COMMUNITY, CONSERVATION, AND COLLABORATION

A FRAMEWORK FOR SUCCESS

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC | African People & Wildlife

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The National Geographic Society is a leading nonprofit that invests in bold people and transformative ideas in the fields of exploration, scientific research, storytelling, and education. The Society aspires to create a community of change, advancing key insights about the planet and probing some of the most pressing scientific questions of our time, all while ensuring that the next generation is armed with geographic knowledge and global understanding. Its goal is measurable impact: furthering exploration and educating people around the world to inspire solutions for the greater good. For more information, visit **www.nationalgeographic.org**.

About African People & Wildlife
African People & Wildlife (APW) works to ensure a future where humans and wild animals thrive living side by side. APW partners with communities to create effective, sustainable solutions that improve the lives of rural Africans while protecting the natural world. Operating on the ground in Tanzania, APW establishes long-term relationships with local residents based on the respectful integration of science and tradition. APW's strategic, holistic approach to conservation is widely applicable in landscapes where people and wildlife coexist. Founded in 2005, APW is a recognized leader in the field of community-driven conservation. For more information, visit **africanpeoplewildlife.org**.

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FOREWORD

"A community in balance leads to a planet in balance."
— Eliana Elias, National Geographic Explorer

At the National Geographic Society, we have helped intrepid explorers, cutting-edge scientists and researchers, and powerful storytellers change the world for over 130 years. One of the most powerful ways we have worked to create impact is by partnering with communities to help advance local solutions and, in doing so, drive sustainable progress.

Today, in the face of unprecedented threats to our planet's wildlife and ecosystems, collaboration is more critical than ever before. Through our global network of National Geographic Explorers—leading experts in science and discovery, education and storytelling—we are working closely with local leaders and champions for the environment and natural world to drive new knowledge and solutions, and create a planet in balance.

Throughout my career, and particularly in my role as chief scientist at the National Geographic Society, I have seen firsthand how global threats to biodiversity can be successfully met with locally driven solutions. In fact, I believe local communities play an essential role in biodiversity conservation and ecosystem health. This is why we are so proud to partner with African People & Wildlife and our very own National Geographic Explorer Laly Lichtenfeld. Together, Laly and her team are empowering and enabling local people to become drivers of their own natural landscapes through sound management, governance, and sustainable livelihoods.

To build on our mission and expand our impact, the Society launched Last Wild Places, a 10-year initiative to help protect the diverse landscapes and marine environments that sustain life on Earth. As part of this effort, we have partnered with African People & Wildlife and other conservation organizations around the world that are embracing community-driven initiatives, building capacity at the local level, and integrating valuable local lessons to inform long-lasting conservation solutions.

The content outlined in this framework highlights many of these lessons and strategies, which are imbued with a diverse range of traditional knowledge and contextualized experiences. While we recognize that individual communities are richly nuanced and complex, this framework takes great care to capture a cross section of case studies and conservation models from across the African continent, including in Kenya, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda. The contexts and implementations vary, but they all share one common theme: local communities are at the heart of the conservation and management efforts.

WE ARE ENERGIZED BY THIS IMPORTANT STEP. THROUGH AN EVOLVING FRAMEWORK, COUPLED WITH TRAINING AND SUPPORT, WE AIM TO BOLSTER TRADITIONAL CULTURES AND LIVELIHOODS WHILE EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES ACROSS AFRICA TO SAFEGUARD THEIR NATURAL LANDSCAPES FOR YEARS TO COME.

For this reason, we are hopeful this framework can support the broader conservation sector. By building on the experiences of others, NGOs and conservation practitioners can enhance their own community engagement strategies—adapting their tools and trainings to their specific sociocultural contexts, landscape management needs, and community priorities.

We are energized by this important step. Through an evolving framework, coupled with training and support, we aim to bolster traditional cultures and livelihoods while empowering communities across Africa to safeguard their natural landscapes for years to come. As we look to the future, we will continue to strengthen our partnerships with indigenous people and local communities and harness our history of storytelling to amplify their voices.

As Eliana Elias said so powerfully, in order to have a planet in balance we must have communities in balance.

Together, I believe we can accelerate meaningful solutions to protect the great diversity of life and build a brighter future for all.

Jonathan Baillie, Ph.D.
Executive Vice President and Chief Scientist
National Geographic Society

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A MESSAGE FROM AFRICAN PEOPLE & WILDLIFE

African People & Wildlife is committed to working in partnership with local communities. We recognize the critical role people play as stewards of our natural resources. Few places on Earth today escape the touch of humanity—whether positive or negative. With decades of combined experience among our team, we have witnessed firsthand the magic that occurs when people come together; share their priorities, interests, and goals; respect and listen deeply to one another; and work together to develop effective and meaningful conservation programming. Yet, we also humbly acknowledge that there is so much still to learn.

This is one of the reasons we feel so honored to work with the National Geographic Society and a group of leading conservation practitioners in Africa to develop a framework for community engagement in conservation. Each landscape that the practitioners reach reflects the beauty of originality and nuance, shaped by particular ecological, social, cultural, economic, and political influences. Likewise, the communities in those landscapes are individual. Only with a spirit of collaboration among conservationists, local people, governments, businesses, and additional stakeholders can we truly unlock the similarities and differences in our experiences and come to a deep understanding of the best practices in this field.

Our efforts start with this document, but they do not end here. We anticipate future revisions to this framework as more partners join us. While we recognize the incredible significance of opening new pathways to community engagement, we also admit that this is only a part of what we need. The actual voices of local people must reach the conservation sector, represented by the individuals themselves as opposed to their conservation emissaries. They need a real-time seat at the proverbial table.

We hope you will agree that we have taken a bold step in the right direction and that this framework serves as an important contribution to the advancement of community engagement in conservation.

ONLY WITH A SPIRIT OF COLLABORATION AMONG CONSERVATIONISTS, LOCAL PEOPLE, GOVERNMENTS, BUSINESSES, AND ADDITIONAL STAKEHOLDERS CAN WE TRULY UNLOCK THE SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN OUR EXPERIENCES AND COME TO A DEEP UNDERSTANDING OF THE BEST PRACTICES IN THIS FIELD.

Laly Lichtenfeld

Laly Lichtenfeld, Ph.D.
Co-founder and CEO, African People & Wildlife
National Geographic Explorer

INTRODUCTION

We are reaching a critical time for conservation and environmental programming; trends leading toward irreversible tipping points in the Earth's biodiversity and ecosystem health are becoming clearer as pressure mounts from human population increase and natural resource overuse. Failure in environmental efforts is not an option. The support and active engagement of local communities is a critical component of securing a healthy future for our planet—including all beings, human and wild. To gain that support, conservation actions must serve the dual purpose of benefiting people and nature in order to also meet the growing needs of communities dependent on limited natural resources.

Many conservation and development organizations have important, practical experience working closely with local peoples. We hope to learn from their successes and build on them. However, some lack a formal approach that can be expanded, tested, and used to inform the programming of new organizations. Much of the experience and knowledge surrounding community engagement tools and methods is held in the minds of practitioners long gone, lost in personnel turnover, or found only in literature hidden behind paywalls, rendering it inaccessible to implementing organizations working in the field on tight budgets. Other donors and NGOs have formal, written approaches that are heavy in theory but missing the practical details of community engagement in action that would allow their models to be imitated or adopted.

And, of course, context matters. Often methods, models, and theories of community conservation have been developed to reflect the specific contexts in which organizations with expertise in a region operate. Acknowledging the individuality and nuances of communities is key to a successful approach. By reviewing a variety of programs, challenges, and successes from a network of conservation and development organizations working closely with communities, we found a unique opportunity to identify best practices in community engagement and highlight overarching lessons that can be applied in multiple contexts. In synthesizing our individual knowledge and experience, we outline key principles and suggest a road map—winding though it may be as applied in different contexts—for strong community engagement.

Therefore, this framework provides NGOs with a strong and elastic process for engagement, based on guidance derived from a substantial body of knowledge on the topic. It is the result of collaboration among donors, governments, NGOs, and academics with the common goal of creating a comprehensive guide to the principles of community engagement and a flexible approach to working as partners with local peoples. Over 60 academic articles and case studies were reviewed to lay the foundation of this framework, and more than 50 organizations' strategies in eastern and southern Africa were considered. Interviews were conducted with experts in community engagement along with many people who have decades of experience in the field. In an inaugural workshop on the future of community engagement in conservation and development, 15 organizations brought their experiences together, fostering a true spirit of collaboration.

This framework is not intended to be the final product of that collaboration but rather the first step. We seek to contribute to the existing body of literature on community engagement and provide an open access guide from which all organizations can learn and adapt. Through strategies, case studies, practical examples, and a suite of tools, this framework goes beyond theory and uniquely attempts to answer the question of "how" in a manner that addresses the complexity of our work and acknowledges that flexibility is required to account for variable community contexts. And our work is not finished here. We invite the input, feedback, and critique of all organizations with experiences to share and intend for this framework to be a living document, adapting and evolving along with the complex communities with which we work.

INTENDED AUDIENCE

We developed this framework for NGOs, conservation practitioners, and protected area managers working on the ground in eastern and southern Africa. For the sake of brevity throughout this document, we often refer to "NGOs" as the audience; however, we recognize and acknowledge that the intended audience is much broader than non-governmental organizations alone. Modern-day conservation challenges often require community engagement and participation. However, many conservationists and environmental managers remain trained principally in the ecological and biological sciences with varying degrees of exposure to community outreach strategies. Only in recent decades have we seen a shift toward interdisciplinary studies and an increasing emphasis on the importance and relevance of the social sciences to the conservation and protected area management fields.

It is our hope that conservation practitioners and environmental managers in Africa will use this framework and its associated toolkit to enhance their knowledge and skills when interacting and working with local peoples. There is no doubt that the application of this framework will vary incredibly depending on the unique geographic, ecological, political, cultural, and economic circumstances of where it is applied. Some sections will apply more to high-level governance institutions or protected area management while others focus specifically on NGO implementation and on-the-ground activity planning. Therefore, we provide general principles, an evolving road map for effective engagement, and examples of best practices and strong projects from the field to help guide those with an interest in further professionalizing their community engagement strategies.

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THE ENDURING IMPACT OF COMMUNITIES IN CONSERVATION

The history of our species has revolved around our reliance on the natural world. For millennia, human communities around the world have engaged in natural resource management and conservation of the lands on which they depend. Globally, we have impacted our environment in many ways—from overuse and destruction to stewardship and restoration.

Many of today's environmental challenges stem not from poor resource management at the community level but rather from resource overuse and needs emanating from the most developed countries on the planet. While such rapid economic growth has often created a schism between people and the natural world, this human-nature dualism is more unfamiliar to those whose livelihoods depend on the security of the natural resources surrounding them. At the most local level, many peoples around the globe have an intimate relationship with and knowledge of their lands, wildlife, water, and climate. As such, communities are important custodians of their environments.

