



Sustainability of the indigenous fishing communities of the Bermejo River (Salta, Argentina): towards the need to improve the legal framework and governance conditions to guarantee tenure and fishing rights



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Tenure and User Rights
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- Objective

To point out the problems and limitations that are facing by indigenous fishers inhabiting the north sector of Argentina, using the Bermejo River as a study case to illustrate the poor visibility that fishing rights and tenure issues have received

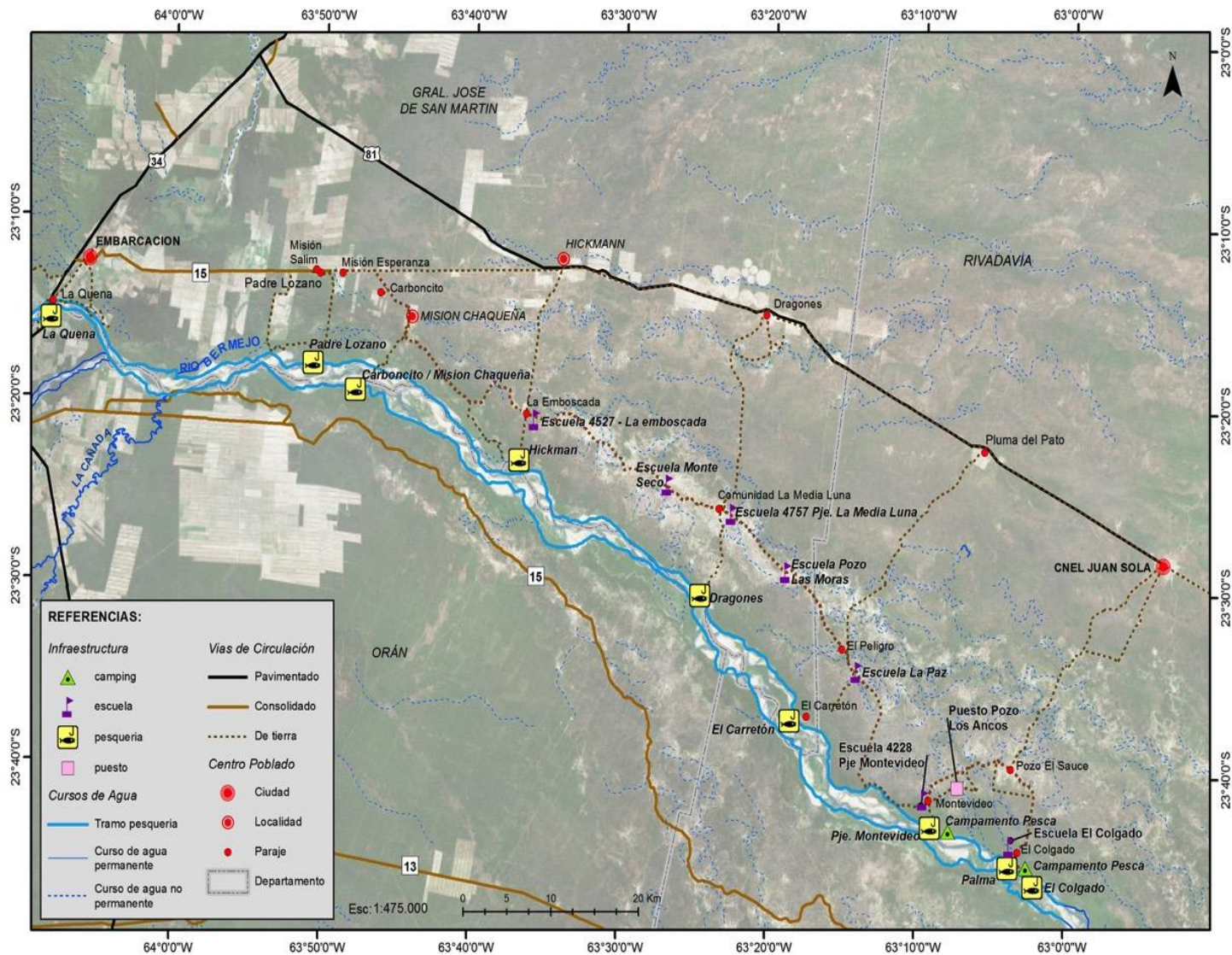


Ecoregiones

- I Cordillera Oriental
- II Subandina
- III Chaco Semiárido
- IV Chaco Subhúmedo Oriental
- V Chaco Húmedo

