



CONTRIBUTION BY
THE SMALL GRANTS PROGRAMME
TO RURAL COMMUNITY TOURISM

**IN COSTA RICA
1993-2015**



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ACRONYMS

| ACRONYM | MEANING |
|-------------------------|--|
| ACEPESA | Central American Association for the Economy, Health, and the Environment |
| ACTUAR | Costa Rican Rural Community Tourism Association |
| ADESSARU | Rural San Jose Sustainable Development Association |
| AECID | Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation |
| AFAORCA | Organic Family Association of Cerros Caraigres |
| AFITURA | Tortuguero Rustic Association |
| ANDAR | Andar Association |
| ASEPALECO | Ecological Association of Paquera, Lepanto, and Cobano |
| ASODINT | Térraba Association for the Defense of Indigenous Rights |
| ASOMOBI | Biolley Organized Women's Association |
| ASOPROLA | Altamira de Bioley Producers' Association |
| ATEC | Talamancan Ecotourism and Conservation Association |
| IDB - MIF | Multilateral Investment Fund of the IDB Group |
| CODECE | Association for the Conservation and Sustainable Development of Cerros de Escazú |
| COOPECAMPESINOS | Los Campesinos Cooperative |
| COOPETURIC | Cooperative of Corcovado Rural Tourism Multiple Service Entrepreneurs |
| COOPRENA | National Ecotourism Network Cooperative Consortium |
| COVIRENAS | Natural Resource Watchdog Committees |
| CRUSA | Costa Rica-United States Foundation |
| CST | Certificate of Sustainable Tourism |
| EL COPAL | Copal Conservation and Sustainable Development Association |
| IAF | Inter-American Foundation |
| FMAM | Fondo para el Medio Ambiente Mundial |
| FUNDECOOPERACIÓN | Fundecooperación |
| GEF | Global Environment Facility |
| ICT | Costa Rican Tourism Institute |
| IMAS | Mixed Social Assistance Institute |
| INAMU | National Women's Institute |
| INDER | Rural Development Institute |
| INFOCOOP | National Cooperative Advancement Institute |
| ISV | International Service of Volunteers |
| JAZON | Northern Zone Young Farmers |
| LAGO JALAPA | Lago Jalapa Puerto Viejo Sarapiquí Agricultural Ecotourism Association |
| MAG | Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock |
| MINAE | Ministry of the Environment and Energy |
| CBO | Community-Based Organization |
| WTO | World Tourism Organization |
| NGOs | Non-Governmental Organizations |
| PANIAMOR | PANIAMOR Foundation |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| PPD | Programa de Pequeñas Donaciones |
| SINAC | System of National Conservation Areas |
| STAR | Transparent Resource Allocation System |
| STIBRAWPA | Artisanal Women of Yorkin |
| RT | Rural Tourism |
| RCT | Rural Community Tourism |
| WWF | World Wildlife Fund |

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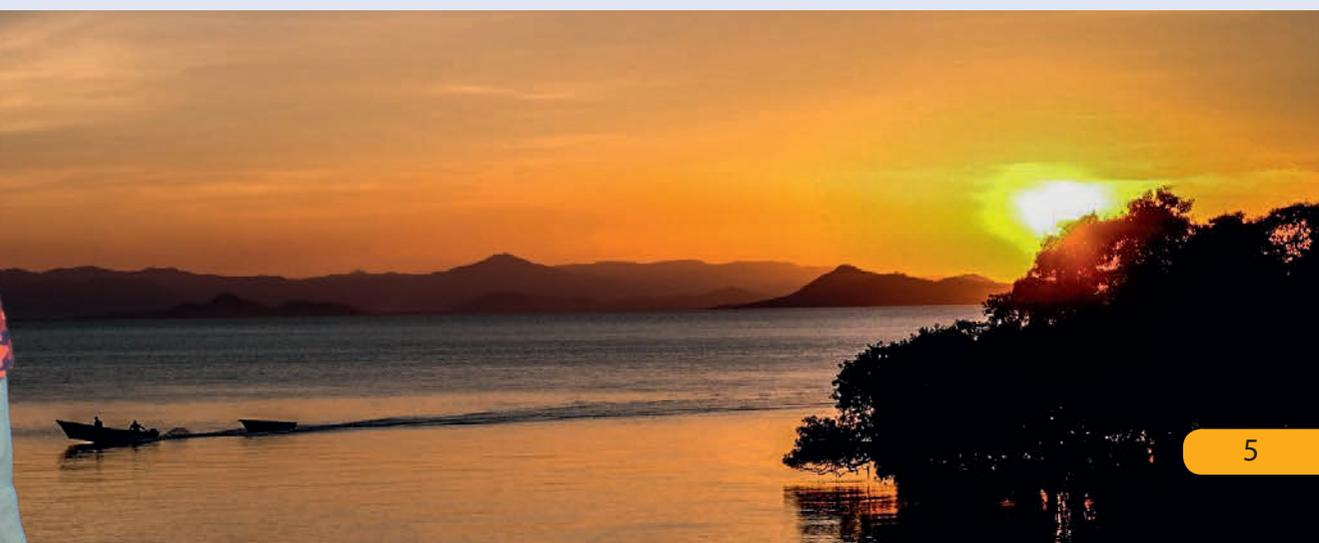
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INTRODUCTION:

This publication contains a systematization of the contribution by the Small Grants Programme (SGP), in Costa Rica, for the 1992-2015 period; documenting the technical and financial support provided to an emerging sector that has grown in importance over the last 20 years, namely, Rural Community Tourism (RCT).

Rural Community Tourism first appeared in Costa Rica as a development alternative to the poverty in which rural areas are often subjected. It has become a determining factor for the rural economy. **“Rural tourism represents a form of nonagricultural rural employment. This type of employment is similar and complementary to other property-based activities in the rural economy... It represents, conversely, a micro-entrepreneurial activity that can provide a major share of family income by complying with specific development phases”** (Faiguenbaum, 2001, p. 19).

For the SGP, **“rural community tourism represents an alternative tourism development that strengthens the protection and use of natural and endogenous cultural resources by the host communities as the lead players. It thus becomes an instrument for local development and heritage conservation that, rather than replacing, complements other traditional financial activities”** (Guereña, 2006).

This systematization presents a retrospective analysis of the work done by the Small Grants Programme -Costa Rica - in implementing a strategy for dealing with the sector. It gives an account of the processes carried out and their impacts. With its support for this sector, the SGP demonstrates that community action can strike a delicate balance between human and environmental needs, as part of an integrated strategy involving communities, strategic partners, private enterprise, cooperatives, and Costa Rican state institutions.

The first chapter describes the programme’s background and actions, both globally and domestically. The second chapter details the strategy implemented by the SGP, the investment made in terms of money and assistance, the financed organizations, the achievements in this collaborative process, and the organizations that are currently performing and providing RCT services. The subsequent chapters show the contribution by the SGP and the Alliance for RCT to the sector, as well as, their contribution to respective public policies, along with six case studies of organizations involved in RCT initiatives to demonstrate the range of initiatives represented by the programme’s partners. The distinguishing factor in all these case studies is that of the underlying model, one **“of local participation whose economic, social, and cultural mainstay is local stakeholders who provide tourism services and the participation of a local workforce with their own businesses; as well as, the people and other local stakeholders which conserve access and allegiance to territorial spaces of beauty and, therefore, enjoyment by tourists”** (Faiguenbaum, 2001).

We hope that this publication makes it possible to inform, reflect upon and appreciate the progress on RCT that has been strategically achieved by leaders, organizations and communities with the support of state institutions, NGOs, private enterprise and academia, and especially with the contribution by the Small Grants Programme. This systemization, which showcases the dynamics developed by the SGP-Costa Rica, confirms that **“acting locally”** requires the participation of many stakeholders, and that it is only TOGETHER that we are able to build the collective management necessary for sustainable development, by incorporating and linking the economic, social, environmental, and the institutional dimensions of development.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:

This systematization was made possible thanks to many people: The National Steering Committee and the SGP country team, and the programme's partner groups, organizations and institutions, with whom we were able to renew old friendships while discussing our shared experiences and accomplishments in building the rural community tourism sector. Today, this sector has forged its identity and marked a milestone in the country's history by highlighting the cultural values of Costa Ricans and their idiosyncrasies, spotlighting the rural environment and especially focusing on how to contribute to local community development while protecting natural resources. We would like to express our profound gratitude for the time that was provided, the passion that continues to be shown, the endless struggle, the hope and the opportunity given to us, by looking back at the road that was travelled, our shared achievements and the social, economic, and environmental transformations. But, above all else, the need to continue reflecting on successes and failures, the improvements that can be made and the road ahead.



PRESENTATION:



The great challenges of sustainable development require creative, bold and inclusive solutions that need to be addressed comprehensively. To achieve the goals embodied in the Agenda 2030, in which the eradication of poverty is a priority, the three dimensions of development - environmental, social and economic - must be treated jointly, without one aspect putting the sustainability of the other at risk, as set out in the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is guided by this integrated development approach, and therefore committed to addressing comprehensive solutions to effectively support countries in moving towards the eradication of poverty in all its forms and dimensions, while protecting the environment and promoting peace and prosperity in the world. The acceleration of structural transformations for sustainable development and building resilience to shocks and crises is also paramount.

Costa Rica is not exempt from this problem, but it has found value in the opportunities offered by alternative development systems, such as sustainable tourism. Today, this Central American country is distinguished as a tourist destination of global importance. According to data from the Costa Rican Tourism Institute (ICT), in 2018 more than 3,000,000 tourists visited Costa Rica, guests who value the policies of protection and conservation of natural resources that exist in the country. Rural, indigenous and coastal communities are recognized as having a fundamental role to play in the tourism industry.



These populations have proven to be strategic allies for the fulfillment of the SDGs. At UNDP we are proud to be part of these multisectoral alliances that allow us to build solutions that respond to people's realities at local and national levels. Particularly, I would like to acknowledge the work that has been done by the Small Grants Programme (SGP), which over the last 25 years has supported over 90 rural community tourism initiatives.

Thanks to the support of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and Costa Rican state institutions, such as, the National System of Conservation Areas (SINAC) of the Ministry of Environment and Energy (MINAЕ) – SGP's historic strategic partner-, the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAG), the Institute for Rural Development (INDER), and other cooperating entities, nowadays, Rural Community Tourism (RCT) is a reality that extends throughout the entire national territory, a clear example of our role as an SDG integrating agency. This tool promotes nature-based solutions for a sustainable planet, through mechanisms that combat the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystems, while integrating marginal communities at risk of poverty as participants in an economic activity that seeks to use resources sustainably and improve living conditions, whilst promoting effective, inclusive and responsible governance within territories and regions. RCT is especially relevant in facing the great challenges faced by our country and the planet; It is for this reason, that from UNDP we will continue to support these types of initiatives in order to achieve social, environmental and economic benefits.

José Vicente Troya Rodríguez

José Vicente Troya Rodríguez

Resident Representative
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
in Costa Rica

FOREWORD:

The Small Grants Programme (SGP) has been a part of Costa Rican community life for a quarter of a century, during which it has strengthened the skills of community-based organizations, facilitating technical and financial assistance for their initiatives.

In 1992, SGP embraced the idea of a group of Indigenous women from the southern Caribbean coast to launch a pilot project in a thematic area which we now know as “rural community tourism,” along the way, inspiring many other rural communities to come up with new ways to become involved in this sector. With the passage of time, and together with other organizations, NGOs, and state institutions, it contributed to the creation of the Rural Community Tourism sector, as an innovative product within the Costa Rican tourism industry.

Today, this sector is clearly identified with natural resource protection, Costa Rican’s unique rural landscapes and pride in displaying its national culture. In turn, it helps generate income to improve living conditions without forcing people to abandon their traditional agricultural or fishing activities.

This document contains the experiences and contributions made by the Small Grants Programme of Costa Rica in facilitating the creation and development of this sector, together with many partners, friends, and organizations all of whom believe that community actions can strike a delicate balance between human and environmental needs.

We hope that this document will become a useful tool for anyone involved or interested in this sector, the lessons learned from past and ongoing processes, and above-all, thanks to the support of local populations, who with their daily work have marked a country’s history.



CHARLES DIXON GRAY

National Coordinator

Small Grants Programme-Costa Rica

I.

THE SGP AT THE GLOBAL LEVEL:

1.1. Background:

The Small Grants Programme (SGP) was established in 1992, the year the Earth Summit was held in Rio de Janeiro, it represents the essence of sustainable development, to **“think globally, act locally.”** The SGP provides financial and technical support to projects that conserve and restore the environment while enhancing people’s well-being and their sources of livelihood. By doing so, the SGP has demonstrated that community action can strike a delicate balance between human needs and environmental imperatives.

The SGP’s mandate has been to provide direct access to the Global Environment Fund (GEF), especially for vulnerable communities living in poverty and local NGOs, to implement sustainable development initiatives that are in line with the GEF’s focal area strategies: Conservation of Biodiversity, Mitigation of Climate Change, Degradation of the Land, Chemicals and Waste and International Waters.

Over the course of twenty-five years (1992-2018), the GEF has invested US \$670 million in the SGP. This money has been used to support more than 14,500 projects in over 133 countries. Costa Rica was one of the first countries to adopt the Small Grants Programme. The SGP is a corporate programme of the Global Environment Fund (GEF), implemented by UNDP on behalf of GEF implementing agencies, and is executed by the UNOPS. The GEF SGP works in operating phases that are defined as “periods of time in which the global SGP meets every 4 years and allocates a quantity of financial resources, per country, to be channelled to civil society organizations.”¹ The SGP has executed the following phases: Pilot, Operational Phase I, Operational Phase II, Operational Phase III, Operational Phase IV, Operational Phase V, and Operational Phase VI.

1.2. The Small Grants Programme-Costa Rica:

The SGP Costa Rica is based on the premise that global environmental problems can only be properly tackled if the communities themselves are involved in the solution. It thus hypothesizes that with minimal economic resources these communities can carry out activities that will have a significant impact on improving quality of life and the environment. Therefore, the SGP directly finances initiatives undertaken by community-based groups and non-governmental organizations aimed at protecting and conserving natural resources while improving the communities’ quality of life.

The GEF SGP Costa Rica has developed community initiatives to protect, conserve, and sustainably use natural resources with an emphasis on protected areas, biological corridors, buffer zones, and sites of global importance. To do so, it provides technical, administrative, and financial support and environmental education to NGOs and Community based organizations to help them collaborate with economically disadvantaged communities in these areas. The initiatives supported by the SGP are designed to improve income for disadvantaged communities, while fostering the conservation of the environment where they live. The programme focuses on the following pillars:

1. The GEF Trust Fund is fed with contributions from 39 donor countries, and replenishments take place every 4 years. Currently, Operational Phase 6 is underway for the period running from July 1, 2014, to June 30, 2018.



1. Skill development for organization members;
2. Community empowerment and participation;
3. Poverty reduction;
4. Mainstreaming of the gender perspective in projects;
5. Indigenous territories;
6. Knowledge management;
7. Replication and scaling-up;
8. Impact on public policies.

From the Pilot² to Operational Phase VI, the programme has invested a total of US \$13,133,538.52, as shown in the following table:

Table 1
Investment by Operating Phase

| Operating Phase | Projects | Investment in US \$ |
|-------------------------|------------|----------------------|
| Pilot Phase (1992-1995) | 40 | 638.506,00 |
| OP-I (1996-1999) | 43 | 676.590,00 |
| OP-II (1999-2004) | 255 | 3.756.942,00 |
| OP-III (2005-2007) | 101 | 1.854.800,00 |
| OP-IV (2007-2011) | 102 | 1.580.564,00 |
| OP-V (2011-2015) | 124 | 3.188.440,52 |
| OP-VI (2016-2018) | 32 | 1.437.696,00 |
| TOTAL | 697 | 13,133.538,52 |

The Global Programme allocates financial resources for each Operational Phase³ for each of the SGPs, by country. These are called CORE funds. Nevertheless, beginning in 2011, Costa Rica became an “Upgraded” country,⁴ meaning that, as of OP-V, it no longer receives funds directly from GEF CORE, instead, it is funded through the System for Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR). Fortunately, for OPV, the Costa Rican government, through the Ministry of Environment – MINAE, as the focal point for GEF funds in Costa Rica, allocated STAR resources to the SGP. MINAE also established different execution strategies as shown below:

2. The Pilot Phase was from 1992 to 1995 until the current Operational Phase (2016-2019).
3. The GEF operates in cycles of four years and first puts forth a resource replenishment strategy. The donors pledge to allocate a determined amount for each period.
4. Upgraded countries: Potentially, the countries with “the most time” in the SGP, which are being updated and have high organizational capacity.

OP-V Phase

“Priority was assigned to 12 biological corridors and the buffer zones in 8 protected areas to develop national focal area initiatives for biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation. In addition, the communities in the Jesús María River basin were prioritized as the focal area for land degradation and Indigenous territory projects.”

Of the total resource allocation received, during each Operational Phase the Programme distributes the resources into three focal areas: Biodiversity, Climate Change, and Land Degradation. This resource allotment is established by the Ministry of the Environment and Energy (MINAE), according to the country strategies in each of these focal areas.

During the 1992-2018 period, the SGP-Costa Rica developed a broad base of projects in thematic areas such as: 1) sustainable livelihood options in Indigenous territories, 2) sustainable production, 3) establishment and consolidation of biological corridors, 4) water resource management, 5) promotion of renewable energy production and energy efficiency technologies, 6) fire management, 7) actions against land degradation, and 8) rural community tourism. The following table shows the number of initiatives financed by thematic area:

Table 2
Small Grants Programme,
Initiatives Financed by Operating Phase and Thematic Area

| Stage and Thematic Area | Pilot | OP- I | OP- II | OP-III | IV | V | VI | total |
|---|-----------|-----------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-----------|-------|
| Sustainable Production/ Soil Degradation | 19 | 11 | 65 | 33 | 36 | 37 | 25 | 231 |
| Rural Community Tourism | 2 | 8 | 74 | 26 | 24 | 26 | 0 | |
| Indigenous Territories | 6 | 6 | 23 | 11 | 11 | 12 | | 69 |
| Multiple Subjects | 8 | 10 | 15 | 12 | 10 | | | 55 |
| Volunteer Forestry Brigades and COVIRENAS ⁵ | 2 | 1 | 16 | 9 | 4 | 7 | 1 | 39 |
| Biological Corridors | 2 | 7 | 28 | 10 | 17 | 16 | 1 | 80 |
| Misc. (expansions) | 1 | | 34 | | | | | 35 |
| Renewable Energy | | | | | | 9 | | 9 |
| Water Resource Management | | | | | | 17 | 5 | 17 |
| TOTAL | 40 | 43 | 255 | 101 | 102 | 124 | 32 | |

Clearly, the thematic areas of rural community tourism, sustainable production, Indigenous territories, brigades and COVIRENAS, and biological corridors are noteworthy with the highest number of financed initiatives. All areas show a heterogeneous development level, generating good practices, providing lessons, sustainable livelihoods for communities, impact on public policies, and the formation of support and innovation networks that have been replicated by other groups and countries.

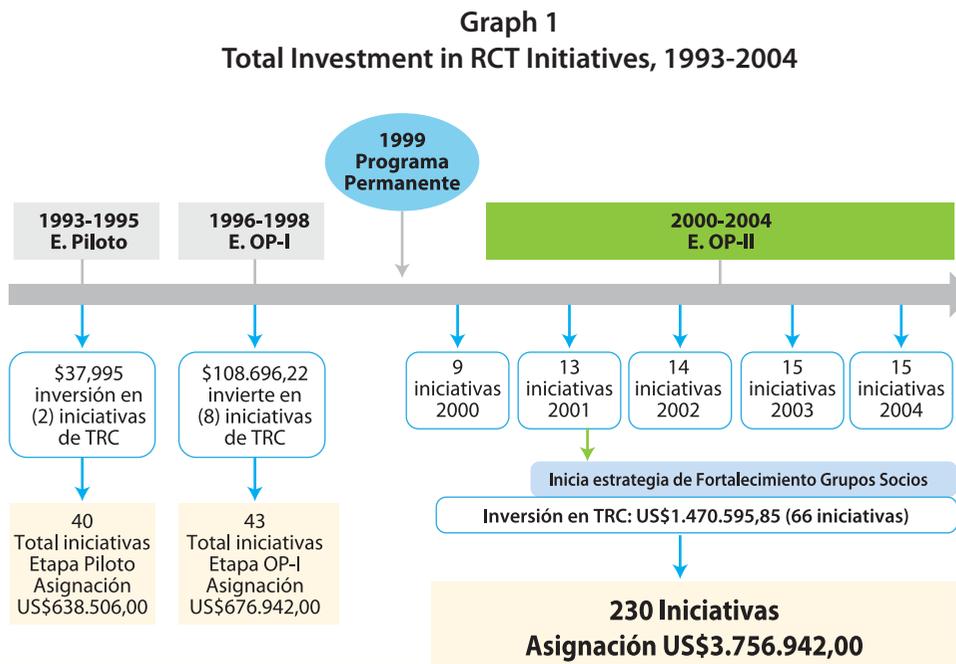
5. COVIRENAS: Natural Resource Watchdog Committees

STRATEGY IMPLEMENTED BY THE SGP FOR THE RCT THEMATIC AREA IN COSTA RICA:

2.1. Strategy Implemented by the SGP for the RCT Sector:

Due to the growth and the demand for addressing this sub-sector, the SGP sought a mechanism to respond to these initiatives, for which it formulated a strategy for the different interventions in this area.

Graph 1 illustrates the number of RCT initiatives by Operational Phase. In the year 2000, those areas with the greatest number of projects were prioritized. More than 50% of the SGP portfolio fell into the FCT sector.



The SGP viewed tourism as an important potential activity for many rural communities. The idea was that it could drive development in the future and strengthen natural resource protection efforts. Undoubtedly, this is anchored in Costa Rica's strong ecotourism vocation, as well as, the expectations of many local groups that applied for the programme's support, thereby becoming agents of change.

This strategy for strengthening the sector started in 2001, with the application of a diagnostic tool to characterize and better understand the needs of partner organizations, aimed at strategically supporting the groups that were working in this area.³ Through this process, it was able to establish the following results:

- Establish a baseline for the quality of the services offered by the groups and their management capacity.
- Identify strengths and weaknesses, as well as investment, training, promotion, and marketing needs.
- Define the target image towards which to channel the projects. This served as a basis to design the Programme strategy.

6. Applied to 20 initiatives financed by the programme, for which a field trip was made for each of the initiatives.

At the end of the diagnosis, the SGP designed the strategy for the partner group strengthening programme, divided into 4 areas:

1. Strengthening of the quality of human resources and tourism product;
2. Access to the tourism market, and links to the sector;
3. Building networks; and
4. Policy advocacy and formation of strategic alliances as a sector.

Altogether, these four areas define two action levels for the strategy: internal and external.