AT THE MOST LOCAL LEVEL, MANY PEOPLES AROUND THE GLOBE HAVE AN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP WITH AND KNOWLEDGE OF THEIR LANDS, WILDLIFE, WATER, AND CLIMATE. AS SUCH, COMMUNITIES ARE IMPORTANT CUSTODIANS OF THEIR ENVIRONMENTS.

This document aims to acknowledge the stewardship role communities play and underscores the enduring impact they have on landscape management. We recognize the importance of traditional systems of natural resource management and land allocation, many of which have already inspired large-scale landscape planning, influenced government policy, and generated income for local peoples. And we call attention to and celebrate the important role of women. From women's responsibilities in sowing and harvesting to the growing number of female scientists working in conservation today, women have held a critical—though often underappreciated—position in ensuring the sustainability of Earth's natural resources. Empowering women and girls at the community level to embrace their role as influencers can advance environmental initiatives regionally and globally.

The importance of engaging local communities in conservation is intensified during this time of climate change. Resilience and mitigation strategies to address the impacts of unpredictable weather and natural disasters—for both people and wildlife—will require collaborations at the landscape level and beyond. Vulnerable populations and minorities, including coastal peoples, islanders, and agriculturalists, are deeply dependent on the natural world for their livelihoods and therefore stand to lose the most. Fortunately, there is great opportunity in working together. For example, after Cyclone Idai devastated rural communities in Mozambique in March 2019, thousands of local people living near Gorongosa National Park mobilized to work in partnership with protected area authorities and rangers to facilitate relief efforts and mitigate the damage caused by flooding. This example of communities and institutions working closely for the betterment of people and planet is just one of many. The environmental problems we face provide an opportunity to amplify the voices of local peoples, scale indigenous knowledge, and inspire collective adaptation and innovation.

It is time to move forward, acknowledging the challenges we face together, recognizing communities' management of their landscapes, and learning from the wealth of existing traditional ecosystem knowledge. We must embrace the beauty and complexity of social-ecological systems, embodying the values of sustainable use inherent in the traditional natural resource management systems that have existed for as long as humanity itself. But to do this well, we must first ask how to meaningfully and effectively engage with communities and their lands.

THE CHALLENGES WE FACE

The evolution of conservation programs and regulations to support more community-inclusive ideology represents a significant step forward in community engagement and creates a path toward a more harmonious concept of the relationship between people and nature. Much has been learned along the way. Four overarching critiques of community engagement have emerged from nearly 50 years of experience. We seek to learn from these challenges to improve community engagement in conservation.

Romanticizing community

The concept of *indigenous community* has often been erroneously associated with *primitive*, *backwards*, or, in later conservation discourse, *virtuous* and *pure*. Western NGOs, donors, and academics engaged in community-based conservation have idealized the "ecologically noble savage" as a standard by which we measure our ability to live in harmony with nature.[1] But as environmental historian William Cronon laments, indigenous peoples who adopt modern practices or technologies often suffer a "fall from environmental grace" in the conservationist's view.[2]

"Why in the debates about pristine natural areas are 'primitive' peoples idealized, even sentimentalized, until the moment they do something unprimitive, modern, and unnatural, and thereby fall from environmental grace? What are the consequences of a wilderness ideology that devalues productive labor and the very concrete knowledge that comes from working the land with one's own hands?"
—William Cronon, 1995

This tendency to romanticize non-Western peoples and synonymize traditional systems with a lack of desire for progress can seriously hinder the effectiveness of community-based conservation and development programs.[3] Relationships with indigenous groups can falter if those groups are forced to retain some stereotypical "primitive" practices. While the incorporation of indigenous knowledge into conservation programming is certainly a best practice, distorting traditional practices for the benefit of tourists or halting community development to retain the appearance of a natural utopia can cause lasting damage to communities and NGOs alike.[4]

Homogenous community perspectives

Perhaps no pitfall of community engagement strategies is more prevalent in practice than that of oversimplifying communities. As it is used on many NGO websites, in donor strategies, and in government reports, the term "community" often refers vaguely to local peoples without regard for the internal complexity in community perspectives, views, or socioeconomic statuses.[5] Viewing community as a single entity with a homogenous position on environmental initiatives can lead to further marginalization of subgroups that have been excluded from the decision-making process.[6] Disenfranchised and vulnerable groups may not be easily accessible but are often disproportionately affected by inequitable benefit distribution or other unintended consequences of NGO programming. Recognizing these environmental justice issues and the complexity within communities is a necessary aspect of ethical programming and can mitigate the challenges faced by organizations that homogenize communities.[7] Despite

vast amounts of literature on complexity and social processes, this critique of community engagement strategies is still highly relevant today.

Imbalance of conservation and community benefits

Are win-win solutions possible? More specifically, are equitable benefits for people and nature possible? Many programs throughout the years have claimed both conservation and development successes, but fewer can claim that the gain to both has been equal.[8] Programs are often conservation focused with a trickle of benefits reaching the community, or development focused with undefined or indirect benefits to the environment. An imbalance in positive outcomes can cause resentment and diminishing support from the community or insufficient ecological progress.[9] Reconciling conservation and development is an age-old problem, but one we must seek to solve through improved project design, logic, monitoring, and adaptive management.[10] Social and ecological goals have too often been in conflict or required unfortunate trade-offs, and programs aimed at addressing both have too often done so only in name.

"Conflicts between local people and conservation initiatives have generated one of the greatest and longest running debates in conservation science. We have provided a novel, global analysis showing a positive association between the socioeconomic and biodiversity conservation outcomes of PAs [Protected Areas]; these two objectives thus need not be considered as conflicting."
—Johan A. Oldekop, 2016

COMMUNITIES CAN NO LONGER BE SIMPLE BENEFICIARIES OF PROGRAMS OR TOKEN REPRESENTATIVES IN MEETINGS. FOR CONSERVATION INITIATIVES TO TRULY SUCCEED IN OUR GLOBALIZING WORLD, COMMUNITIES MUST BE DESIGNERS OF SUSTAINABLE PROGRAMS, OWNERS OF ENVIRONMENTAL ENTERPRISES, AND CATALYSTS FOR CHANGE AT NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVELS.

This challenge is perhaps the most difficult of the four to address, but good practice cases and an increasing number of global assessments provide evidence that win-win solutions are not only possible, but also necessary for a sustainable future.[11]

Illusion of community involvement

The last critique is also the most problematic. While the previous three critiques encompass a challenge we can identify and mitigate, the pitfall that programs have only the illusion of community involvement is difficult to recognize. As conservationists, we want to incorporate participatory approaches into our programming, and it is easy to believe we are doing so if we conduct needs assessments, hold community meetings, and include community leadership in discussions. However, the appearance of community inclusion does not reflect legitimate interest in and support of conservation initiatives. Community member participation in meetings does not demonstrate community ownership or empowerment. Of course, establishing strong monitoring systems and safeguards prior to program implementation can help mitigate this challenge.

1   Redford, K. H. 1990. The ecologically noble savage. Orion 9: 25–29.

2   Cronon, W. 1995. The trouble with wilderness; or, getting back to the wrong nature In William Cronon, ed., *Uncommon ground: Rethinking the human place in nature.* New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 69–90.

3   Agrawal, A., and C. C. Gibson. 1999. Enchantment and disenchantment: The role of community in natural resource conservation. World Development 27 (4): 629–649.

4   Philipp, E. 2015. Ross, Anne, Kathleen Pickering Sherman, Jeffrey G. Snodgrass, Henry D. Delcore and Richard Sherman. Indigenous peoples and the collaborative stewardship of nature: knowledge binds and institutional conflicts. Agriculture and Human Values 32 (2): 365.

5   Waylen, K. A., A. Fischer, P. J. McGowan, and E. J. Milner-Gulland. 2013. Deconstructing community for conservation: Why simple assumptions are not sufficient. Human Ecology 41: 575–585.

6   Berkes, F. 2006. From community-based resource management to complex systems: The scale issue and marine commons. Ecology and Society 11 (1): 45.

7   Margulies, J., and K. K. Karanth. 2018. The production of human-wildlife conflict: A political animal geography of encounter. Geoforum 95: 153–164.

8   Brichieri-Colombi, T. A., J. M. McPherson, D. J. Sheppard, J. J. Mason, and A. Moehrenschlager. 2018. Standardizing the evaluation of community-based conservation success. Ecological Applications 28 (8): 1963–1981.

9   Babcock, K. L. 2010. Keeping it local: Improving the incentive structure in community-based natural resource management programs. Colorado Journal of International Environmental Law & Policy 21 (1): 201–229.

10 Anthony, B. P., and L. Swemmer. 2015. Co-defining program success: Identifying objectives and indicators for a livestock damage compensation scheme at Kruger National Park, South Africa. Journal for Nature Conservation 26: 65–77.

11 Oldekop, J., G. Holmes, W. Harris, and K. Evans. 2016. A global assessment of the social and conservation outcomes of protected areas. Conservation Biology 30 (1): 133–141.

This critique can also invoke the problem of oversimplifying the community, since some subgroups in a community may be genuinely engaged in conservation projects while others may be marginalized, excluded, or ignored. Reflecting on organizational intentions and refraining from imposing goals on communities can help distinguish between surface-level involvement and true community ownership of conservation efforts. While these can be difficult processes—even for well-intentioned organizations—they are a necessary aspect of program adaptation and evolution.

"Attempts to broker partnerships need to start from the recognition of indigenous people as 'equals at the discussion table,' not (as so often in the past) as subaltern groups to whom rights might be conditionally ceded by pragmatic conservation proprietors." — William Adams, 2007

IMAGINING A NEW PATH

"How can we begin to move toward ecological and cultural sustainability if we cannot even imagine what the path feels like?"[12] — Robin Wall Kimmerer, 2013

Despite these common pitfalls, the importance of community engagement in conservation efforts continues to grow. Development and environmental work must occur simultaneously for long-term, sustainable outcomes to be achieved. None of the challenges described above are impassable if we as conservationists recognize them and seek to alter our programs accordingly. This requires not just adjusting problematic program designs but also reflecting on our own perspectives, learning from our history, and—most importantly—shifting to a new environmental paradigm in which communities *drive* conservation.

The time has come for us to redefine our role as conservationists. Communities can no longer be simple beneficiaries of programs or token representatives in meetings. For conservation initiatives to truly succeed in our globalizing world, communities must be designers of sustainable programs, owners of environmental enterprises, and catalysts for change at national and international levels. Our role, as organizations with political leverage, financial resources, scientific prowess, and environmental management expertise, must shift toward one of support, facilitation, and advocacy. The necessity of a rights-based approach to conservation cannot be overstated. We must build the capacity of communities to manage their own resources, recognizing their wealth of traditional knowledge while also providing access to new science and technological tools. We must empower the most vulnerable populations in communities while working within existing cultural and governance structures. We must be facilitators of innovation while encouraging the revival of a healthy human-nature relationship. Indeed, we must question our own relationship with nature and strive to set aside the human-nature dualism that has threatened coexistence for centuries. Most importantly, we must be agents of change, inspiring all sectors of society to be good stewards of their natural environments.

