

REPORT ON ECTI'S LEADERSHIP COURSE FOR BRAZILIAN CONSERVATIONISTS

ATLANTIC FOREST GREAT RESERVE, PARANÁ STATE

ONSITE PHASE

COORDINATED BY:

Effective
Conservation
TRAINING INITIATIVE



2026

PHOTOGRAPHY: GABRIEL MARCHI

Executive Summary

The **Effective Conservation Training Initiative (ECTI)** aims to increase the number of conservation leaders who are able to manage complex programs and multidisciplinary teams in landscapes of global significance.

This report analyzes the results of ECTI's first course delivered in Portuguese for conservationists from Brazil (one of the world's megadiverse countries).

In a first online phase, participants read and discussed the conservation manual available in Portuguese, "Produção de Natureza: Parques, Rewilding e Desenvolvimento Local". After this, an onsite phase took place in the Atlantic Forest Great Reserve (state of Paraná), home to one of the most exciting initiatives in conservation and local development in Brazil in recent years.

During the course, 20 participants from 15 Brazilian conservation organizations interacted with experienced trainers on team management and international conservation practitioners with extensive practical knowledge managing programs in Argentina, Europe and Africa, as well as park managers and senior conservation practitioners from Brazil. Participants and trainers also visited different types of protected areas (federal, state and private) located within the Atlantic Forest Great Reserve.

Results from a survey carried out after the onsite phase show high levels of satisfaction regarding the online phase, the choice and performance of speakers, the overall design of the first two phases, the selection of the Atlantic Forest Great Reserve for the onsite phase, logistics, and the general working environment and energy.

General Context

The **Effective Conservation Training Initiative (ECTI)** was launched in 2023 in response to a shortage of professionals with the experience, personality, skills, and knowledge required to lead complex programs and multidisciplinary teams capable of delivering tangible conservation outcomes.

This lack of experienced and effective team leaders is so severe that it has become a major bottleneck for some organizations seeking to scale up their conservation actions. In parallel, most academic training programs for conservationists are run and taught by professionals with strong theoretical knowledge but little experience in the actual management of conservation programs and organizations.

After carrying out three global courses in English, with onsite phases conducted in African parks between 2023 and 2025, we identified the need to implement regional courses for conservationists who are not fluent in English. Thus, in 2025 we implemented our first course in Spanish for South American conservationists, and in 2026 we implemented our first course in Portuguese aimed at Brazilian conservationists, given that Brazil is the largest country in the Neotropics.