2.1.1. Internal Level:

Provision of **technical assistance to groups**: facilitating an exchange of experiences between organizations and assisting with networking. To do so, it used the diagnostic results (grouped weaknesses) as inputs. These were addressed using training workshops and exchanges at project sites or at the Tourism Hub of the National Training Institute (INA). This involved facilitators or instructors hired by the SGP or by INA, depending on their specialty. The subject areas that were addressed are shown in Sidebar 2.

Sidebar 1: Topics of the Group Technical Assistance

- Conceptual framework: community ecotourism and sustainable tourism
 - Quality of tourism services: lodge/hostel management, hotel cooking techniques: cooking with seafood, Caribbean cooking, breakfast preparation, bar and restaurant services, room cleaning services, and hotel reception services
 - Tourism marketing and promotion: definition of the target market, preparation of tourism packages and routes, how to sell and market a tourism product, preparation for participating in a tourism fair
 - Tourist safety and risk management: first aid techniques, tourism activity risk assessment, emergency plans, civil liability insurance and policies
 - Environmental management: Environmental sustainability and good practices, organic production techniques, alternative energies (bio digesters, solar energy, solar stoves), waste treatment and recycling, sanitation (septic tanks, artificial wetlands for treating greywater), biological corridors
 - Cultural management: tourism and culture, assessment of cultural heritage and incorporation into the tourism product
 - Tourism regulation to protect the local culture (the case of the Indigenous Kuna Yala region in Panama).
 - Business management: Pricing based on cost analysis, use of information technology tools for communication (email, Internet), and computing (word processor and spreadsheets).
-
- **The exchange workshops**: among the same groups proved an excellent learning strategy. They made it possible to show success factors, areas for improvement, and lessons learned, for the incorporation into the day-to-day work of the RCT initiatives. The exchanges were an opportunity to begin to knit together a national network of community tourism.

- **Specific technical assistance:** Each organization was provided specific assistance, according to their identified needs, either by the strengthening team itself or by external professionals facilitated by the INA, the Costa Rican Tourism Institute (ICT), or through the SGP.

Sidebar 2:

Specific Technical Assistance Subject Areas

- Design and construction of a tourism plan for housing, food, and handicraft sales
- Development of tourism products and promotion plans
- Sales manual preparation
- Tourist safety and emergency plans
- Accounting and financial management
- Work plans, report submittal, and preparation of project documents
- Organizational aspects
- Quality and environmental sustainability standards
- Costing and fee setting
- Wastewater treatment

Sidebar 3 shows the subject areas addressed by the technical assistance work:

Sidebar 3:

Examples of Networking Implemented by Financed RCT Initiatives

- The “Five Volcano Route” was created, in which several initiatives got together and pushed for its promotion by applying for support from the Ministry of Foreign Relations.
- The Gulf of Nicoya network was created, comprised by initiatives from this region for joint marketing and promotion.

- Building networking:

The strengthening of networking promoted strategic alliances among the organizations for promoting, marketing, and facilitating the smooth exchanging of information; this was also a way to generate the management capacity of the financed groups.

SGP assistance was based on the development of these skills. Once the strengthening programme ended, the groups were able to function on their own and meet their needs through actions with the different state and private organizations. Networking came about spontaneously after the experience exchange workshops (see Sidebar 4).

One of the most important results of the networking was the creation of the Costa Rican Alliance for Rural Community Tourism (ACTUAR), consisting of 24 SGP-supported organizations involved in rural tourism.

2.1.2. External Level:

Work was focused on creating ties and strategic alliances with:

Strategic alliance with the INA Tourism Hub:

Joint training workshops were proposed. The SGP prepared the programme and prioritized the subjects while INA provided the facilities, equipment, and specialized instructors.

Nevertheless, the instructors at times clung to conventional tourism conditions because they were not familiar with the reality of the RCT initiatives. This posed a need to adapt the contents and methodologies. To overcome this limitation, external SGP-selected instructors, who had a better grasp of the characteristics of RCT projects, held training and experience-sharing workshops.

This strategic alliance with the INA tourism hub was a catalyst for the progress made by the SGP and the tourism initiatives, as it formalized the institutional support provided for professional training. More than twenty community organizations in the country lodged specific demands, leading the INA to observe the need to adapt to the requirements of the sector, and the provision of new training needs.

- The role of the Costa Rican Tourism Institute (ICT):

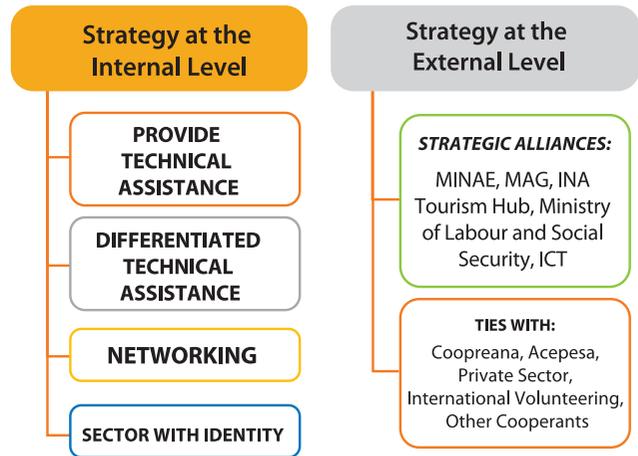
Initially, the ICT first presented the RCT sector as a tourism product that fully matched the country slogan being promoted at the time - "No Artificial Ingredients". In 2013, the ICT launched a new country brand with the slogan "Essential Costa Rica", with the idea of attracting more tourists. This slogan was clearly aligned with the values and principles of the RCT sector.

- Joint efforts with other stakeholders:

- **Consortio Cooprena R.L. and ACEPESA:**⁷ COOPRENA already had more than ten years of experience in the

sector and, with ACEPESA due to its strategic, institutional and political ties. This merger made it possible to jointly lobby the ICT to bring up joint needs for the RCT sector. As a result of this merger, close ties were forged with the ICT promotion department, bringing about very positive results. The results are shown in Sidebar 4.

Graph 2



Sidebar 4:
Preliminary Results at the Beginning of the Joint Efforts (Later Called Alliance for RCT):

- Launch of the first and second issues of Guide to Rural Community Tourism
- Group participation in the EXPOTUR and FERTUR fairs
- ICT support for holding the annual RCT fairs
- Inclusion of tourist destinations in the Aquí supplement to the La Nación daily newspaper

7. **ACEPESA:** Central American Association for the Economy, Health, and the Environment

With the passage of time, these joint efforts led to the creation of the Alliance for Rural Tourism, comprised by COOPRENA R.L., ACEPESA, and the ACTUAR NETWORK. The Small Grants Programme's role was to aid with the actions of this Alliance, due to its proximity to the partner groups and its direct support for the ACTUAR NETWORK.

- Private Sector :

- The link between the products and services on offer and the private sector was one of the most relevant steps provided by the SGP strengthening team. As its first activity, it convened a focus group with the main tourism operators. "The operators indicated that while they agreed that the RCT offer was very attractive, they felt that it was still not ready for the market. It did not have well-defined tourism products, structured rates, accident coverage insurance, local bilingual guides, and most importantly, the quality standards being offered were not at the required level, yet. They also indicated their concern over the sector's informality in certain aspects: rates, invoicing, operating permits, communication, etc." (Guereña and Calderón). This revealed several issues:
 - An entity was needed to be in charge of efficient communication, sales of tourist packages, logistical management, reservations, and validation of the needs found in the diagnostic and the sector-wide challenges faced by the RCT initiatives.
 - It was concluded that all services on offer should establish competitive prices, a rate system (rack/net⁸), civil liability insurance policies, compliance with quality standards, and efficient communications methods.
- Another strategy used with the private sector was learning directly from tourism initiatives in Puerto Viejo (La Costa de Papito) and Bahía de Ballena (La Cusinga). The goal was for RCT initiatives participants to feel and act like tourists.
- International volunteering sector: this played a fundamental role in building the tourism base and sharing with other cultures with groups of volunteers from Youth Challenge, Raleigh International and the International Service of Volunteers (ISV).

- The Creation of a Sector with "Identity":

When the SGP-assisted organizations started out in the tourism industry, they did it "in an isolated fashion with a huge knowledge gap regarding the activity, the market, and the policies established by the governing entity, the municipalities, the Ministry of Health, etc. This lack of knowledge was also shared by the Small Grants Programme." Nor was the market approached with a differentiated product identified by a common term. A process was needed to build that "identity" known today as **rural community tourism**. Since then, attempts have been made to develop a sector with its own identity, highlighting the particular features of this offer and establishing the differentiated elements that make it particularly interesting (Guereña and Calderón, 2005).

8. **Rack Rate:** the most expensive rate at which a room may be sold. This rate is generally offered when the hotel has a great deal of demand and very few rooms. **Net Rate:** The monetary value indicated for a tourism product or service prior to adding on any fees and taxes.

“For organizations, the creation of a common concept was part of a process to link efforts under a group objective addressing common needs. And for the Small Grants Programme, it meant the consolidation of a new thematic area, by which tourism joins with biodiversity conservation efforts allowing for the development and strengthening of local skills for environmental action” (Guereña and Calderón 2005).

Initially, the Programme adopted the term community ecotourism,¹⁰ while, for the World Tourism Organization, at that time, ecotourism was considered a mode of tourism. Today, the WTO defines the concept of community tourism and rural community tourism even further. Sidebar 6 shows both definitions.

**Sidebar 5:
CT and RCT Definition According to the WTO**

Community tourism is viewed as an alternative for overcoming the social and economic disparities that typify rural communities. It is also a means that communities can use cultural resources when they seek to generate other sources of income within their daily economic activities... “Rural community tourism (RCT) is a type of tourism activity that takes place in a rural setting. It is planned, sustainable and based on active participation by the local populations that will benefit from the development of tourism,”

In this regard, ecotourism, community tourism and rural community tourism all share common principles consistent with this thematic area of the Small Grants Programme. Later, with the formation of the Alliance for RCT, the term “rural community tourism” was formally adopted and supported by the SGP and the partner groups:

“Rural community tourism is comprised of tourism experiences that are planned and sustainably integrated into the rural environment. It is developed by organized local inhabitants for the benefit of the community.” (ICT, UNDP, Alliance for RCT, 2005)

9. Ecotourism is a way of traveling responsibly to natural areas. It preserves the environment and improves the well-being of the local population, as defined by the International Ecotourism Society.
10. Development of sustainable tourism seeks to meet the needs of tourists and the current destinations and to strengthen opportunities for the future. The idea is to manage all resources so that economic, social, and aesthetic needs are satisfied while cultural integrity, the essential ecological processes, and biological diversity are maintained.



The SGP strengthening team assisted partner groups by developing skills, so that once the project ended, the partner groups would have the ability to function on their own and meet their needs through their own actions with state institutions and private companies. On the other hand, it provided institutional and political spaces to present the sector's needs when working with the INA, ICT, and private enterprise, with good results. However, as the ACTUAR network began to consolidate, the role of the Small Grants Programme became a support and assistance resource for the network's actions.

From 2001 to 2010, the Small Grants Programme invested a total of US \$313,515.00 in the strategy for strengthening partner groups (see Appendix 1). This included financing training activities and experience exchanges (accommodation, food, teaching materials, instructors, supplies, transportation, facilitator contracts, etc.). It also included travel expenses for specific technical assistance, fuel, hiring of facilitators, vehicle rentals, among others.

2.2. The Rural Community Tourism Thematic Area

El área temática de Turismo Rural Comunitario (TRC) data del año 1993 cuando el PPD acompañó técnica y financieramente a las dos primeras iniciativas:

- **STIBRAWPA** (Artisanal Women of Yorkín) women's group, located geographically in Talamanca-Yorkín in the region bordering on Panama in the province of Limón.
- **ACECOP Foundation**, with a project aimed at encouraging dialogue among the municipalities, leaders, and local inhabitants on integrated rural tourism to improve the quality of living and working conditions of the communities of Palma and Guaymi on the Osa Peninsula.

As time passed, the SGP incorporated more initiatives near the country's protected areas (PAs) and/or biological corridors¹¹, according to the strategies and selection of geographic action areas defined for each of Operational Phases from 1992 to 2015.

11. This is a defined continental, marine-coastal and island territory, the primary purpose of which is to provide connectivity between the protected wildlife areas and landscapes, ecosystems, and natural or modified habitats, whether rural or urban. The idea is to ensure maintenance of biodiversity and ecological and evolutionary processes by providing spaces for social partnering to promote investment in conservation and sustainable use of the biodiversity in those spaces. Costa Rica has 44 biological corridors, representing close to 33% of the continental territory (SINAC: <http://www.sinac.go.cr/ES/correbiolo/Paginas/default.aspx>).



Table 3 shows the number of financed RCT initiatives (i.e., the number of projects that were submitted and financed) for each GEF SGP Operational Phase. As can be seen, from the pilot phase to OP II, the SGP went from assisting two initiatives to assisting 82 initiatives. By 2015, this added up to 160 initiatives. The 160 initiatives (number of project documents) correspond to 97 organizations, since some initiatives were refinanced from phase to phase.

Table 3
Small Grants Programme-Costa Rica
RCT Financing by Operational Phase

| OPERATIONAL PHASE | No. of Organizations |
|--|----------------------|
| PILOT PHASE (1993-1995) | 2 |
| OPERATIONAL PHASE I (1996 -1998) | 8 |
| OPERATIONAL PHASE II (2000 - 2004) | 74 |
| OPERATIONAL PHASE III (2005 - 2007) | 26 |
| OPERATIONAL PHASE IV (2008 - 2010) | 24 |
| OPERATIONAL PHASE V (2011 - 2015) | 26 |
| TOTAL | 160 |
| Number of organizations financed to implement the 160 initiatives | 97 |

Source: Authors' compilation, 2018.

The investment in this thematic area adds up to US \$3,607,000,702.54 from 1992 to 2015. Of that amount, 95.29% pertains to the SGP and 4.71% pertains to funds from the British Embassy. (Appendix 2 lists the financed initiatives.)





Table 4
Financing and Co-Financing for RCT Initiatives by Operational Phase
(in-kind/cash).

| FASES OPERATIVAS | Funding in US \$ | CO-FINANCING in US \$ | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | | Cash | In-kind |
| PILOT PHASE (1993 - 1995) | 37.935,00 | 508.915,00 | 236.000,00 |
| OPERATIONAL PHASE I (1996 - 1998) | 108.696,22 | 12.919,00 | 35.304,00 |
| OPERATIONAL PHASE II (2000 - 2004) | 1.640.285,85 | 570.892,50 | 733.591,85 |
| OPERATIONAL PHASE III (2005 - 2007) | 701.892,16 | 146.292,60 | 227.943,85 |
| OPERATIONAL PHASE IV (2008 - 2010) | 489.521,51 | 278.762,00 | 452.278,00 |
| OPERATIONAL PHASE V (2011 - 2015) | 629.371,80 | 74.430,67 | 1.024.373,29 |
| Total | 3.607.702,54 | 1.592.211,77 | 2.709.490,99 |

Source: Authors' compilation, 2018.

The co-financing reached in this period exceeded more than 100% (US \$4,301,702.76), thus meeting the GEF mandate that organizations have to contribute the same or a greater percentage for every dollar invested.

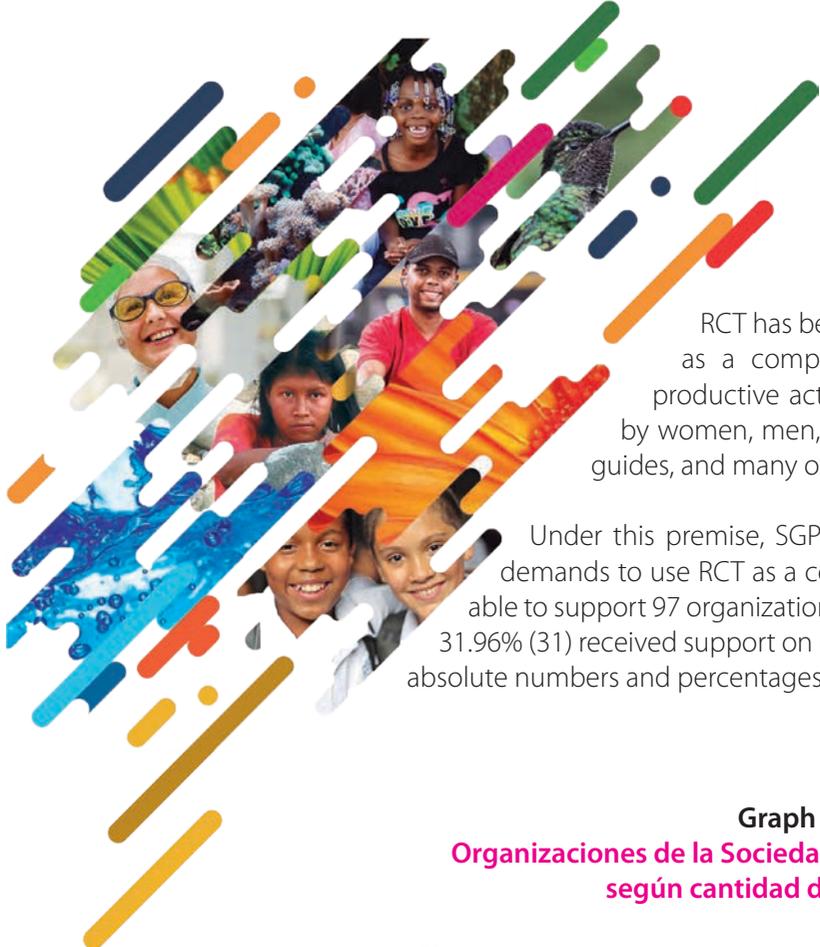
2.3. Organizations Financed in the RCT Thematic Area

2.3.1. RCT and the Sustainable Development Goals:

Most of the organizations supported by the SGP have viewed tourism as one of the more important options for improving their living conditions and as a way to protect and preserve the environment, thereby contributing to two of the Millennium Goals, at the same time. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) include new spheres such as climate change, economic inequality, innovation, sustainable consumption, and peace and justice, among other priorities.

RCT addresses the following goals directly: Goal 1 (No poverty); Goal 8 (decent work and economic growth); Goal 10 (reduced inequalities); Goal 11 (sustainable cities and communities); Goal 12 (responsible production and consumption); Goal 13 (climate action); Goal 14 (life below water); and Goal 15 (life on land). In effect, the goals are interrelated and the key to success for one goal, will often involve processes more frequently linked to another goal. The SDGs entail a spirit of collaboration and pragmatism to choose the best options for sustainably improving the lives of future generations. They provide guidance and clear targets, so they can be implemented by all countries according to each country's own priorities and global environmental challenges in general.

Clearly, the correlation of rural community tourism with the SDGs constitutes an activity that shows that community action can strike a delicate balance between human needs and global environmental protection. This is the main challenge for the Small Grants Programme (Guereña and Calderón, October 2005).



RCT has become a driver for local economies. It has been conceived as a complement to, rather than a replacement, for traditional productive activities. It is an inclusive activity that allows participation by women, men, small producers, service providers, artisans, fishers, local guides, and many other parties (Guereña and Calderón, 2005).

Under this premise, SGP-Costa Rica is committed to responding to community demands to use RCT as a conservation tool. From 1992 to 2015, SGP-Costa Rica was able to support 97 organizations. Of these, 68.04% (66) received one-time support, while 31.96% (31) received support on more than one occasion. Table 5 shows the information in absolute numbers and percentages.

Graph 3
Organizaciones de la Sociedad Civil apoyadas en TRC, según cantidad de ocasiones



Table 5
Organizations that Received Technical and Financial Support from the SGP in RCT

| Organizations Financed | Number | % |
|---|-----------|---------------|
| Organizations financed on one occasion | 66 | 68,04 |
| Organizations financed on two or more occasions | 31 | 31,96 |
| Total number of financed organizations | 97 | 100,00 |

Appendix 3 shows a summary of the matrix containing the information on organizations that were supported technically and financially, according to the number of occasions.



2.3.2. Services Provided by the Financed RCT Organizations

Of the 97 supported organizations:

- 45.36% were supported to provide the following services: accommodation, food, tours, tour guides, and handicraft sales;
- 4.12% were for tour guides in forests, reserves, oceans, rivers, etc.;
- 6.19% were to create and sell handicrafts using materials from the forest and sea;
- 27.84% were to sell one-day tour services and food services;
- 14.43% went to second-tier NGOs such as ACTUAR, JAZON, COOPETURIC, CODECE (tour operators) that were strengthened as a group and contributed to strengthening their associates by means of training workshops, consulting services, promotion, marketing, public policy advocacy, capital contributions, strategic partnering, and environmental and social sustainability.
- 2.06% went to financing NGOs and foundations that contributed to building the skills of partner groups in technical, organizational, administrative, and operational matters.

Table 6
Organizations that Received Technical and Financial Support from the SGP in RCT

| Organizations Supported Technically and Financially | Lodging, Food, Tours, Guides, and Handicraft Sales | Tour Guides | Handicraft Production | One-Day Tours (Food, Tour Guides) | Tour Operators, NGOs Engaging in Advocacy | Skill building |
|---|--|-------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|---|----------------|
| Organizations financed once only | 22 | 3 | 4 | 24,00 | 13 | 0 |
| Organizations financed more than twice | 22 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 2 |
| Number of organizations financed | 44 | 4 | 6 | 27 | 14 | 2 |
| En % total | 45,36 | 4,12 | 6,19 | 27,84 | 14,43 | 2,06 |

Source: Authors' compilation.

2.3.3. Families Participating in Implementing the Initiative and Their Achievements

In terms of the impact on the number of families, approximately 3,469 families benefitted directly from the implementation of the projects, and more than 17,195 people benefitted indirectly.

2.3.4. Formation of COVIRENAS Groups and Voluntary Forestry Brigades

100% of the financed organizations received consulting and training in environmental education, formation of COVIRENAS groups and forestry brigades. The partners promoted awareness-raising on environmental problems as part of the financed project. They also gave talks to students from elementary and high schools in communities close to the geographic action area.¹²

12. Natural Resource Watchdog Committees

The driving motivation of environmental and conservation organizations is the search for financial support to provide sustainability to the work they do. Many of these organizations have private reserves and have to invest funds in protecting them with surveillance and control to prevent poaching, illegal logging and fires. To do so, they compiled information on the “number of hectares of forest and sea being protected,” considered one of the indicators that can measure the contribution of communities to protecting and conserving biodiversity. The phases mentioned here amount to 269,028.28 hectares.

The financed RCT initiatives are not merely considered as an economic activity, but rather an alternative for conserving and improving living conditions.

2.3.5. Cooperation from other Donors and Institutions

Other donors have played a substantial role in supporting initiatives in this area. They include the CRUSA Foundation, FUNDECOOPERACION, WWF, Costa Rica/Canada Foundation, AECID-Spanish Cooperation, the British Embassy, AVINA, amongst others. State institutions, such as the Institute for Cooperative Advancement (INFOCOOP), the National Women’s Institute (INAMU), the Mixed Social Assistance Institute (IMAS), the Rural Development Institute (INDER), and the Ministry of the Environment and Energy (MINAE) have also cooperated. Rural community tourism in Costa Rica has essentially been developed by community-based organizations with the financial and technical support of international cooperation organizations and institutions such as the ones mentioned.