Though not all community engagement strategies have been successful in the past, in most cases today there is simply no other way to do conservation. Shifting our environmental paradigm from *community-based* to *community-driven* conservation is crucial to finding balance between people and nature, society and ecology, tradition and innovation. Perhaps the more appropriate question to ask ourselves—as we embark on a journey toward more ethical, equitable, and ecologically sound conservation—is not why we should engage communities, but why communities should engage with us.

THE NECESSITY OF A RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH TO CONSERVATION CANNOT BE OVERSTATED. WE MUST BUILD THE CAPACITY OF COMMUNITIES TO MANAGE THEIR OWN RESOURCES, RECOGNIZING THEIR WEALTH OF TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE WHILE ALSO PROVIDING ACCESS TO NEW SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGICAL TOOLS.

[12] Kimmerer, R. W. 2013. Braiding sweetgrass: Indigenous wisdom, scientific knowledge and the teachings of plants. Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions.

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PRINCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT

Engaging effectively with communities requires a solid foundation of trust based on mutual respect and understanding of priorities. Establishing principles as a code of conduct helps the relationship process by setting expectations for all parties.

It also assists NGOs in developing their approaches to and activities around community engagement. And it sets the stage for transparency, which conservationists agree is critical to building lasting, meaningful partnerships.

Some organizations use guiding principles as a foundation for their models of engagement. For example, housed in the acronym PARTNERS, the Snow Leopard Trust emphasizes its principles of community engagement: the *presence* of conservationists among the community members; the *aptness* of interventions; *relationships* built on respect; *transparency* with local communities; *negotiations* based on conservation

linkages; *empathy* and attention to perspectives; *responsiveness* to emerging problems; and *support* to increase resilience of community conservation efforts.[1]

When donor-imposed timelines require NGOs to meet benchmarks and deadlines, there can be a tendency to push the process along. However, when working with communities, rigidity is not favorable. It is important to remain fluid, flexible, and responsive to the momentum and pace of local people. The specific values reflected in the principles will undoubtedly vary based on culture, project, and setting. Still, in virtually all cases, agreed upon, documented principles serve as a lens that is critical to ensuring conservationists remain mindful of the concerns of residents.

In a workshop on community engagement hosted by African People & Wildlife in Arusha, Tanzania, on November 14 and 15, 2018, our invited collaborators shared what they believed to be the most essential principles:

PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Flexibility
Remaining responsive to shifting community interests and issues, adjusting direction and momentum as necessary

Respect
Upholding cultural institutions, local governments, and community decision-making structures in conservation initiatives

Trust
Optimizing benefit-sharing and improving livelihoods through transparency, equity, and reciprocity

Participation
Eliciting inclusive community participation and collaboration with stakeholders

Integration
Embracing a shared learning environment that emphasizes understanding and empathy through dialogue, listening, and support of local languages

Relevance
Incorporating traditional knowledge and diverse perspectives of local communities and indigenous peoples

Empowerment
Inspiring community involvement by committing to resource ownership, capacity building, and accountability

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[1] Snow Leopard Trust. 2019. Partners principles. https://www.snowleopard.org/our-work/conservation-programs/partners-principles.

FIG. 1
INCLUSIVE PARTICIPATION

Real and active participation is perhaps one of the most challenging principles to implement in practice. To avoid the pitfall of the *illusion of community engagement*, NGOs must ensure that participation in conservation initiatives is inclusive and substantial. These five strategies, which also reflect the principles mentioned, can assist NGOs in fostering genuine participation in a target community.
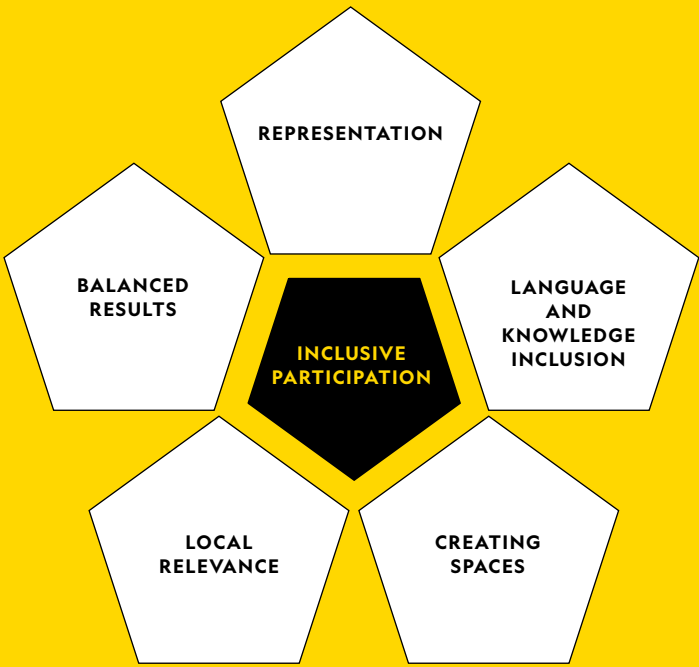
Ensure Widespread Representation
Reach out to minority members of a community and vulnerable populations to ensure they are aware of and have access to program activities. This may mean sending team members to remote areas of a community, providing transportation, and closely monitoring activity demographics. Providing opportunities for majority-minority or gender disaggregated meetings and ensuring confidentiality will help give underrepresented people the opportunity to speak freely.

Foster Language and Knowledge Inclusion
Ensure that translators are present during activity implementation when necessary and encourage community members to contribute what they know about a relevant topic. Note that this knowledge may not be shared in the way we are used to (through books or records) but may be provided in the form of stories, songs, and art. Similarly, accessing this knowledge can require different lines of questioning to account for varying perceptions of what information is important. A wide range of tools beyond interviews or group meetings can also be used to learn about local knowledge.

Create Spaces for Information Exchange
As an NGO, make staff members available to the community regularly. NGO staff should be approachable and open to listening to and discussing relevant issues with community members. Both formal and informal spaces for ideas and feedback are extremely useful.

Ensure Local Relevance
Programs should be co-designed with the community and be pertinent to their needs. People are not likely to participate in programming that seems unlikely to affect them or is irrelevant to their lives. Remember, relevance will change over time so programs must follow another principle: flexibility.

Aim for Balanced Results
Ensure that program benefits are distributed as equally and equitably as possible among community subgroups. Groups that feel shortchanged or marginalized will be less likely to participate in future programming, which will further the cycle of imbalanced results. Providing equitable benefits is also a strategy for another principle: trust.

RECOGNIZING COMMUNITY

Jamii. Communauté. Olosho.
Comunidade. Gemeenskap. Community.

Every spoken language on our planet has a word to describe the fellowship between people living in the same area and experiencing the same environment. Communities are often bound by historical and cultural ties, and those within them have often suffered similar challenges and celebrated similar joys. Within communities, there will always be complex social, political, economic, religious, or professional differences, but members of them are nonetheless connected by the shared experiences inherent in their common environment.

Of course, sharing a locality is just one way of defining a community. Individuals may identify with broader global communities such as political parties; ethnic, religious, racial, or gender groups; or people who share some other trait. People may also identify with specific sectors of a larger community, choosing to highlight the diversity that can be found even in the most isolated places. Members of one subgroup may intersect, conflict, or overlap with members of another subgroup, and individuals may shift their primary community over time. But regardless of the feature that binds people together—be it geographic, historical, religious, political, or linguistic—individuals identify with a community as a way of making meaning in their lives. We are social beings, and membership in some community is a necessary aspect of a healthy life. It is therefore imperative for conservation NGOs intending to work with people to first recognize how the communities are defined locally, understand what binds them together, and consider how they serve to make meaning for their members.

As NGOs, we must also clarify the definitions of words often used synonymously with community: society, indigenous, local, and native are just a few of the terms often interchanged with community, despite having internationally recognized distinguishing features. We cannot assume that all communities we work with are indigenous or even native. Subgroups of communities may certainly be indigenous, but ascribing this trait to the whole can lead to the pitfalls of homogenizing or romanticizing the community. Thus, in recognizing communities, we must accept and embrace the complexity inherent in social systems.

Finding Each Other

How do we decide upon our community partners? For an NGO with limited experience in a target region, they may be predetermined by organizational priorities, geography, eco-indicators, and existing connections. In the beginning, NGOs typically work with the communities they know on issues relevant to their conservation goals, expanding programming as they grow their networks, resources, and organizational reputations. In this case, a community interest assessment is often a strong place to begin. This type of appraisal can include a formal needs assessment or be comprised of informal meetings and discussions with community members and leadership. This is also an ideal time to begin identifying diversity and complexity within a community to avoid the pitfall of assuming homogenous community perspectives. **Tool 1** in the toolkit provides a guide for assessing community interest along with a checklist to ensure NGOs have not overlooked important processes in early community engagement.

NO MATTER THE FEATURE THAT BINDS THE COMMUNITY TOGETHER, ASSESSING THAT COMMUNITY'S INTEREST IN ENGAGING IN CONSERVATION PROGRAMMING IS CRUCIAL TO DETERMINING IN WHICH COMMUNITIES THE PROGRAM WILL SUCCEED.

For established NGOs with well-known programming, the task of determining which communities to work with can require an entirely different process. Ideally, established NGOs no longer need to conduct interest assessments since community leadership will seek out the NGO and make their interest known. It is then imperative for NGOs to develop rapid response protocols for assessing internal readiness and for engaging a new community, since delayed response times or disorganized start-ups can hinder relationships before they begin. Using standard templates for start-up project planning, budgeting, and timeline charts, NGOs can work with communities on a program package, ready to be adapted to the

CASE STUDY

African People & Wildlife's Sustainable Rangelands Initiative

In the northern Tanzania rangelands, 92 percent of available wildlife habitat consists of places where people and wildlife interact. African People & Wildlife's (APW's) Sustainable Rangelands Initiative works to keep these critical areas open and flourishing for the long-term benefit of rural communities and wild animals. Through regular data collection, assessment, information sharing, and active management, volunteer rangeland monitors—selected in conjunction with local leaders—use a mobile-based reporting system to provide updates on pasture quality to their community networks.

APW began implementing the Sustainable Rangelands Initiative in 2016 in its home village of Loibor Siret, where the NGO has strong relationships, a physical presence, and an in-depth understanding of local rangeland dynamics. Soon thereafter, the program expanded to include two additional villages where APW had been implementing human-wildlife conflict programming for several years. Conversations with community members in those villages indicated a substantial interest in rangeland monitoring and management. This interest was assessed during meetings between pastoral committees and APW staff. Together, they identified rangeland management goals early in the start-up process.

By 2019, word of mouth and organizational partners had spread awareness of this program to new communities. In geographies where the program is implemented, APW no longer seeks out villages and assesses their interest; instead, APW rangeland officers act as ambassadors of the program and village pastoral committees seek their assistance. Through established start-up protocols and a long-standing positive organizational reputation in northern Tanzania, APW has been able to expand its Sustainable Rangelands Initiative—with communities making the first move.

specific context of the community. By showing an immediate willingness to engage and demonstrating well-structured start-up procedures, an NGO can gain the confidence of the community, especially if the community has had unsuccessful engagement in the past. **Tools 2.1** and **2.2** in the toolkit provide a template start-up budget and timeline chart, respectively, which NGOs can adapt to their own programming.

