



Ethical  
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## Sharing PARTNERS Principles with conservation leaders from Latin America

By Dr. Micaela Camino



In August 2023, I had the pleasure of introducing the PARTNERS principles to 15 dedicated conservation professionals from the Americas. We conducted this workshop at the renowned Instituto de Pesquisas Ecológicas (IPE) in São Paulo, Brazil. It's one of the most respected institutes in the field of conservation, both regionally and globally. This workshop was a part of a training course organized by the Whitley Funds for Nature. Our participants were individuals who have received the prestigious Whitley Award and work passionately in conserving endangered species and environments, often in collaboration with local communities.

This workshop provided a valuable platform for these conservationists coming from various countries including Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Uruguay, and Venezuela. The participants represented a wide range of experience, with some working in the field for as long as 30 years,



while others were relatively new to the scene. This diversity allowed for insightful and rich discussions that lasted over four hours. We shared our experiences, knowledge, opinions, and raised critical questions about the fundamental principles that guide our work with local communities. Our collective goal was to minimize errors, enhance justice, and maintain high ethical standards while empowering communities to lead in the conservation efforts.

Our discussions unanimously highlighted the central role of ethics as the foundation of conservation work alongside communities. Together, we identified a set of questions that could serve as a guide for our actions and strategies in the field. We also dove into the PARTNERS principles: Presence, Aptness, Respect, Transparency, Negotiation, Empathy, Responsiveness, and Strategic Support. As in previous workshops, these principles proved to be an invaluable framework, offering essential elements to consider when conducting conservation work in partnership with local communities. Our focus remained on justice and ethical practices, with the journey often taking precedence over the outcomes.

To facilitate this workshop, we utilized focus groups, group discussions, role-playing games, and various interactive activities. The feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive. They found the workshop not only useful but also enjoyable, and many expressed their intention to apply the concepts they gained during our time together. As the facilitator of the workshop, I felt a deep sense of fulfillment. It was a privilege to share this valuable knowledge and engage with such passionate conservationists.



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The Ethical Conservation Alliance, which I represent, has a core mission: to collaborate with other conservation practitioners in exploring ways to conduct conservation activities that are not only effective but also ethical, equitable, and guided by the principles of respectful partnerships with local and indigenous communities. These communities are often the heart of conservation efforts in their territories. Working with fellow conservation professionals to share our experiences and insights is a fundamental part of our alliance's mission, and we look forward to continuing this important work.

**About  
the author**

Micaela, or Mica as she is popularly known, is the founder of Proyecto Quimilero. She works with communities to protect Argentina's Dry Chaco forests - for which she received the Whitley Award. Her research focuses on the Chacoan peccary and its habitat. Her [recent paper](#) shows the importance of securing indigenous land rights for forest conservation.