Furthermore, it is important to analyse the role of the System of National Conservation Areas (SINAC), which became a natural partner for the Programme, as well as, the projects in establishing the first actions in this thematic area; there is also a need to support participating groups (A. Carmona, 2018). By participating in tourism activities, people living close to the protected areas also become allies of SINAC and key actors in reversing the problems of poaching and illegal logging. Participation by local populations in the benefits deriving from conservation is necessary for SINAC’s sustainability, given the economic and institutional context (Guereña and Calderón, 2005).

2.3.6. Quality Standards for the Initiatives Supported by the SGP

The SGP observed a wide variety in the quality of financed initiatives. This gave rise to a non-standardized, and therefore, less marketable, offer.

The meaning of quality in the RCT initiatives was analysed. It found a common perception linked to the quality of services for lodging, food, comfort, cleanliness, nutrition, amongst other factors. Despite the term “quality” being a very abstract concept, it can be interpreted and materialized in many ways depending on the market segment involved.

Sidebar 6

Infrastructure and equipment: General aspects, lodging, restrooms and bathrooms, kitchen and dining areas, common areas, paths, and green zones

Operation and services: administration, care and service, food and beverages, information, security, etc.



Faced with this dilemma, several existing quality standard manuals were reviewed. Some of them did not work for this type of rural establishment. Others were too complicated to be managed by the organizations' members. Based on these, a practical tool was developed for periodic use as a self-evaluation instrument: a guide with 84 yes/no questions, divided into sections, as shown in Sidebar 7. The method used stoplights, which helped to visually identify the strengths and weaknesses determining where investment was needed. The end goal was to have the maximum number of green lights.

The document "Rural Community Tourism in Costa Rica: The Experience of the Small Grants Programme and its Partner groups" provides further details on the tools used.



2.4. Supported RCT Organizations with "Active", "Some Level of Activity", and "Inactive" Status

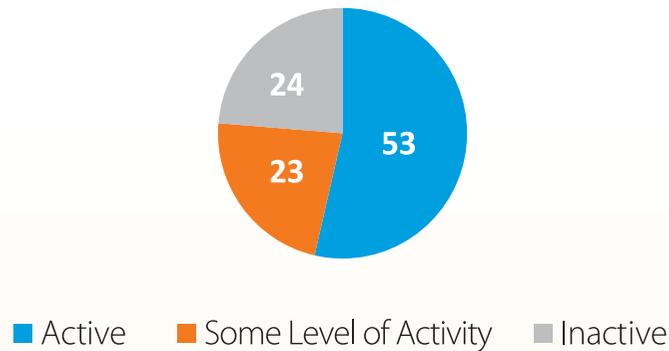
From the start of SGP's assistance, some RCT initiatives were not able to advance on or consolidate many of the actions they had proposed. Even so, an estimated 50% remained active. The following table shows the number of initiatives by the following status - **"active", "some level of activity", and "inactive"**:

Table 7
Small Grants Programme-Costa Rica, Financed Initiatives by Status:
“Active”, “Some Level of Activity”, “Inactive”.

| Organizations supported by the SGP | Total Number | Active | % | Some Level of Activity | % | Inactive | % |
|--|--------------|--------|--------|------------------------|-------|----------|--------|
| Organizations financed one time | 66 | 29 | 55,77 | 18 | 81,82 | 19 | 82,61 |
| Organizations financed more than twice | 31 | 23 | 44,23 | 4 | 18,18 | 4 | 17,39 |
| Number of organizations financed | 97 | 52 | 100,00 | 22 | 100 | 23 | 100,00 |

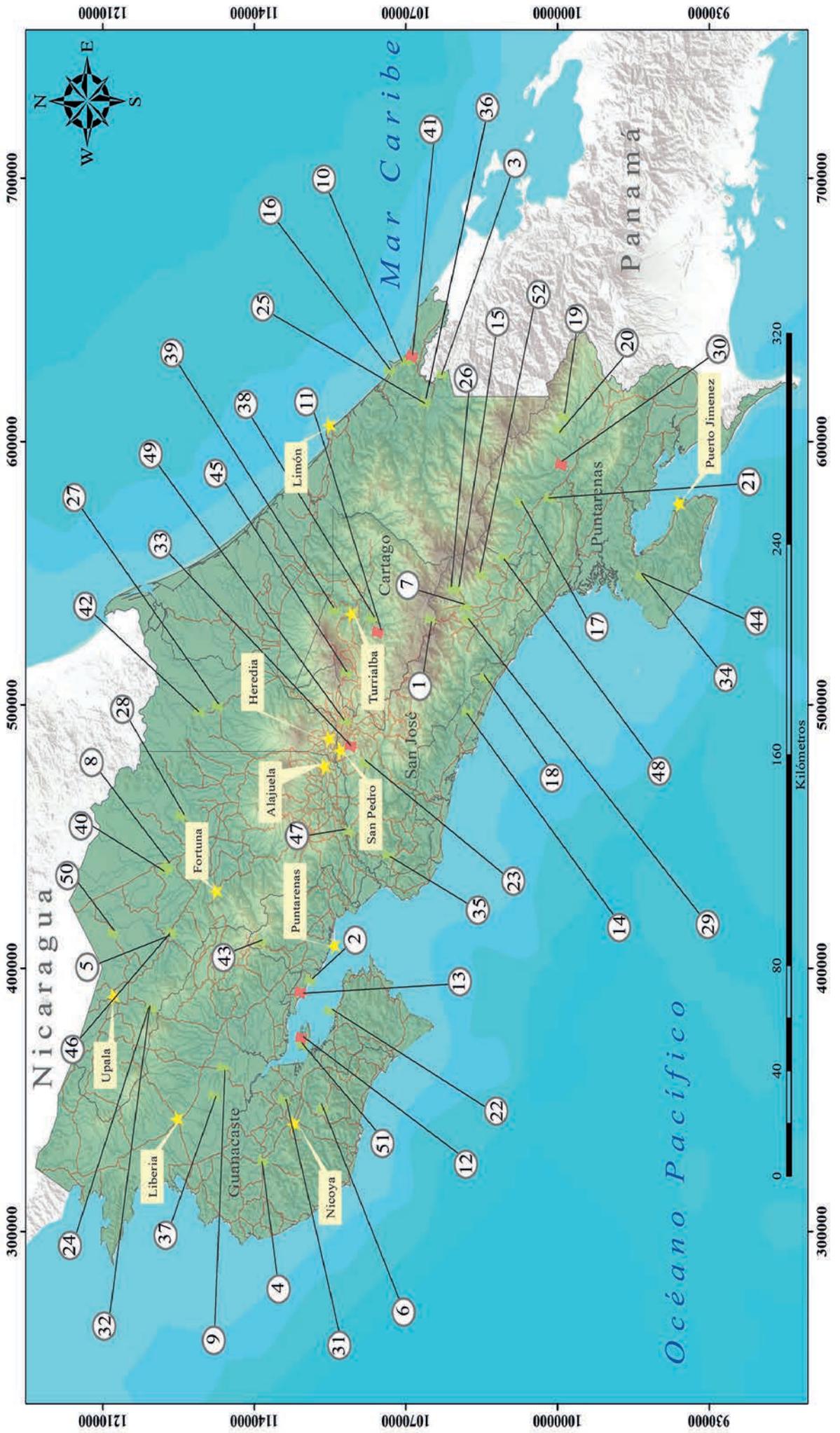
52 organizations continue to provide RCT services and are considered “active”, while 22 organizations show some tourism activity, and 23 organizations have stopped providing RCT services.

Graph 4
Organizaciones en TRC, según condición de actividad



The following map shows the location of “active” financed organizations in the national territory:

Iniciativas de TRC “activas”



Simbología

-  Iniciativas de Turismo Rural Comunitario
1. Asociación de Productores Forestales de Villa Mills
 2. Fundación Universidad Nacional
 3. Asociación Personas Artesanas de Yorkin
 4. Fundación Sol de Vida
 5. Asociación Indígena de las 8 Etnias de Costa Rica
 6. Fundación Monte Alto
 7. Asociación Montaña Verde
 8. Asociación Agroecológica Juanilama
 9. Asociación Falconiana de Artesanía Natural y Turismo
 10. Asociación de Familias Productoras El Yule
 14. Cooperativa de Autogestión Agropecuaria El Silencio
 15. Asociación Ecológica Amigos del Chirripó
 16. Asociación de Conservación y Desarrollo de Carbón 2
 17. Asociación Brhripa Kanoble
 18. Asociación de Productores de Vainilla
 19. Asociación de Productores La Amistad
 20. Asociación de Mujeres Organizadas de Biolley
 21. Asociación Para la Defensa de los Derechos Indígenas de Terraba
 22. Asociación de Jóvenes Uniendo Esfuerzos para el Desarrollo y la Ecología de Isla Venado
 23. Asociación para el Desarrollo Sostenible de San José Rural
 24. Asociación Bijaguaña de Productores Agrícolas
 25. Asociación Comisión de Mujeres Indígenas de Talamanca
 26. Asociación de Desarrollo Integral de Herradura de Rivas
 27. Asociación de Ecoturismo de Cureña
 28. Asociación Femenina Artesanal Ecológica de San Marcos de Curris
 29. Asociación Quebradita de Artesanos
 31. Asociación de Guías Ecologistas del Parque Nacional Barra Honda
 32. Cámara Turismo Tenorio Miravalles
 34. Cooperativa de Servicios Múltiples de Emprendedores en Turismo Rural de Corcovado
 35. Asociación de Productores del Sur de Turruabares
 36. Asociación Centro de Capacitación y Desarrollo de Talamanca Finca Educativa
 37. Fundación para el Desarrollo de la Reserva Biológica Lomas Barbudal
 38. Asociación Grupo Ecológico de Pejibaye
 39. Asociación de Guías U-SERE de Guayabo
 40. Jóvenes Agricultores de la Zona Norte
 42. Asociación Agro Ecoturística Lago Jalapa
 43. Asociación de Desarrolladores Integral San Luis, Monteverde
 44. Asociación de Desarrollo Integral de Rancho Quemado, Bahía Drake, Osa
 45. Asociación de Guías de Turismo Rural de Tierra Blanca
 46. Asociación para la Promoción Y Rescate de Tradiciones Culturales Maleku
 47. Asociación Integral de Desarrollo de San Antonio de Turruabares
 48. Unión de Amigos para la Protección del Ambiente
 49. Asociación Centroamericana para la Economía, la Salud y el Ambiente
 50. Asociación de Mujeres Productoras Orgánicas de Nueva Esperanza de Caño Negro
 51. Pescadores de Pallo
 52. Asociación de Productores de Cedral de Cajón
-  Estudios de Caso
11. Asociación de Conservación y Desarrollo Sostenible del Copal
 12. Asociación Ecoturística Damas de Chira
 13. Asociación de Mujeres Mariposas del Golfo
 30. Asociación de Turismo Tres Colinas de Potrero Grande
 33. Asociación para la Conservación y Desarrollo Sostenible de los Cerros de Escarzi
 41. Asociación Indígena Keköldi Wak ka Kónéke
-  Principales Ciudades
-  Red Vial
 -  Red Hídrica



2.5. Establishment of Strategic Alliances:

To implement the strategy for developing the RCT thematic area, the SGP and its partner groups built strategic alliances with different organizations, institutions, cooperatives and private enterprises; these played a pivotal role in developing the initiatives. Leading players and SGP project allies greatly valued the numerous alliances and networks, showing the strengthening of capital stock in the individual interventions.

The following table lists the organizations with which SGP established strategic alliances:

Table 8
Strategic Alliances

| | State Institutions |
|--|---|
| MINAE | Ministry of the Environment and Energy |
| INA | National Learning Institute |
| ICT | Costa Rican Tourism Institute |
| MTSS | Ministry of Labour and Social Security |
| MAG | Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock |
| INDER | Rural Development Institute |
| COOPRENA R.L. | National Ecotourism Network Cooperative Consortium |
| ACEPESA | Central American Association for the Economy, Health, and the Environment |
| Cooperants | International Cooperants |
| Embassy of the United Kingdom in San José, Costa Rica | British Embassy |
| Japanese Embassy | Japanese Embassy in Costa Rica |
| Fondo de Canje de Deuda Costa Rica-Canadá | Costa Rica-Canada Debt Swap Fund |
| FUNDECOOPERACIÓN | Fundecooperación |
| AVINA | Avina Foundation |
| AECID | Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation |
| | FOREIGN VOLUNTEER GROUPS |
| ISV | International Service of Volunteers |
| Youth challenge | Youth Challenge |
| Raleigh Internacional | Raleigh Internacional |
| Partner Groups | SGP partner groups |



III.

SGP'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE RCT SECTOR

3.1 Gestation of a NETWORK of SGP-Supported Initiatives

3.1.1. Creation of the ACTUAR Network:

One of the SGP's substantive actions in this field was to provide technical and financial support for establishment of the ACTUAR network as a way to bring together all the geographically scattered organizations involved in rural tourism. In tandem, grants were given to organizations that were engaging in RCT activities and were associated with ACTUAR. Another noteworthy aspect, is that new initiatives that cropped up, also received technical and financial support and were encouraged to associate with the ACTUAR Network.

Sidebar 7: ACTUAR's values are as follows:

- "We believe it is possible to protect natural resources and generate sustainable livelihoods for the women and men who manage rural community tourism projects.
- We value cultural identity (sharing).
- We value democratic participation and equity in the community for the sustainable use of natural resources."

Source: Prodoc, 2012. OP-V.

Birth of the ACTUAR Network: In May 2001, the SGP organized a workshop seminar on community ecotourism with the participation of all its partner groups. This first encounter gave rise to the network of organizations: The Costa Rican Rural Community Tourism Association¹³. ACTUAR¹⁴ was defined as an organization **"consisting of community organizations that share a vision of protecting natural resources and improving the quality of life in their own towns by promoting ecological tourism."**¹⁵

This was one of the first steps in which SGP helped to create a national RCT movement. Another noteworthy aspect was the process of building an identity through preparation of the first Authentic Costa Rica guide, which contained a compilation of the community tourism offer and helped shape that identity. The Small Grants Programme and the COOPRENA R.L. Consortium joined efforts to publish, for the first time, detailed and combined information on the RCT offer at the national level.

For the first time ever, the financed initiatives were able to get together into a group with a common activity and goal. The meeting served as a platform for sharing problems, needs, challenges, and triumphs that had previously only remained as the practices and



13. Called at first the Costa Rican Alliance for Alternative Rural Tourism.

14. Appendix 5 shows the listing of ACTUAR member organizations according to PRODOC 2012.

15. The ACTUAR 2001 Strategic Plan



conversations of each group. At the end of this encounter, the idea arose to generate a common discussion and analysis space for those enterprises, and thus, the decision was made to create ACTUAR. At first, the organization members decided that it was too difficult for all the organizations to meet. Therefore, they agreed to appoint representatives for each zone or geographic region to create a national committee. The committee held meetings quarterly and analysed what the joint vision would be for ACTUAR. Based on that, they established the first guiding values for the organization. ACTUAR began to be mentioned in the different political, institutional, and tourism circles in which the member organizations were involved. At the end of 2001, ACTUAR organized a strategic planning workshop where it defined the strategic lines for its development.

ACTUAR held a general meeting at the end of 2002 in which it elected a Board of Directors and established the formalization of the “organization is fundamental for responding to the projected needs and goals,” as a priority in the strategic plan. Thus, on September 24, 2003, ACTUAR was officially created as an association under Law 218 on Associations.

ACTUAR installed its offices as of November 23, 2003. The Board of Directors and other ACTUAR members selected the head of the organization’s executive department with the idea of galvanizing the process and pursuing the goals for the future. The selected executive director had a background in communications and administration.

ACTUAR’s purpose is to promote the environmental, social, cultural, and economic sustainability of rural community tourism initiatives in Costa Rica by establishing strategic alliances for community tourism marketing, strengthening resource management and building the capacities of its members.

3.1.2. Actions of ACTUAR and its Tour Operator from 2003 to 2015

ACTUAR implemented a series of key actions for developing the RCT model during this period. This was relevant for developing and positioning a sector of the population that had few or no possibilities of sustainably using the natural, biological, and cultural resources it possessed. The sector turned to sales of tourism services which contributed to major conservation and protection areas. The following work areas were the axes of ACTUAR’s actions in that direction:

Strengthening of RCT initiatives:

- Definition of the tourist product
- Capacity-building of the partner groups on various tourism topics
- Sales manual preparation: 28 rural community tourism companies lacking a product design developed a sales manual.
- Formalization of ACTUAR associates: rural community tourism companies with a tourism declaration (Nacientes Palmichal, ASEPALECO, El Encanto de Piedra Blanca, ATEC, BRIBRIPA KANEBLO, COOPECAMPESINOS and EL COPAL)
- Group civil liability policy: 15 rural community tourism companies joined in the policy, complying with all risk management requirements: ANDAR, El COPAL, ASEPALECO, STIBRAWPA, CODECE, Lago Jalapa, ATEC, Bribripà Kaneblo, Asoc. Conservacionista Tesoro Verde, ASODINT, ADESSARU, ASOPROLA, ASOMOBI, COOPECAMPESINOS, and Nacientes Palmichal.



- Certified tour guides: certification of 49 guides from rural zones with ICT accreditation as general guides
- Certificate of Sustainable Tourism (CST): 5 rural community tourism initiatives were TSC certified (10 more made the attempt but did not finish). The ACTUAR-Aventuras Naturales Tour Operator obtained the maximum certification level – level 5.
- Environmental diagnostics of RCT initiatives: An expert consultant in RCT initiatives was hired to provide recommendations on different aspects that needed changing.

Promotion and advertising:

- **Tourism Fairs:** In 2003, the Rural Community Tourism Fair was institutionalized with the presence of different organizations that support RCT. ACTUAR was an active co-organizer of this event. The seventh version of the fair was held in 2008 with more than 100 exhibitors¹⁶.
- **Tourist Guidebooks:** ACTUAR, GEF SGP and the COOPRENA Consortium co-edited the fourth rural community tourism guidebook “Authentic Costa Rica: Guide to Rural Community Tourism.” After the first edition was published, RCT became a topic of discussion both domestically and internationally. Beatriz Blake, author of “The New Key to Costa Rica” (Costa Rican travel guide for international travellers), was the first to include these types of initiatives as some of the destinations for foreign tourists to visit.

Commercialization:

- Creation of the Rural Adventures Tour Operator (2004): ACTUAR operates as a tour operator specializing in rural community tourism. Called ACTUAR-Rural Adventures, it is responsible for promoting and commercializing as a network. ACTUAR had an average flow of 70 passengers per month and average annual sales of \$750,000. It never differentiated itself from the rest of ACTUAR as a commercial brand, however. Instead, it has become another axis in the organization.

Opening of the project developer line:

- With this line, it formulates international cooperation initiatives to strengthen the partner groups, including these cooperants: SGP, IDB-MIF/INCAE, EED, and IAF.

Credit:

- A line of solidarity credit was opened that is available to the organization’s members. Fourteen organizations used the credit line to implement infrastructure improvements. a ella, para la implementación de mejoras en la infraestructura.

16. Achievements: More than 9,000 visitors and more than 50 tour operators attended. The press and television channels announced the fair and are reporting on it more than 10 times a year.



Establishment of the “Regions¹⁷” restaurant and store with the financial support of the Inter-American Foundation

Policy advocacy:

- This has been a major cornerstone of the organization’s work. With the support of SGP, ACEPESA and COOPRENA set up the Alliance for Strengthening Rural Community Tourism, the main goal of which was to improve public-private conditions in order to encourage investment.

Acknowledgments:

- Awards or accolades: Gallinita de Oro; Latin American Awards - 121st place in human development and 3rd in sustainable finances; Bizz 2017 - award for business management; Green Fund - Sustainable Tourism Award 2017, Landscape and RCT Projects category; PANIAMOR - recognition for the best 88 organizations committed to the Code of Conduct.

3.1.3. ACTUAR as a Business Manager:

ACTUAR capitalized on a market niche in the tourism industry, becoming a model for the commercialization of RCT initiatives to agencies and wholesalers who had traditionally been unable to access this niche due to geographical, communications and access conditions, etc. The factors that facilitated this process included the following, among others:

- **A highly creative technical team** for designing tourist products and chaining with other tourist attractions.
- **The quality of the tourist product** that was promoted. This quality began with capacity-building, improving the quality of services and tourism infrastructure by getting donations through the Network or the associates. The process was facilitated by the cooperants – the SGP had a strategic vision and helped the partner organizations access grants for improving and adapting the infrastructure to market requirements.

Sidebar 8:

“The SGP went from being a mere donor to where we all feel we are a part of a philosophy, of being a great network, of a way of producing, of wanting to build a country project. Consequently, SGP is not simply a donor. Despite the fact that many do not receive financing, we are all linked to the SGP’s actions, such as sustainable production, introduction of alternate energies, etc.”

(Ernest Cañada, Mass Communication for RCT, 2011)

17. The Regions restaurant and store closed their business operations because they did not reach a breakeven point for economic and financial sustainability.



- **Promotion and marketing**, emphasizing cultural, environmental, and human facets that differentiate the tourist product:
 - Family-based service;
 - Cultural sharing without barriers;
 - Local hosts and guides;
 - Ability to get close to the Indigenous, Afro-Caribbean, and country culture;
 - Contact with nature in often unexplored places;
 - An authentic, enriching experience with the option of participating in agricultural and other activities found in daily life;
 - Possibility of getting involved in and contributing to conservation efforts; and
 - Direct participation of community and conservation organizations who benefit from the tourism activity.
- **Integration of RCT proposals with more conventional initiatives.** Wholesalers include well-known destinations because these are the destinations that sell. If only destinations that nobody is familiar with are included in the tour packages, the packages would not sell. What ACTUAR created was a combination of classic destinations with RCT. The location of the rural community tourism initiatives close to national parks, protected reserves, among others, makes interaction with conventional destinations possible. (Systematization of the ACTUAR Experience, 2016).
- **Positioning of the RCT offer with wholesalers:** When the RCT offer reaches some wholesalers, it is much easier for it to reach others, who somehow imitate the offer of wholesalers with a dominant position.
- **Definition of a basic commercialization and promotion structure in each tourism endeavour.**
- **Building of a relationship with the media:** This meant maintaining a connection and making it easy for the media to stay informed. It also meant helping journalists who were predisposed to this type of tourism. These correspondents are also building opportunities for the sector.
- **Feel a part of and gain footing in the tourism Industry at the national level.**
- **Tours for operators to get to know and learn about what RCT offers.**
- **A mass communication strategy** to position the sector in the main media, especially television, where ACTUAR played a fundamental role. The following actions stand out: co-organization of its own tourism fairs; participation in different national and international fairs; inclusion of ample reporting about its tourism offer in the ICE Yellow Pages; collaboration in airing numerous television programs about community tourism initiatives, and especially the section produced for Channel 7's "Buen Día" programme; implementation of a website (in three languages) and its presence on the internet, especially Facebook. (Ernest Cañada, Mass Communication for RCT, 2011).
- **Institutional support from the country's governing tourism entity**, with its acknowledgement, appraisal and support for the RCT sector as one of its tourism products.
- **Support and willingness of state institutions** (INA, INDER, IMAS, MINAE, and MAG) to collaborate in rural spaces with the drivers of tourism micro enterprises.



