



**Co-enquiry and Participatory
Research for Community
Conservation:
Methods Manual**



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List of abbreviations

ANAI	Associação Nacional de Ação Indigenista
CBPR	Community-based Participatory Research
CR	Community researcher
CRIPX	Consejo Regional Indígena Popular de Xpujil
CRP	Community Research and Co-enquiry Protocol
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
EC	European Commission
FPIC	Free, Prior and Informed Consent
GDF	Global Diversity Foundation
INECOL	Instituto de Ecología, Mexico
IVM	Institute for Environmental Studies, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, The Netherlands
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PM&E	Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation
RTD	Research and Technological Development (Institution)
TRIZ-OSTM	Theory for Inventive Problem-Solving/General Theory for Powerful Thinking [Acronyms in Russian]
UAB	Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona, Spain
UEFS	Universidade Estadual de Feira de Santana, Brazil



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I. Introduction

The *Co-enquiry Methods Manual* is designed as an overarching tool for engaging in co-enquiry processes with indigenous and local communities. It includes arguments in support of co-enquiry as best practice, guidance on how to approach each element of the research cycle using co-enquiry, descriptions of co-enquiry approaches to monitoring, evaluation and dissemination, and reflections on the relationship between co-enquiry and advocacy.

Background

The European Union's Framework Programme 7 funded the production of this manual (COMBIOSERVE project: January 2012 to January 2015). The manual was co-authored by members of the COMBIOSERVE consortium under the leadership of Global Diversity Foundation (GDF). It is the result of theoretical inquiry and practical experiences of co-enquiry research on the topic of community-based conservation, implemented in collaboration with indigenous communities of the Chinantla region of the state of Oaxaca, in Mexico, as well as of COMBIOSERVE fieldsites of Calakmul (Mexico), Pilon Lajas (Bolivia) and Porto Seguro (Brazil).



GDF collaboration with Chinantec communities

The Chinantla highlands are located in the northern part of Oaxaca state in Southern Mexico. The Chinantla is rich in biocultural diversity. It holds the largest intact contiguous area of the dwindling Mexican cloud forest, and is home to many threatened and endangered species. Chinantec-speaking indigenous peoples, now living in formally recognized community territories, have populated this region for thousands of years.

Since 2007, GDF has worked with three Chinantec indigenous communities in the Tlapeusco river watershed. Here, we have implemented community-based, collaborative research processes to explore the consequences of formal and community-based conservation on natural resource use and community wellbeing, to co-develop community-based adaptive management plans for community territories, and to support communities as they enhance their capacities to manage their territories.

GDF's role in the COMBIOSERVE project was to help develop a co-enquiry methodological framework to be used to answer a broad range of research questions surrounding the assessment of community-based conservation strategies. Our fieldwork with Chinantec communities consisted of working with community research teams to select appropriate conventional research methods¹ drawn from other research themes within the project, and adapt them for application within a co-enquiry framework.

In this way, and in close collaboration with colleagues from the COMBIOSERVE consortium, GDF worked to formalize and commit to paper a co-enquiry approach to 'assessing the effectiveness of community-based conservation'. In particular, we worked with Instituto de Ecología (INECOL) on developing co-enquiry approaches to biodiversity monitoring and received support from the Institut de Ciència i Tecnologia Ambientals of the University of Barcelona (ICTA-UAB) and Universidade Estadual Feira de Santana (UEFS) on the topic of social sciences and co-production of knowledge.

In addition to GDF's work with Chinantec communities, COMBIOSERVE colleagues working in the Calakmul fieldsite (consortium members INECOL and CRIPX) and in the Southern Bahia fieldsite (consortium members UEFS and ANAI) adapted methods from their research on participatory biodiversity monitoring and land use change to a co-enquiry approach. Therefore this manual also gathers experiences, expertise and results emerging from these fieldsites and research themes. Specific results from these themes have already been published elsewhere, in particular COMBIOSERVE (2013) and COMBIOSERVE (2014).

This manual seeks to gather and synthesise all of the work carried out on developing and refining a co-enquiry framework during the project. Chapter II, which covers the theoretical background to co-enquiry, was principally authored by GDF. Chapters III, V and VI present the results of Chinantla-based fieldwork carried out by GDF with

¹ In this manual, the phrase 'conventional research' is used to describe research processes where the researcher is the expert and has control over the design, methods and means for producing knowledge, whereas the subject of research has no control over these processes.



Chinantec community researchers and in collaboration with other consortium members. While these chapters are authored by GDF, they contain the results of collaborative work; in particular, all of the sections relating to biodiversity monitoring are the result of a joint effort between GDF, INECOL and CRIPX. Chapter IV presents methodological work carried out by other consortium members: here we present both co-enquiry approaches and non-co-enquiry, conventional methodologies developed by COMBIOSERVE.

What is co-enquiry?

Co-enquiry is a research process in which external researchers are the facilitators to a community-led and -controlled process, aimed at addressing community needs. In co-enquiry, the community as a whole takes a leadership role in all decisions regarding research objectives, process, results and dissemination. Community researchers are in charge of adapting and implementing the research methods to respond to community needs. The external researchers are facilitators, supporting the community researchers in their work and, if asked, the community, in their decision-making processes. Co-enquiry is about much more than research: as this Methods Manual will show, it is about politics and power, and about supporting communities as they empower themselves and take control of their futures. From the decolonisation of research practice, co-enquiry becomes a path towards self-determination (see Smith 1999).

