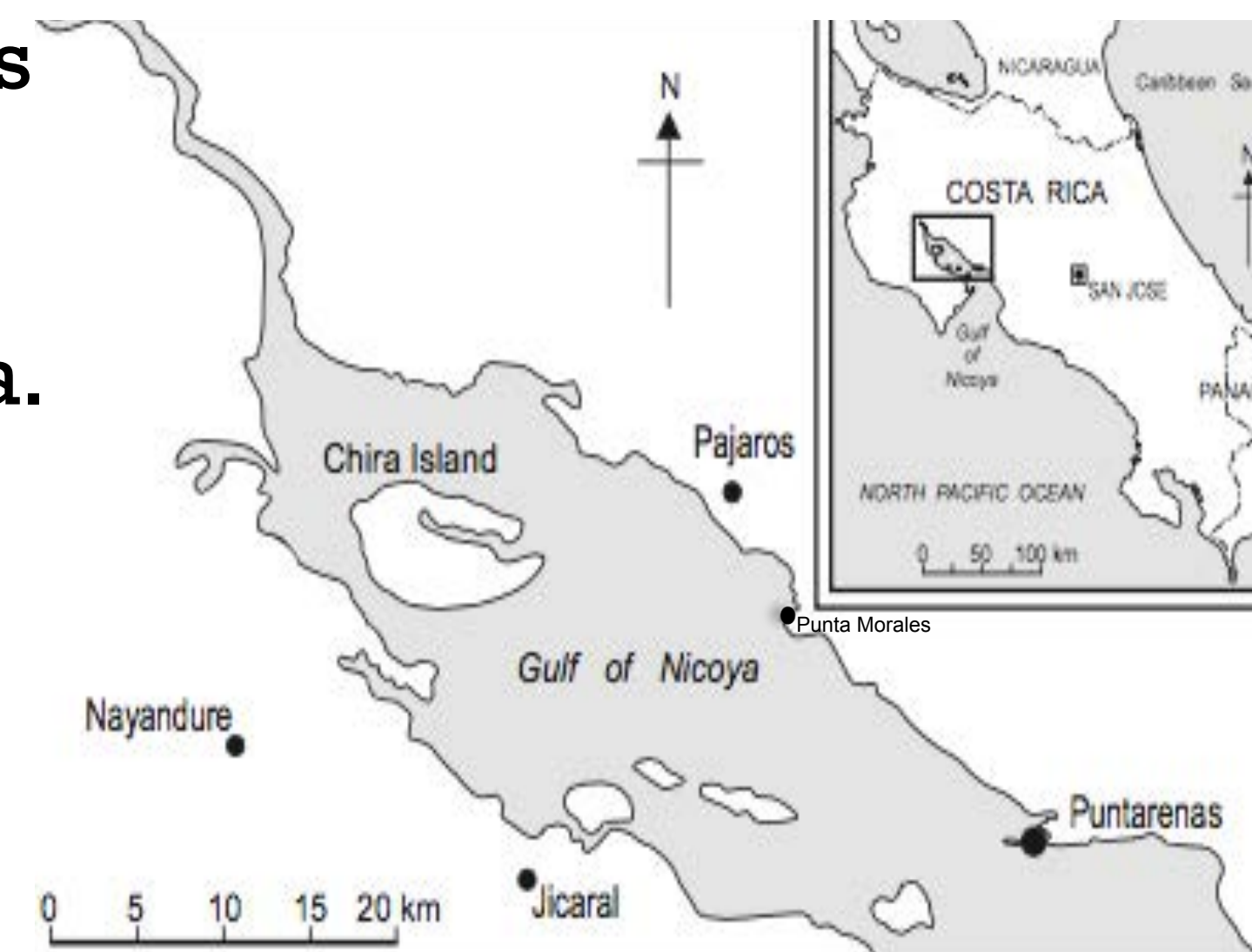


A situational analysis of community-based oyster farming in Palito, Isla Chira, Costa Rica

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Location

Chira island is located in Costa Rica's Gulf of Nicoya. The gulf is an important national fishing resource.



Context



- Palito is a low-income, fishing community in Chira
- Overexploitation & pollution of gulf has negatively impacted fishermen's income
- NGOs and government institutions helped start small oyster projects to provide livelihood alternatives for communities affected by the gulf's state

Practicum Overview



Palito's oyster group requested my help strengthening their operations. I used participatory methods (interviews,

production mapping, & participant observation) to produce a situational analysis and needs assessment. I also facilitated planning sessions with the farmers.