Sistema Hídrico

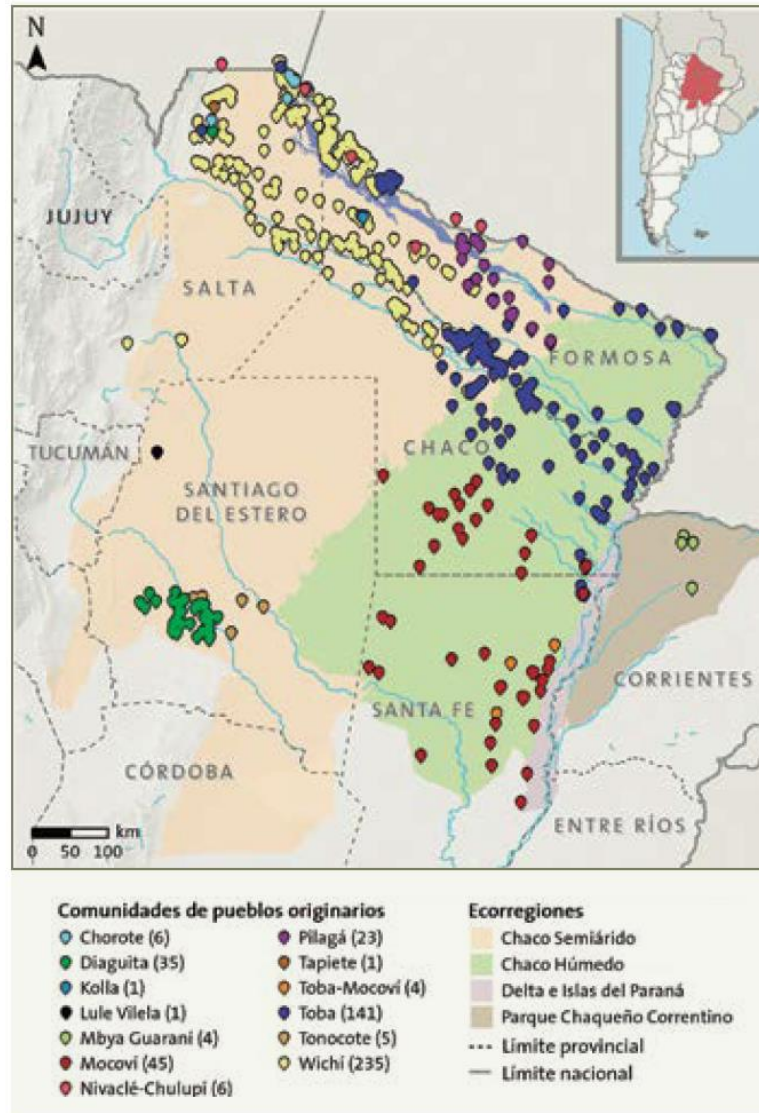












Tomado del libro Río Pilcomayo
Proyungas



- Most of indigenous communities live in “missions” that are highly isolated or have poor communication with urban centers, thus people lack of access to basic services
- To go fishing people need to cover sometime long distances (up to 40 km) as most the mission are located outside de river border.

- Main target species for Bermejo fishers are the the sabalo (*Prochilodus lineatus*), robal (*Zungaro yahu*), the surubi (*Pseudoplatystoma*), white catfish (*Pimelodus albicans*), being the first three migratory







- Native people suffer of severe poverty living in marginal conditions. Chagas diseases also know as the American trypanosomiasis is very common in the region. Houses are made by mud (adobe) and straw favoring the develop of the blood-sucking vinchuca which like to live in dark crakes of walls and ceilings. When it bites humans during the nights it inoculates the *T. cruzis* in the blood





- Indigenous livelihoods in the Bermejo and Pilcomayo basin are associated to handicrafts, hunting, small-scale agriculture and fishing