Of course, even after years of positive relationship building, demonstrated success in programming, and structured start-up protocols, NGOs may still conduct regular outreach to expand their programs to new geographies and communities. Appointing local staff—who are both knowledgeable about the work and strong communicators—as organizational ambassadors is key to approaching new communities as potential partners. These staff members should speak the local languages, be well aware of local culture and traditions, and be prepared to answer questions about program

operations and intended outcomes. The ambassadors may need to travel to new locations to assess the interest of geographically new communities, or they may need to consider adapting existing programs to include new subgroups (e.g., based on politics, gender, or religion) in a familiar locality. No matter the feature that binds the community together, assessing that community's interest in engaging in conservation programming is crucial to determining in which communities the program will succeed.

Setting Boundaries

Though embracing complexity is a necessary aspect of working with diverse communities, NGOs must also set boundaries. Taking into account organizational mission, capacity, and limitations, these boundaries may be geographic, political, cultural, or demographic. Programmatic boundaries can also be set to target a livelihood-specific subgroup within a community; perhaps an NGO can target farmers and pastoralists but does not have the expertise or resources to work with wildlife scouts, teachers, or medical professionals. All members of a community may have valuable perspectives on a topic of mutual interest to the NGO, but the NGO must determine the *community within a community* that will enable the most success as a partner during program implementation. Identifying community champions is a proven strategy used by many NGOs that will be discussed in further detail in *Accessing the Community*.

"A problem common to both scholarly and advocate agendas might be described as 'genericization.' Advocate model-building can too easily become embroiled in implementing management regimes in which concepts such as community, territory, rights, resources, management, indigenous, and traditional are used generically without regard to local contexts and wide-ranging political stakes in these terms."[2] —James Brosius, 1998

Multiple-Community Programming

When conservation initiatives are relevant to many geographic communities or demonstrate early success, NGOs will likely be encouraged to work in multiple localities. For conservation, this can be ideal. With the appropriate resources and capacity, NGOs working in multiple locations have an excellent opportunity to learn from implementation in varied landscapes and to apply best practices across borders. As programming becomes more adaptable to new communities, outreach opportunities increase and allow for exponential conservation and development benefits.

Working in multiple communities across diverse landscapes and ecosystems also provides NGOs with financial and administrative insurance. Should political, social, or economic conditions change in one community—resulting in program termination or delay—work can continue in other areas where conditions are more stable. Diversifying communities is, in this way, similar to diversifying funding portfolios.

There are many ethical reasons for implementing conservation programming in multiple communities. As in the health and development sectors, sharing the benefits and technology of conservation programming widely allows for greater equity between communities and helps prevent further marginalization of already vulnerable populations. Programs targeting just one

community or subgroup can escalate conflicts between groups, exacerbate existing inequities, and create unwanted competition.

However, working in multiple communities simultaneously can also be challenging. Limited financial resources can cause NGOs to stretch programming too thin; where a well-funded program may have succeeded in one community, spreading the financial resources between multiple communities can lead to poor implementation and eventual project failure. Moreover, if the NGO prioritizes one community over another or funnels funding into certain aspects of programming but not others, it could be seen as favoritism. This can create conflict or competition for resources between communities or subgroups and damage relationships with the NGO. Facilitating collaboration between staff in multiple communities can mitigate this challenge and ensure the benefit of shared learning opportunities. As always, following the principles of community engagement when interacting with potential target communities is crucial. In particular, maintaining trust through transparency in community selection will prevent a breakdown in relationships. Further, it is always critical to determine the local relevance of programming. Simply employing blanket scale-ups across communities assumes all challenges and solutions are uniform and may ignore critical nuances that render programming ineffective and expenditures irresponsible and wasteful.

Lastly, when working across diverse landscapes or with multiple subgroups within one geographic community, NGOs must be aware of different community priorities and goals. It can be easy to expand programming based on the interests of communities while not setting boundaries to retain the organizational mission. While we must avoid generalizing programming and be flexible and willing to adapt to new community contexts, working with communities based on mutual goals (see **Tool 1: Assessing Community Interest**) can prevent mission drift.

1   Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. 2019. Free, Prior and Informed Consent. http://www.fao.org/indigenous-peoples/our-pillars/fpic/en/

2   Brosius, J. P., A. L. Tsing, and C. Zerner. 1998. Representing communities: Histories and politics of community-based natural resource management. Society & Natural Resources 11 (2): 157-168.

ESTABLISHING COMMON GROUND FOR STRONG COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Determining which communities to work in based on their interest and readiness is only the beginning of true engagement. In this section, we walk through three key aspects of community engagement that must be considered early in an organization's program timeline: defining shared goals with the community, assessing mutual threats and opportunities, and supporting good governance and diplomacy.

DEFINING SHARED GOALS

One of the most important phases of building strong relationships with communities is discovering the goals we have in common. Just as all members of a community must share some trait in order to identify with that community, NGOs must learn which environmental goals they share with a community in order to integrate effectively. This process may begin informally and gradually shift toward formal goal-setting exercises; it may be years long or even an ongoing phase of community engagement. In defining common ground with the community, we should promote open dialogue and foster collaborative relationships that help the NGO become not just tangential to the community, but a part of it. Importantly, this places local people squarely at the center of the conservation discourse.

> **ⓘ Goals. Objectives. Results. Benchmarks. Targets. Milestones. Project. Program. Activity.**
>
> As NGOs, we often get caught up in defining and differentiating terms. While this can be extremely important for donors and within organizations, it is beyond the scope of this framework. Thus, we focus on concepts rather than precise definitions. Some terms may be used interchangeably, and it is up to each NGO to determine how they fit within their own organizational structure. Remember: When working across cultures and languages, this flexibility is key!

Accessing the Community

Depending on how established or evolved an organization is, the precise starting point for engaging with a community may vary substantially. A new NGO may struggle initially with zero or few contacts to begin a relationship. As referenced in *Recognizing Community*, it is preferable to work with communities where the NGO has some connections. However, new relationships can always begin through the simple act of being present in a community and establishing friendships. Attending community events, celebrations, and meetings or visiting eating establishments and places of worship can be excellent ways to begin meeting community members.

Through our local connections, we should try to identify at least one community champion. A *community champion* is an individual in the community who has strong connections to local leadership and the community at large and is willing to facilitate introductions to other people. If the NGO is lucky, a community champion will be a member of the village council or other local governance institution. Finding community champions may take time, but without them it can be more difficult for NGOs to engage effectively and consistently. Individuals who know the influencers in a community can help inform the NGO about the local decision-making and social processes and ultimately endorse and give credibility to conservation interests.

Community champions should help facilitate introductions with, or provide contact information for, members of a community executive council or other leadership authority. When getting to know local leadership, it can be helpful to arrange a brief introductory meeting first to build trust before planning for larger presentations or discussions. This meeting should include introductions with key people from the NGO and the community and may involve a brief description of the NGO's mission statement.

📝 TIPS AND TOOLS: CLARIFY INTERNAL GOALS

Before engaging with communities to determine mutually held goals, NGOs should have a strong sense of their own identities and priorities. This will help ensure they come prepared to meetings with community leadership. Many NGOs already have a vision, mission statement, or desired end state defined in their organizational frameworks, which can serve as an internal guideline for priority-setting exercises. However, broad visions must be pared down to **goals** that are relevant to the scope and context of the intended project site. Goals should be feasible, but also ambitious! Goals that are too lofty may leave a project with no realistic targets, whereas goals that are too easy to achieve may not allow for project growth and expansion. Before conducting visioning workshops with community leadership, NGOs should understand their own priorities, areas for expansion, and **red lines** they won't cross. For instance, an NGO focused on stabilizing apex predator populations may draw a red line if a community goal is to extirpate the predator population in their area. Without defining red lines before meeting with community leadership, an NGO may be subject to mission drift or lose its foundational vision. Thus, we must recognize, as conservation NGOs, that there is some inherent, and yet essential, risk in community-driven goal setting.

Tool 3 in the toolkit can help NGOs clarify their internal goals, areas for expansion, and red lines and organize them before meeting with communities.

📝 TIPS AND TOOLS: ASSESS INTERNAL CAPACITY

When working with communities, we have a responsibility, at the very least, to "do no harm." Before implementing a project, organizations should have a strong grasp of their own skills and strengths in order to maximize their engagement efforts. If done comprehensively with a self-critical lens, internal readiness assessments help pinpoint gaps and areas where additional resources are required to be successful.

Using STEP analysis, **Tool 4 in** the toolkit guides organizations through the process of assessing internal capacity for social, technical, economic, and political work in their target communities.

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COMMUNITY CHAMPION HIGHLIGHT

Helena Mbarnoti
Tanzania

Helena Mbarnoti, known as Mama Helena to the village of Loibor Siret, Tanzania, is a natural leader. She lives in a Maasai village where women's roles are defined by tradition and a long history of a pastoralist and patriarchal lifestyle. Nevertheless, Mama Helena has spent years empowering women in the village to be in control of their own futures, to gain financial independence, and to learn useful skills.

Mama Helena has served as a community champion for African People & Wildlife's Women's Beekeeping Initiative since its inception. After an initial environmental entrepreneurship training, she led the Women's Association in *choosing* beekeeping as a sustainable and environmentally friendly enterprise. "When the women apply themselves, take responsibility, and work, [they] gain an added freedom," Mama Helena says. "I am very thankful for the organization because women are directly benefiting and they are grateful." Mama Helena has been able to strengthen her natural leadership skills by heading the Women's Association. She is a catalyst for women's empowerment in her community via her championing of African People & Wildlife's mission.

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🛈 Community Champion

An individual in the community who is knowledgeable about community structure, has connections with community leadership, and is willing to facilitate introductions to other people.

Importantly, the community leadership should be encouraged to describe the critical environmental issues in their community and how the NGO's mission fits—or doesn't fit—within existing priorities or programming and initiatives.

Understanding the Local Context

After an introductory meeting, the NGO should learn as much as possible about local needs, priorities, issues, existing systems, and other NGOs working in the region. This phase of community engagement is critical to truly understanding the people, their culture(s), and the social dynamics within which an NGO intends to work. A suite of assessments can be conducted at this phase, all of which comprise a Context Assessment. This is also an opportune time to begin collecting baseline information, even though indicators for monitoring may not be defined.

Depending on the region, community, NGO mission, and assessment capacity of the NGO, a Context Assessment may include the following:

- Needs appraisal
- Conflict analysis
- Historical background research
- Land-use change analysis
- Market assessment
- Attitudinal survey

While all these assessments may seem cumbersome or complicated, they will often overlap significantly in results. Some organizations may choose to conduct rigorously sampled assessments, while others may find it more useful to glean this information through informal discussions and conversations with community members. Either way, this initial scoping phase will help the NGO deepen its understanding of the community while strengthening relationships with individuals, subgroups, and leadership.

Remember to keep the principles of community engagement in mind so that all communication with community members is respectful and the NGO's intentions are transparent. This can expedite the relationship-building process and alleviate suspicion of newcomers.