3.2. Support by the SGP in Creating and Consolidating ACTUAR

Strengthening of ACTUAR by the SGP was provided through the following actions:

- Enabling mutual exchange and encouraging spaces for dialogue between initiatives (for example: training and experience-sharing workshops, annual meetings of the Programme where night-time schedules were included to deal with organizational matters).
- The SGP's strategic vision to hire and guide the strengthening team that outlined the integration of individual initiatives with many matching aspects (weaknesses, threats, attractions, problems, etc.).
- Supporting the legal creation of and facilitating the strategic planning for the ACTUAR organization.
- Advancing and encouraging the presence of ACTUAR and partner groups in political and business promotion spaces.
- Using the UNDP platform for assistance and back-up to encourage the opening of political and business platforms for ACTUAR and its partners.
- Collaborating to help new groups, with SGP grant support, meet quality and sustainability standards. This also meant encouraging them to join the ACTUAR network and using it to create promotion and commercialization strategies.
- Providing financial support for ACTUAR's consolidation and activities, aimed at promoting the organization's future economic sustainability.
- Supporting partner initiatives with refinancing to improve service quality and build capacities, as a way to develop quality from the projects' very foundations for coordinating them with the tourism industry, through the Natural Adventures tour operator and the project developer.
- The SGP invested US \$340,000 in ACTUAR from 2003 to 2015.

3.3. Current Situation of the ACTUAR Network

In August 2018, ACTUAR closed its doors and declared bankruptcy. There is no official communication from the organization, or from its Board of Directors, on the reasons for this closure. Nor does the SGP officially know the causes for the situation. Since the SGP has always been an ally in this process, a meeting was held on November 21, 2018 with the different ACTUAR partners to analyse the RCT situation and to gain first-hand knowledge of where the sector was going and the implications of the tour operator's shutdown. Participants expressed their views on what had happened. They unanimously stated that, "ACTUAR, as a network, has not died because they continue to be associates and are operating." Meylin Chamorro, vice chair of the Board of Directors on behalf of CODECE, commented "we are making a great effort to close down the organization in an orderly manner and take the pertinent actions."

It bears mentioning that Board of Directors members were interviewed as part of the systematization process. However, it was impossible to interview officials, at any level of the organization's executive structure.

A further and important piece of information is that the COOPRENA Consortium and Symbiosis Tours are also in the process of dissolution and closing their doors for various reasons. This means that there are no tour operators, specializing in RCT, currently operating in the country.

Yet, at the same time that these RCT operators were operating, new forms of commercialization and promotion emerged, characterized by being individual companies that offer RCT initiatives in connection with other attractions and destinations in the country. For example, Authentic Costa Rica, CATEMI, COOPETURIC, CULTOURICA, RCT Viajes and others, are operating locally.



IV.

THE SGP AND ADVOCACY ON BINDING PUBLIC POLICIES FOR RCT

4.1 The Network at the National Level

4.1.1. Alliance for RCT:

The national SGP coordinators decided to provide strategic support for actions influencing public policy on RCT. These actions would be in the form of an alliance comprised of three organizations: the COOPRENA Consortium, which has been involved in tourism operations since the 1990s and has a vast experience in the cooperative field and its own tour operator, Symbiosis Tours; ACEPESA, an NGO working on environmental matters and on coordinating public-private dialogue; and the ACTUAR Network, supported technically and financially by the SGP, which grouped the Programme's partner initiatives and also ran its own tour operator.

The SGP's support for the Alliance and its actions was evident in its facilitation and opening of political spaces, representation on the UNDP platform, support for analysing the draft text of the decrees, and other assistance during the entire time it was exerting influence on the institutional stakeholders in the process. In addition, it provided support to ACTUAR for that purpose through a US \$50,000 grant.¹⁸

Sidebar 9:

COOPRENA R.L.:

The National Ecotourism Cooperative Network Consortium, founded in 1994, is a business network comprised of 23 organizations, cooperatives, and associations. The network was created to organize, market, and commercialize the tourist products offered by its members. It implemented tourism by making sustainable use of natural resources and by respecting equity, cooperation, and customs, to promote local development and improve quality of life. It formed its own tour operator called **Symbiosis Tours**.

ACTUAR: Founded in 2001, ACTUAR was made up of 38 rural community tourism initiatives (associations or cooperatives). ACTUAR's purpose was to promote the environmental, social, cultural, and economic sustainability of rural community tourism initiatives in Costa Rica. It did so by establishing strategic alliances for community tourism marketing, capacity-building of the members, and resource management. ACTUAR formed its own **Natural Adventures Tour Operator**.

ACEPESA: ACEPESA is a nongovernmental organization recognized in Costa Rica and Central America for its contribution of innovative, high-quality technical products. It is also recognized for its contribution to the coordinating of public and private efforts for managing development and sustainability. ACEPESA works in the areas of sustainable tourism, integrated solid waste management, and sustainable sanitation.

18. COS/OP3/2/07/41, in addition to the investment that it had provided in the past and continued to provide up to the OP-V.

The COOPRENA Consortium was backed technically and financially by the National Council of Cooperatives (CONACOO), the Institute for Cooperative Advancement (INFOCOOP) and other donors. For its part, ACEPESA had funds from a donor to join this Alliance for RCT and played a catalytic role in this process.

That is how the Alliance, along with the SGP and other stakeholders, proposed to strengthen rural community tourism as one of the main tourism activities at the national level. At the same time, it proposed to consolidate RCT as an instrument for generating sustainable development with equity and a high degree of participation of local investment.

They formed an alliance to jointly lobby for state institutions to strengthen RCT. Their work focused on implementing advocacy strategies to help create change and remove any obstacles to the development of the RCT sector. In turn, the strategies would boost synergies between public and private stakeholders, providing greater opportunities for this type of tourism.” (Ernest Cañada Alba Sub, 2009)

After several years in association (2003-2009)¹⁹, the Alliance for RCT garnered major achievements in terms of influence on public policies for an emerging sector seeking sustainability for its undertakings. These are presented as follows:

Table 9
The Alliance for RCT’s Influence on Public Policy

| Baseline Situation | Progress Achieved | Acknowledgment of the Contribution of RCT |
|---|--|---|
| <p>The RCT sector was informally acknowledged by state institutions</p> | <p>The declaration of public interest²⁰ carries a major policy connotation. It assumes commitment by the state to provide greater support to the sector, reflecting the state’s obligation to include it in state plans and programmes for the short, medium, and long-term.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Costa Rican tourism offering has been diversified by the creation of rural community tourism (RCT), through new ways to produce and consume tourism products at rural community destinations with the direct involvement of local organizations. • Land use meant for agribusiness production gets added value by having tourism spaces and structures specifically for visitors who want to enjoy settings other than those offered at traditional destinations. • The investment efforts by organized RCT towns have, first of all, revolved around the safeguarding and balanced use of the protected areas in their regions or locations. These areas may have state or private protection in the form of development of local protection policies and the construction of facilities such as trails to enable and facilitate tourist visits. |

19. The Alliance for Rural Community Tourism originated in 2003. It consists of an informal space for coordinating efforts by the organizations with the greatest share in the subject matter.
 20. State institutions related to rural tourism: MINAET, MAG, INDER, INA, ICT, the academic sector, national banks, etc.

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental protection actions combined with a tourism vision are commonly taken by rural communities to create a tourism plant for lodging, food, and facilities for tourist activities, whether on the local organizations' own lands or on properties belonging to their affiliates. • Agricultural organizations and families are venturing into another activity: RCT. Despite the differences, RCT has become a very important complementary activity leading, in many cases, to a symbiosis of land use and economic activities. • The development of the RCT mode has had a significant positive impact on the development of locations and the tourist offering and should be encouraged. The impact includes: diversification of the Costa Rican tourism offering; value added to agribusiness production; promotion of natural resource protection and the identity of rural communities; encouragement for taking pride in and preserving local family heritage; and promotion and facilitation of gender equity with the notable participation of women. |
| <p>There was no acknowledgment for RCT style accommodation: Executive Decree No. 11217-MEIC of February 25, 1980, published in La Gaceta No. 48 of March 7, 1980, and its reforms, established in "Article 4: to classify and protect tourists,</p> | <p>Decree on Rural Inns No. 34717 – MEIC-TUR</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize a type of accommodation in line with rural tourism and rural community development, since these modes reinforce the sustainable tourism model promoted by our country. Country Inns are acknowledged as a "type of establishment with a minimum of three rooms provided with a private bathroom. It may offer food services and is located in a rural setting (...)." • The purpose is to make it possible for this type of establishment to access the benefit of the Tourism Declaration²¹ issued by the Costa Rican Tourism Institute under the Bylaws on Tourism Companies and Activities (25226-MEIC-TUR of March 15, 1996). |

21. BENEFITS OF OBTAINING THE TOURISM DECLARATION: Be included on the official ICT listing (and on the Internet); receive training from the ICT, which is a requirement for obtaining a tourism contract; be categorized; establish a link on the ICT website; opt for the CST (travel agencies); have access to current information on market behavior; be promoted on the website www.visitcostarica.com; participate in international tourism fairs; be able to participate in international cooperative campaigns with wholesale travel agencies and airlines; be able to participate in campaigns in specific areas in coordination with local hoteliers to provide special discounts to tourists; be able to distribute material in the ICT Tourist Information Centers located at the Daniel Oduber Quirós Airport (Liberia), the ICT Building (La Uruca), etc.; be recommended for obtaining the open-ended closure license after approval by the ICT (for gastronomy companies).

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| <p>accommodation establishments must correctly use a designation that describes their company as follows: a) Hotel, b) Aparthotel, c) Inn, d) Villas/Cottage/Cabins, e) Guesthouse, and other. RCT initiatives fell within the following designation to a certain degree "a) Hotel: Type of establishment containing a minimum of ten accommodation units made up of a bedroom and private bathroom, providing lodging services at a daily rate (...)"</p> | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The fact of having been approved unanimously represents the volition of all the political fractions to support this important activity. This means that there is political awareness for boosting the sector... to legislate in favour of RCT. (Ernest, Cañada Alba Sud, page 11) |
| | <p>Taking out a group civil liability policy from the the National Insurance Institute for organizations involved in tourism products</p> | <p>As a tour operator, ACTUAR negotiated a group liability policy from the INS for its associates.</p> |

However, the scope of the work done by the Alliance for RCT was not just for advocacy, but encompassed a much larger spectrum in terms of contributions:

4.1.2. Network Achievements

As an RCT sector, they were able to:

- Define, characterize, and agree upon a unified concept of rural community tourism.
- Position RCT as a national tourism product.
- COOPRENA, R. L. and ACTUAR together have more than 60 affiliates, including cooperatives, integral development associations, foundations, and associations created by Law 218, which offered a wide variety of tourism products for the national and international markets.
- Organize and plan seven rural community tourism fairs.
- Edit three rural community tourism guides; organize the forum on the Law for the Advancement of Rural Community Tourism.
- Incorporate rural community tourism products into the country image promotion in the domestic and international markets.
- Incorporate rural community tourism into the 2010-2017 National Tourism Development Plan of the Costa Rican Tourism Institute (ICT).
- Formally create the National Chamber of Rural Community Tourism (CANTURURAL).

4.2. CANTURURAL: Formalization of a coordination platform.

The National Chamber of Rural Community Tourism (CANTURURAL) was created in June 2009. At the outset, it was comprised of 25 associates. This way, the Alliance stopped being an informal coordination platform and became a representative body for the sector. "It was essential to have an important political figure in the RCT sector that could also serve to develop projects and have a structure that would bring the sector together." (Ernest Cañada, ACTUAR Systemization)

For its part, the SGP continued to support the actions of the Alliance for RCT, now CANTURURAL, by providing US \$50,000 in financing to a project²¹ that proposed the following goal: "Contribute to institutional strengthening of the National Chamber of Rural Community Tourism by influencing policy and promoting the sector."

Sidebar 10 CANTURURAL's Goals:

- Advocate for RCT policy formulation and implementation.
- Promote access to environmentally friendly technologies.
- Foster development of technical skills.
- Contribute to sector integration.
- Provide appropriate and timely information on market trends.

21. C10S/SGP/FSP/OP5/BD/12/35, approved in 2012 by the National Steering Committee

The first Board of Directors elected to guide this Chamber was presided over by ACTUAR. The second Board of Directors that led the Chamber was presided over by Posada Rural Nacientes Palmichal, a founding partner in the ACTUAR Network. During the CANTURURAL's third operating period, it shut down for diverse reasons. According to Hernán Ramírez, "the main actions of the Chamber during those years were to follow up on approval of the law and its bylaws, organize the first RCT Congress, prepare the RCT diagnostic, and get the CANTURURAL project approved by the SGP" (Ernest Cañada, ACTUAR Systemization)

Despite the push for these initiatives, "the Chamber was unable to meet the expectations caused by its creation... in part, Hernán Ramírez indicated that a time came when it had no funds to operate. Certain organizations that had been key in the Alliance, such as COOPRENA, ACEPESA and ACTUAR, stopped playing a major role in coordinating the sector for different reasons (...) which caused a certain decline in the work done by the Chamber." (Ernest Cañada, ACTUAR Systemization)

Finally, the project financed by the SGP ended in 2014. In 2017, CANTURURAL totally disintegrated.

On March 11, 2019, a new chamber of rural tourism was created and formalized with the ICT. Called "Rural Experiences Costa Rica," it was comprised of companies, families, tour operators and an RCT initiative (Nacientes Palmichal). The "Rural Experiences Costa Rica" Chamber has a strategic plan and receives advice from the National Training Institute. It is taking its first steps as such. (Hernán Ramírez, March 12, 2019 telephone interview)

4.3. The RCT Country Contribution to the Tourism Industry in Costa Rica

1. Rural community tourism emerged in the country as a new market segment that innovated a tourism offering based on the pillars of beach, sun, ecotourism, and nature. The sidebar shows the evolution of the campaigns used by the ICT to position the country in the tourism industry.

Sidebar 11

The Country's Position in the Tourism Industry at the Domestic and International Levels

- Prior to 1984: The country's position as a tourist destination was linked to nature and to protecting and using the environment responsibly.
- 1984: The ICT approved a new marketing policy to position Costa Rican as a "soft nature" destination with the development of its first international tourism promotion campaign called "Costa Rica: It's only natural" (ICT, 1987).
- Later, the international promotion line stayed focused on campaigns that highlighted natural attractions and comfort – "No Artificial Ingredients," initially focused on nature and natural parks, sun and beach.

2. Rural community tourism “positioned the value of our rural nature,” commented Leyla Solano. “Costa Rica was only selling sun, beach and nature. With the arrival of this new product, the cultural aspect of our rural communities was highlighted in an assertive and positive way. Agribusiness activities appeared as tourism products: milking cows, riding on sugar cane trailers pulled by tractors, enjoying a bath in a swimming hole in the river or under a waterfall, joining in daily chores on a farm, sorting beans, threshing rice, making chocolate from scratch by grinding cacao, shucking corn, joining in soccer games, and many other things.” (Leyla Solano, interview, March 2019)
3. The country discourse in the tourism industry changed radically to not “just talking” about nature, beach, and sun. Now it also included cultural values, which is also a contribution of the Alliance for RCT. As Leyla Solano said, “the RCT is like a giant wave in the sea” that went beyond the supported endeavours and permeated the whole country. This may be seen in the launch of a global campaign in 2017 called “Essential Costa Rica: My Choice, Naturally,” which according to tourism minister Mauricio Ventura, “. . . shows Costa Rica as a destination that engenders authentic travel experiences that leave the visitor with a feeling of well-being because the message is direct, personal, and inspiring.” (elmundo.cr, June 2107)
4. In 2007, RCT was declared to be of national interest. The Costa Rican Tourism Institute welcomed it as a “macro-product,” possibly on a par with other similar activities that take place in the country, such as beach and sun, adventure and ecotourism.
5. Rural community tourism has spread throughout the country, making a diversified offer possible that, in addition to giving visitors a glimpse of the great natural diversity for which Costa Rica is famous, also helps give them a greater understanding of the pieces that make up the Costa Rican idiosyncrasy.
6. The initiatives, financed by donors and institutions, did not just lead to the creation of RCT endeavours, but also to the establishment of new tourist destinations, such as Chira Island on the central Pacific coast and the different sites in the Gulf of Nicoya. On the southern Caribbean coast, eighty percent of the tourism services being promoted and commercialized were RCT, comprised by Indigenous groups (Natural Ventures, STIBRAWPA, ACOMUITA,²² etc.), birdwatching with KEKOLDI and Casa Calateas (Carbón Dos). In the northern zone, with the first Heliconia Shelter, the town’s development has been growing and new production chains have been created. Today, the town is prosperous and transformed. On the west side of San José, in Escazú, the Encanto de Piedra Blanca tour operator offers cultural experiences. They encompass 90% of the promoted packages and include cooking classes, dance classes, tours of the town, the church, the cimarrona,²³ “Don Gerardo” with his huge “masquerade” heads, and “Don Torino” with the last oxen-powered sugar mill.

22. Women’s groups that produce cacao and bananas provide a value added to cacao by turning it into artisanal chocolate for sale.

23. A cimarrona is small band of amateur musicians, part of the folk tradition of cantons and towns in Costa Rica. The cimarrona is usually made up only of wind and percussion instruments. It has its own musical style that in most cases is transmitted intangibly (it is music that you “have to listen to”). It does not use any sheet music.

7. With the participation of RCT initiatives and tour operators as a tourist product at domestic and international fairs, such as EXPOTUR, cultural aspects were highlighted and given “value.” “Costa Rica is now selling culture,” Leyla Solano commented. “What sells today are popular dances, such as salsa, merengue and the Costa Rican swing. When we started participating in the different fairs, we innovated by bringing cultural activities such as the “cimarrona” or the swing dance with “Ligia Torijano”. At first, it was looked down upon and considered a “polada”.²⁴ Even so, with the passage of time, the cimarrona is still present at the EXPOTUR and other fairs. “Churchills”²⁵ and coconut caramels are sold; our authentic rural gastronomy has been given a dimension. In other words, many of our cultural values are present. These actions reflect the impact that RCT has had on the national tourism product being promoted.”
8. As an example of this process, “the ICT has implemented a strategy called “building destination competitiveness.” It is aimed at capitalizing on the wealth and cultural differences of different regions of the country. The idea is to promote tourism products (local gastronomic fare, handicrafts with identity, etc.) with different local groups and stakeholders in order to offer tourists a comprehensive experience.” (ICT website)
9. By measuring the support of state institutions and, especially that of donors and development agencies through the financing of RCT initiatives, we can now appreciate a “country product” that has permeated and given value to previously intangible “cultural aspects”, in spite of the strengths and weaknesses that are still present. (Leyla Solano, 2019)

24. Something that is in poor taste and old-fashioned (polo = a coarse person from the country).

25. This contains shaved ice, syrup, caramelized milk, powdered milk and ice cream and is very refreshing!

V.

CASE STUDIES

The rural community tourism experiences shown below are part of the local participation model. There is a predominance of local stakeholders in the offered services, with community micro-enterprises that are sustained by the community's own work force.

They present the array of initiatives financed by the Small Grants Programme that have nourished the RCT concept. In addition, they illustrate the different forms and levels of development and implementation of successful initiatives, in the different contexts in which they are being implemented. These case studies also showcase the gender approach that the SGP has promoted and streamlined. To give the reader a better grasp of the situation, the following table presents the experience for each selected case study.

Table 10
Case Studies and their Relevance

| Enterprise Name | What does the case study exemplify in this systematization process? | Gender Aspects |
|--|--|---|
| CODECE (mixed group of women and men who are residents and professionals fighting for the common good of their people) | An environmental organization that concatenates nature with cultural aspects and performs as a tour operator, going beyond the common belief that lodging has to be offered in order to provide RCT services. | An organization that has incorporated the gender vision and made the most of its strengths from the outset. |
| Association of Women of the Gulf (a group of women on the central Pacific coast) | The union of two organizations financed by the SGP that complement tourist destinations. Monteverde has the cloud forest, adventure tours, and birdwatching, while the "Women of the Gulf" offer the ocean and artisan fishing. | Despite the adverse patriarchal and financial conditions, they moved ahead with the endeavour and demonstrated to the fishing community that they could do it. They are a role model for many Costa de Pájaros women and formed a federation of women led by this organization. |
| The Tres Colinas de Potrero Grande Association (group of women and men in the middle of a sector of the La Amistad International Park) | An organization that arose from and developed in the middle of a government-declared protected area which had been creating antagonistic relations. After some time, the relations became harmonious. Later, they were able to convert Cerro Kamuk, a location close to the community, into a tourist destination, thus generating an RCT initiative | An organization that from the outset incorporated a gender approach. Currently, both men and women equally share the work and benefits of this undertaking. |
| Association for the conservation and sustainable development of Copal (group of producers and farm workers). | Rural producers and farm workers commercialized a forest to create one of the country's best birdwatching sites (more than 360 species can be spotted). The tourism activity complements their economic activities. | A producers' organization which decided to include women in the organization, given the initiative's context and development. This is seen as one of the most assertive and viable strategic decisions. They recognize the role of women, and women leaders within the enterprise for coordinating tourism activities. |
| Damas de Chira Ecotourism Association (group of women and men from Chira Island) | How do you forge a common identity on an island based on development and tourism chains (all financed by the SGP)? How do you jointly commercialize it as a tourist destination that never existed before? | A group of women who came up with an economic enterprise within the context of adverse patriarchal relations. They were isolated within the context of the community. Later, they took the lead in forging value chains that built up Chira Island as a tourist destination. They are a role model for women's groups and their experience has been systematized from this perspective. |
| Kekoldi Wak Ka Köneke (Bribí Indigenous organization) | An organization that expanded its strategic vision in the RCT service offering. They selected a unique target market, "that of research and doing science," basing their offer on the attractions in the forest reserve (watching for birds of prey and amphibians). | Created as an organization of women and men, its leadership continues to be male-dominated as men have the greatest exposure outside the Kekoldi territory. |

Association for Conservation and Sustainable Development of Cerros de Escazú (CODECE)



5.1 RCT Initiatives Supported Technically and Financially by the SGP:

5.1.1. Association for Conservation and Sustainable Development of Cerros de Escazú (CODECE)

A Community Organization that Became a Tour Operator

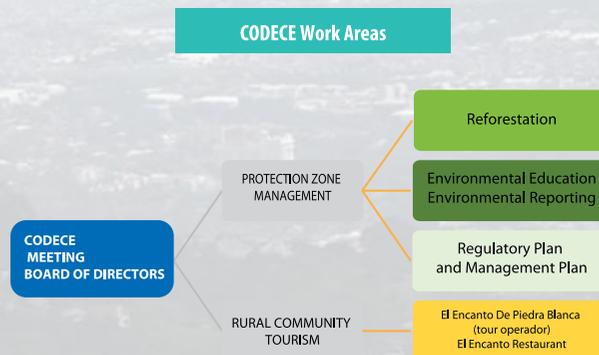
| | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Implementing Organization: | Association for Conservation and Sustainable Development of Cerros de Escazú (CODECE). |
| Address: | San Rafael de Escazú, San José |
| Contact: | +506 2228-0183 / Meylin Chamorro: +506 8416-9920 Email: elencantocodece@gmail.com |
| Web: | www.elencantodepiedrablanca |

TOUR OPERADOR

CODECE was formed in 1985 as a community response to institutions and individuals engaging in construction projects in the Cerros de Escazú Protection Zone,²⁶ a protected wildlife area (declared in 1976). Later, the work done by CODECE was directed to providing follow-up on environmental complaints. It began an environmental education programme and reforestation sessions. In 1991, it started promoting organic agriculture, and in 1994, it created a local cuisine restaurant, UPE, as a strategy for self-financing, with the support of SGP, “Bread for the World” and community efforts. In 2002, it consolidated the rural tourism programme “El Encanto de Piedra Blanca”, which is currently demonstrating its effectiveness as a community tourism enterprise.