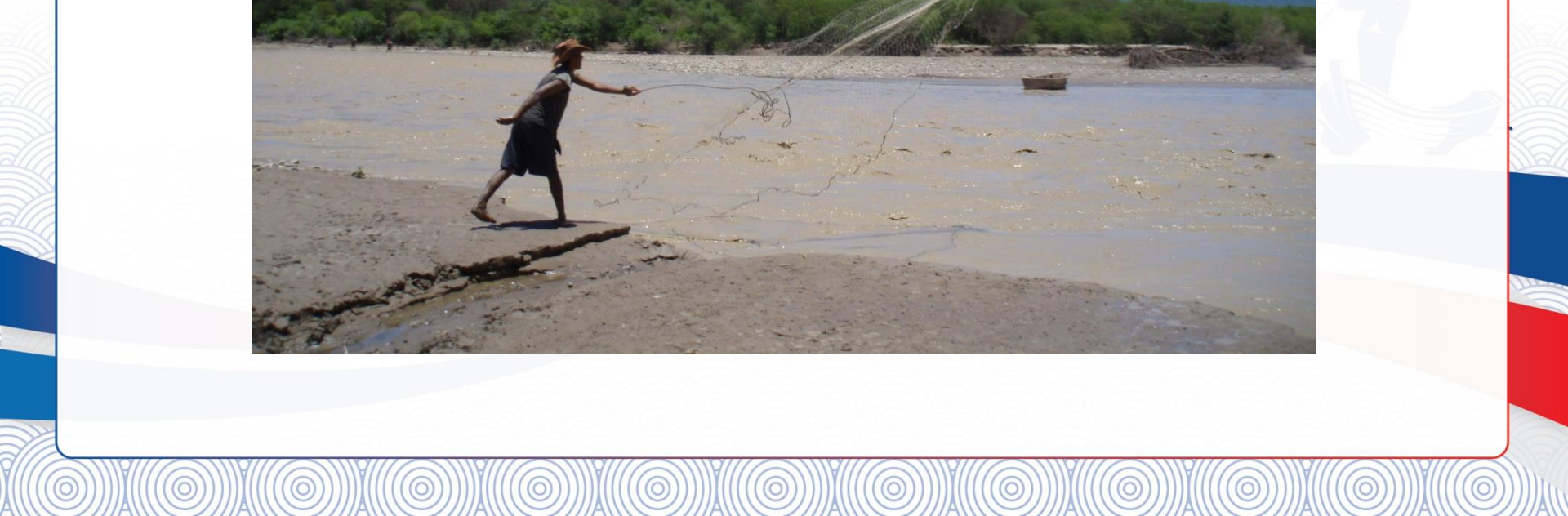












- Fishing a key component of livelihood for aboriginal communities





Identified Problems

- In the Bermejo River the most important drivers that limit native people fisheries are related to weak social, economic capitals, poor governance mechanisms and inappropriate legal framework
- Indigenous people are allowed to fish only for subsistence purposes without recognizing a status of artisanal or small-scale commercial fisheries that would allow them to make economic benefits
- Public access to some fishing areas have severe impediments to access the fishing sites as many local roads that cross private farms were closed to avoid the passage of fishers forcing them to travel long distances to reach the river.



Identified Problems

- Fishing gear must be hand woven and cannot be bought. Boats should be only wooden and without engine
- Current legislation does not consider specific articles for artisanal fisheries but only focuses on recreational fisheries regulation and management



Identified Problems

- Fishing authorizations for native people depends of specific decrees developed by the provincial authority without going through the provincial legislature. Therefore, they do not have the status of a true law making subsistence fishing regulations highly unpredictable and exposed to modification without consulting main stakeholders



Identified Problems

- Customary tenure rights have not been legally recognized.
- Current management vision attempts to accommodate fishing rights for native people to “white man-based perspective” imposing severe regulations that limits the daily catch, gear types and boat characteristics
- Management agency assumes that native fisheries need to be regulated to preserve and protect the resources for recreational fisheries.