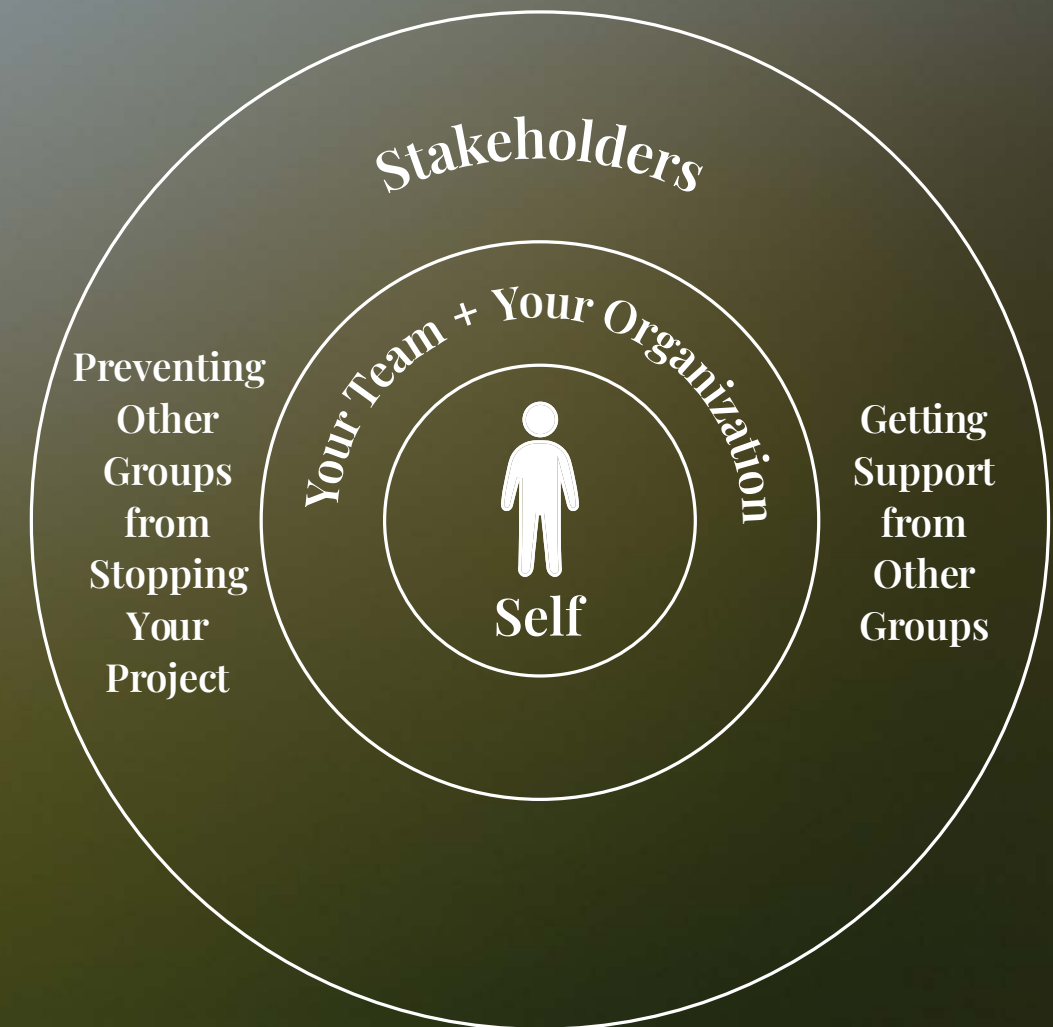


ECTI's Goal

Our goal is to **increase the amount of conservation leaders** who are ready to manage complex programs and multidisciplinary teams in conservation landscapes of global significance.

We identify, train, inspire, and connect **a new generation of conservationists** working in wild areas so they learn about team management and how to build constructive relations with key stakeholders and partners.

The Three Circles of Influence



Effective Conservation = People Management

Training Phases, Participants, Trainers & Speakers

TRAINING PHASES

Phase 1: Reading and online discussions: 120-minute sessions where groups of 4-14 participants interacted online from December 2025 to March 2026.

Phase 2: Onsite training at Atlantic Forest Great Reserve, 12nd-19th April 2026.

Phase 3: After the onsite phase we'll continue online sessions during the following months, as we have done with participants from the global editions carried out between 2023 and 2025.



PARTICIPANTS

There were a total of **20 participants** from **15 organizations** representing the country's main biomes: Amazonia, Caatinga, Cerrado, Atlantic Forest, and Pantanal.

[VIEW DOCUMENT \(PDF\)](#)

TRAINERS & SPEAKERS

Besides the three main trainers, there were **12 international and Brazilian conservation practitioners** who shared their practical knowledge with the participants.

[VIEW DOCUMENT \(PDF\)](#)

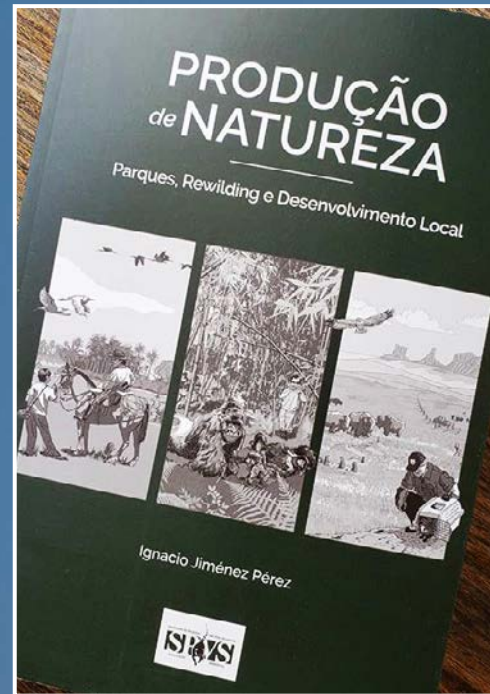




EVALUATION OF FIRST PHASE OF THE COURSE: READING AND ONLINE SESSIONS (DECEMBER 2025 TO MARCH 2026)