CODECE is working to get community influence on the Escazú Regulatory Plan; it has joined the regulatory plan committee and negotiated decisive restrictive regulations for conservation of the Escazú hills (the Regulatory Plan was published in the La Gaceta official journal in February 2005). From 1991 to 2005, it implemented actions to purchase land for conservation. Some 13.2 hectares were acquired which are suitable for natural regeneration.

Graph 4



26. Escazú is a canton located on the west side of the province of San José in Costa Rica. It is part of the greater metropolitan area, and is one of the cantons with the largest residential area. It borders on the canton of Belén to the northwest, the canton of Santa Ana to the west, the cantons of Mora and Acosta to the south and the canton of Alajuelita to the east. It has an area of 34.49 km². Its head is the district of Escazú, which is categorized as a city. The canton has 67,362 inhabitants, according to the latest demographic projection by the INEC.



How did the RCT initiative come about?

The tourism programme began in 1991. At the time, it was called agro-tourism. It was initiated by a group of women in the community who, being excellent cooks, began offering catering services. The first inventory of tourist attractions was taken in 1995. Later, a meeting was called that was attended by marimba musicians, mask makers, ox-herders, cooks, sugar mill workers, cimarrona players, and other groups. When the idea was proposed to them, they all agreed.

Meylin from CODECE commented:

“There were a lot of people, but people thought that tourism was going to be a flash in the pan. Instead, it was a process that took many years, which caused many people to desert. The only people left were the female cooks, Don Torino (sugar mill with oxen), Don Gerardo (masks), and the cimarrona folks. Gladys, Maritza, and Flor took the first steps with the typical food services called “almuercitos” (plate lunches wrapped in plantain leaves).

In parallel, CODECE began the process of finding funding. In 2001, they proposed to the SGP an initiative consisting of the sustainable use of natural and cultural tourist attractions. It involved generating economic resources to support the organization’s environmental efforts. The SGP financed project COS/01/13 with a grant of US \$30,000.²⁷ A consultant was hired to provide professional services. Each of the tourist attractions began its transformation into a tourist product, thus creating a joint offering of tourist products from the individual ventures of the partners.

As an organization, CODECE develops and chains together each of the tourist services. It promotes and markets them and has prepared a sales manual. It builds capacities in diverse RCT areas. It establishes rack and net rates, negotiates and establishes direct relationships with tour operators, and uses the relationships to bargain for a percentage to contribute to underwriting the protection efforts.

Meylin Chamorro²⁸ commented:

“CODECE has 13.2 hectares of forest called “Codecita.” It provides training and environmental education in the forest through tours and walks. This is part of its tourism service offer. It does not have the land to build infrastructure or provide accommodation or restaurant services.²⁹ Given this situation, an RCT tour operation was the best option. Currently, we chain together the following tourism services: a marimba musician, a typical dance group, the ladies who cook in the restaurant (founding partners), the farm belonging to Luis Chacón (co-founder), an ox-herder, the sugarcane mill and farm owned by Don Torino, the masks made by Don Gerardo, cooking with Doña Gladys, the forest area called Codecita for offering guided tours and environmental education, and a butterfly farm.”

27. The PRODOC included capacity-building and purchases of equipment, furnishings, utensils, etc.

28. Administradora del Encanto de Piedra Blanca, entrevista 21 diciembre, 2018.

29. The restaurant services are offered at facilities that have a defined schedule.



The “Encanto de Piedra Blanca” is the source of two permanent jobs. In addition, the whole staff can be hired to provide tours and guide services. It joined the now defunct ACTUAR Network and was part of the RCT offer commercialized and promoted by the tour operator, ranking second as the partner with the most sales. ACTUAR used the project financed by SGP ³⁰ to help CODECE participate in training sessions and tour guide education and obtain the Certificate of Sustainable Tourism.

Conservation efforts:

The profits generated by the tour operator continued to be invested in protection actions for the Escazú Hills. The profits are also invested in a forestry brigade and reforestation efforts, as well as, the reporting of environmental crimes in the community.

Lessons Learned:

1. Not to depend on international aid: At first CODECE’s environmental work took place in a healthy context of grants, but then the grants dried up and the organization had to reinvent itself to be able to fulfil its mission and vision.
2. Split up functions and establish fees for services provided by the associates within the organization in order to offer quality tourism services to domestic and foreign tourists.
3. Tour guides are an important source of information for learning about the tastes of the different tourist nationalities (e.g. young people from the United States like rice and chicken, and Germans love fruit, but they’re not very fond of papaya). (Meylin Chamorro, December 21, 2018)
4. Everything has to be prepared or semi-cooked during the cooking tours so that people can taste it during the tour.

Challenges:

1. Build a restaurant on your own land to offer tourism services more comfortably and to expand toward other initiatives.
2. Involve young people in the activity and generational turnover.
3. Generate financial resources to be able to maintain the human capital that has been trained, such as guides, cooks, artists, etc., in the different low and high seasons.

Business Name: CODECE

Fantasy Name: El Encanto de la Piedra Blanca (tour operator officially authenticated by the ICT), with a tourism declaration and a Certificate of Sustainable Tourism.

Emblem: The Escazú Hills.

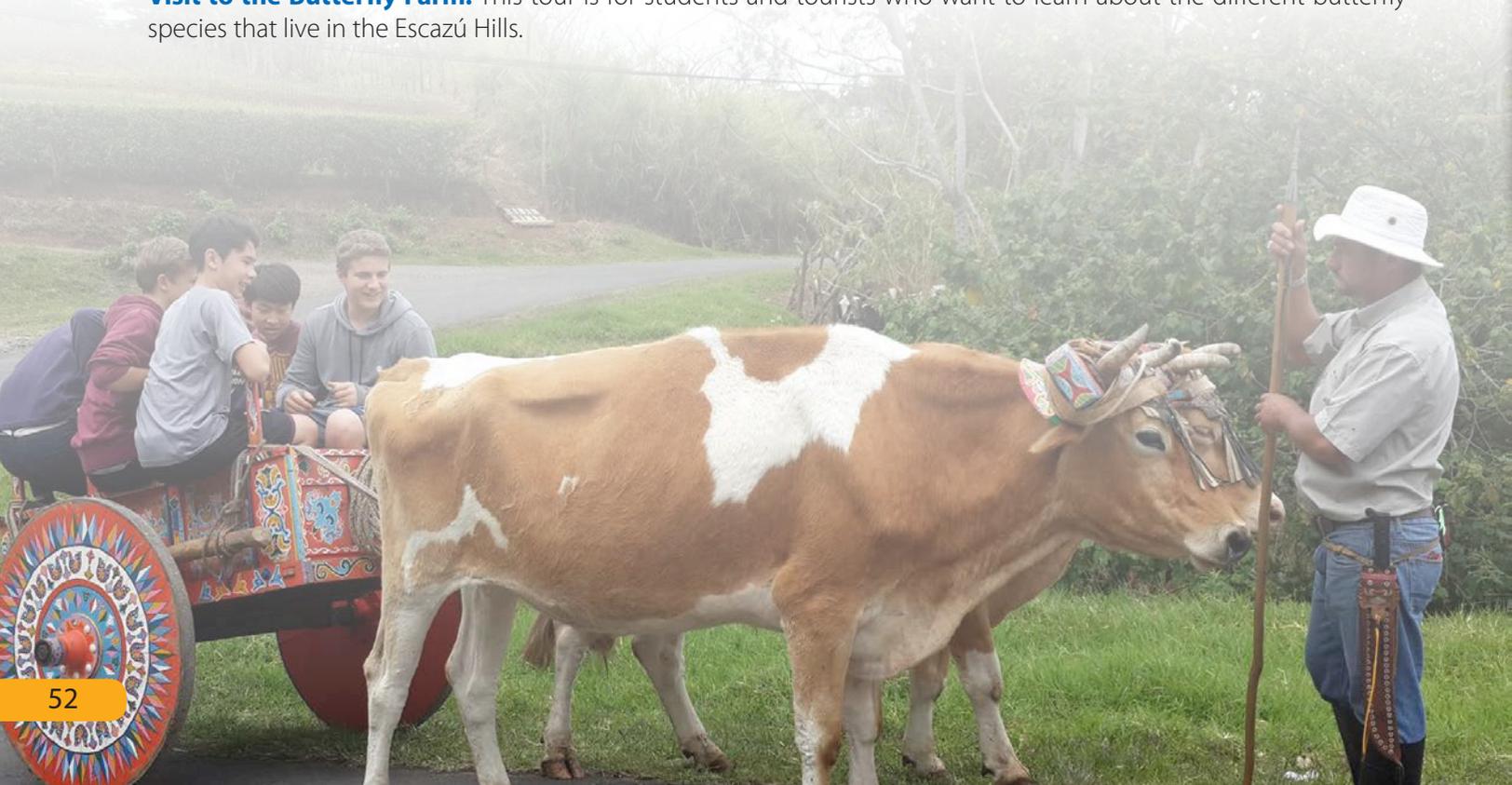
Food service: Thirty-five people in the restaurant, fifty or more people in other facilities.

30. SGP finances three CODECE projects for environmental protection for a total of US \$38,569 (COS/06/24, COS/05/23, and COS/92/65/06).



TOURS OFFERED BY EL ENCANTO DE PIEDRA BLANCA:

- **Magical Nights!** Tourists take a beautiful tour of the Encanto de la Piedra Blanca with a local guide, visiting the San Antonio de Escazú church. They will enjoy a panoramic view of San Jose and sample beverages and typical food. They will hear the story of how the organization was founded, accompanied by a marimba player and a group of dancers who will perform typical dances.
- **A Full Day of Delights!** The great cultural richness of rural life in San Antonio de Escazú will be shared. It will begin with a visit to the Catholic Church, part of the cultural heritage, and the Monument to the Ox-herders mural. Later, tourists will enjoy a typical lunch in the Cueva de Zárate room with marimba music in the background.
- **Cooking Classes!** The ladies from CODECE will teach people how to prepare typical dishes: bizcocho biscuits, arracache root hash, coconut caramel treats, a typical lunch wrapped in leaves, buñuelo sweet fritters, baked tamales, and many other delicacies!
- **Reforesting the “Codecita” - Volunteer for a Day!** Offers people the chance to provide volunteer services for one day of reforestation.
- **Picking Traditional Fruit!** A visit to the farm owned by Don Torino Alvarado where crops such as sugarcane, coffee, and many varieties of produce can be found.
- **Green Adventures Educational Tour!** Have fun, learn, and protect!™: This tour targets teachers who would like to learn about environmental education in the field.
- **Visit to the Butterfly Farm!** This tour is for students and tourists who want to learn about the different butterfly species that live in the Escazú Hills.



Butterflies of the Gulf Women's Association



The Women of Costa de Pájaros Share the Gulf with the Monteverde Forest Reserve³¹

31. The Monteverde Forest Reserve is located in a region in the northern part of the province of Puntarenas in the central mountain range. It is located six kilometers from the city of Santa Elena and around 150 kilometers from San Jose. The Monteverde Cloud Forest Biological Reserve is one of the most impressive nature reserves in the entire world.



5.1.2 Butterflies of the Gulf Women's Association.

Implementing Organization: Butterflies of the Gulf Women's Association.
Address: Costa de Pájaros, Chomes, Puntarenas
Contact: +506 8416-9920 / Esther Ledezma • Email: caligodelgolfo@gmail.com
Web: www.mariposasdelgolfo.org

Costa de Pájaros is a community located within the Gulf of Nicoya. Similar to other nearby villages, the poverty level is high due to an almost exclusive dependence on artisanal fishing, which has declined considerably. Employment opportunities for women are still practically non-existent. In 1999, this led a group of women to decide to organize and undertake productive projects that would make it possible to earn income. They call themselves the Butterflies of the Gulf Women's Association, which currently consists of 13 women from the initial 60 women members.

The first grant processed by the SGP was for purchasing equipment to build a butterfly farm, a visitor information module and a forestry nursery that would include native ornamental plants.³² They later received support from other donors to purchase an 1,800 m² plot of land, where the project facilities are located, and to build a canteen and a small boat and outboard motor that is currently used to transport visitors. In 2012, they knocked on the SGP's doors once again to request support for financing accommodation infrastructure with the construction of two cabins with a shared bath.

From 2000 to 2018, the Association members participated in numerous training activities on the technical aspects of managing a butterfly farm, the administrative aspects of project management, and the organizational aspects of creating the self-management conditions needed for its sustainable operation.³³ (Esther Ledezma)

The butterfly farm continues to operate and is one of the main attractions offered by the organization.

Esther Ledezma tells us:

"In that whole time, we women members, some with more specific skills, have learned to manage the butterfly farm. This includes producing pupae and their host plants, handling the pupae, and managing the butterfly farm in general. This has made it possible for us to have butterflies on exhibit most of the time for visitors. With the support of ACTUAR and the SGP, we developed the first sales manual and defined the rates for the tours. This has given us a base for continuing working."

-
32. The organization's projects financed by the SGP: COS/98/G52-A for US \$10,000, COS/00/012/02 for US \$20,300 (funds from the British Embassy), COS/SGP/OP4/CORE/07/14 for US \$6,180, and COS/SGP/OP5/Y2/BD/13/89 for US \$20,000; grand total: US \$56,480.
 33. In all these processes, the Association has received ongoing support from the SGP, the Women's Studies Institute and the School of Biology through the Gulf Programme of the National University (UNA), the ECMAR at UNA, the National Training Institute, the Mixed Social Assistance Institute, the Ministry of the Environment and Energy, and the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock.



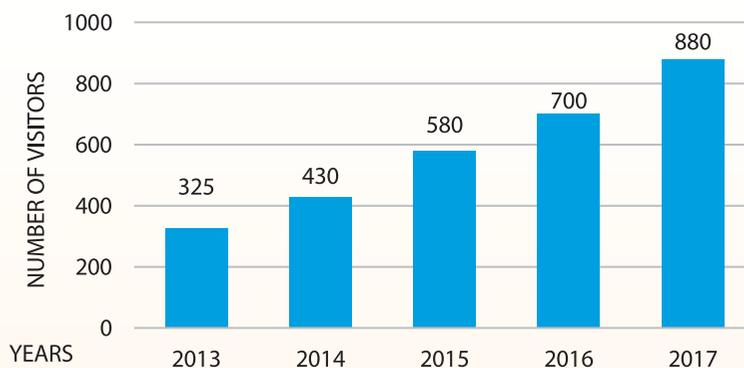
As part of the organization's efforts, contact was made with the Local Council of the Pájaro Campana Biological Corridor (also an SGP partner³⁴). The Council has helped obtain the host plants for butterflies. It has also provided contacts that have made it possible to continue bringing in foreign students. During these visits, the Association provides educational talks on coastal zone environmental topics. It maintains close ties with the National University's Marine-Coastal Science Station, which brings in national and foreign students to hear educational talks. The organization has established business ties with five tour operators, while other visitors heard about it on social media. It became part of the ACTUAR Network and received support on RCT matters from the SGP through the strengthening team.³⁵

Nevertheless, Esther and Silvia say:

"It has never been easy. We have had all types of problems with the organization, but we have overcome them. After not having anything, we are now a company which is able to provide the following jobs: a permanent position (boat captain) and other temporary positions: people for cleaning and maintenance of the surveillance areas and boat maintenance, cooks and speakers (three), facility janitors, bedding launderers (two), and a person to make repairs to the boat, cabins, plumbing, etc. Each one of us has a function. For example, someone in charge of cooking and giving talks about the history and the butterfly farm, washing the life jackets, and waiting for and waiting on guests. And there is the function of the administrator who uses a computer and the Internet and prepares the promotional materials for the project (rates, services, etc.)." "That's me," Esther said.

All the permits are up-to-date, and they pay for insurance on the boat in case of accidents. They do not have a rural inn tourism declaration because they do not have the minimum number of rooms and the conditions required by the different regulations. As a second-tier organization, they are part of a women's federation together with two community organizations: MUDECOOP R.L and the Women's Association of Coyolito. Together they promote and commercialize cultural activities, traditional food and revive coastal cultural history, in addition to sharing in the activities of Costa de Pájaros.

Graph 5
Number of Visitors from 2013 to 2017



34. COS/SGP/FSP/BD/12/05 for US \$20,000, the COS/SGP/FSP/OP4/Y3/RAF/10/16 project, Strengthening of Pájaro Campana, and the COS/04/14 project for the ADI San Luis de Monteverde for the initiative Community Lodges and the Pacífico Valle de San Luis Trail (US \$19,923).

35. Se retiraron de la RED ACTUAR 2008.



The organization plays a fundamental role in the community by supporting other organizations that are forming, helping them with their processes, for example, with the Costa de Pájaros Fishers' Association (ACOPECOPA), which is in the process of establishing a responsible fishing area. They already have the buoys in place and are under study by INCOPECA. Butterflies of the Gulf supports it by providing a locale, guiding meetings, and facilitating contacts.

Anabelle Rojas commented:

“Our spouses and children are part of this organization. They have finally understood the need to organize and what we have achieved as a group.”

Conservation Efforts: The women continue to support the work of the brigade members. They also provide talks at education centres on the biological wealth of the Gulf of Nicoya. They work at reforestation, planting trees native to the area (tamarind, moringa, water apple, ojoche, and olive trees) as a way to foster the habitat of the bellbird, a symbol of the biological corridor of which they are a part.

Lessons Learned:

1. Capacity-building and assistance from the different institutions have made possible the growth of the undertaking and the people in the organization.
2. Being up-to-date with all legally-required permits gives us credibility with tour operators and visitors.

Challenges:

1. Finish preparing the new tour packages that will be innovative in the zone.
2. Expand the infrastructure (restaurant, butterfly farm, visitors' centre, and boat) to improve customer services.
3. Register as a rural inn after expanding accommodations, in order to enjoy the benefits of the law.

BUSINESS NAME: Women's Association of the Gulf

Fantasy Name: Gulf Butterflies

Emblem of the Venture: Coligo or owl butterfly

Accommodation Capacity: 4 people with a shared bathroom

Food Service Capacity: 25 people

Boat Transportation: 15 people

Tours on Offer:

- **Gulf of Nicoya!** Boat tours around the Gulf of Nicoya to observe the delimited artisanal fishing areas and the Costa de Pájaros line-and-hook fishers.
- **Educational Tour!** The tour includes a trip through the island wetlands and the oyster-raising area, with a talk at each place; lunch is included.
- **Tour of Chira and Venado Islands!** Tour around the islands with a stop at each. Lunch and a refreshment are also provided.
- **Artisanal Fishing Tour!** A family fishing tour with options, the most attractive of which includes an educational talk by teachers, students, environmentalists, and naturalists.
- **Restaurant Services!** Fresh seafood: fish, plate lunches, fish and plantain ceviche, mussels and oysters.



Tres Colinas de Potrero Grande



Tres Colinas de Potrero Grande: Shared Management – Cerro Kamuk and PILA Attractions³⁶

36. PILA = La Amistad International Park



5.1.3. Tres Colinas de Potrero Grande (ASOTUR).

Implementing Organization: Tres Colinas de Potrero Grande Tourism Association.
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Contact: +506 8321-9262- +506 8829-2693 / William Solano Acuña
Blanca Rosa Mena Gamboa
E-mail: asoturtrescolinas@hotmail.com • asoturtrescolinas@gmail.com
Web: Facebook: ASOTUR

At the beginning of the 1960s, a new community, Tres Colinas, was formed on the skirts of the Talamanca Mountain Range. The community is located 23 kilometres from Potrero Grande, Buenos Aires de Puntarenas, on a strip of land bordered by the La Amistad International Park (PILA - established in 1982) in the Talamanca Mountain Range highlands. When the international park was established, many of the properties belonging to residents of the Tres Colinas community remained within the area of the PILA. They were forced to abandon their productive activities along with their properties. Most of the residents had to migrate to other regions, causing a breakdown in community development.

The relationship between MINAE and the organization changed substantially in 1995 after a joint project was developed to open up Cerro Kamuk as a tourist attraction based on the scenic beauty of the PILA. The strategic vision of the Ministry of the Environment was to involve communities in the protection and conservation of natural resources.



Currently, Tres Colinas de Potrero Grande engages in natural resource protection and conservation activities



Before Tres Colinas de Potrero Grande



GEF SGP arrived at the community in 2003 and provided the first support for the organization with a \$2,000 project aimed at building the group's capacities in diverse areas. To that end, it proposed experience-sharing with organizations such as ASOPROLA, Bioley, and the Talamanca Caribbean Biological Corridor,³⁷ which were implementing different kinds of RCT actions. That same year, the community gained access to an initiative with a larger number of resources for a project intended to facilitate infrastructure, equipment, amongst other support, for growing organic blackberries and other fruits. The initiative also included improving the productivity of already established areas and enhancing post-harvest management conditions by establishing a storage centre with regulated temperatures to preserve products before being taken to market³⁸.

ASOTUR continues to work on the production of blackberries and organic products as a source of financial income while also engaging in rural community tourism activities such as offering hikes and receiving tourists attracted by the beauty and legends of Cerro Kamuk. In addition, it has been assisted by various donors doing scientific research on its natural resources. Cerro Kamuk is the second highest peak in the country at 3,549 meters above sea level.

In 2012, ASOTUR³⁹ knocked on the SGP's doors with a project to fortify environmental actions within the Quetzal de Tres Colinas Biological Corridor.⁴⁰ This initiative provided the grounds for implementing RCT actions and the ASOTUR office became an information centre and reception area for tourists going to Cerro Kamuk, as well as other attractions in the community and the PILA. Over the last eight years, it has welcomed French groups that have been doing volunteer work in the community and in the park. Promoting and marketing ventures such as Cerro Kamuk have been low-profile because they did not have a usage permit or suitable conditions for welcoming tourists. With the passage of time and the use of their own resources, the members created accommodation options with food facilities, a star-gazing site, amongst other attractions. On average, they welcome 8 to 12 groups per year.