Connecting with the Community

With a better understanding of the local context, grounded in developing relationships, we can now begin connecting more deeply with the community leadership to identify shared goals and mutual priorities. At this stage, it is important to remember and acknowledge that community leadership and members will have their own interests and red lines, which may overlap, conflict, or complement those of the NGO.

When meeting with community leadership for a visioning workshop, we should allow significant time for members of the community to state their perspectives, issues of interest, and goals, recognizing that the community will not have homogenous views. Understanding local politics and the multiple perspectives within communities can help NGOs build layered alliances that span multiple levels of governance.[1] There are several strategies that we use in visioning workshops with communities to foster an inclusive and participatory atmosphere:

- **Joint facilitation:** Identify facilitators from both the NGO and the community who can meet before the visioning workshop to delineate the roles and responsibilities of each facilitator.

- **Language inclusion:** Ensure that translators will be present for all languages spoken in the community so that all subgroups in attendance will have the opportunity to understand the proceedings and voice their perspectives in their preferred language.

📝 TIPS AND TOOLS: STAKEHOLDER MAPPING

Building relationships in new communities can sometimes be overwhelming, with many new people, organizations, and civil society groups vying for their voices to be heard. It may be difficult initially to determine which individuals and groups can help, which will oppose, and why. Examining these new relationships in depth through a stakeholder analysis can help orient an NGO while also providing necessary context for building community partnerships.

Tool 5 in the toolkit provides two templates for stakeholder mapping. The first, **Tool 5.1**, allows NGOs to categorize stakeholders as "opponents" or "supporters" of their cause along with their levels of engagement. The second, **Tool 5.2**, asks NGOs to rank the level of power that each stakeholder may have and thus determine if that stakeholder's support or opposition will be significant in programming.

1 Agrawal, A. 2005. Community, intimate government, and the making of environmental subjects in Kumaon, India. Current Anthropology 46 (2): 161–190.

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CASE STUDY

Acknowledging the Importance of Traditional Knowledge in Conflict Prevention

Including traditional knowledge in conservation programming is often said to be a necessary element of community engagement. Recognizing where traditional knowledge is useful begins at the assessment phase when NGOs can speak with community members about their past and current practices in natural resource management and human-wildlife conflict prevention.

In some communities where prolonged international aid efforts have overshadowed indigenous knowledge, NGOs may have to actively encourage a revitalization of traditional practices. In the Transmara District of southwestern Kenya, for instance, elephant conflict has long been a challenge to the safety of the local communities. As development partners pushed the communities toward agriculture over pastoralism for food security reasons, crop raiding by elephants became a dire threat, not just to safety but also to livelihoods. The traditionally nomadic people became more permanently settled near their farms, which often overlapped spatially with elephant corridors, creating further conflict between people and elephants, particularly at night. As conservation organizations recognized this issue, they began to probe community elders for traditional methods of preventing conflict between humans and elephants and instilling pride in the communities for their traditional livelihoods. Now, through a combination of technological early warning systems, easily implementable deterrents such as chili oil and beehives, and traditional ecological knowledge of elephant movement patterns, communities are more prepared when elephants are present in the corridor, leading to fewer conflicts and consequent incidences of retaliation.

"People had forgotten how to use the wind, the time of day, and the look of the soil. The indigenous knowledge was disappearing and that explained why there was high conflict. Now, we've made some good progress in terms of community engagement, with less focus on sophisticated and expensive anti-conflict measures, and more on simple and cost-effective methods that incorporate traditional knowledge of the land." — Noah Sitati, World Wide Fund for Nature [2]

[2] Sitati, N. W., and M. J. Walpole. 2006. Assessing farm-based measures for mitigating human-elephant conflict in Transmara District, Kenya. Oryx 40 (3): 279–286.

- **Disaggregation:** Consider offering separate visioning workshops for women or other minority groups to ensure their views are included. Members of minority subgroups may not feel comfortable voicing their opinions in front of the greater community. Disaggregating may help avoid the pitfall of homogenizing community perspectives.

- **Mirroring:** Encourage the community facilitator to lead the proceedings as they would in any other community meeting, with the NGO facilitator representing the interests, goals, and red lines of the organization. The location and atmosphere should mirror those of community meetings in which the NGO does not participate. This will avoid the pitfall of the visioning workshop becoming purely NGO driven and the workshop results appearing to be initiated from the top down. [3]

- **Structured participation:** Create an agenda for the meeting in collaboration with the community facilitator that encourages each subgroup within the community to state its priority goals and red lines. This often requires strong facilitation to ensure the discussion remains targeted on the topic of potential shared community-NGO programming and not all societal needs as recognized by the community.

- **Actionable agenda:** At the beginning of the visioning workshop, ensure that the facilitators clarify an end goal or deliverable that should be completed by the end of the meeting. This will help each member of the community frame their thoughts around that deliverable and allow for more productive and actionable discussion. Community members should be able to see how their perspectives and input are reflected in the final deliverable.

ⓘ Conflict Transformation Model

One model that can be used for conflict resolution within a working group is the Conflict Transformation Model. [4] This model conceptualizes conflicts as opportunities to understand and change the factors shaping priority conflict. It entails long-term engagement with conflicting parties and acknowledges that disputes about a given issue may be based on underlying histories of conflict. [5] Members of the working group must therefore meet regularly, and are encouraged to discuss their shared values, differing perspectives, and personal connections to the conflict issue. Only through repeated, respectful human engagement can meaningful relationships be built between conflicting parties on an issue. When members of a working group understand each other's sociopsychological needs and begin to develop relationships outside of the conflict sphere, open communication is more likely and resolutions to conflict issues become more feasible.

Managing Conflicting Goals

Of course, while some goals of the NGO and all subgroups of the community will overlap or complement each other, other goals will conflict. Red lines may be crossed where one community group's priority goals directly contradict those of another group or the NGO.

For instance, a farmers' association or other agricultural community group may have land-use priorities that conflict directly with the land conservation goals of the NGO, the infrastructure development goals of a

[3] Measham, T. G., and J. A. Lumbadsi. 2013. Success factors for community-based natural resource management (CBNRM): Lessons from Kenya and Australia. Environmental Management 52 (3): 649–659.

[4] Madden, F., and B. McQuinn. 2014. Conservation's blind spot: The case for conflict transformation in wildlife conservation. Biological Conservation 178: 97–106.

[5] Madden and McQuinn. 2014.

transportation authority, and the economic goals of a community-owned tourism venture. Reconciling these directly conflicting priorities requires committing to genuine conflict resolution. Many organizations might advise NGOs to focus on complementary goals to maintain positive relationships. However, embracing and attempting to resolve conflicts can be a powerful entry point for building trust and commitment. Meanwhile, ignoring or setting aside conflicting goals can lead to resentment or tension that is sure to raise issues in later stages of the project cycle. When conflicting priorities are identified through visioning exercises, it can be more productive in the long run to *create a working group* tasked with discussing and designing a resolution around the issue. Thus, a visioning workshop can continue as planned when a venue for conflict resolution has been created.

The case study below describes two scenarios of conflict in which NGOs and community subgroups had directly conflicting priorities. Comparing the community engagement strategies of each demonstrates how priorities can be reconciled or conflict can escalate between parties.

COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY

Case One

Though the Ijara pastoralists of eastern Kenya value the hirola antelope as a heritage symbol, livestock had depleted grazing land and left the hirola critically endangered. When the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) tried to translocate the remaining hirola to a national park, conflict ensued between conservationists and the Ijara seeking to protect their cultural heritage. After years of court battles, the Ijara proposed creating the community-managed Ishaqbini Hirola Conservancy. In the conservancy, managers and youth scouts are elected by the local community and trained by KWS. Reformulated grazing rules and enforcement mechanisms have increased not only hirola populations but also those of elephants, giraffes, hyenas, warthogs, and African wild dogs. The project's success relies on four key factors: The community had direct interest in the conservation goals; conservation strategies were initiated and controlled by the community; there were secure communal property rights; and government and NGOs played supportive roles, including for capacity building, without ever imposing projects or solutions.[6]

Case Two

In rural Nevada, where ranchers and the timber industry coexist with tourists and relocated environmentalists, development and growth are seen as key instigators of conflict. The Natural Heritage 2020 (NH2020) plan was designed as a collaborative response to the perceived risks of rapid growth. Planners of this "inclusive" approach, however, did not take into account the political interests and divisions that pervaded the conversation. This left them blind to the resentment of ranchers and farmers, which powerful interests recognized and capitalized upon. The opponents of NH2020 successfully campaigned against what they framed as a "stacked" process that served environmentalist goals and subsequently derailed the process by publicly attacking the program's legitimacy. Here, attempts at community-based natural resource management created the conditions for a more contentious management climate, deepening long-standing divisions and precipitating new conflicts. This is a risk of any management process that fails to recognize, analyze, and address the power dynamics embedded in environmental management.[7]

6   Measham and Lumbadsi. 2013.

7   Walker, P. A., and P. T. Hurley. 2004. Collaboration derailed: The politics of "community-based" resource management in Nevada County. Society and Natural Resources 17 (8): 735–751.

Even when no mutually ideal solution is proposed, a working group gives individuals in conflicting parties a venue dedicated to engaging with those competing priorities. Since much conflict is shaped and inflamed by individuals' feelings of marginalization, lack of respect, or lack of power in decision-making, a regular working group can offer the needed platform for influence and appreciation. As individuals begin to feel respected, heard, and included, histories of conflict can naturally de-escalate and amiable resolutions become more feasible.

IT MAY TAKE SEVERAL ITERATIONS OF THE SHARED GOALS DELIVERABLE BEFORE AGREEMENT IS REACHED. HOWEVER, THE VISIONING PROCESS CANNOT CONTINUE FOREVER; WHEN GENERAL AGREEMENT AROUND SHARED GOALS HAS BEEN REACHED, EVEN IF SPECIFIC WORDING HAS NOT BEEN SOLIDIFIED, THE PROCESS OF CO-DESIGNING ACTIVITIES CAN BEGIN.

Arriving at Goal Agreement

When expanding the dialogue from individual priorities to shared goals, visioning workshops can easily stray into broad discussions of human values. Certainly, all groups may share the desire for respect, power, ownership, and wealth. However, specific programming cannot be designed around these values.

Thus, the final deliverable should be a relevant and achievable list of specific goals that are shared among all subgroups and the NGO. Remember: The NGO should bring to light issues of interest and discuss its organizational priorities, but in the end, act as a catalyst for the community to implement its own goals where they are shared with the NGO. These goals will likely have social and economic outcomes that encourage sustainability and local relevance, but they should also be directly tied to conservation outcomes.

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The community and NGO facilitators will likely need to define goals more specifically by meeting in small groups, proposing wording of certain goals, and allowing individuals in the visioning workshop to suggest edits, amendments, or additions to the goals. At this stage in community engagement, it may be necessary for community leadership and NGO representatives to review notes from the initial sessions of the workshop and develop preliminary drafts of goals before reconvening with the community as a whole. It may take several iterations of the shared goals deliverable before agreement is reached. However, the visioning process cannot continue forever; when general agreement around shared goals has been reached, even if specific wording has not been solidified, the process of co-designing activities can begin. The initial goals defined in the visioning exercises form the beginnings of a common theory of change, shared between the community and NGO. We discuss theories of change in more detail in *Co-designing Activities*.