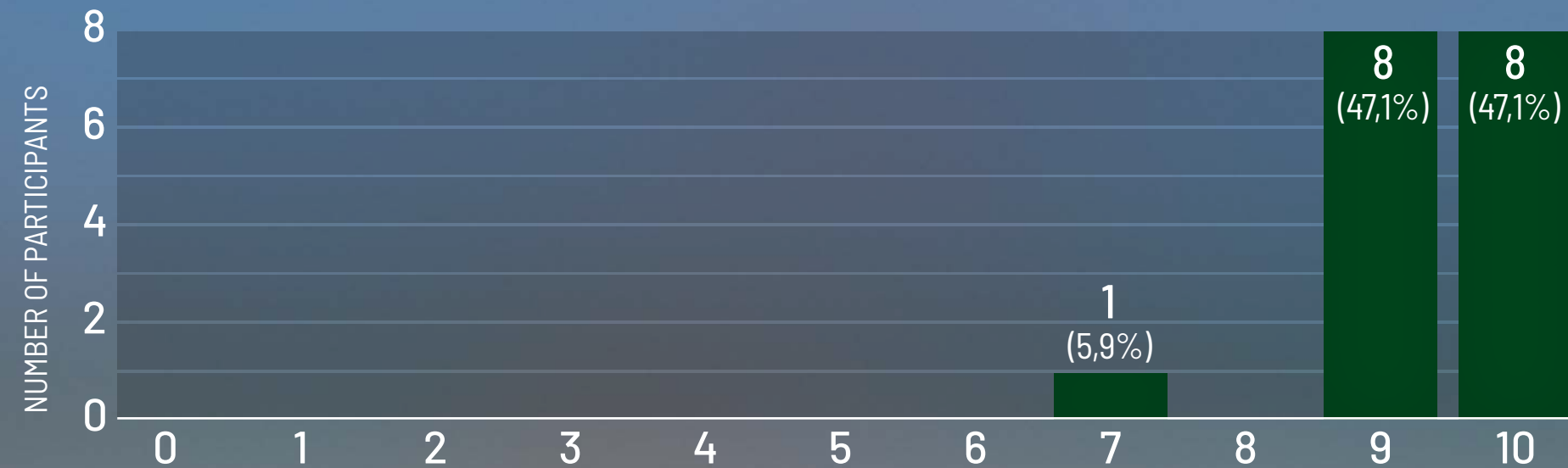
Survey Results, First Phase



Question: Choose the best option that describes your opinion of the text book used during this phase:

Not very useful	0
Useful	0
Very useful and appropriate for the course	17 (100%)

Question: From 0 to 10, how would you rate this first phase of the training program?:



Answers by trainees: n=17

Survey Results, First Phase

SOME PHRASES SUMMARIZING THE PARTICIPANTS' IMPRESSIONS OF THE ONLINE PHASE OF THE TRAINING PROGRAM

Upon rereading the book, I developed deeper perspectives on certain topics, and the discussions added greater depth to the ideas addressed during the sessions.

It was very enriching, providing conceptual depth combined with exchanges that broadened the practical understanding of the content.

This phase of the program was very useful for deepening the themes proposed in the book, getting to know the other participants, and exchanging experiences about how different institutions operate.

The guidance, facilitation, and well-structured chapter reading provided better flow during the online classes.

The online discussion meetings and guiding questions greatly helped with the assimilation of the knowledge presented in the book and were always coherent with the themes addressed in each chapter.

A deeper understanding of fundamental concepts for visualizing the work context.



Survey Results, First Phase

SOME PHRASES SUMMARIZING THE PARTICIPANTS' IMPRESSIONS OF THE ONLINE PHASE OF THE TRAINING PROGRAM

Strong theoretical foundation combined with real-world cases.