Do we need another manual?

Participatory research has at least 30 years of history. Scholars and practitioners have already developed manuals for its implementation (for example, Pretty et al 1995; Bellon 2001; Slocum 2003; Gonsalves et al 2005a, b, c), a dedicated website (www.participatorymethods.org) and a practitioner's journal (Participatory Learning and Action, published by IIED). Co-enquiry, however, is different to participatory research. It goes beyond the 'sharing of power' approach that a number of variants of participatory research propose: it seeks to put the control of the research into the hands of the communities. While co-enquiry is increasingly being implemented in community-based research, so far there has been no concerted effort to produce an accessible, hands-on implementation manual for wide dissemination and use, published in different languages (to date: English and Spanish).²

Objectives of the present manual

This is the first co-enquiry specific manual that provides step-by-step instructions for carrying out co-enquiry as well as exploring, and finding solutions for, the possible stumbling blocks that researchers and communities encounter as they engage in co-enquiry research. It seeks to dispel some of the myths surrounding the impossibility of carrying out mutually beneficial research while also acknowledging the complexities and power dynamics inherent to the relationship between research institution and community.

² John Heron (1996) and Peter Reason (1988, 1994) have both written and edited volumes that provide the philosophical underpinnings of co-enquiry, some examples of collaborative research, and some methodological guidance. Nevertheless, these textbooks and manuals are not necessarily accessible to a broad readership (including indigenous and community-based practitioners in rural settings). However, John Heron's website – specifically its section on cooperative inquiry (www.human-inquiry.com/doculist.htm) lists a series of papers on the topic, including a short guide on cooperative inquiry (www.human-inquiry.com/cishortg.htm).



The manual collates and summarises current state-of-the-art knowledge and theory on diverse aspects of co-enquiry. It also innovates, building on this state-of-the-art knowledge, by providing grounded theoretical advances that are drawn from field experiences targeted at testing the co-enquiry method.

Amongst others, the manual provides:

- An overview of the arguments for implementing a co-enquiry and mutual learning approach in research for community benefit and emancipation;
- A systematic approach to carrying out co-enquiry and proposals for resolving problems related to implementing a co-enquiry approach in community contexts;
- Specific tools – Community Research and Co-enquiry Protocols – for the implementation of co-enquiry research processes, specifically in the context of community-based territorial management;
- Description of field experiences of co-enquiry approaches to biodiversity monitoring, participatory mapping, and intercultural research training;
- Description of innovative (non-co-enquiry) methodologies developed by COMBIOSERVE consortium partners to respond to research questions surrounding community conservation;
- Co-enquiry monitoring and evaluation tools;
- COMBIOSERVE experiences in co-enquiry dissemination.

Structure of the manual

Following this introduction, the manual provides a full background of the concept of co-enquiry, including a discussion of its roots in participatory action research (PAR), the differences between conventional and co-enquiry research processes, and the relationship between co-enquiry and academic research. It then describes the practice of co-enquiry in detail, providing information on all the fundamental requirements that must be in place for a successful co-enquiry process to take shape, and a step-by-step guide for implementing the full co-enquiry research cycle. These two chapters provide the theoretical framing for co-enquiry.

The two subsequent chapters are dedicated to practical approaches to co-enquiry, which are steeped in the field experience of the authors of this manual and of other COMBIOSERVE colleagues. The third chapter provides case studies of co-enquiry research in the COMBIOSERVE field sites as well as short descriptions of other (non-co-enquiry) methodological innovations developed by COMBIOSERVE research institutions. The fourth is a practical chapter presenting 6 Community Research and Co-enquiry Protocols (CRPs) for implementing co-enquiry research – 4 on the topic of biodiversity monitoring and 2 on the topic of socio-ecological change. They were prepared in the context of COMBIOSERVE, which seeks to ‘assess the effectiveness of community-based management strategies for biocultural diversity conservation’, but they are relevant for a wide variety of co-enquiry research objectives.

In the fifth chapter, we present practical guidance for implementing co-enquiry monitoring and evaluation processes, including a section on how to ensure community researcher wellbeing throughout the process. The manual then describes practical



approaches for co-enquiry dissemination. It concludes with a brief overview of the relationship between co-enquiry and advocacy.

Some practical notes for the reader

Given that co-enquiry is a process, and as such can be improved by participants throughout its arc of implementation, the authors expect that the methods and approaches herein will benefit from lessons learned and experiences gained in the future. The manual is therefore intended as a living document, to be adapted and improved through practice and experience.

Throughout the document, readers will find different coloured boxes providing additional information on certain aspects of the work. Orange-coloured boxes are entitled '**Voices from the communities**', and contain perspectives and quotes from community-based researchers on the topic at hand. Green boxes represent '**Experiences from the field**' and contain brief analyses of real events that occurred in the COMBIOSERVE fieldsites. Turquoise-coloured boxes are '**Ideas**' boxes, where we provide additional ideas relating to the topic under discussion. Dark blue boxes are '**Comment**' boxes in which we provide an additional opinion or comment on the topic under discussion.