IDENTIFYING MUTUAL THREATS AND OPPORTUNITIES

TIPS AND TOOLS: CONDUCT A SWOT ANALYSIS

In addition to defining shared goals, NGOs must also work with community leadership and other subgroup representatives to identify threats and opportunities potentially impacting goal achievement. Jointly conducting a **SWOT** analysis, either together as a large group or in small break-out groups, is an excellent way to start. SWOT— or **strengths**, **weaknesses**, **opportunities**, and **threats**—is a commonly used strategic planning technique that can help committees comprised of diverse members to identify both internal and external capacity for programming. **Tool 6** in the toolkit provides a template that NGOs can use for SWOT analysis.

While SWOT was originally designed for business ventures, we use the same template with slightly different questions. With the common goals developed through visioning workshops already defined, an NGO facilitator can frame a SWOT analysis around those goals. For environmentally focused NGOs, facilitating a SWOT analysis in a planning committee meeting may involve questions such as the following:

- **Strengths:** What ecological, social, political, and economic assets do we have, as a community and as individual subgroups? Highlight which subgroups are best equipped to handle certain situations or activities.

- **Weaknesses:** What ecological, social, political, and economic capacities do we lack which may limit our ability to achieve our goals? Highlight potential partnerships that could fill these gaps.

- **Opportunities**: What external ecological, social, political, and economic factors can we use to achieve our goals?

- **Threats:** What external ecological, social, political, and economic challenges may threaten programming and the achievement of our goals?

The answers to these questions become the building blocks of strategic activity planning through the collaborative creation of a theory of change, which is discussed in *Co-designing Activities*.

A SWOT analysis outlines who or which subgroups have the technical abilities, language fluency, cultural awareness, knowledge of local decision-making processes, and authorities needed to make initial inroads. This is particularly relevant in rural settings. Building on existing interpersonal connections can save valuable time and resources and immeasurably affect our ability to engage key community members.

Completing a SWOT analysis collaboratively also allows for different subgroups in a community to recognize the value of working with other groups that may have a comparative advantage in some sector. The process should provide mutual learning opportunities as organizations and community members highlight their strengths. This is particularly important for empowering women, youth, and other vulnerable groups since it creates a designated space for them to express pride in their capacities and find places where they can be genuinely integrated into programming.

While discussing internal weaknesses can be challenging, creating spaces where participants in a SWOT can be vulnerable is a powerful opportunity for relationship building. Not only does identifying weaknesses allow subgroups and organizations to be self-reflective and recognize gaps in their capacities, it creates a bond between all participants, particularly where there are already strong social hierarchies. When conducting the weaknesses section of a SWOT, it is important for the NGO to also partake and be transparent about its expertise and lack thereof (See **Tool 4: STEP Analysis for Internal Capacity**).

THE THREATS SESSION SHOULD NOT BE DEMORALIZING BUT RATHER SHOULD EMPHASIZE THE AREAS WHERE THE COMMUNITY AND NGO HAVE LITTLE CONTROL AND NEED TO BUILD PARTNERSHIPS.

Discussing opportunities is the highlight of most SWOT analyses. Having just examined individual strengths and become vulnerable in referencing weaknesses, this session should be fun, innovative, and inspiring. No longer reviewing internal subgroup traits, the community and NGO can come back together as a team during the opportunities session. This is also an excellent time for the NGO and community to begin thinking about potential activities. Although co-designing activities will take place later, the opportunities session of a SWOT analysis can contribute heavily to activity planning. Note that opportunities should be factors that the community and NGO, based on their respective strengths, can reasonably change to achieve mutual goals. Due to its inspiring and innovative nature, many facilitators choose to conduct the opportunities session last, rather than before threats.

Finally, identifying external threats to mutual goals during a SWOT analysis requires strong facilitation to prevent the session from becoming disempowering. Having the facilitator come prepared with a few categories of threats and structuring the discussion around them can be helpful. Further, this section of a SWOT analysis may be better conducted in small groups, with each group reporting back to the whole; having the groups write down their threats and present them back to the group encourages productive discussion. Remember to distinguish threats from weaknesses since threats are external challenges rather than internal gaps in capacity.

The threats session should not be demoralizing but rather should emphasize the areas where the community and NGO have little control and need to build partnerships. Oftentimes, the threats will highlight a need for government partnerships. In the next section, we discuss the challenges and benefits of working with government at multiple levels, building effective partnerships, and working within and strengthening existing governance structures.

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GOVERNANCE AND DIPLOMACY

The relevance of good governance and working across multilayered governance structures for sustaining community-driven efforts should not be underestimated. Navigating the decentralized decision process necessary for effective community-driven conservation can be daunting, with decision-makers conflicting and overlapping from the community level to the national government. This section addresses the significance of local good governance and provides tools and tips for mapping the decision process, challenging that process when needed, or adapting to work within it to ensure government support.

Local Good Governance

A devolved governance structure that empowers community members to formally manage resources through a combination of local organizations and institutions, rule development and enforcement, and shared responsibilities for environmental outcomes contributes to the strength of community-driven projects. This may require renegotiating the balance of decision-making power between communities and regulatory agencies. Governments may be asked to establish and enforce community property rights, share decision-making power with local nongovernment actors, and establish policies that will maintain long-term collaborative relationships.

With this support, communities around the world can successfully manage land and marine resources, protect endangered species, and produce sustainable livelihoods. Yet passing ownership of conservation initiatives to communities requires the communities to have equitable, strong, and transparent local governance structures in place. Institutions are a significant player in social-ecological systems, and their sound policy and management are critical to ensuring that rights-based approaches to conservation are implemented and sustained.[1]

"Whether their [a community's] self-governed enterprise succeeds over the long term depends on whether the institutions they develop are consistent with design principles underlying robust, long-living, self-governed systems."
—Elinor Ostrom, 2009

The principles of good governance are similar to the principles of community engagement: integration, trust through transparency, flexibility, and participation in particular. Indices of good governance also include legitimacy, accountability, connectivity, resilience, and fairness.[2] When working with communities and within existing governance institutions, NGOs must be cognizant of the mechanisms by which individuals are granted government and leadership positions, the timeline and method of turnover, consistency in policy, and the ability of leadership to respond to community conflicts. This will also inform the NGO's assessment of community perceptions of government legitimacy, connectivity, resilience, and participation.

In many situations, NGOs will find it necessary to focus on strengthening local governance institutions in order to support effective community conservation programming. While it may seem to be outside the realm of many conservation NGOs' expertise, we encourage NGOs working with communities to include governance capacity building within potential areas for expansion. After all, true community engagement requires passing ownership onto the community and ensuring that initiatives are sustainable beyond the management of the NGO.

Encouraging National Government Support

Even though community engagement practices have become popular in conservation strategies, the decentralized management structure often necessary for effective *community-driven* conservation can easily conflict with existing environmental policy. National government officials may not see the value

in community-driven conservation initiatives, may question the efficacy of community management, or may be unwilling to give local communities control over management decisions. For these reasons, advocates of community ownership of conservation programming, in addition to designing effective programs, must develop effective strategies for demonstrating and communicating the benefits to government officials.

Because they require a committed shift from normal governance strategies, these approaches can meet resistance from government agencies at multiple levels. Though community members and advocates may see local people as those best suited to manage the environment in which they live, technical experts in government agencies may be reluctant to accept "nonprofessional" decision-makers. Agencies at local and regional levels face pressure to meet policy targets with limited staff and budgets, and may view community management as a risk for job performance. At the national scale, legislation and agency policy

often leave little room for the devolved decision structures and community-held property rights on which community conservation depends, making these strategies a burden for officials bound to national regulatory structures.

To engage government actors, address potential tensions, and encourage government to adopt community-driven conservation initiatives, environmental practitioners can draw on multiple strategies. To know what strategies will be most useful and at what levels of governance to work, NGOs should take time to outline the relevant decision processes at play. Similar to a stakeholder analysis, a decision process outline simply clarifies who is responsible, accountable, consulted, and informed of all decisions made related to an environmental initiative. See **Tool 7.1: RACI Chart for Decision Process**.

So where do we start?

TIPS AND TOOLS:
OUTLINE RELEVANT DECISION PROCESSES WITH A RACI CHART

A common tool used to outline a decision process is the RACI chart, which can be found in the toolkit as **Tool 7.1**. This chart organizes potential decision-makers, at all levels of government, into their respective roles on various decisions and actions. By first charting environmental decisions related to a program in this format, an NGO can visually depict where it should focus its efforts. Often, an NGO's efforts may have to start with changing the decision process itself. If the RACI chart is completed and the NGO recognizes that there are areas where decision-making authority must change for effective programming, it may recreate the ideal RACI chart, present it to all relevant parties, and encourage shifts in the decision process. Of course, this is easier described than achieved!

- **Responsible:** The primary decision-making authority on an issue—often an individual

- **Accountable:** The entity that is accountable for making the decision—often an agency head who usually has veto power over decisions (the buck stops here!)

- **Consulted:** Those with relevant information or expertise about an issue who must be consulted before a decision is made

- **Informed:** Those who are impacted by the decision and must be informed of changes in policy but do not have authority in the decision process

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[1] Ostrom, E. 2009. A general framework for analyzing sustainability of social-ecological systems. Science 325 (5939): 419–422.

[2] Lockwood, M. 2010. Good governance for terrestrial protected areas: A framework, principles and performance outcomes. Journal of Environmental Management 91 (3): 754–766.

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1. **Build Trust First:** Relationships built on trust and mutual respect may be the single most important factor in natural resource management.[3] Scholars who study successful adaptive co-management stress the importance of strong social networks, mutually perceived legitimacy, and social learning characterized by equality and transparency among collaborators.[4] Advocates who build these relationships with government actors early—before promoting devolved management regimes—will have a stronger foundation from which to effect change.

2. **Highlight Success Stories:** One way to foster trusting relationships and establish mutual legitimacy is by sharing victories. The global mainstreaming of community-based management creates compelling narratives for governments with conservation goals.[5] Likewise, local pilot projects can be a powerful tool for advocating for community-driven conservation. Success stories show how devolved management can succeed in the local context while providing a clear project template for government actors who may be wary of ceding control. This can spur scale-up or replication of community-based management at a regional or national scale, as in Zimbabwe's CAMPFIRE project.[6] Though managers must be mindful that wide-scale replication can counteract goals for empowerment and conservation and may invoke common pitfalls, leveraging successful models can engage local and national governments to shift environmental policy toward devolution.

3. **Emphasize the Role of Government in Community-Driven Conservation:** Community management does not entail removing government actors, and this can be a starting point for productive conversation. Successful community conservation projects rely on government offices for skills training, organizational capacity building, material and staff resources, and shared project responsibilities. Government actors are particularly vital in their capacity to support and enforce communal property rights and local decision-making.[7] Delineating these roles can help government actors recognize how community conservation will best use their offices' capacities without creating extra burden or precluding agency oversight.