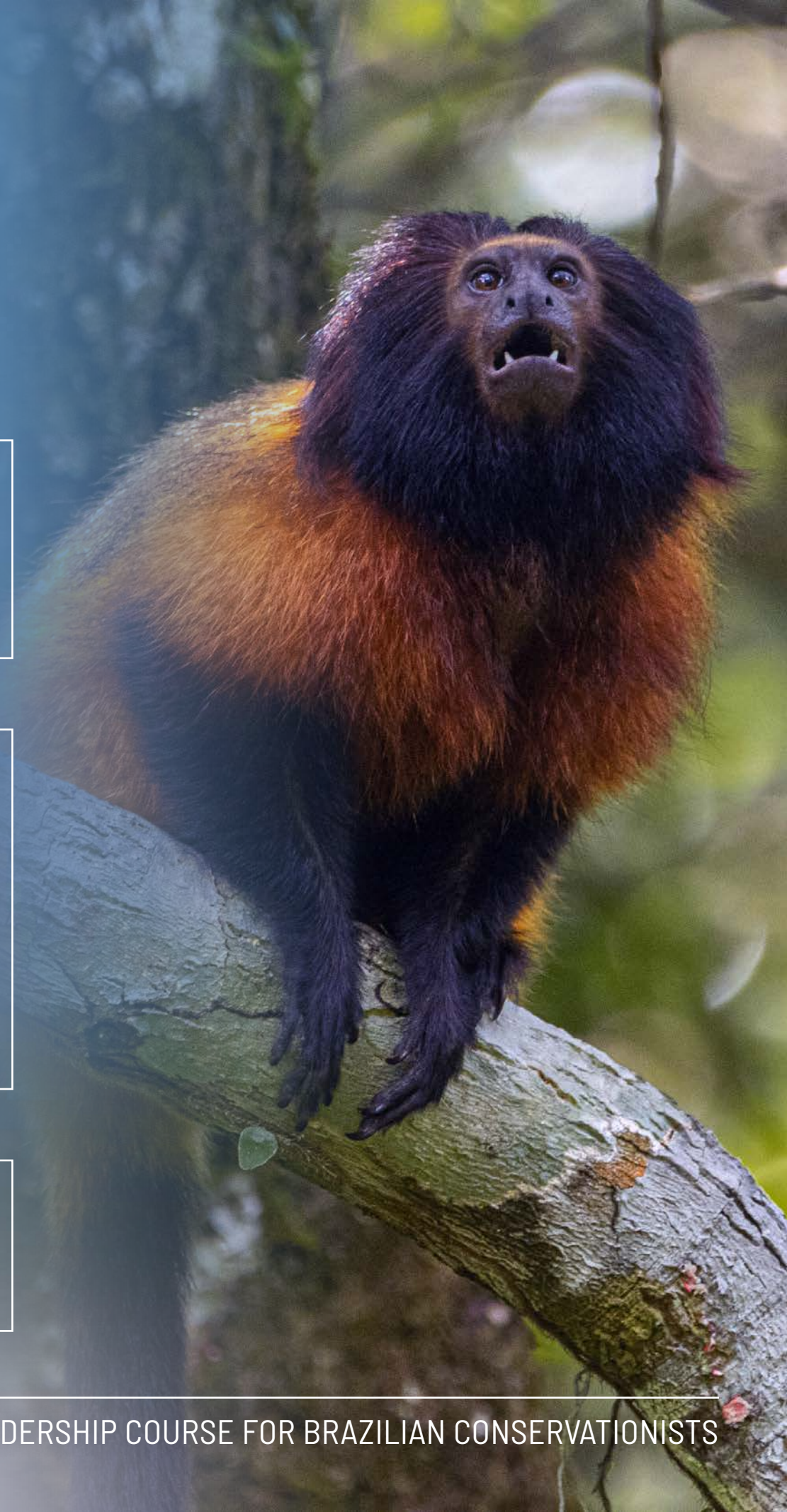
I liked the dynamic of dividing the studies by chapters for each meeting, which made the reading lighter and easier. The group discussion dynamics were enjoyable and allowed for very good conversations during the online sessions.

Reading the book and participating in the online meetings were fundamental for contextualizing the objective of the course, introducing important concepts for the discussions, and leveling the participants' knowledge.

It provided an enriching reading experience and the opportunity to deepen reflections that emerged throughout the chapters.

The online meetings were essential for consolidating the book's content, mainly because of the interaction with Ignacio and the rest of the group. This phase was also important so that, during the onsite meeting, the focus could remain on the proposed activities.

It was excellent to hear the author speak about the book. We rarely have that opportunity.