Blanca Rosa Mena, who along with her family owns the BONNYSU cabins, commented:

"We have not done any heavy promotion, but we already have 20 people signed up for the second week of January 2019. We are taking it slow because the accommodation capacity is still minimal. In addition, MINAE regulations have to be met regarding the load capacity for Cerro Kamuk. The community has a lot to offer."

37. SGP partner organizations that have implemented conservation and RCT projects.

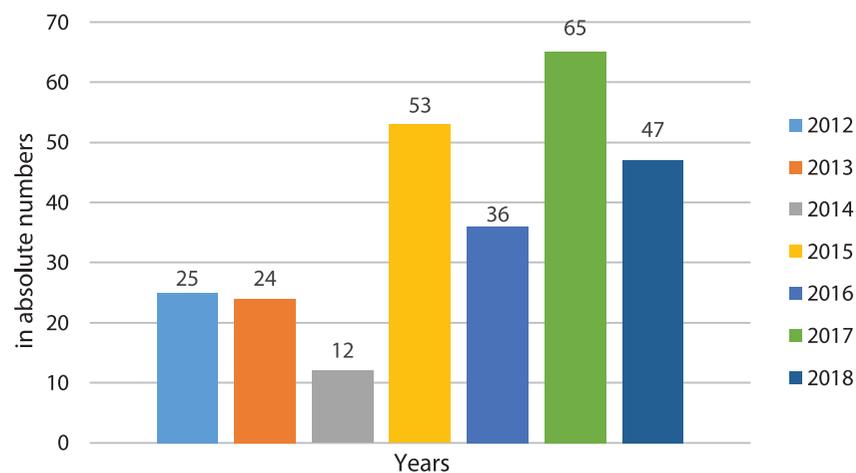
38. The organization successfully implemented the project. However, to set up blackberry storage conditions, electric power was needed. An assessment was made with the Costa Rican Electricity Institute that year, which quoted the work at more than US \$100,000, in addition to a service rate of approximately US \$4,500.

39. The SGP financed the organization with US \$62,000 for implementing 3 initiatives: COS/03/21 for US \$2,000; COS/03/32 for US \$40,000; and COS/SGP/FSP/OP3/Y2/CC/12/51 for US \$20,000.

40. Raising of the social production level through the use of biological conservation; creation of an ASOTUR organizational strategic plan; construction of a meeting centre, office, and collection area for organic products from the community; and a biological species monitoring strategy for the El Quetzal Biological Corridor to diagnose the status of conservation; purchase of the basic necessary and suitable equipment for monitoring activities; and reforestation with 8,000 trees in fragmented forest areas to improve connectivity.



Graph 6
Number of Visitors from 2012 to 2108



It was not until 2018 that a 3-year usage permit was issued to them for visitors from November to April, by means of Resolution No. ACLA-P-D-000-2018. This turned their initiative into a success and a replicable model of shared management for other community organizations. In addition, MINAE is in the process of a call for proposals for setting up campsites in order to officially launch the opening up of visits to Cerro Kamuk. It also established three more visiting points: Los Quetzales, El Jilguero, and El Páramo, all of which are new offerings in Costa Rica.

William Solano (January 5, 2019) commented:

“Obtaining the usage permit for Cerro Kamuk is a triumph for us as an organization. However, it also requires a lot of work on administrative tasks, such as, for example, collecting tickets, keeping visitor logs, making bank deposits, providing communication services, etc. As a group, we are happy, but it is also a challenge to meet all the provisions indicated by MINAE.”

Conservation Efforts: They are continuing as a forestry brigade and they have a project to bring water to the community; with this, they hope to set up 22,000-litre water tanks for use in case of a forest fire. In addition, they are continuing with sustainable farm work.

Lessons Learned:

1. The forest regeneration and conservation efforts provide fruits in the medium and long term.
2. “The organization needs to be open to the entry of other members of ASOTUR to bring in new vigour and ideas. It can’t keep going with just ideas from the past.” (William Solano, January 2019)

Challenges:

1. Improve the conditions for providing tourism services for food, lodging, and the look-out point.
2. Continue with the conservation and protection work for Cerro Kamuk and the PILA within the Los Quetzales Biological Corridor.



Business Name: Tres Colinas de Potrero Grande Tourism Association

Fantasy Name: Tres Colinas (Cerro Kamuk)

Emblem of the Venture: Quetzal

Accommodation Capacity: 20 people in the cabins and lodge

Food Service Capacity: 25 people

The Tres Colinas de Potrero Grande community is the jump-off point for the Tres Colinas - Cerro Kamuk Trail located at 3,549 meters above sea level. It is situated 25 kilometres from Potrero Grande, Buenos Aires, Puntarenas, on the edge of the La Amistad International Park. It has cabins, a lodge, local trails, trout fishing, blackberry wine, and impressive views. It is categorized as rural and adventure tourism.

Tours on Offer:

- **Cerro Kamuk!** From 3 to 5 days, overnighting at the different stations.
- **Tour of the Ceno Trails!** Trails on Ceno Hill close to the community.
- **Trail Tour!** La Quebrada, Finca Los Colibríes, Guardianes del bosque.
- **Blackberry Picking Tour!** Blackberry crops belonging to the farmers in the community are harvested and commercialized in Pérez Zeledón.
- **Tour to Watch Meteor Showers and the Red Crescent Moon!** At the natural look-out point to watch meteor showers and shooting stars and view the planets, depending on the season.
- **Winemaking Tours!** Tourists learn how wine is made from wild blackberries.
- **Birdwatching tours and looking for the Glass Frog!** Hiking along the trails of Kamuk to see 286 species of birds and admire the glass frog and the salamander that are endemic to the region.





Copal Conservation and Sustainable Development Association





RCT as an Option for a Group of Producers to Conserve 177 Hectares of Forest in the Buffer Zone of the Tapanti National Park

5.1.4. Copal Conservation and Sustainable Development Association

Implementing Organization: Copal Conservation and Sustainable Development Association
Address: El Humo-Pejiballe, Cartago
Contact: +506 2531-2124 • +506 8880-0432 Patricia Gómez Bonilla
E-mail: el.copal98@gmail.com
Web: <http://www.elcopal.org>

EL COPAL RURAL INN

The Tapantí National park is located in the La Amistad - Caribbean Conservation Area together with the “Cerro de la Muerte.” This park is frequently visited by birdwatchers, since it has more than 260 recorded species of birds, including quetzals, hawks, hummingbirds, and oropendolas. The park is part of an immense biological corridor that includes other nearby protected wildlife areas such as the Chirripó National Park, the Los Santos Forest Reserve, and the Chirripó Indigenous Reserve.

In 1998, several residents of El Humo, La Selva, and Taus decided to purchase a 177-hectare plot of land with the idea of conserving the forest and its biodiversity to generate alternate sources of income for the farmers’ families. More than 380 bird species have been identified in the forest in the El Copal Reserve, making it a birdwatcher’s paradise. The community shares traditional activities such as sugarcane cultivation, cattle ranching, and preparation of tapa de dulce (compacted sugar cones). The El Copal Rural Inn uses solar energy for its operations.

In 2000, the Association submitted its first project to the SGP for building and equipping a rustic lodge and for making sustainable use of ecological trails. It successfully implemented the initiative. The Association has received support from academic institutions such as the University of Costa Rica, the National University and university colleges for research and technical and scientific work. Volunteer organizations such as Youth Challenge have helped with construction of infrastructure and capacity-building. From the outset, the organization has been a part of ACTUAR and has occupied different positions on the Board of Directors. The SGP invested an estimated \$70,000 in this organization from 2000 to 2015.

El COPAL achieved the category of rural inn and is working to obtain a Certificate of Sustainable Tourism (CST), which despite its efforts, has still not been received.

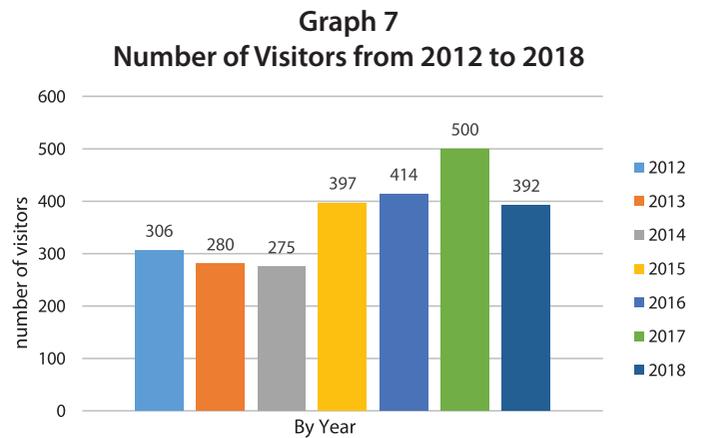
Beto Chaves, the organization’s president, commented:

“Looking back over time, we have achieved the dream of our own venture, conserving the forest, and we have a better quality of life. Three permanent jobs have been generated, and the best thing is that we, as an organization, administer it. We have created business relations with 11 tour operators that bring us tourists all year round for birdwatching and we have learned quite a bit.” (Interview on December 30, 2018)



Patricia Mora, the administrator for the venture, and a member of the organization, also commented: *“El Copal is sustainable. We are able to meet the overhead costs, insure three people through the CCSS⁴¹ in the high season, pay taxes, and pay the people we hire; in the low season (August-October) we cover all the expenses and provide maintenance to the facilities.”* (Interview on December 30, 2018).

Conservation Efforts: Natural regeneration of the forest and environmental surveillance to prevent poaching and deforestation. The 177 hectares were eligible for payments for environmental services (75% is primary forest and the rest is being regenerated). Waste and compost are being managed. Solar energy is used for the physical infrastructure and birds are counted three times a year. The place is suitable for different types of research on flora and fauna. The Institute of California recently finished research on the long-tailed manakin and the MINAE has set up cameras in the forest to observe margays and jaguars.



41. CCSS = Costa Rican Social Security Institute



Lessons Learned:

1. Including women in the organization was a very assertive step for its growth.
2. The profits generated by the venture were always reinvested. This is a decision that has paid off.

Challenges:

1. Receive visitors in the low season and increase the operator portfolio for El COPAL.
2. Change the legal status from association to cooperative, to better manage financial capital and profits.
3. Generational turn-over is needed for the venture and conservation actions.

BUSINESS NAME: Association for the Development and Conservation of El Copal

Fantasy Name: El Copal

Emblem of the Venture: Copal Tree

Accommodation Capacity: 22 people in cabins and the lodge

Food Service Capacity: 25 people

Meeting Rooms: for 25 people

Tour:

- **El Copal Rural Tour!** Visit a cattle ranch and a biodigester that produces anaerobic gas from organic materials. In the reserve, hike through the rain forest to see the area's different varieties of exotic birds.
- **Bird Watching at El Copal!** Hike along trails with names like La Mariposa (Butterfly), El Gálbula (Oriole), and El Tigre (Tiger), where you will be able to see examples of the main attraction, birds such as trogons, tanagers and hawks.
- **Sugar Mill Tour!** Visit the artisanal sugar mill belonging to Don Julio Mora, who will explain, step-by-step, the process of extracting sugarcane juice to produce dulce de tapa (compacted sugar cones).



Chira Ladies Ecotourism Association





5.1.5. Chira Ladies Ecotourism Association

Built-up Tourist Destination: Chira Island

Implementing Organization: Chira Ladies Ecotourism Association
Address: Isla de Chira, Puntarenas
Contact: + 506-8714 0060, 2661 3261 • Lilliana Martínez
E-mail: laamistadischira@gmail.com
Web: www.laamistad.inchira.com



LA AMISTAD RURAL INN

This is the largest island in the Gulf of Nicoya, with an area of 43 km², and the most populated island in Costa Rica. It is comprised of five small communities. The locals work in artisanal fishing, piangua (mussel) cultivation,⁴² handicrafts, and RCT. It has a responsible fishing marine area that is home to hundreds of fish, birds, and other animals, giving Chira Island magnificent natural wealth.

At the beginning, the main concern for this group of women was to identify an economic activity that would allow them to increase their income without having a negative impact on the environment. The first government institutions to support this group of women were the National University (UNA), the gender office of the Ministry of the Environment and Energy (MINAE), and the National Women’s Institute (INAMU), which provided training in leadership and self-esteem. They also opened up spaces to analyse the population’s situation of poverty in order to propose potential projects for the women.

In 2000, the Chira women implemented their first project with the SGP together with other groups of women. In 2001, they established themselves as the Damas de Chira Ecotourism Association and participated in the Ford Foundation competition. They were chosen as one of the money prize winners and used the funds to purchase a plot of land where they set up all the local development and tourism operations in place to date.

The La Amistad RCT inn was built with the financial support of GEF SGP and the FUNDECOOPEREACIÓN-MINAE Project. In addition, the SGP contributed to building the group’s capacities for providing tourism services, creating advertising material, promoting the initiative, and improving the way solid waste is handled. In addition, with the support of other state institutions, the group of women built a panga (small boat) with room for 15 people. They purchased a 100-horsepower motor to provide a transportation option for tourists. The SGP invested an estimated \$82,000 in this women’s group through the implementation of different initiatives over a period of fifteen years (2000 to 2015).

The process for change, driven by this organization on Chira Island, and by the women in the association has had different types of impact on the residents’ social and cultural patterns. Practices for the conservation, use, and handling of natural resources have improved. Finally, there has been a ripple effect that has encouraged the development of new ventures.

42. Piangua is a mussel harvested in the mangroves - in Nicaragua they are called “concha negra”, in Panama, “chucheca” and in El Salvador “curil.”

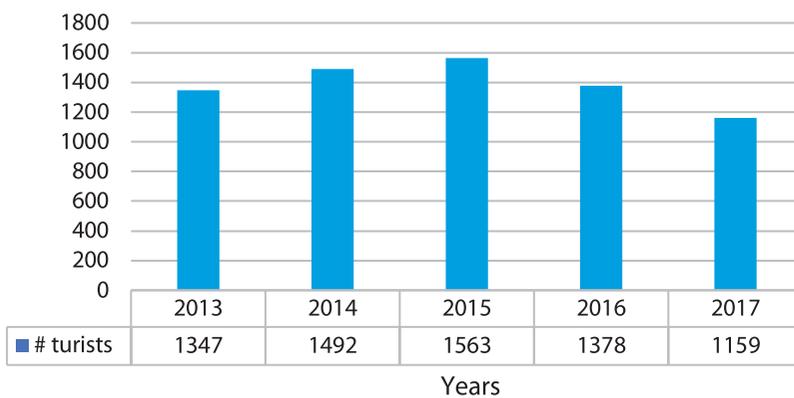
BIENVENIDOS A ISLA CHIRA
PRACTIQUEMOS LAS 4R DE LA BASURA

Eighteen years later, this group of women continues to work without giving up their roles of mothers and spouses. They have opened the door to new opportunities for other women and men on the island. These women, who organized themselves into groups, broke with the patriarchal pattern that predominated on the island. Many of them began to venture into jobs that were traditionally done by men (building fiberglass boats and boat piloting); at first this was not well accepted by their neighbours, friends of the community, and families.

Lilliana Martínez, the current administrator of the venture, commented:

“They received no support from their families or husbands who accused them of abandoning their children and their responsibilities at home. Today the situation is different: The spouses, sons, and daughters participate in the venture and take on different roles. They are being prepared to be the new generation.”

Graph 8
Number of Tourists from 2013 to 2017



As for the men on the island, who are mostly fishers (hook-and-line), the SGP has established relations with them at the request of the group of women. The inn is where the meetings were held that gave rise to the first responsible fishing area financed by the Programme.⁴³ Following the example of this group, other women on the island took the initiative to generate other livelihood options, organizing groups such as the Asociación de Mujeres Sembradoras de Pianguas (Association of Women Mussel Planters), the Asociación de Damas Artesanas (Association of Lady Artisans), and the Asociación de Damas Trabajando por el Ambiente (Association of Ladies Working for the Environment), which received financial support from the SGP. Today, they are part of the tourism offer promoted and commercialized by the Isla de Chira Ladies Ecotourism Association.

Thus, this organization has become a model for local organization. Over time, and with a great deal of effort, they have been able to strengthen their service offer as well as other undertakings as part of the same offer. That means that today, the tourist destination is seen as “the whole island” rather than as separate ventures. In addition, this group of women is still leading and supporting local development.

43. COS/SGP/OP4/RAF707/10 for US \$15,000 and COS/03/40 for US \$22,000.



Lilliana Martínez commented:

“What we learned in the management of tourism we applied to growing the community and the school. For example, I have been the president of the Palito school for twelve years. The group’s inn and restaurant operate as campgrounds for disaster victims, for example, with Hurricane Nate. It is the meeting point for the police force, the OIJ (judicial investigation agency), and even the Navy for renewing boat permits. Plus, the La Amistad boat is used to provide an emergency sea boat. RCT has been the basis for developing the town and has generated a common identity. People feel proud to say, ‘I am from CHIRA.”

The initiative generated eight jobs: two captains for piloting and maintaining the launches (hired when there are tours), and two people for customer service, reservations, food management and inn cleaning. There is one person for maintaining the structure and there are two kitchen assistants and a driver for the tourism microbus.⁴⁴

Their commercialization strategy uses social media, a website, direct phone contact with customers, and word-of-mouth recommendations by customers who have already visited the island. They also have a direct business relationship with 15 tour operators, who provide all the visitors who come to the island. They were part of ACTUAR as founding members and occupied different roles on the Network’s Board of Directors.

Lessons Learned:

1. Promotion and marketing are done in two ways: by the venture and with other tour operators.
2. Working together as micro-entrepreneurs gave us more identity as an island.

Challenges:

1. Strengthening the residents’ capacities, knowledge, and skills, and generational turn-over for the venture.
2. Innovating the tours to offer a variety of attractions.

BUSINESS NAME: Chira Ladies Ecotourism Association (Damas Chira Ecotourism Association)

Fantasy Name: La Amistad

Accommodation Capacity: 26 people

Food Service Capacity: 30 people

Meeting Rooms: for 10 people

Rural Inn: La Amistad⁴⁵

44. There is no transportation service on the island. In 2018, the INAMU donated a motor and some money to purchase a microbus to transport tourists.

45. The organization does not benefit from the Law to Promote RCT because the island is state heritage (property of the state) and ICT’s requirements for being a rural inn include a property title for the land. La Amistad has only the right of possession.

BIENVENIDOS A ISLA CHIRA
PRACTIQUEMOS LAS 4R DE LA BASURA

Tours:

- **Visit to the Bird Sanctuary on Paloma Island!** Sanctuary for water birds: a large number of egrets and heron's nest from May to September, such as the tula, cattle egret, tricolored heron, great egret, and white Ibis.
- **Tour of the Mangroves on Chira Island!** Observe the impressive mangrove forest that is home to five of the seven mangrove species; the tour takes you through the responsible fishing marine area.
- **Piangua Mussel Tour!** The tour visits the oldest church and the first school on Chira before going on through the mangroves in a launch until the mangrove parcel is reached. You will learn how mussels are grown and harvested, and you can try on the mussel harvesting gear and play in the mangroves!
- **Artisanal Fishing Tour!** The tour goes to the Chira Island Protected Area, where you can fish with a line and interact with the community's fisherfolk.
- **Take Handicraft Classes with the Chira Women Artisans and Buy Costume Jewellery!** Jewellery prepared from the fruits of the forest and the sea.
- **Complementary Tours!** Hiking on trails, bicycle rentals to explore the island, visit to the birdwatching platform, tours of the islands and mangroves in the Gulf of Nicoya, birdwatching, tour to El Muerto Beach, starry nights, etc.





**Kekoldi Wak Ka Köneke
Association**



5.1.6. Kekoldi Wak Ka Köneke Association

Kekoldi Wak Ka Koneke: an Indigenous Organization Conducting Scientific RCT

Implementing Organization: Kekoldi Wak Ka Köneke Association
Address: Hone Creek, Puerto Viejo, Limón
Contact: Sebastián Hernández Balma
E-mail: shb.kekoldi@gmail.com

The Keköldi Indigenous Territory is part of the Bribri Indigenous people. Created in 1977, it has some 210 inhabitants. It is located in the canton of Talamanca in the province of Limón and is part of the Talamanca Caribbean Biological Corridor. The Corridor encompasses some 36,000 land hectares and 5,400 sea hectares. The Indigenous reserve has a large primary and secondary forest area, in addition to cacao, palmito, and palm farms. The Keköldi Wak Ka Koneke Indigenous Association (Association of Indigenous Caretakers of the Keköldi Lands) was established in 1994 to protect the forest, help improve the quality of life of the reserve's inhabitants, defend the land, and promote sustainable development.

Costa Rica is one of the world's four sites for watching the migration of millions of birds of prey, along with Eilat in Israel, Veracruz in Mexico, and Batum in Georgia. In the autumn, these birds migrate along the Caribbean lowlands with the Talamanca Mountain Range on one side and the Caribbean coast on the other. The lowland region resembles a funnel three miles wide between the mountains and the ocean, crossing through the Keköldi Indigenous Reserve. A lookout tower⁴⁶ for falcons is in the heart of the reserve at the top of a hill that provides a 360-degree view of the surrounding forest, Caribbean Sea and Panama.



46. Built in 2002 with the financial support of Hawks Mountain.



According to Sebastián Hernández, the director of the Kekoldi Scientific Centre:

“The migration of birds of prey is part of our mythology. The raptors that migrate are dancing gods, they are the bearers of the seeds of forest trees, and the life of the reserve. We Indigenous people sing to the coming of the birds of prey and we celebrate their arrival. They are the spirits of other peoples who migrate to cultivate.” (January 2009).

In 2001, the SGP technically and financially supported the organization with an initiative of almost \$20,000. The purpose was to build the partners’ RCT capacities and endow the infrastructure (construction of a wooden lodge with shared bathrooms) and equipment.

The idea at that time, according to Sebastián Hernández:

“It was to become a tour operator and fill Kekoldi with visitors 365 days of the year, so they can appreciate our culture and way of life. Nevertheless, the reality was not what we thought. Building the lodge took a little more time than we thought due to the heavy rains. Access to the Reserve became more difficult.”

In 2003, the lodge was inaugurated. The lodge also operates as an office, library, and centre for training and meetings. Tourists began to arrive in different ways: through tour operators, because of the recommendations of hotel owners in Puerto Viejo and Cahuita, and also by word-of-mouth from visitors who had gone through the Reserve.

Sebastián commented:

“We sold iguana tours, cacao tours, hiking tours to reach the centre of our community and tours to the lookout to watch birds of prey. We realized that tourists were not coming as frequently as we had imagined. We learned that we had to do our own promoting and marketing and that we could not depend on intermediaries. That is why we decided to create the website to capture our customers. It worked well for a time.”

Over time, Kekoldi built up its own portfolio of customers who were fascinated by Indigenous culture and the town’s mythology.