4. **Appeal to Government Imperatives:** At the local level, government officials may be burdened by numbers-based targets, reporting deadlines, chronic understaffing, and budget constraints. In this context, community engagement may seem like a hindrance. By acknowledging these difficult work conditions, conservationists can help local officials see how community-based solutions may alleviate pressure. Community-based monitoring, for example, may benefit understaffed environmental offices.[8] Devolved management may particularly appeal to government actors whose strategies have fallen short, as when the translocation of endangered hirola antelopes failed in northwest Kenya (see Case One on page 28). The Ijara pastoralist community proposed a co-management solution, and the resulting community-managed conservancy has seen social and ecological success.[9]

3 Brosius, J. P., A. L. Tsing, and C. Zerner. 1998. Representing communities: Histories and politics of community-based natural resource management. Society & Natural Resources 11 (2): 157–168.

4 Lundmark, C., S. Matti, and A. Sandstrom. 2014. Adaptive co-management: How social networks, deliberation and learning affect legitimacy in carnivore management. European Journal of Wildlife Research 60 (4): 637–644.

5 Campbell, B., and S. Shackleton. 2001. The organizational structures for community-based natural resource management in Southern Africa. African Studies Quarterly 5 (3): 87–114.

6 Babcock, K. L. 2010. Keeping it local: Improving the incentive structure in community-based natural resource management programs. Colorado Journal of International Environmental Law & Policy 21 (1): 201–229.

7 Radachowsky, J., V. Ramos, R. McNab, E. Baur, and N. Kazakov. Forest concessions in the Maya Biosphere Reserve, Guatemala: A decade later. Forest Ecology and Management 268: 18–28.

8 Hazzah, L., A. Bath, S. Dolrenry, A. Dickman, and L. Frank. 2017. From attitudes to actions: Predictors of lion killing by Maasai warriors. PLoS ONE 12 (1): e0170796.

9 Measham, T. G., and J. A. Lumbadsi. 2013. Success factors for community-based natural resource management (CBNRM): Lessons from Kenya and Australia. Environmental Management 52 (3): 649–659.

CASE STUDY

From Local to Global, Transboundary Conservation Initiatives

The future of large-scale conservation lies in transnational, transboundary, and multiple-land-use initiatives that seek to improve coexistence and maintain habitat connectivity in fragmented, human-dominated landscapes. Naturally, at its most complicated tier, linking community-level conservation efforts to international conservation goals requires transnational cooperation and strong governance institutions.

The Kavango-Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area (KAZA TFCA) encompasses lands in Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, covering nearly 520,000 square kilometers (km^2). As the largest transfrontier conservation area on the globe, KAZA comprises 20 national parks, 85 forest reserves, 22 conservancies, 11 sanctuaries, 103 Wildlife Management Areas, 11 Game Management Areas, and over 148,000 km^2 of land for agriculture and rangeland. This extraordinary diversity in land use and livelihoods creates extreme governance challenges. But, by necessity, it also drives cooperative and collaborative opportunities to overcome conflicting priorities and align revenue streams of adjacent communities and neighboring countries.

Yet KAZA's varied land-use allocation, from strict protected areas to productive agricultural fields, provides a platform for the landscape-scale conservation efforts needed to maintain healthy ecosystems and redefine the relationship between people and nature. Through a six-tiered governance structure—with the Ministerial Committee providing multinational political leadership, national committees ensuring alignment between country and KAZA-wide priorities and distributing benefits to communities, and a secretariat coordinating day-to-day operations—KAZA seeks to link community conservation and development initiatives with global conservation aims.

Though there is much to learn in governing transfrontier conservation areas, the KAZA TFCA, through its diversity- and community-based approach, is emerging as a leader in landscape-scale conservation through community-driven initiatives.[10]

10 Kavango-Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area. Master Integrated Development Plan: 2015–2020.

5. Build on Existing Policies and Organizational Structures: Many countries have natural resource policies that encourage, or at least allow for, some degree of devolved management. Though these policy and legislative mechanisms do not guarantee environmentally or socially successful management,[11] they are nonetheless key strategic instruments for convincing governments to support community engagement in conservation. Existing frameworks may come in the form of national legislation, resource management policy, or government-supported civil society structures. Examples include ejido communal agricultural lands in Mexico, the National Forest Policy of Tanzania, and government-supported people's organizations in the Philippines. Though these policies are likely insufficient for fully supporting community engagement in conservation, and further policy and legislative advocacy may be required,[12] invoking them can open windows of opportunity for government buy-in.

6. Recognize Limitations: Finally, advocates of community-driven conservation must recognize that this strategy is no panacea, and it will not fit all social, political, and environmental settings. Acknowledging this will increase NGOs' legitimacy with government actors and allow practitioners to identify suitable sites based on specific social, environmental, and governance contexts. With this in mind, advocates should appreciate that even in appropriate local contexts perceived power imbalances can derail these initiatives.[13] To address this limitation, NGOs may want to invoke facilitated conflict resolution strategies at an early stage as addressed previously in *Managing Conflicting Goals*.[14] NGOs must also recognize when existing governance structures are sufficient. In these cases, establishing new leadership to fit community engagement objectives may result in inefficient, redundant, or parallel governance structures. Similarly, forcing participation when there is a lack of capacity or readiness—purely for the sake of meeting demographic diversity targets—can do more harm than good, both for the NGO and the community members involved.

> *"In struggling to create a sustainable world and functional societies, individuals inevitably express shared concerns about human dignity, mutual respect, and healthy environments, manifest in their perspectives and behaviors. Functionally, achieving sustainability requires that societies be made up of whole individuals— that is, people who are physically, psychologically, and socially integrated within the institutions of society."*
> —Susan G. Clark and Richard L. Wallace, 2015 [15]

11 Li, T. 2007. The will to improve: Governmentality, development, and the practice of politics. Durham: Duke University Press.

12 Pomeroy, R. S. 1995. Community-based and co-management institutions for sustainable coastal fisheries management in Southeast Asia. Ocean & Coastal Management 27 (3): 143–162; Lindsay, J. M. 1999. Creating a legal framework for community-based management: Principles and dilemmas. UNASYLVA-FAO: 28–34.

13 Walker, P. A., and P. T. Hurley. 2004. Collaboration derailed: The politics of "community-based" resource management in Nevada County. Society and Natural Resources 17 (8): 735–751.

14 Redpath, S. M., J. Young, A. Evely, W. M. Adams, W. J. Sutherland, A. Whitehouse, A. Amar, R. A. Lambert, J. D. C. Linnell, A. Watt, and R. J. Gutierrez. 2013. Understanding and managing conservation conflicts. Trends in Ecology & Evolution 28 (2): 100–109.

15 Clark, S. G., and R. L. Wallace. 2015. Integration and interdisciplinarity: Concepts, frameworks, and education. Policy Sciences 48 (2): 233–255.

FIG. 2
PRINCIPLES OF GOOD GOVERNANCE[16]

GOVERNANCE VALUES

Legitimacy: The acceptance and justification of shared rule

Transparency: The visibility of decision-making processes

Accountability: The allocation and acceptance of responsibility for decisions and actions

Inclusiveness: The availability of opportunities for all stakeholders to participate in and influence decision-making

Fairness: The attention given to stakeholders' views and absence of personal bias in decision-making

Connectivity: Effective coordination and coherence between levels of governance

Resilience: Balance between flexibility and security in anticipating and responding to threats and opportunities

HUMAN VALUES

Affection: Desire for friendship and loyalty

Enlightenment: Desire to give and receive information

Power: Desire to make and carry out decisions

Rectitude: Desire for moral or ethical standards

Respect: Desire to give and receive recognition

Skill: Desire to develop talents

Well-being: Desire for mental and physical health

Wealth: Desire to control resources

Good governance is closely connected to the preservation of core human values. People create governance institutions as a means to protect their base values, though often we do so subconsciously. Therefore, one role of governance institutions is to ensure that human values are upheld in a community.

As human institutions, governance structures are dependent on the people they serve to retain authority. If good governance principles are not met, human values will degrade, and the community will seek a change in authority. Thus, human values and principles of good governance are interdependent.

16 **Adapted from** Clark, S. G. 2002. The policy process: A practical guide for natural resource professionals. New Haven: Yale University Press; Lasswell, H. D. 1970. The emerging conception of the policy sciences. Policy Sciences 1 (1): 3–14; Lockwood, M. 2010. Good governance for terrestrial protected areas: A framework, principles and performance outcomes. Journal of Environmental Management, 91 (3): 754–766.

AN EVOLVING PROCESS OF COLLABORATION

Genuine community engagement requires not just community inclusion in preliminary meetings, analyses of the local context, and shared goal setting but also true collaboration in all aspects of program implementation, evaluation, and adaptation. This section walks us through an evolving process of collaboration in which communities design activities, implement them, and participate in the monitoring and evaluation of those programs.

CO-DESIGNING ACTIVITIES

When common goals have been defined in an inclusive and participatory way, and mutual threats and opportunities have been identified, we begin to work with community leadership or other influential members of the community to plan activities aimed at achieving those goals. Of course, planning at this stage cannot be done productively in large community meetings, so we ensure multiple perspectives are incorporated by working closely with a planning committee made up of community subgroup leaders. We do not select these leaders ourselves, but rather ensure that the community members identify who should represent them in the planning committee. Most importantly, we find that when local employees represent the NGO in a planning committee, the meetings are more productive.

NGOs must also bear in mind that there may be programming already happening in their target communities. Through the preliminary assessments referenced in the previous section, the NGO should be well aware of the types of programs being conducted, what those programs are achieving, and what resources they may be lacking. Together, the community and NGO should have identified the programming that has overlapping or complementary goals in order to better focus their resources, whether it be to expand, adapt, or modify. Of course, if no such programming exists, or if the NGO and community have innovative ideas for solving existing challenges, they have the exciting opportunity to work closely to design and introduce new initiatives.

Planning for Results

Much of the material discussed earlier in this framework lays the groundwork for creating a theory of change. It is a phrase that many NGOs use, and many have organizational theories of change, but rarely are they created in collaboration with the community. For conservation initiatives to be truly community driven, the community must be involved with designing activities through the mutual creation of a theory of change.

> ### ⓘ Theory of Change
>
> A cause-and-effect hypothesis, or model, for how a suite of activities will achieve a project's goals. Usually, a theory of change is comprised of "building blocks" that begin with project activities and, through cause-and-effect logic, end with the achievement of long-term project goals.

But what is a theory of change?

Because using sound cause-and-effect logic is critical in developing a theory of change, some organizations refer to theories of change as **logical frameworks**. Other donors and organizations phrase each "building block" of a theory of change as the effect, or result, of the previous building block. For this reason, theories of change can also sometimes be called **results frameworks**.

Despite the different names used to describe theories of change, the concept is always the same: Every project should have a hypothesis of how activities will achieve defined goals. Thus, developing a theory of change as a strategic planning exercise with the project planning committee is a necessary step in co-designing activities. We begin theory of change development through a process called **backwards mapping**, where we start with the mutual goals developed in visioning workshops and work backwards through cause-and-effect logic until we arrive at implementable activities.