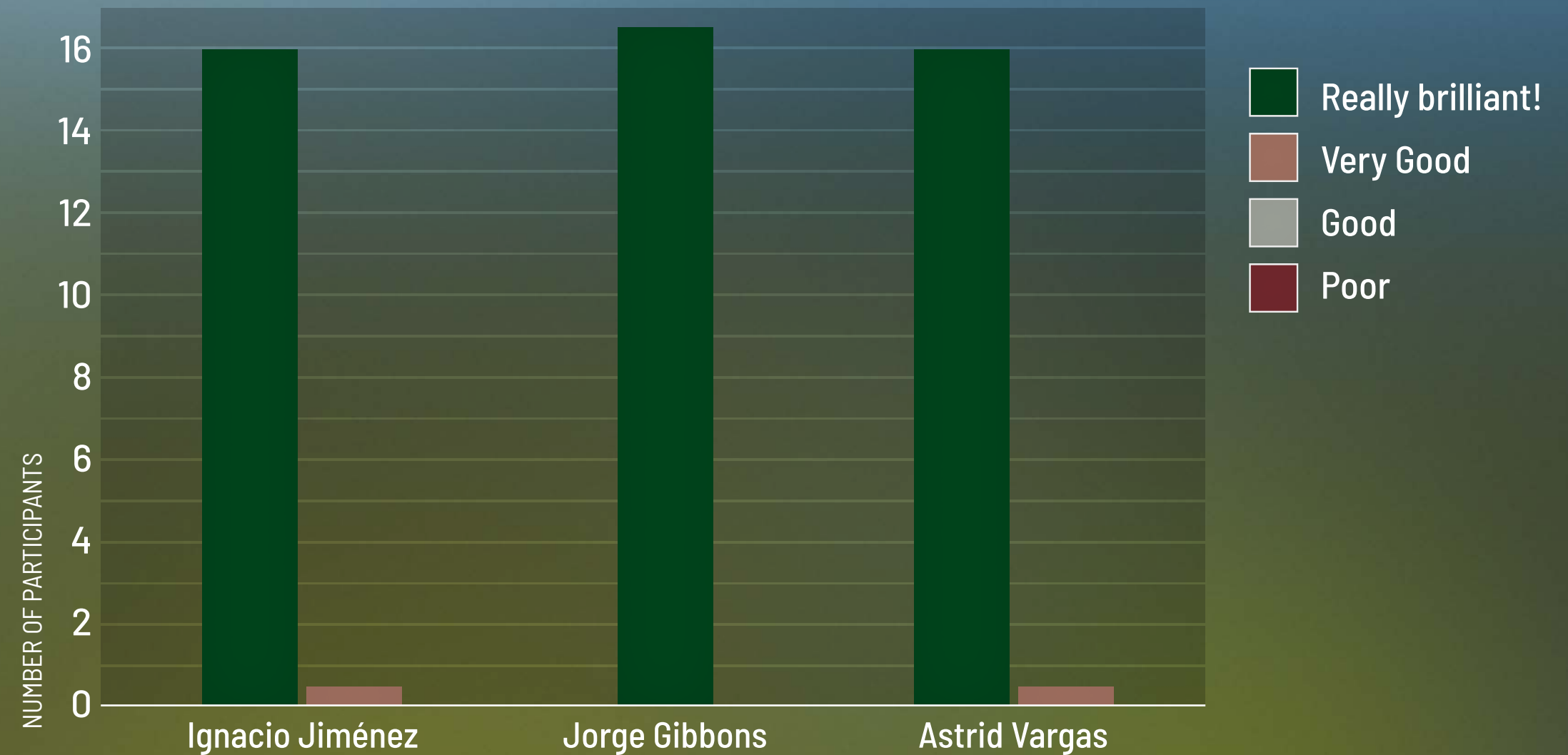
An aerial photograph of a lush, green landscape. In the foreground, a winding river flows through a dense forest of tall trees. The river meanders through a valley, creating several loops and curves. The surrounding area is covered in vibrant green vegetation, including grassy fields and dense woods. In the background, a range of mountains stretches across the horizon under a bright blue sky with scattered white clouds. The overall scene is a beautiful representation of a natural, undisturbed environment.

