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“Filling gaps and removing traps  
for sustainable resource management”

## Community Based Governance and Sustainability in the Paraguayan Pantanal

LUCA EUFEMIA<sup>1</sup>, IZABELA SCHLINDWEIN<sup>1</sup>, MICHELLE BONATTI<sup>1</sup>, SABETH TARA BAYER<sup>1</sup>, STEFAN SIEBER<sup>1</sup>, MARCOS LANA<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Leibniz Centre for Agric. Landscape Res. (ZALF), Germany*

<sup>2</sup>*Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Crop Production Ecology, Sweden*

### Abstract

The megadiverse biome of the Paraguayan Pantanal is in danger due to the expansion of cattle ranching and agricultural frontiers that threaten not only the fragile equilibrium of natural resources, but also the one of local governance and cultural identities. As a consequence, weak governance stresses the relations between natural resource dependent communities, generating socio-environmental conflicts. This perception study seeks to find community-based governance model standing for sustainability in the context of Paraguayan wetlands. Under the organisational principles of community based natural resource management (CBNRM) we applied qualitative approaches with the use of the Governance Analytical Framework (GAF) to identify problems and social norms. Our findings suggest that community-based governance is constructed by the Yshiro indigenous community relation to land use/management (e.g. Traditional Ecological Knowledge, TEK) and their self-organised group (Unión de Comunidades Indígenas de la Nación Yshiro, UCINY), as well as highly threatened by the impact of the national neo-extractivist economy. In addition to the reaffirmation of identities, resistance and knowledge sharing, many structural changes need to happen (e.g social/economic standing of indigenous communities to contribute to TEK and cultural survival), since indigenous communities are clearly embedded in post-colonial settler relations in multiple ways. As for the findings of this work, the role of the developmental strategy of extractivism is having negative impacts on the equilibrium of local governance and cultural identities. Likewise, the historical role of identity of the Yshiro community should be included in dialogues of sustainability for its intimate bond to land and its entrenched connotations.

**Keywords:** Community-based natural resources management, community-based governance, identity, indigenous rights, Paraguayan Pantanal