Identified Problems

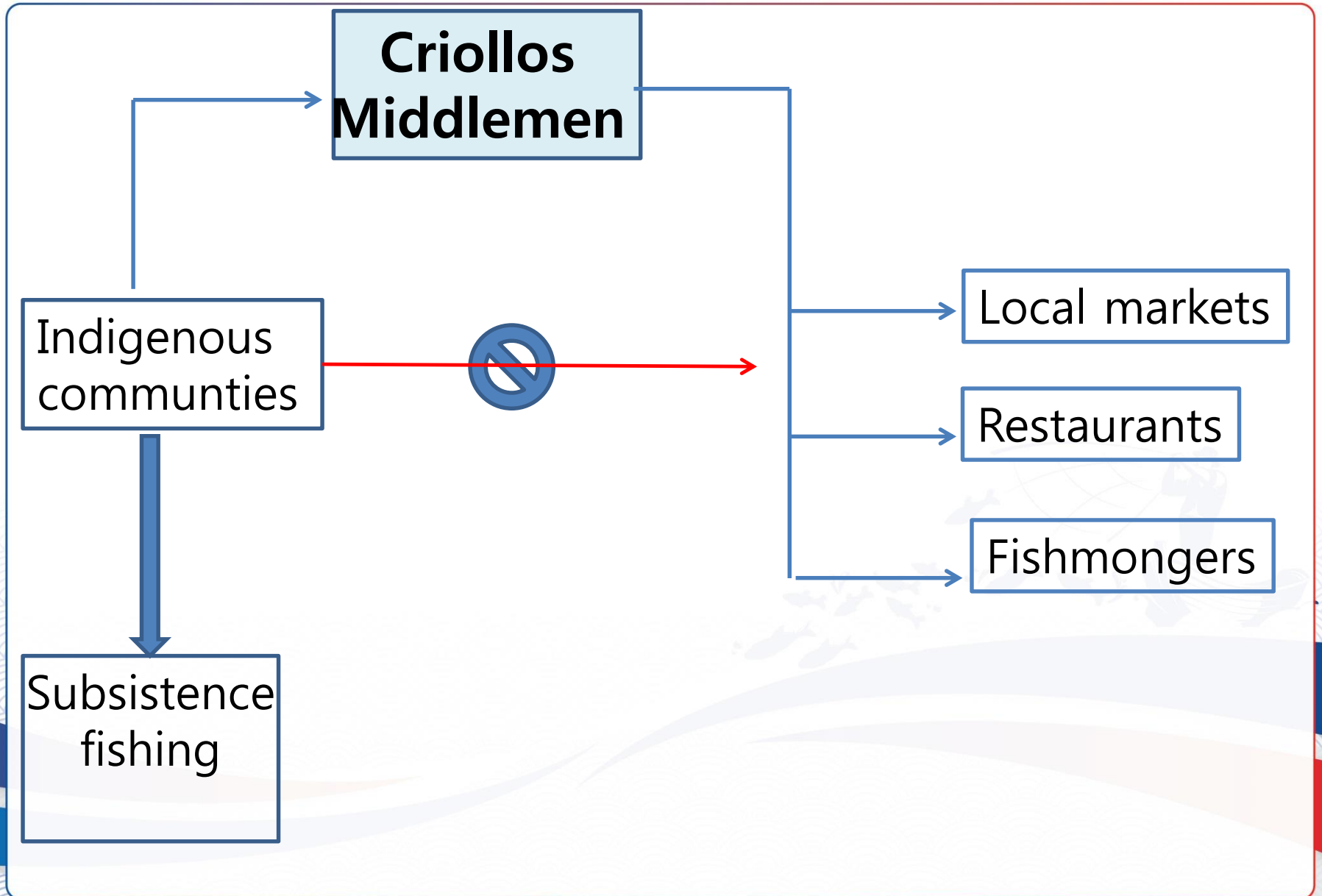
- Daily catches are estimated for consumption only but not for selling fish or adding value to increase people socio/economic benefits
- Fisherfolks have often strong limitations to access to other employment opportunities, due to lack of skills, isolation by cultural and social customs and attitudes;
- There are major governance conflicts among local communities precluding to built strong associations
- Lack of a common leadership for all aboriginal communities as they belong to different cultural ethnias



Identified Problems

- Although there is strong demand for fish in some spots or sites, indigenous fishers are not allowed to sell fish in neighbor local markets, thus requiring to use middlemen services and therefore loosing economic benefits









Future directions

Future directions in Salta Province should be oriented to promote short-term strong improvements of the legal framework by introducing criteria encompassed by EAF.

For example:

- Securing tenure rights for fishing communities recognizing that fishing critically contribute to food security
- Strengthening the capacity of fishing organizations and fisher participation
- Support new commercialization mechanisms to improve social and economic benefits



Future directions

- Provide territorial use privileges and rights to indigenous people in order to preserve most productive fishing grounds and fishing areas and reduce the interaction and conflicts with recreational fisheries
- Promote a governance of tenure by implementing mechanisms and processes related to social, cultural and economic issues, environment, traditions, subsidiarity, transparency, equity, involvement in decision-making issues, etc. that allow empowering the indigenous fisheries



Future directions

- Promote at provincial and national level key issues and concepts related to SSF Guidelines, fisheries tenure, and user rights in order to modify the vision with which indigenous fisheries have been managed





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THANK YOU!!