EVALUATION OF SECOND PHASE OF THE COURSE: ONSITE TRAINING IN THE ATLANTIC FOREST GREAT RESERVE (APRIL 2026)

Survey Results, Second Phase



Evaluation of the sessions conducted by the main trainers at GRMA:



Answers by trainees: n=17

Survey Results, Second Phase

COMMENTS ON THE ROLE OF THE THREE MAIN TRAINERS THAT COULD BE USEFUL FOR FUTURE COURSES (DEVELOPMENT AND REINFORCEMENT FEEDBACK)

The three trainers were essential to the delivery of the course, each covering important areas for personal and professional growth: Jorge brought data and information for professional development, mainly through practical activities. Astrid, with all her professional and personal experience, brought tools for emotional growth, helping to strengthen professional development as well. Ignacio brought practical approaches, encouraging action to solve problems and showing that obstacles we “think we have” can often be overcome through partnerships and proactivity. All of them complemented each other and brought new perspectives for my personal and professional growth.

The trio connects and complements each other very well: Ignacio represents the head, Astrid the heart, and Jorge the hands. The coordination among them flows very harmoniously. As a suggestion, including Astrid and Jorge already during the online meetings could enrich the group dynamics and increase interaction with them during the preparatory phase.

Survey Results, Second Phase

COMMENTS ON THE ROLE OF THE THREE MAIN TRAINERS THAT COULD BE USEFUL FOR FUTURE COURSES (DEVELOPMENT AND REINFORCEMENT FEEDBACK)

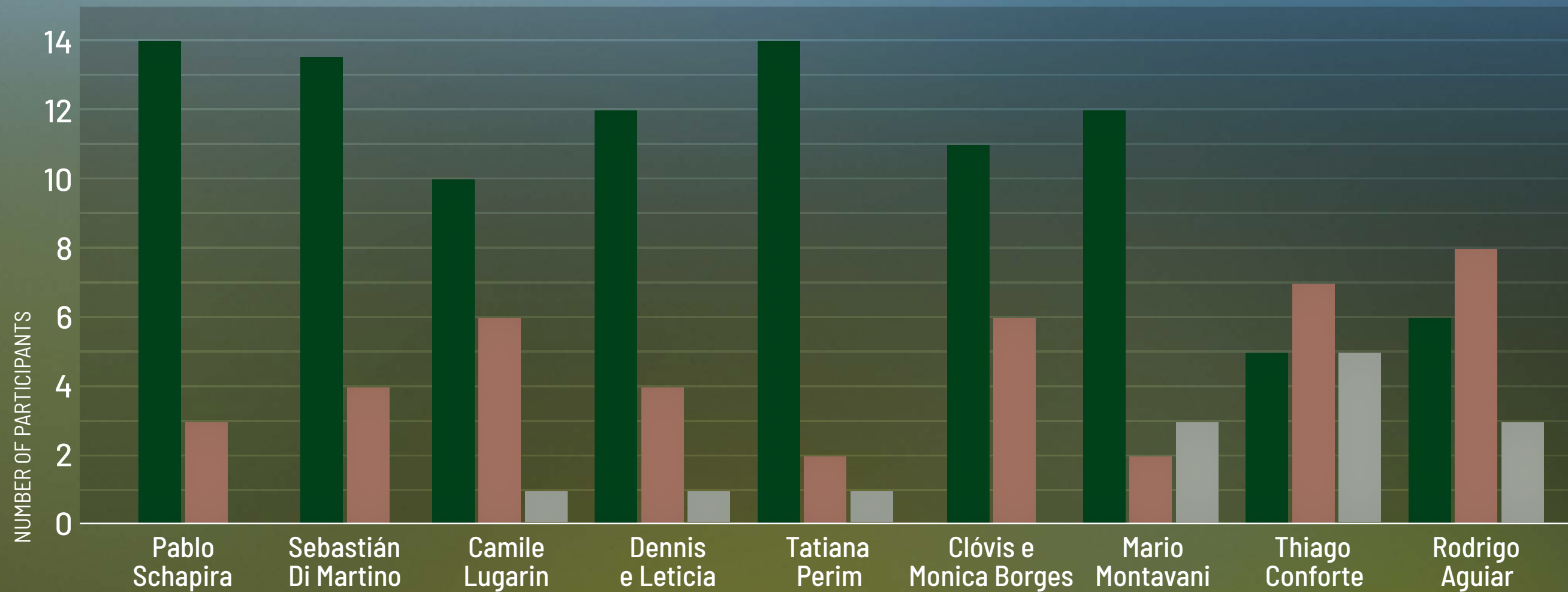
Jorge: incredible facilitator, very didactic, and highly knowledgeable about people and group dynamics. Astrid: her ability to connect with people in a humane and respectful way, while sharing her very human perspective. Ignacio: leads with great experience, clarity, guidance, and leadership.

