in danger of extinction.” At the national level it is recommended “that a special protection framework for indigenous peoples in voluntary isolation should be adopted and that Governments should establish special policies for ensuring the protection and rights of indigenous peoples with small populations and at risk of extinction.”



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Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization  
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Address  
SHIS QI 05, Conjunto 16, Casa 21, Lago Sul  
CEP: 71615-160 Brasília – DF, Brazil  
T: +55 61 3248 4119/4132 | F: +55 61 3248 4238  
[www.otca.info](http://www.otca.info)