Even so, Sebastián commented:

“The tourists that we received did not want to get very muddy and the need arose to improve the lodging and food services. As an organization, we could not respond at the same pace. So, we decided that we had to shift, adjust our offering, and concentrate on a different target market that was more scientific. We began with the birds of prey and the peregrine falcon. The lodge was turning into a scientific centre, a centre for welcoming domestic and international students who came to do their theses, internships, volunteer work, etc. That is how Kekoldi today houses scientific information on migratory and resident birds and the diversity of plants, amphibians, reptiles, culture, and anthropology. It is kept open to anybody who would like to work in science for conservation and community development.” (Interview, January 2019).

The subject of reptiles led the organization to explore a serpent species found in the Caribbean region. It lives in the rain forests on the Caribbean and Northern slopes from sea level to 1,100 metres in elevation. Its scientific name is *Lachesis stenophrys*, family Viperidae and it is commonly known as matabuey (ox killer), cascabel muda (mute rattlesnake), or bocaracá de Javillo. This reptile is an indicator of the forest’s health or ecological balance and it has been seen frequently on the reserve. It has nocturnal habits and is normally found in burrows dug by armadillos and other mammals. Night-time tours have been promoted for locating this species of reptiles and photographing the fauna on the reserve, this laid the ground for more scientific research on this species of reptile.



Sebastián stated:

“In addition to being innovative, the night-time photography tour for reptiles and amphibian has been a success. It doesn’t only allow us to welcome scientific and specialized tourists; we are also covering a specific target market that gives us the possibility of broadening our horizons even more.” (Sebastián Hernández, January 2019).

Between twelve and thirteen individual specimens have been reported on the Kekoldi Reserve. The research is carried out “on site.” This is an innovative element, since all the studies that have been conducted at the country level have been outside its habitat. This method has motivated the Clodomiro Picado Institute to take an interest in the research done by the organization. It has asked to form a strategic alliance with the organization to carry out scientific studies.

BUSINESS NAME: Keköldi Wak Ka Koneke Indigenous Association

Fantasy Name: Kekoldi Scientific Centre

Emblem of the Venture: Matabuey serpent

Accommodation Capacity: 24 people with a shared bathroom

Food Service Capacity: 30 people

Meeting Rooms: for 20 people

Tours:

- **Spotting and Counting Birds of Prey!** The necessary equipment is provided in the observation towers.
- **Nocturnal Photography Tour of Amphibians and!** Prepare to venture into the forest.
- **Tour to the Kekoldi Trails and Waterfalls!** Tour the primary forest on the way to beautiful waterfalls.
- **Tour of the Bribri Culture and How the Locals Live in the Keköldi Indigenous Territory!**
- **Complementary Tours!** Hiking on trails, food sales, tours of cacao farms, birdwatching.



VI.

VI. CONCLUSIONS, GAPS, LESSONS LEARNED, CHALLENGES, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. General Conclusions

6.1.1. The SGP Contribution to RCT Development:

- a. The GEF SGP has made a substantial contribution to building and consolidating the Costa Rican rural community tourism model.
- b. The RCT model for Costa Rica has become a model to be replicated internationally.
- c. The Small Grants Programme's decision to provide technical and financial support to community organizations for RCT has been successful in that RCT has become a tool for natural resource conservation and improvement of living conditions.
- d. Other development agencies and Costa Rican state institutions also committed assertively to placing resources (in kind and in cash) in the hands of non-governmental organizations, cooperatives, foundations, and community-based organizations working in RCT.
- e. The 97 organizations are close to buffer zones for protected wildlife areas (PWAs) within the biological corridors and/or in the Indigenous territories. They have become conservation allies.
- f. The 97 organizations received technical and financial support from the SGP. They engage in environmental protection actions and also directly participated in forming the COVIRENAS groups and Forestry Brigades. In addition, they carried out actions to raise the awareness of the population in the three geographical action areas on issues such as poaching, illegal logging, environmental legislation, waste management, reforestation, biological corridors, and other environmental-social issues.
- g. More than half the organizations supported by the GEF SGP in the RCT thematic area continue to be actively providing RCT services. Most of them do their commercialization, promotion, and marketing individually, so they are not exclusively dependent on tour operators who perform that function.
- h. Of the organizations financed by the SGP, only a few were able to choose the benefits of the Rural Inn Declaration. This is due to difficulties with property titles and/or to being located in coastal maritime zones. Or it may be because many of the ventures do not believe that having an ICT tourism certification is important or advantageous. This trend is repeated throughout the country and only one-third of the companies that provide tourism services have this certification.
- i. As a strategy for implementing and developing the sector, the ACTUAR Network was a viable and functional mechanism.
- j. The establishment of a tour operator specializing in RCT was a success for the ACTUAR Network as a mechanism for the promotion, marketing and sale of the tourism services provided by the GEF SGP-supported organizations.

6.1.2. Conclusions Regarding the Contribution of the Alliance for RCT of which the SGP was a Part:

- a. By measuring the support of state institutions and, especially that of donors and development agencies through the financing of RCT initiatives, we can now appreciate a "country product" that has permeated and given value to previously intangible "cultural aspects", in spite of the strengths and weaknesses that are still present. (Leyla Solano, 2019)
- b. Rural community tourism is emerging in Costa Rica as a new market segment promising to innovate a tourism offering based solely on beach, sun, ecotourism, and nature.
- c. Rural community tourism has positioned "being rural" as a value, making possible a better grasp of the components of the Costa Rican idiosyncrasy.

- d. The SGP's contribution to public policy lobbying, through the Alliance for RCT, for legislating the regulatory framework for rural community tourism activities has been substantial. In its content, the law acknowledges the role of tourism in conserving and diversifying the tourism offer through new forms of producing and consuming tourism products in rural community destinations that are directly managed by local organizations. It also acknowledges that land use intended for agricultural production has added value when it has specific tourism spaces and structures designed for visitors to enjoy.
- e. El RCT as part of the tourism industry is the only activity that is backed by a public policy aimed at incentivizing its development.

6.2. General Gaps in the Rural Community Tourism Sector:

- a. The absence of networks (COOPRENA and ACTUAR) and their tour operators requires immediate actions by micro-entrepreneurs on different issues.
- b. RCT initiatives that are located on coastal sites and in MINAE/SINAC and INDER reserves and were transferred under the right of possession, as well as organizations in Indigenous territories, continue to fall outside the law. They do not have a trade representative that can continue the lobbying for public policies that favour or clear the way for their formalization.

6.3. General Challenges and Recommendations - RCT Segment:

- a. The RCT micro-ventures should take on a dominant role in guiding the RCT sector without generating any dependence on individuals or autocratic strongmen.
- b. They should unionize again: They may find it feasible to join the new "Rural Experiences Costa Rica" Chamber of Tourism comprised by companies that engage in rural and community tourism. Also, essential issues for continuing operations should be put back on the agenda: the tourism declaration and reform of the RCT law requiring land ownership.
- c. Local, state and government institutions should include actions for encouraging RCT ventures in their operating and financial plans.
- d. They should analyse the new options for personalized commercialization (small one-person companies) that are operating locally and nationally.

6.4. Lessons Learned:

6.4.1. Lessons Learned on the Subject of the Alliance for RCT:

- a. The alliance of three second-tier organizations with common goals and objectives to develop the RCT sector was a success.
- b. The use of different lobbying strategies by the Alliance for RCT to achieve public policy that would benefit and grow the sector was also successful.
- c. The creation of two tour operators belonging to two networks (the COOPRENA Consortium and ACTUAR) specializing in promoting, marketing, and commercializing, constituted a way of doing business that would bolster the sustainability

- of its actions.
- d. Development agencies are essential allies for boosting these social and environmental movements entailing the protection and conservation of natural resources and the enhancement of people's quality of life.
 - e. Legislators, employees, and leaders play an essential role in driving and achieving public policies that favour the RCT sector.
 - f. The coordination platforms live out their useful lives and fulfil their mandated purpose. In any event, their formalization does not mean they will last over time.

6.4.2. Lessons Learned by the ACTUAR Network:

- a. The Network and its Board of Directors should encourage organizational and management mechanisms to help keep track of the Tour Operator and Network's business activity. This business warrants trustworthy, simple and transparent information that complies with accounting and legal standards.
- b. The venture should foster an administrative, commercial and operational structure for making sure requests by tour operators are efficiently and effectively met on time and with the necessary information.
- c. Micro-enterprises, simultaneously with tour operators, should take on commercialization, marketing and promotion. A clear policy should be established for defining the NETWORK's business relationships with the associates. Undoubtedly, the establishment of direct business relationships between the ventures, tour operators and wholesalers are a sign of success, but it also meant the loss of a sale for the Natural Ventures Tour Operator, as well as a problem for guaranteeing the reservations in those ventures.
- d. Innovation in the service offer of RCT ventures requires continuity, time, dedication, and effort. This means rethinking, looking at the setting differently, and seeking opportunities and alliances with nearby micro-enterprises. In addition, there needs to be an awareness of the other realities being offered by the tourism industry.
- e. The written press and televised media are major potential stakeholders for forming strategic alliances for RCT promotion. Making them part of the collective effort generates identity and allies for sector development.

6.5. Recommendations:

6.5.1. Recommendations for the Small Grants Programme:

- a. Evaluate the financed initiatives that were unable to stay active over time to garner lessons learned.
- b. Evaluate the ACTUAR Network.
- c. Perform a study to evaluate the improvement of living conditions for the supported organizations, especially the organizations that received more than one investment.

6.5.2. Recommendations for Organizations Wishing to Implement an RCT Network and Tour Operator:

- a. Define an organizational and legal structure that enables and provides an incentive for appropriation by the partners as owners of the created enterprises, in this case the tour operator. In order to add value and appropriate business models, the legal structure of the country in which the profit-sharing takes place should be taken into consideration.
- b. From the outset, define the sales policy in the business relationship with the tour operator and the ventures.
- c. Establish a business code of ethics for its associates, regulate it, and enable actions for complying with it.
- d. Create an organizational, administrative, and legal structure that satisfies the interests and motives for each of the network's action axes/areas/programs.
- e. Contract financial audits for the programmes/components and business structure departments.
- f. Administer the network's business activities with an entrepreneurial vision.
- g. Within the partners, train new generations to assume executive direction and the other technical positions (as in the Vanilla Producers Association (ASOPROVA), which went from being an association prohibited from making a profit, under Law 218, to a cooperative organization (COOPECAMPESINOS) that allows profit-sharing.
- h. Provide continuity to strategies that worked and made the tour operator successful (communications strategy, media relations, strategic alliances with tour operators, business fairs, product innovation, etc.).
- i. Train and strengthen the network members' capacities for ventures, tourism, and accounting and management issues that make it possible to understand and follow up on the actions that are taken.
- j. Develop clear profiles for hiring staff in the different tour operator positions. In addition, do a timely annual employee performance evaluation. Also, establish policies and procedures and reporting that can uncompromisingly show how the business is faring.







VII. APPENDICES

Appendix 1

**Table: SGP Investment in the RCT Partner Group
Strengthening Programme from 2000 to 2004**

| Initiative Number | Objective | Amount in US \$ |
|---|---|-----------------|
| COS/01/03; COS/02/07; COS/02/11; COS/02/49; COS/04/46; COS/OP3/2/07/28; COS/SGP/OP4/CORE/07/08 | Strengthen partner groups in the RCT thematic area. The Small Grants Programme's "Programme to Strengthen Partner Groups" | 315,515.00 |

Appendix 2

**Table. Embassy of the United Kingdom: Support for Rural Community
Tourism Initiatives from 2000 to 2003**

| Project Number | Organization Name | Project Title | Approved Amount in US \$ |
|----------------|---|---|--------------------------|
| COS/00/012-01 | Chira Island Women's Association | Sustainable Use of Coastal Marine Resources, Chira Island, Puntarenas | 20,000.00 |
| COS/00/012-02 | Costa de Pájaros Women's Group | Sustainable Use of Coastal Marine Resources, Costa De Pájaros, Puntarenas | 20,000.00 |
| COS/00/012-09 | Manzanillo Association of Indigenous Naturalist Guides | Social Ecotourism Linked to Protecting Marine-Coastal Biodiversity in Mixed-Type Conservation Areas | 19,995.00 |
| COS/00/012-11 | Yorkin Indigenous Women's Group | Indigenous Women and Biodiversity Conservation | 19,900.00 |
| COS/00/012-12 | Keköldi Wak Ka Koneke Indigenous Association | Caretakers of the Kekoldi: Territory and Protection of the Biodiversity in the Community's Forests | 19,995.00 |
| COS/00/012-13 | Carbon 2 Agro-forest Conservation and Development Association | Mini Forest Corridors as an Alternative for Community Development. | 19,800.00 |
| | | | US \$169,900.00 |

Appendix 3 SGP, One-Time Financed Initiatives, 1992-2015

| PROJ. # | ORGANIZ. | PROJECT TITLE | # HA CONS. | APPROVED US \$ | CO-FINANCING | | |
|---------|--|--|------------|----------------|--------------|------------|--------|
| | | | | | IN KIND | CASH | |
| 1 | ABIPA, Asociación Bijagüña de Productores Agrícolas (Bijaguan Association of Agricultural Producers) | Strengthening of the Tourism Project, Environmental Education and Protection of ABIPA | 122 | 20,000.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | OP-II |
| 2 | ACECOD, Foundation | Integrated Rural Tourism to Improve the Living and Working Conditions and Quality in the Palma and Guaymi Community on the Osa Peninsula | | 17,935.00 | 505,800.00 | 236,000.00 | PILOT |
| 3 | ACEPESA, Asociación Centroamericana para la Economía, la Salud y el Ambiente (The Central American Association for the Economy, Health, and the Environment) | Strengthening of SGP Partner Groups | | 50,000.00 | 25,100.00 | 6,000.00 | OP-III |
| 4 | ACODEFO, Asociación de Conservación y Desarrollo Forestal de Talamanca (Talamanca Forest Conservation and Development Association) | Local Management and Eco-Tourism Strengthening | 400 | 19,552.00 | 0.00 | 10,000.00 | OP-II |
| 5 | ACOMUJTA, Asociación Comisión de Mujeres Indígenas de Talamanca (Talamanca Indigenous Women's Commission Association) | Commercialization and Refurbishment for Organic Chocolate Manufacture in the Bribri Indigenous Community | 25 | 22,150.00 | 31,350.00 | 600.00 | OP-III |
| 6 | ADI PARISMINA, Asociación de Desarrollo Integral de Barra Parismina (Barra Parismina Integral Development Association) | Strengthening of Communal Environmental Management to Ensure the Sustainability of the Community and Tourism in Barra de Parismina | 0 | 20,032.00 | 0.00 | 2,156.85 | OP-III |
| 7 | ADI RIVAS, Asociación de Desarrollo Integral de Herradura de Rivas (Herradura de Rivas Integral Development Association) | Strengthening of Tourism Activity in the Community of Herradura by Promoting and Improving the Urán Chirripó Route | 41,150 | 20,000.00 | 2,864.00 | 534.00 | OP-III |
| 8 | ADJTIBRI, Asociación de Desarrollo Integral de Bribri (Bribri Integral Development Association) | Management of Endangered Species and Cultural Ecotourism in the Bribri Indigenous Territory | 45,627 | 30,000.00 | 2,200.00 | 0.00 | OP-II |

| | | | | | | | | |
|----|-------------------------------------|--|---|-------|-----------------|----------|-----------|--------|
| 9 | COS/SGP/FSP/ OP5/Y2/BD/13/ 92 | AECOTUCU, Asociación de Ecoturismo de Cureña (Cureña Ecotourism Association) | Development of a Rural Community Tourism Initiative in the Community of Cureña, Sarapiquí, Heredia | | 30,000.00 | 0.00 | 18,181.00 | OP-V |
| 10 | COS/OP3/2/06/ 17 | AFAES, Asociación Femenina Artesanal Ecológica de San Marcos de Cutris (San Marcos de Cutris Women's Ecological Artisanal Association) | Sustainable Environmental Ecotourism Services in the Community of San Marcos de Cutris | | 16,218.00 | 0.00 | 2,000.00 | OP-III |
| 11 | COS/05/15 | Asociación de Mujeres Ambientalistas, Agropecuarias (AMARPA) (Association of Women Environmentalists and Agribusinesswomen) | Development of Agro- Ecotourism Practices in the Las Pavas Reserve, Nuevo Arenal Settlement, Tilarán, Guanacaste | 9,896 | 17,227.00 | 0.00 | 9,896.00 | OP-III |
| 12 | COS/03/06 | AMEPSA, Asociación de Mujeres Ecologistas de la Península de Santa María (Santa María Peninsula Association of Ecologist Women) | Local Ecotourism in Nuevo Arenal (with expansion) | 0.5 | 30,937.00 | 0.00 | 19,200.00 | OP-II |
| 13 | COS/SGP/OP4/ RAF/07/11 | APIAPU, Asociación Mixta de Piangueros de Purruja (Mixed Association of Purruja Mussel Harvesters) | Sustainable Use of Marine Biodiversity | 70 | 20,000.00 | 0.00 | 60,000.00 | OP-IV |
| 14 | COS/SGP/FSP/ OP5/BD/12/06 | AQUA, Asociación Quebradeña de Artisanos (Quebrada Artisans Association) | Promotion of Rural Tourism for Environmental Development in Quebradas de Pérez Zeledón | | 19,203.00 | 0.00 | 4,718.00 | OP-V |
| 15 | COS/00/012-13 | ASACODE, Asociación San Migueleña de Conservación (San Miguel Conservation Association) | Native Talamancan Forests Safeguarded by a Rural Community and Community Ecotourism | | \$ 20,000.00 | | | OP-II |
| 16 | COS/OP3/2/07/3 4 | ASCOMAFOR, Asociación para la Conservación y Manejo de Áreas Forestales de San Carlos (San Carlos Association for the Conservation and Management of Forest Areas) | Management of Community Forests for Organizational Strengthening, Conservation, and Sustainable Use, and Implementation of a Volunteer Program for Environmentally Aware Tourists | 270 | 24,000.00 | 3,000.00 | 5,516.00 | OP-III |
| 17 | COS/95/G52-15 and 15 A | ASODESGUAY, Asociación para el Desarrollo Sostenible Guaymi Osa (Guaymi, Osa, Association for Sustainable Development) | Community Ecotourism Project Based on Community Organization in the Guaymi de Osa Indigenous Reserve | 2,800 | 21,000.00 | 0.00 | 18,000.00 | OP-I |

| | | | | | | | | |
|----|-----------------------------|---|--|--------|-----------|------------|-----------|--------|
| 18 | COS/01/17 | ASOPARQUE | Support for Shared MINAE/Community Management of the Ballena National Marine Park | 110 | 20,000.00 | 18,992.00 | 7,003.00 | OP-II |
| 19 | COS/SGP/FSP/OP5/Y2/CC/12/51 | TRES COLINAS, Asociación de Turismo Tres Colinas de Potrero Grande (ASOTUR) (Tres Colinas de Potrero Grande Tourism Association) | Strengthening of Biological Conservation and Food Security in the Quezjal de Tres Colinas Biological Corridor | 2,000 | 20,000.00 | 0.00 | 20,000.00 | OP-V |
| 20 | COS/SGP/FSP/OP5/Y2/BD/12/62 | AVANCEMOS, Asociación Avanceмос (AVANCEMOS Association) | Development of Social-Productive Initiatives in the Golfo Dulce Forest Reserve | 1 | 23,419.50 | 22,181.15 | 0.00 | OP-V |
| 21 | COS/04/30 | BARRA HONDA, Asociación de Guías Ecologistas del Parque Nacional Barra Honda (Barra Honda National Park Ecological Guide Association) | Strengthening of Community Ecotourism Processes for the Barra Honda National Park Ecological Guide Association | 1 | 20,000.00 | 1,000.00 | 12,000.00 | OP-II |
| 22 | COS/03/33 | BIOGUANACASTE, Asociación Bioguanacaste (Bio-Guanacaste Association) | Catalysing Changes in North-western Costa Rica: Protecting the Guanacaste Conservation Area's Marine Sector by Establishing a Pilot Mariculture Project and Providing Training in Scuba for Education, Tourism, and Research | 43,000 | 20,000.00 | 126,262.00 | 7,500.00 | OP-II |
| 23 | COS/01/04 | CABO BLANCO, Asociación Cabo Blanco (Cabo Blanco Association) | Protecting and Conserving Natural Resources in the Cabo Blanco Reserve | 3,059 | 24,000.00 | 0.00 | 4,273.00 | OP-II |
| 24 | COS/SGP/FSP/OP5/BD/12/35 | CANTURURAL, Cámara Nacional de Turismo Rural Comunitario (National Chamber of Rural Community Tourism) | Institutional Strengthening, Promotion, and Policy Advocacy of the National Chamber of Rural Community Tourism | | 50,000.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | OP-V |
| 25 | COS/OP3/2/06/15 | CAÑO NEGRO, Asociación de Mujeres Productoras Orgánicas de Nueva Esperanza de Caño Negro Los Chiles (Nueva Esperanza de Caño Negro Los Chiles Organic Women Producer's Association) | Agricultural and Organic Livestock Production Capacity-Building with an Ecotourism Focus in the Nueva Esperanza Settlement | 3.5 | 20,000.00 | 30,000.00 | 20,020.00 | OP-III |
| 26 | COS/SGP/OP4/Y3/RAF/09/11 | CATEMI, Cámara de Turismo Tenorio-Miravalles (Tenorio-Miravalles Tourism Chamber) | Strengthening of the Tenorio-Miravalles Tourism Chamber (CATEMI) for Developing Rural Community Tourism | 12,501 | 20,115.00 | 0.00 | 17,750.00 | OP-IV |

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|----|-------------------------------------|---|---|--------|-----------|----------|------------|--------|
| 27 | COS/OP3/2/06/ 23 | Asociación de Productores de Cedral de Cajón (Cedral de Cajón Producers Association) | Cedral Ecotourism Development, an Alternative for Improving the Quality of Life for its Residents to the Benefit of Existing Natural and Cultural Resource Conservation | 10 | 20,000.00 | 0.00 | 20,526.00 | OP-III |
| 28 | COS/01/13 | CODECE | Community Self-Management of the Escazú Hills Region | 7,060 | 30,752.98 | 7,380.50 | 6,183.00 | OP-II |
| 29 | COS/98/G52- 012 | CONTE BURICA, Asociación de Desarrollo Integral de Conte Burica, ADI Conte Burica (Conte Burica Integral Development Association) | Mery Sribire / Swiss Embassy. Purchase, Distribution and Facilitation of Cloth and Trimmings to Indigenous Women for Preparing Clothing and Traditional Handicrafts | 11,910 | 10,000.00 | 0.00 | 10,000.00 | OP-II |
| 30 | COS/04/31 | COPEMANGLE, Coopemangle R.L. | Development of an Innovative Ecotourism Service for the Manglars of Terraba-Sierpe to Support its Conservation by Coopemangle | 32,325 | 20,000.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | OP-II |
| 31 | COS/SGP/FSP/ OP5/Y3/BD/13/ 99 | Cooperativa de Servicios Múltiples de Emprendedores en Turismo Rural de Corcovado (COOPETURIC R.L.) (Corcovado Rural Tourism Multiple Entrepreneurial Services Cooperative) | Strengthening of the Corcovado Rural Tourism Multiple Entrepreneurial Services Cooperative (COOPETURIC R.L.) to Conserve the Forests on the Osa Peninsula | 913 | 49,701.70 | 0.00 | 424,550.83 | OP-V |
| 32 | COS/04/21 | ECOBAMBU, Asociación Artesanos Eco-Bambú (Eco-bamboo Artisans' Association) | Wastepaper Recycling Workshop, Design and Preparation of Artisanal Items with Recycled Paper Pulp | 0.5 | 20,000.00 | 0.00 | 13,615.00 | OP-II |
| 33 | COS/04/10 | ECOINDEX, Asociación Alianza del Bosque Lluvioso (Rainforest Alliance Association) | Eco-Index for Groups with a Grant from SGP, with a New Section on Tourism Projects | 0 | 14,944.00 | 0.00 | 25,900.00 | OP-II |
| 34 | COS/SGP/OP4/ Y2/CORE/08/03 | ECOSUR, Asociación de Productores del Sur de Turubares (Sur de Turubares Producers Association) | Strengthening of an ECOSUR RCT Initiative | 0 | 20,000.00 | 0.00 | 7,000.00 | OP-IV |
| 35 | COS/SGP/OP4/ Y2/CORE/09/11 | FINCA EDUCATIVA, Asociación Centro de Capacitación y Desarrollo de Talamanca Finca Educativa (Educational Farm Talamanca Training and Development Centre Association) | Traditional Module for Tourism Services at the Shiroles Educational Farm | 0 | 20,000.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | OP-IV |