The three instructors are far above the norm. They know how to hold people's attention, and each one, with their own style and expertise, makes a point of sharing all the knowledge they have gained throughout their lives and careers. I believe this is fundamental for creating meaningful role models. They are truly outstanding!



Survey Results, Second Phase

Evaluation of the speakers/practitioners:



Answers by trainees: n=17

Survey Results, Second Phase

Question: From 0 to 10, how would you rate the pedagogic quality of this part of the training program based on conversations with experienced team leaders?

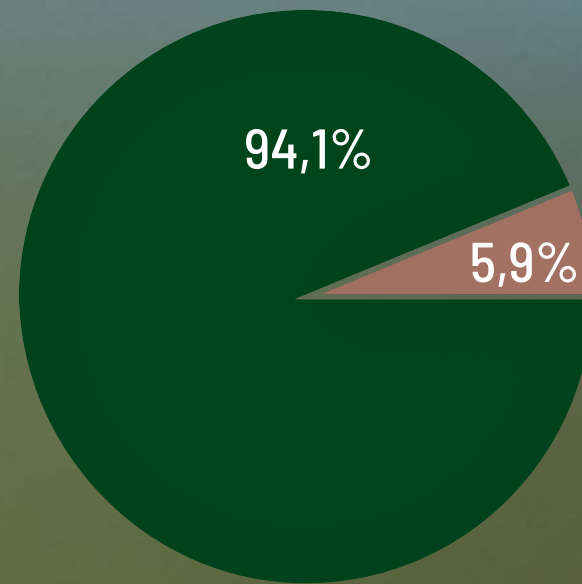


Answers by trainees: n=17

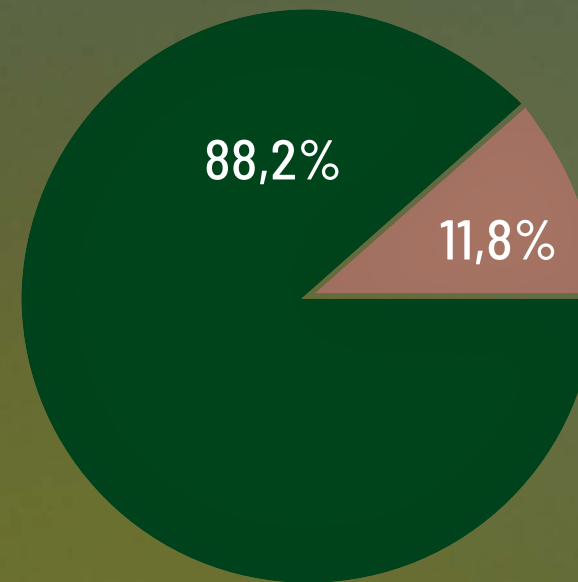
Survey Results, Second Phase



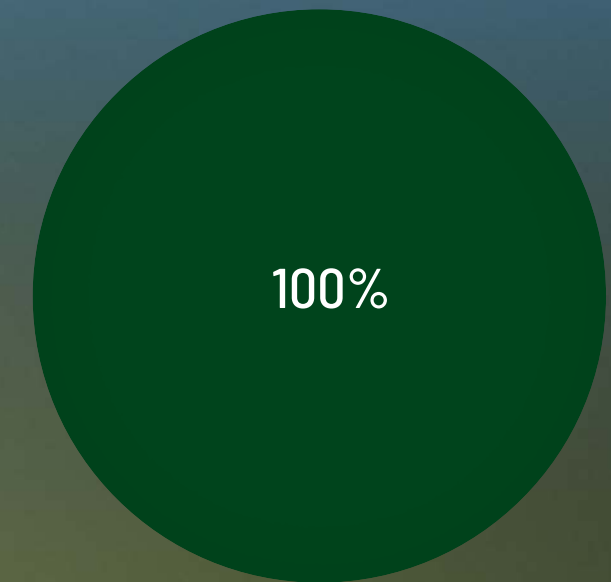
I found the quality of the course with regard to the **establishment of personal and professional links** for my future work to be:



I found the quality of the course with regard to **logistical aspects** (i.e. accommodation, food, pre-course communication, transport, etc.) to be:



The treatment and **human atmosphere** during the course was:





SOME GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS ABOUT THE COURSE BY TRAINEES

Recommendations

I feel there could have been more opportunities for professional exchange among participants. I believe each participant could have shared more about their challenges and successes with the other participants and the trainers.

Making better use of the diversity of participants' experiences by encouraging exchanges between different contexts and realities.

I thought everyone was treated in a very inclusive and welcoming way. Everyone felt comfortable expressing their opinions and asking questions.

I believe the immersive nature of the course days alongside other professionals greatly facilitated integration. I was able to interact very well with all participants.

I believe all the moments created during the course, within the established schedule and available time, were reasonable for human interaction. Perhaps the language barrier—and this could be an area for improvement—was the only issue that prevented better connection.

Perhaps greater diversity of professional backgrounds, beyond biologists, veterinarians, and related fields. Bringing in more people from tourism, economics, and administration could also be valuable.

Recommendations

The training was excellent! It's difficult to find areas for improvement. I suggest: a) better briefing UC managers so they are not caught off guard when questions are asked (e.g., the manager from Ilha do Mel regarding GRMA); b) increasing tolerance for Brazilian cultural traits, especially regarding speaking time (too much is bad, but too little can also be harmful).

There should be time for feedback during the course. There should also be a racial diversity policy to ensure black participants specifically have access to the course.

For events here in Brazil or in South America (Latin countries), it would be important to have some background music in the evenings, always in moderation—for example, during dinner.

Give participants the opportunity to introduce themselves and their institutions.

I thought the logistics were excellent, considering the number of people, places visited, and activities carried out. There were so many things that could have gone wrong, but everything ran smoothly. The team truly deserves congratulations!

The only recommendation I have is to provide small snacks during the morning and afternoon breaks, such as fruit and cookies in addition to coffee.

An aerial photograph of a vast, lush green forest covering rolling hills. The forest is dense and vibrant, with various shades of green. In the background, the hills rise against a clear blue sky, with some light mist or smoke visible in the valleys. The overall scene is bright and natural.

SOME GENERAL COMMENTS ABOUT THE COURSE BY TRAINEES

Comments

A transformative course. I am very grateful for the opportunity and for the quality of the exchanges and learning throughout the entire program.

This course was an “opportunity of a lifetime,” and I am very grateful to have been part of the group and for the work that the Effective Conservation Training Initiative is doing around the world, training present and future generations of conservation leaders!

The course was excellent! It was an experience that provoked deep reflections about working in conservation and promoted valuable learning for personal life as well. I consider it a truly transformative experience in many ways, and I will be eternally grateful for the opportunity.

This training program was the most significant learning experience I have ever had. It provided concrete and readily applicable tools for daily work routines, which will help make my team and my institution’s management processes more effective, and consequently achieve more effective conservation outcomes. It was also a very important networking experience.



Comments

The program provided training in fundamental aspects of leadership work, with a focus on conservation, which is rarely found. By creating opportunities for leaders to meet both in person and virtually within a network, the possibilities for collective collaboration are greatly expanded. The program innovates in so many ways that I cannot think of any suggestions at the moment.

One aspect that could improve in future editions is racial diversity. The majority of participants, speakers, and leadership references presented were white people, which does not accurately represent the Brazilian population. Perhaps this reflects inequality within conservation organizations themselves. However, it is important to hear not only from people working on different topics, but also from people with different lived experiences who may face different challenges and bring to the conversation issues that may be overlooked by the majority. One good way to increase this diversity would be through the speakers, by inviting a more socially diverse group of presenters.

Comments

Congratulations, and thank you for the course. A life-changing experience!

Congratulations on the initiative. As we heard during the closing bonfire, this program changed many people's lives, both professionally and personally. Thank you very much for the opportunity! Gracias!

The best course of my life!