Results



The following are some of the major findings in the situational analysis.



Palito's farmers have received significant support from domestic and international private, non-governmental, and governmental institutions. The support has been largely technical (focusing on oyster production) & financial (contributing funds to acquire inputs & build infrastructure).

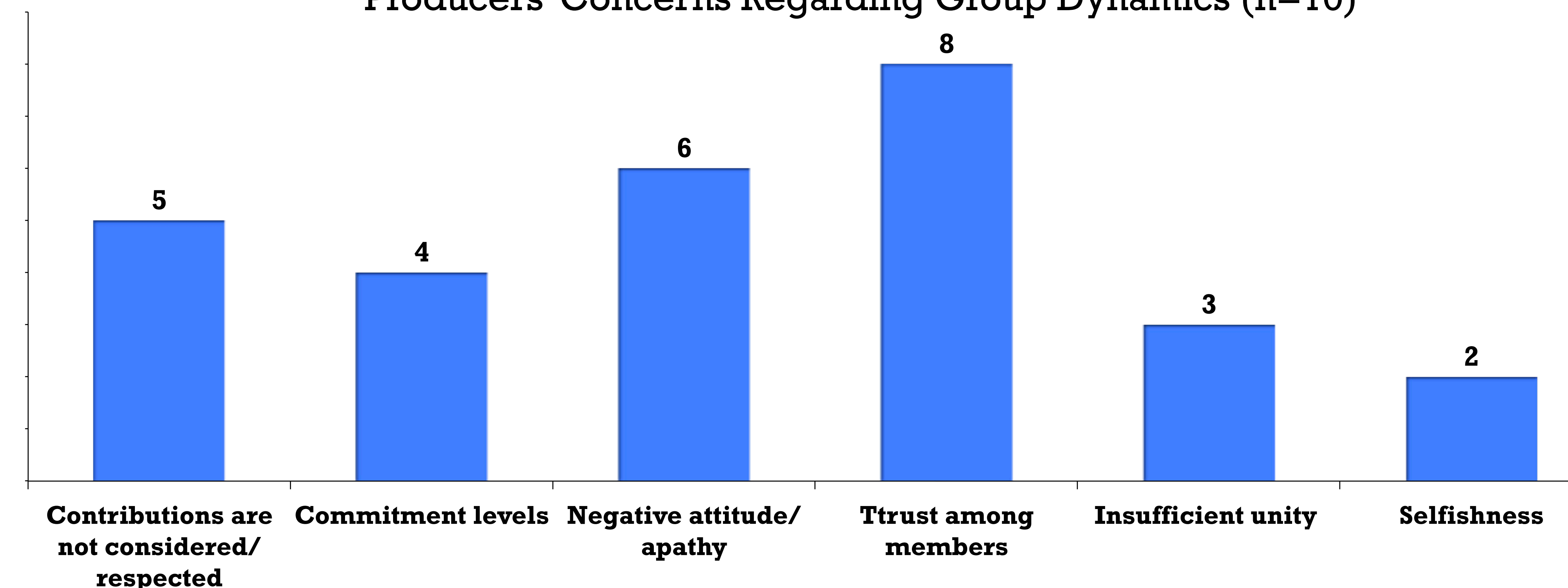


Palito's farmers face various external threats that could affect their success. These include lack of enforcement of the Fishing & Aquaculture law, pollution from waste and agricultural runoff, & challenges with product commercialization and an underdeveloped local oyster market.



Palito's farmers also face internal threats. They expressed significant concerns regarding management, governance, communication, decision-making and group dynamics. These findings indicate that there are major challenges with the governance & management systems of this group. An example of these concerns is shown in the figure below.

Producers' Concerns Regarding Group Dynamics (n=10)



Conclusions

- It is crucially important to ensure the long-term sustainability and success of this activity because oyster projects can have a larger impact on the livelihoods of gulf communities by employing more people and allowing the gulf's fish stock to recover.
- The long-term success of this endeavor will require multiple conditions to be met. These range from having adequate infrastructure, inputs, and knowhow to produce quality oysters, to strengthening the nation's legal aquaculture frameworks and promoting a comprehensive commercialization strategy.
- Palito's producers must strengthen their governance structure and management system as these directly affect their ability to function as a cohesive, effective, and efficient unit.
- External support thus far has focused on technical and production aspects, neglecting the other factors mentioned above. Future efforts should focus more on enhancing the group's governance, administrative, and management capacity as well as expanding commercialization and value added opportunities.



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