

Project Title: Gender and Community Management of Mangrove Forests in Isla de Chira, Costa Rica**Location:** Costa Rica**Dates:** May 10, 2019 to July 26, 2019

Summary: My research seeks to understand gender roles and mangrove restoration on Isla de Chira, Costa Rica. Through my fieldwork and data collection I explored gendered participatory processes of mangrove restoration through gendered community involvement, partner influences, and community perceptions. I began my research in the San Jose area and visiting various wetlands and mangrove sites along the Caribbean and then pacific coasts of Costa Rica. During this time, I was developing context around gender, fisheries, policies and practices surrounding mangrove area use and meaning. While building context, I worked to identify and meet with key individuals involved environmental organizations and government agencies and ministries that have a stake in mangrove use and conservation on Isla de Chira, Cost Rica. The early stages of my field work allowed me to identify and to observe what mangrove forest products were of interest to consumers and outside (of Isla de Chira) stakeholders. Some of the mangrove forest products of interest that were identified by consumers and members of the



Ministry of Environment (MINAEC) were fish (including Corvina) and shellfish. The mangrove cockle, known locally as *piangua*, was mentioned as a key mangrove forest product and was perceived by consumers and participants from MINAEC as a forest product mostly associated with women. *Piangua* extraction is practiced in various mangrove areas on the Pacific coast of Costa Rica and is viewed as traditional and challenging.

Following this period of building context, I traveled to Isla de Chira. Arriving to the isla involved driving from the San Jose area to Punta Arenas (on the west coast), a two hour boat ride from the mainland to the island and a forty-five minute ride on an old Blue Bird school bus to get to the community of Palito. Here, I lived with a local family and worked to develop trust and further context around mangroves and the relationships between resource users (both men and women) and the forest and among participants and each other and their external partners in management. Participants for my research on the island included members and nonmembers of fishing and mollusk extraction associations from various sites on the island. Many of these participants worked directly in forest management and decision-making. Once on the island, my research involved participant observation, interviews with both men and women, and the organization of a community workshop in which participants discussed their experiences with mangroves, created community maps, and created a community timeline of their history with mangrove use and conservation.

I participated actively in various activities including cleaning and sorting clams in an aquaculture project, fishing with men and women, visiting current and past mangrove restoration sites and mangrove nurseries, and extracting pianguas. Observations made during these activities allowed me to collect data about gender and age differentiated knowledges,

practices, values, experiences, and expectations. I also collected data through individual interviews and the community meeting concerning participants' experiences in mangrove management decision-making and working with external groups like Conservation International and universities in Costa Rica.

