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|----|--------------------------|---|---|-------|--------------|-----------|-----------|------|------|--------|
| 36 | COS/01/08 | FUDEBIOL, Fundación para el Desarrollo del Centro Biológico Las Quebradas (Quebradas Biological Centre Development Foundation) | Greater Environmental Management Capacity for Quebradas River Basin Communities through Education and Environmental Training to Strengthen Ecological Tourism, Productive Activities, and Handicrafts | 10 | 19,896.00 | 3,500.00 | 3,500.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | OP-II |
| 37 | COS/95/G52-43 | FUNDACION NEOTROPICA (Neotropic Foundation) | Nature Guide Program | 0 | 11,300.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | OP-I |
| 38 | COS/04/44 | Fundación para el Desarrollo de la Reserva Biológica Lomas Barbudal (FUNDELOBA) (Lomas Barbudal Biological Reserve Development Foundation) | Conservation and Protection of the Lomas Barbudal Biological Reserve | 2,279 | 20,000.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | OP-II |
| 39 | COS/95/G52-09 | GANDOCA, Fondo Comunal de Crédito Gandoca (Gandoca Community Credit Fund) | Community Ecotourism for the Conservation of Sea Turtles and Gandoca Coastal Resources | 3383 | 14,800.00 | 2,000.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | OP-I |
| 40 | COS/03/39 | GRUPO ECOLOGICO PEJIBALLE, Asociación Grupo Ecológico de Pejiballe (Pejiballe Ecological Group Association) | Pejibaye Ecological Centre, to be Used for Biodiversity Protection and Conservation by Raising the Awareness of People in the Communities Neighbouring the La Marta Wildlife Refuge and El Copal Biological Reserve | 1518 | 20,000.00 | 0.00 | 16,637.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | OP-II |
| 41 | COS/SGP/OP4/RAF/07/03 | GUIAS GUAYABO, Asociación de Guías U-SERE de Guayabo (Guayabo U-SERE Guide Association) | Strengthening of the Guayabo U-SERE Guide Association as an Organization with Environmental Commitment and Capacity to Consolidate as an Engine for Local Employment | 0 | 18,425.06 | 4,130.00 | 7,760.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | OP-IV |
| 42 | COS/00/012-09 | GUIAS MANZANILLO, Asociación de Guías Naturalistas autóctonos de Manzaniillo-GUIASMANT (Manzanillo Association of Indigenous Naturalist Guides) | Social Ecotourism Linked to Protection of Marine-Coastal Biodiversity in Mixed-Type Conservation Areas | 0 | \$ 19,995.00 | | | | | OP-II |
| 43 | COS/SGP/OP4/Y2/RAF/08/01 | JAMEIKARI, Asociación de Turismo Cultural Indígena Cabécar de Jameikari (Jameikari Cabécar Indigenous Cultural Tourism Association) | Jameikari Indigenous Ethno-Cultural Tourism | 500 | 20,000.00 | 45,000.00 | 10,000.00 | | | OP-IV |
| 44 | COS/0P3/2/07/30 | JAZON, Jóvenes agricultores de la Zona Norte (Northern Zone Young Farmers) | Revival and Sustainable Use of the Frio River Basin, Northern Zone | 300 | 20,000.00 | 10,193.60 | 16,000.00 | | | OP-III |

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|----|-----------------------------|---|---|-------|--------------|-----------|-----------|--|--------|
| 45 | COS/00/012-12 | KEKÖLDI, Asociación Indígena Keköldi Wak Ka Kóneke (Keköldi Wak Ka Koneke Indigenous Association) | Caretakers of the Keköldi Territory and Protection of Biodiversity in the Community's Forests | 0 | \$ 19,995.00 | | | | OP-II |
| 46 | COS/0P3/2/07/36 | LAGO JALAPA, Asociación Agro Ecolurística Lago Jalapa Puerto Viejo Sarapiquí (Lago Jalapa Puerto Viejo Sarapiquí Agricultural Ecotourism Association) | Promotion and Equipping of the Project for Conservation and Sustainable Use of the Natural Resources of the Lake Jalapa Reserve, with a Training Component and Sustainable Tourism Development | 10 | 20,781.00 | 4,845.00 | 9,960.00 | | OP-III |
| 47 | COS/98/G52-33 | LLANOS DEL CORTÉS, Asociación Llanos del Cortés (Llano del Cortés Association) | Project Planning | 2 | 1,004.71 | 0.00 | 0.00 | | OP-II |
| 48 | COS/02/27 | MANGLAR DE PLAYA BLANCA, Asociación Protectores del Manglar de Playa Blanca (Association of Protectors of the Playa Blanca Mangrove Forest) | Contribution to the Sustainable Management of Playa Blanca, La Palma de Jiménez | 0 | 16,282.90 | 0.00 | 0.00 | | OP-II |
| 49 | COS/04/45 | MESA NACIONAL INDIGENA (NATIONAL INDIGENOUS BOARD) | Biodiversity and Formulation of the Components for Developing Ethno-Tourism in the Buenos Aires Indigenous Region | 0 | 20,760.00 | 0.00 | 5,557.00 | | OP-II |
| 50 | COS/04/14 | MONTEVERDE, ADI San Luis | Community Lodges and Pacific San Luis Valley Trail | 2,500 | 19,223.00 | 0.00 | 8,706.00 | | OP-II |
| 51 | COS/SGP/FSP/OP5/Y2/BD/12/46 | MULURVI, Asociación de Jóvenes Indígenas Cabécares de Ducha Kicha y Mulurvi por el Rescate de la Cultura, el Ambiente y el Desarrollo Sostenible (Association of Young Indigenous Cabécares of Ducha Kicha and Mulurvi for Cultural Revival, the Environment and Sustainable Development) | Contribute to Capacity-Building and Development of a Rural Community Tourism Initiative in the Mulurvi Community to Foster Self-Development of the Mulurvi Indigenous Youth and Forest and Biodiversity Conservation and Protection in the Talamanca Central Mountain Range Biological Corridor – Barbilla-Desierto Subsector | 135 | 31,100.00 | 0.00 | 43,000.00 | | OP-V |
| 52 | COS/SGP/OP4/RAF/07/01 | NANDAYURE, Asoc. Mujeres de Quebrada Grande de Nandayure (Quebrada Grande de Nandayure Women's Association) | Strengthening of a Rural Community Ecotourism Initiative and Conservation of Native Orchid Species of the Quebrada Grande de Nandayure Women's Association | 0 | 16,807.66 | 0.00 | 16,200.00 | | OP-IV |
| 53 | COS/SGP/OP4/RAF/08/02 | OREROS, Asociación de Oros de Cerro de Oro (ASOCO) (Cerro de Oro Goldminers' Association) | Productive and Environmental Alternatives for the Cerro de Oro Goldminer Community, Osa Peninsula. | 500 | 20,000.00 | 28,032.00 | 14,484.00 | | OP-IV |

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|----|--------------------------------------|---|---|--------|-----------|-----------|------------|--------|
| 54 | COS/SGP/OP4/ CORE/07/15 | OROCU, Asociación de Desarrollo Específico Pro Mujeres, Nuevo Amanecer de Orocu, Chomes, Puntarenas (Specific Pro Women Development Association, Nuevo Amanecer de Orocu, Chomes, Puntarenas) | Consolidation of Marine Eco-System Tourism | 0.5 | 15,000.00 | 0.00 | 83,974.00 | OP-IV |
| 55 | COS/OP3/2/07/ 46 | Asociación Agroturismo Jimenez Rio Pejiballe (Jimenez Rio Pejiballe Agro-tourism Association) | Rural Ecotourism for Sustainable Management and Natural Resource Protection in the Southern Region of the Province of Cartago | 0 | 20,000.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | OP-III |
| 56 | COS/SGP/OP4/ RAF/07/10 | PESCADORES PALITO, Pescadores de Palito (Palito Fishers) | Capitalization on Sustainable Eco-Tourism in the Palito Fishing Exclusion Zone, Chira Island, Gulf of Nicoya | 3 | 15,000.00 | 0.00 | 29,750.00 | OP-IV |
| 57 | COS/03/11 | PUERTO JESUS, Grupo Ecoturístico de Mujeres de Puerto Jesús (Women of Puerto Jesús Eco-tourism Group) | Community Ecotourism in Puerto Jesús and the Letras Wetland, Nicoya | 1,800 | 20,000.00 | 0.00 | 15,148.00 | OP-II |
| 58 | COS/SGP/OP4/ CORE/07/06 | QUERCUS, Asociación Hijas del Sol (Daughters of the Sun Association) (on behalf of Quercus) | Strengthening of the Quercus Conservatist Network through Sustainable Production and Rural Community Tourism Initiatives in their Partner Groups | 13,000 | 20,000.00 | 94,000.00 | 22,000.00 | OP-IV |
| 59 | COS/SGP/FSP/ OP5/Y3/BD/13/ 103 | RANCHO QUEMADO, Asociación de Desarrollo Integral de Rancho Quemado, Bahía Drake, Osa (Rancho Quemado Integral Development Association, Drake Bay, Osa) | Development of a Community Eco-Tourism Trail and Strengthening of Micro-Enterprises in the Rancho Quemado Community, Golfo Dulce Forest Reserve | 200 | 21,000.00 | 0.00 | 117,985.21 | OP-V |
| 60 | COS/0P3/2/07/3 2 | SANTO THOMAS, Asociación de Damas Voluntarias de Santo Thomas (Santo Thomas Volunteer Ladies' Association) | Rural Tourism: An important Tool for Integral Development of the Communities in the Upper-Middle Páramo River Basin (Santa Eduvigis, Santo Thomas, Los Angeles, California, Santa Lucia, and La Lira) | 242 | 18,134.00 | 0.00 | 15,877.00 | OP-III |
| 61 | COS/SGP/OP4/ RAF/09/19 | TIERRA BLANCA, Asociación de Guías de Turismo Rural de Tierra Blanca (ASOTUR) (Tierra Blanca Rural Tourism Guide Association) | Consolidation of ASOTUR as an Organization with the Capacity to Offer Tourism Services with a Social-Environmental Commitment | 2,036 | 19,955.79 | 1,000.00 | 13,200.00 | OP-IV |

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|----|-------------------------------------|---|---|------------|--------------|------------|--------------|-------|
| 62 | COS/SGP/OP4/ RAF/07/02 | TRONADORA, Asociación Junta Administradora del Asentamiento Península de Tronadora (Tronadora Peninsula Settlement Management Board Association) | Development of Rural Agricultural Tourism for the Tronadora Peninsula Settlement, Tillarán, Guanacaste | 0 | 20,000.00 | 0.00 | 10,000.00 | OP-IV |
| 63 | COS/SGP/FSP/ OP5/Y2/BD/13/ 95 | Asociación Para La Promoción Y Rescate De Tradiciones Culturales Maleku (Association for the Promotion and Recovery of Maleku Cultural Traditions) | TUINA FUJEJA, Tuina Fueja Maleku Indigenous Tourism | 700 | 19,849.60 | 19,090.00 | 0.00 | OP-V |
| 64 | COS/SGP/FSP/ OP5/Y2/BD/12/ 58 | TURRUBARES, Asociación Integral de Desarrollo de San Antonio de Turrubares (San Antonio de Turrubares Integral Development Association) | Strengthening of a Rural Community Tourism Initiative in the Community of San Antonio de Tullín | NA | 20,000.00 | 0.00 | 30,000.00 | OP-V |
| 65 | COS/01/14 | UNAPROA, Unión de Amigos para la Protección del Ambiente (Union of Friends for Environmental Protection) | Multiservice Promotion Centre for Organizational Strengthening of UNAPROA (with expansion) | 0 | 30,000.00 | 0.00 | 17,000.00 | OP-II |
| 66 | COS/01/30 | YIMBA CAJ, Asoc. de Mujeres de Rey Curré (Rey Curré Women's Association) | Strengthening of Yimba Caj Indigenous Women. | 0 | 22,350.00 | 0.00 | 2,012.00 | OP-II |
| | | | | 228,064.28 | 1,412,846.90 | 987,920.25 | 1,481,235.89 | 0.00 |

Appendix 4 SGP Initiatives Financed More than Once, 1992-2015

| PROJ. # | ORGANIZ. | APPROVED US \$ | CO-FINANCING | |
|---------|---|----------------|--------------|-----------|
| | | | IN KIND | CASH |
| 1 | VILLA MILS, Asociación de Productores Forestales de Villa Mills (Villa Mills Forest Producers Association) | 50,729.16 | 2,500.00 | 29,415.00 |
| 2 | UNA, Fundación Universidad Nacional (FUNDAUNA) (National University Foundation) | 43,650.22 | 6,000.00 | 90,920.00 |
| 3 | TESORO VERDE, Asociación Conservacionista Tesoro Verde (Tesoro Verde Conservacionist Association) | 50,000.00 | 0.00 | 38,409.00 |
| 4 | STIBRAWPA, Asociación Personas Artesanas de Yorkín (Yorkín Artisans Association) | 68,900.00 | 19,715.00 | 25,500.00 |
| 5 | SOL DE VIDA, Fundación Sol de Vida (Sol de Vida Foundation) | 33,000.00 | 0.00 | 2,673.00 |
| 6 | Fundación RAICES (ROOTS Foundation) | 50,000.00 | 16,736.00 | 15,923.00 |
| 7 | PLAYA HERMOSA, Asociación Ecológica de Playa Hermosa (Playa Hermosa Ecological Association) | 61,572.00 | 163.00 | 24,410.00 |
| 8 | OCHO ETNIAS, Asociación Indígena de las 8 Etnias de Costa Rica (Indigenous Association of the Eight Ethnic Groups of Costa Rica) | 32,000.00 | 0.00 | 32,808.00 |
| 9 | MONTE ALTO, Fundación Monte Alto (Monte Alto Foundation) | 70,000.00 | 13,943.00 | 17,304.00 |
| 10 | MONTAÑA VERDE, Asociación Montaña Verde (Montaña Verde Association) | 54,912.18 | 7,423.00 | 16,866.85 |
| 11 | JUANILAMA, Asociación Agroecológica Juanilama (Juanilama Agro-ecological Association) | 40,641.00 | 8,436.00 | 15,975.00 |
| 12 | Asociación Falconiana de Artesanía Natural y Turismo (Falconian Association of Natural Handicrafts and Tourism) | 20,342.00 | 790 | 8,352.00 |
| 13 | EL YUE, Asociación de Familias Productoras El Yué (El Yué Producer Families' Association) | 54,400.00 | 0.00 | 5,660.00 |
| 14 | EL COPAL, Asociación de Conservación y Desarrollo Sostenible del Copal (Copal Conservation and Sustainable Development Association) | 70,433.00 | 22,000.00 | 44,876.00 |

| | | | | | |
|----|---|--|------------|------------|------------|
| 15 | COS/02/13; COS/00/012-01; COS/05/43; COS/SGP/FSP/OP5/Y2/BD/13/74 | DAMAS CHIRA, Asociación Ecuatorista Damas de Chira (Chira Ladies Ecotourism Association) | 82,720.00 | 11,000.00 | 20,000.00 |
| 16 | COS/98/G52-09-A; COS/00/012-02; COS/SGP/OP4/CORE/07/14; COS/SGP/FSP/OP5/Y2/BD/13/89 | COSTA PAJAROS, Asociación de Mujeres Mariposas del Golfo (Butterflies of the Gulf Women's Association) | 56,108.00 | 0.00 | 21,866.00 |
| 17 | COS/95/G52-19; COS/02/04 | COOPESILENCIO, Cooperativa de Autogestión Agropecuaria El Silencio (El Silencio Agricultural Self-Management Cooperative) | 35,000.00 | 0.00 | 57,427.00 |
| 18 | COS/98/G52-34; COS/04/20; COS/04/36 | CHIRRIPO, Asociación Ecológica Amigos del Chirripó (ASEACH) (Friends of Chirripó Ecological Association) | 50,000.00 | 0.00 | 39,500.00 |
| 19 | COS/03/38; COS/00/012-14; COS/SGP/FSP/OP5/Y2/BD/13/94 | CARBON DOS, Asociación de Conservación y Desarrollo de Carbon 2 (ASODECC) (Carbon 2 Conservation and Development Association) | 59,800.00 | 0.00 | 33,851.00 |
| 20 | COS/SGP/OP4/RAF/08/06; COS/SGP/FSP/OP5/BD/12/32 | BRIBRIPA KANEBLO, Asociación Bribripá Kaneblo (Bribripá Kaneblo Association) | 50,000.00 | 0.00 | 39,500.00 |
| 21 | COS/01/03; COS/02/07; COS/02/11; COS/02/49; COS/04/46; COS/OP3/2/07/28; COS/SGP/OP4/CORE/07/08 | Small Grants Program's Partner Group Strengthening Program | 315,515.00 | 59,400.00 | 103,462.00 |
| 22 | COS/98/G52-08; COS/04/26 | BAULAS, Asociación Protectora de los Recursos Marinos y Vida Silvestre Matapalo (Matapalo Marine Resource and Wildlife Protection Association) | 21,000.00 | 612.00 | 6,261.00 |
| 23 | COS/02/29; COS/05/03 | BAJO LA PAZ, Asociación Productores para el Desarrollo Sostenible de Bajo La Paz de San Ramón (Producers Association for the Sustainable Development of La Paz de San Ramón) | 30,000.00 | 100,000.00 | 21,900.00 |
| 24 | COS/98/G52-27; COS/03/34 | BAGATZI, Asociación Agroecológica de Bagatzi (Bagatzi Agro-ecological Association) | 47,180.00 | 0.00 | 25,730.00 |
| 25 | COS/98/G52-25; COS/01/18 | ASOPROVA, Asociación de productores de Vainilla (Vanilla Producers Association) | 50,000.00 | 0.00 | 50,686.00 |
| 26 | COS/02/26; COS/SGP/FSP/OP5/Y2/BD/12/70 | ASOPROLA, Asociación de Productores La Amistad (La Amistad Producers Association) | 40,754.00 | 2,762.11 | 23,767.37 |
| 27 | COS/05/47; COS/OP3/2/06/22; COS/SGP/OP4/Y3/RAF/09/17; COS/SGP/FSP/OP5/Y2/BD/12/69; COS/SGP/FSP/OP5/Y2/BD/12/42 | ASOMOBI, Asociación de Mujeres Organizadas de Biolley (Biolley Organized Women's Association) | 92,060.00 | 22,046.00 | 109,014.00 |
| 28 | COS/04/32; COS/SGP/OP4/RAF/09/10; COS/SGP/FSP/OP5/BD/12/33 | ASODINT, Asociación Para la Defensa de los Derechos Indígenas de Terraba (Association for the Defense of Indigenous Rights of Terraba) | 60,072.00 | 30,397.41 | 19,695.88 |

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|-----------|---|--|--------------|------------|--------------|
| 29 | COS/OP3/2/07/29; COS/SGP/FSP/OP5/Y2/BD/12/52 | AJUESDE, Asociación de Jóvenes Uniendo Esfuerzos para el Desarrollo y la Ecología de Isla Venado (Association of Young People Joining Forces for the Development and Ecology of Venado Island) | 42,959.00 | 668.00 | 50,618.00 |
| 30 | COS/01/11; COS/03/20; COS/OP3/2/07/39; COS/SGP/OP4/Y3/CORE/09/06; COS/SGP/FSP/OP5/Y2/BD/12/73 | ADESSARU, Asociación para el Desarrollo Sostenible de San José Rural (Association for the Sustainable Development of Rural San Jose) | 121,814.00 | 15,000.00 | 100,301.00 |
| 31 | COS/03/14; COS/04/13; COS/04/48; COS/OP3/2/07/41; COS/SGP/OP4/Y3/CORE/09/10, COS/SGP/FSP/OP5/Y2/CC/13/81 | ACTUAR | 340,000.00 | 264,700.00 | 152,142.00 |
| | | | 2,195,561.56 | 604,291.52 | 1,244,813.10 |

Appendix 5
ACTUAR Network Member Associations

| | |
|-----|---------------------------------|
| 1. | AFITURA - POCORA MÍA |
| 2. | ANAI |
| 3. | ATEC |
| 4. | AVENTURAS NATURALES YORKÍN |
| 5. | CABINEROS DE GANDOCA |
| 6. | CASA CALATEAS |
| 7. | LA CASONA DE TORTUGUERO |
| 8. | ECOFINCA |
| 9. | EL YUE |
| 10. | JAMAİKÄRI |
| 11. | KEKÖLDI |
| 12. | STIBRAWPA |
| 13. | AFAORCA |
| 14. | EL COPAL |
| 15. | NACIENTES PALMICHAL |
| 16. | ARTESANAS ISLA CHIRA |
| 17. | CERRO ESCONDIDO |
| 18. | PESCADORES DE PALITO |
| 19. | PIANGUERAS DE CHIRA |
| 20. | FEDERACIÓN DE MUJERES DEL GOLFO |
| 21. | ASOC. DAMAS CHIRA |
| 22. | MONTE ALTO |
| 23. | SOL DE VIDA |
| 24. | CONSORCIO POR LA MAR |
| 25. | RESERVA LOS CAMPESINOS |
| 26. | ASODINT |
| 27. | ASOMOBI |
| 28. | ASOPROLA |
| 29. | BRIBRI KANEBLO |
| 30. | FUDEBIO |
| 31. | MONTAÑA VERDE |
| 32. | PLAYA HERMOSA |
| 33. | RED QUERCUS |
| 34. | TESORO VERDE |
| 35. | RESERVA JUANILAMA |
| 36. | LAGO JALAPA |

VIII.

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