

University of International Cooperation and EC Assess tool

2010



*Using EC Assess in the
Ethics for Protected
Areas Management
course*

The Brazilian Amazon territory contains 310 federal and state conservation units and 430 indigenous territories. Altogether correspond to 50% of the Amazon, but the number of protected areas continues to increase. This is very promising nonetheless the management of this huge territory is an important international challenge.

Considering this, the **University of International Cooperation (UCI)**, Costa Rica (an Earth Charter International Partner), and the **National Institute of Amazon Research (INPA)**, with the support of the German Cooperation Agency (GTZ) created a **Master's Degree in Protected Areas Management**.

This one-year program, held in Brazil, consists of both traditional and on-line courses. It is an interdisciplinary program, whose goal is to train senior managers of the Amazon's protected areas on sustainability issues, environmental conservation, as well as socio-economic and administrative efficiency.

The ethical framework of the Earth Charter together with the EC Assess tool has been one of the topics in a course on *Ethics for Protected Areas' Management*, within this international masters program.

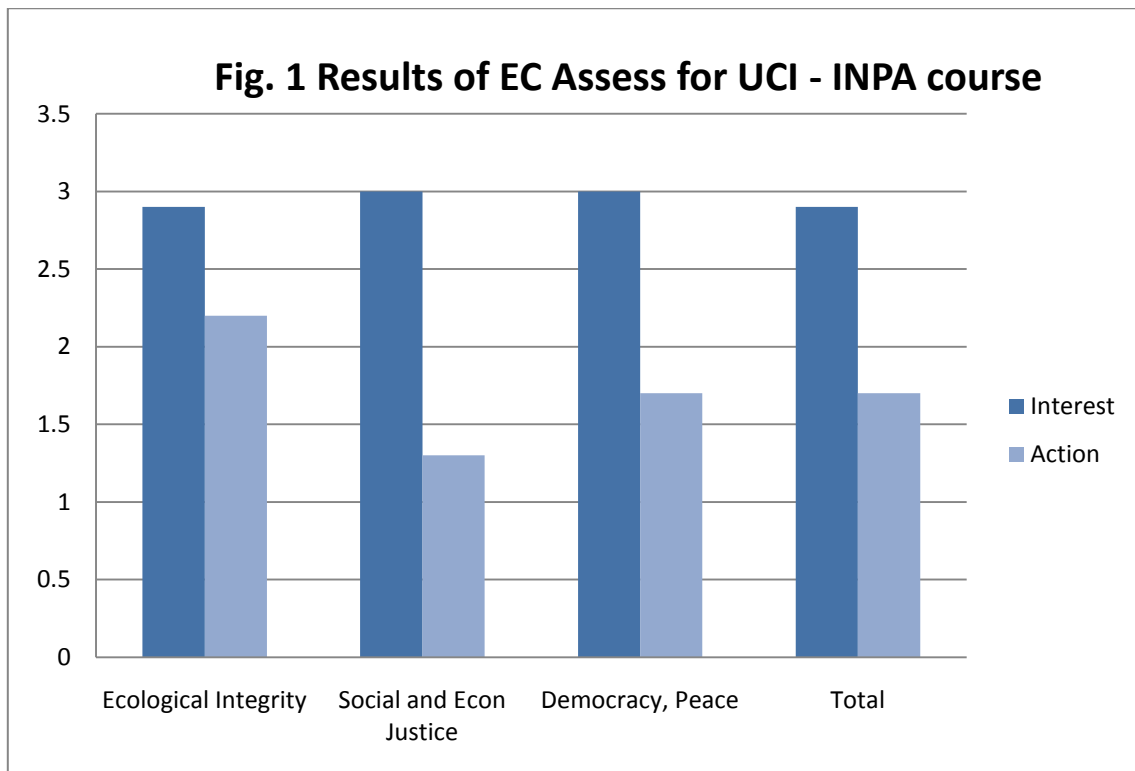
EC Assess – The Earth Charter Ethics-Based Assessment Tool – helps individuals or groups to evaluate their level of declared

commitment and their level of performance in pursuit of a more just, sustainable and peaceful world. It uses the Earth Charter principles (principles 5 to 16) as framework to cover all dimensions of sustainability. The results allow the evaluator to identify areas where either the declared embrace of an EC principle and the actual practice of that principle is strong or weak



Fifteen participants – each a professional manager representing one of the Brazilian Amazon's fifteen protected areas- met in the scenic **Ducke Forest Reserve, Manaus** to take part in the course, lectured by **Professor Lorena San Roman**, the vice-rector of UCI.

As in many other UCI courses, the initial session included a presentation of the Earth Charter's vision and principles. The focus then shifted to the EC Assess tool and its potential use in protected areas management.



During a classroom exercise each of the participants used the EC Assess tool to evaluate their level of commitment and actions to the ideals of sustainability on a personal level. This enabled the students not only to familiarize themselves better with the Earth Charter principles, but also to rediscover their own, individual values.

EC Assess uses a scale of 0-3 to evaluate the care and level of action for all principles contained in the Earth Charter. A score of 0 means that there is no evidence of care or action on that principles, and 3 would mean there is plenty of evidence of high level of care and action.

The results were compiled per person and averages for each pillar and a total average were computed (Fig. 1).

The group score has led to an interesting discussion; while the participants considered themselves to be primarily environmentalists; they were surprised to see that they had higher level of care towards the Earth Charter principles of democracy, non-violence, and peace, and social and economic justice; it was expected that participants would be bias to the ecological integrity principles.

Nonetheless, the level of action for ecological integrity is higher than the other pillars, an obvious result considering that the participants work directly on environmental protection actions. What is interesting is the level of awareness of these participants on the importance of the other dimensions for sustainability. This finding triggered a further analysis of the EC Assess tool, both from a technical perspective, as well as on the higher, ethical level.

According to Professor San Roman, both – the initial – and the continuing feedback after the course's end shows an increased interest in the Earth Charter. Not only have the participants discovered and mastered a valuable tool for analysis, - their outlook on ethics in management has been also broadened with the help of the EC Assess. They were able to see the interactions and importance of all dimensions related to sustainability, not only the environmental part.



The course was seen as a big success by the organizers and participants alike. The combination of the nature-surrounded learning environment of the Ducke Reserve, the holistic ethical vision offered by the Earth Charter, as well as the practicality of the EC Assess tool provided to be a truly transformative experience for many of the guests.

Placing a stronger emphasis on ecosystems' dynamics, and the understanding of natural systems from the biological perspective as well as the ethical viewpoint were only two of the many important directions discovered during the course.

The course organizers hope to continue expanding the program in the future, inviting guest professors from all over Latin America. The positive impact of the Earth Charter in training responsible, committed managers will no doubt continue as well.