While there are several ways to structure a theory of change, and many organizations and donors will have their own preferences, the basic structure remains the same. In a very simple theory of change, there are generally four levels:

1. **Input:** The project resources. (What financial and human resources are you putting into activities?)

2. **Output:** The project activities. (What direct results will come of the resource inputs?)

3. **Outcome:** The intermediate results of the project activities. (What indirect actions or changes will be caused by the activities?)

4. **Impact:** The project goal. (What will ultimately change as a result of the activities?)

In a simple model, an input causes an output. The output causes an outcome, which then causes an impact. Or, to think of it in reverse: The impact is a direct result of the outcome, which is a direct result of the output, which is a direct result of the input. A simple theory of change with just one building block at each level is often called a **causal chain**.

In an activity-designing session with the project planning committee, take time to create one or two *causal chains* as a group, logically linking potential activities to their intended goals. Results from a SWOT analysis, particularly from the opportunities session, can spark ideas for activities. If the committee has trouble linking activities to an end goal, it is often a result of predetermining activities where either the NGO or members of the community wish to implement certain activities, despite the possibility that they might not reflect or lead toward mutually defined goals. Working backwards from mutual goals to activities can mitigate this common pitfall and ensure that the NGO is not imposing unwanted activities on a community or genericizing. As a committee, use the results of SWOT and STEP analyses (**Tool 6** and **Tool 4** from the toolkit) to rethink the types of activities that can be implemented mutually and which lead logically to the achievement of common goals.
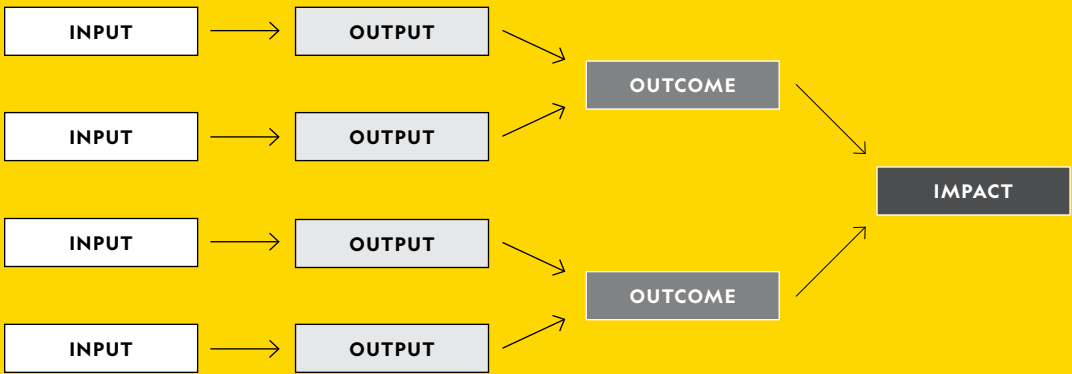

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Since we live in a complex world and many factors effect changes in ecology, society, and the economy, most theories of change have many levels between the four listed above. Conservation theories of change are often comprised of several interconnected causal chains. The key is not to let this become too overwhelming or complicated so as to discourage participation or confuse committee members.

Figure 3 on page 43 page shows a relatively simple theory of change with four distinct causal chains. A more realistic theory of change that demonstrates additional complexity in a project can be found in **Tool 8** in the toolkit. Figure 4 on the opposite page shows one causal chain from African People & Wildlife's theory of change. The Living Walls program in this chain comprises one part of a larger human-wildlife conflict prevention objective. Of course, Living Walls alone cannot lead to APW's organizational vision, but when implemented simultaneously with other holistic programming, multiple impacts can be achieved, and together, lead toward the NGO's vision.

When backwards mapping, planning committees frequently rush through the intended outcomes and focus solely on inputs and outputs. However, this is a sure way to create unwanted logical leaps from program activities to impact. Having a facilitator who is knowledgeable about the backwards mapping process and final product can mitigate this challenge (see Tips and Tools: The Role of the Facilitator on page 44). It is through these logical leaps that many programs fail to consider unintended negative consequences of their activities, forget to include minority groups, or oversimplify the interdependent relationships between the ecological, social, and political spheres. Thus, we encourage the planning committee to assign a "skeptic" or "contrarian" for the discussion (see Tips and Tools: The Role of the Skeptic on page 45). This can be a role that rotates every 10–15 minutes, or it can be the same person for the entire session.

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FIG. 3
SIMPLE THEORY OF CHANGE

FIG. 4
LIVING WALLS* CAUSAL CHAIN

INPUTS   OUTPUTS   OUTCOMES   IMPACT   VISION

LIVING TREES

CHAIN-LINK FENCING

HUMAN RESOURCES TO INSTALL

LIVING WALLS

HIGHER NUMBER OF TREES IN LANDSCAPE

DECREASED TREE REMOVAL FROM LANDSCAPE FOR STANDARD BOMAS

DECREASED DEPREDATION

DECREASED HABITAT FRAGMENTATION

DECREASED RETALIATORY KILLING

INCREASE IN WILDLIFE POPULATIONS

RURAL COMMUNITIES AND WILDLIFE COEXIST AND THRIVE

*Living Walls are environmentally friendly corrals that keep livestock safe from predators. To build a living wall, community members plant a circle of trees to serve as posts for chain-link fencing. As the trees grow, they add height to the wall and create an impenetrable barrier.

TIPS AND TOOLS: THE ROLE OF THE FACILITATOR

The role of the facilitator is extremely important in the development of sound logic. While the facilitator should be knowledgeable about the technical aspects of a theory of change (input, output, outcome, impact), it is not necessary for them to explain it in detail to the planning committee. In fact, describing the theory in too much depth can halt the process, cause confusion among participants, and result in unproductive planning sessions.

Rather, the facilitator's role is to support the planning committee in developing a theory of change through targeted questioning. In essence, the facilitator is leading the planning committee through a problem orientation exercise in which participants are asked to define the root causes of the problems they face and design solutions to target those causes. The facilitator could ask questions like the following:

- What factors would create stable wildlife populations?

- What factors lead to improved livestock health?

- What would prevent the community from expanding their agricultural fields?

- What might cause people to feel better about living with wildlife?

- What is the root cause of overgrazing in this area?

- Why are people hunting lions in this area?

- What can the Women's Association do to bring more girls and youth to events?

Ideally, through the joint efforts of the NGO, the community planning committee, and the skeptic, a theory of change will emerge with clear and defined activities (outputs) along with their needed resources for implementation (inputs). There will be sound logic linking these activities to their intended outcomes and those outcomes to a final impact. In the process of co-designing activities, the NGO and the community will have deepened their respect for and trust in each other and will move forward into implementation of locally relevant efforts with enthusiasm.

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Most importantly, the theory of change developed in early activity-design sessions must be adaptable and flexible. As NGOs and communities mutually learn from activities, test assumptions about outcomes, and measure impact, the theory of change will likely require modification. Remaining in close contact with community planning committee members through both informal meetings and scheduled theory of change review sessions is necessary for ongoing program evolution. The theory of change must be a living document that is reviewed regularly and expanded as both NGO and community learn from implementing conservation programs and as circumstances change on the ground.

TIPS AND TOOLS: THE ROLE OF THE SKEPTIC

The role of the skeptic is simple: Ask questions! A few examples of questions asked by a contrarian include the following:

- But how is this rangeland management training leading to healthier pasture?

- Have we considered whether improving local access to livestock markets might lead to interest in larger herds with subsequent unintended consequences for the rangeland?

- Have we thought about how this location for the well will affect girls' ability to attend school?

- What awareness mechanisms do we need to add to this initiative to ensure that people living far from the village center will know about it?

- Is a beekeeping technical training enough to ensure women's ownership of the enterprise or do we need to train on financial management and marketing as well?

WORKING HAND-IN-HAND

Activities have now been designed and the team is enthusiastic about creating positive change for the community and the environment! At this phase in community engagement, the real work can begin. Local team members should be supported based on their respective strengths, and project leadership should include community members. Where NGO staff have expertise needed by the community project managers, capacity building should occur through shadowing, mentorship, and skills training. Remember: Project and team management is a skill in itself and local staff should be given the resources necessary to succeed in management roles.

HAVING A CONSISTENT PRESENCE IN THE COMMUNITIES IN WHICH WE WORK APPEALS TO PEOPLE'S CORE VALUES, DEMONSTRATING THAT THE NGO DOES NOT VIEW COMMUNITY MEMBERS SIMPLY AS "CONSERVATION OBJECTS" BUT AS EQUALS TO BE RESPECTED AND VALUED.

Planning for Implementation

Creating a work plan for project activities is an extremely activity-specific task. Some activities may require lobbying government authorities for land tenure, while others may involve distributing materials to schools, building infrastructure, hanging beehives, removing fences, presenting at meetings, or conducting wildlife counts. No matter what the activity, it will require an illustrative timeline with tasks and inputs defined. As referenced in *Recognizing Community*, using a template start-up budget and timeline chart can expedite this process and give the project managers tools for project planning. These tools can be found in the toolkit in Appendix 2.

NGO staff with project management experience should work closely with local project managers to complete a budget and timeline. This process should be a shared learning experience since the NGO staff member may have more knowledge of donor requirements and deadlines, while the community project manager will likely have a better understanding of logistics, the feasibility of timing, and the financial resources needed to complete each task. Monitoring and evaluation activities should be included with program activities in both the budget and illustrative timeline. Through creating a work plan together, both the NGO and community staff will build their own capacity for working in the conservation field.

Earlier in this framework, we used the RACI tool to help NGOs demystify the decision process in their communities. The same format can be used in role clarification for implementing activities. Especially with large teams consisting of multiple levels of management from NGO executives to on-the-ground laborers, the RACI tool can prevent duplication of efforts and ensure that the appropriate people have authority to make decisions, spend financial resources, or drive NGO vehicles. Each task or decision can be assigned by using the following categories:

- **Responsible:** The people actually performing the task (e.g., trainers, builders, game scouts)

- **Accountable:** The project manager or other entity reporting back to the donors—often NGO leadership

- **Consulted:** Community members or groups who may have knowledge or expertise about the activity and its implementation

- **Informed:** Community members or groups who may be affected by the activity

The implementation version of the RACI tool can be found in **Tool 7.2** in the toolkit.

As much as possible, the NGO should play a role of support, facilitation, guidance, and mentorship. In supporting community members as staff, members of a field team, volunteers, casual laborers, or general contributors to a project, the NGO should be building its capacity and enthusiasm to work in conservation while providing tools where necessary for successful implementation. As project work begins, it is imperative to apply the principles of community engagement, not just with community staff but also with beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries.

Maintaining a Presence Through Implementation

Holding regular check-ins with community project managers and staff is a key aspect of assuring quality and maintaining positive relationships. For check-ins with community member staff, be sure to provide translation services if necessary and consider locating these meetings somewhere in the community where the staff member is comfortable.

Check-in meetings should not appear to be a disciplinary measure. Scheduling them often, even if there are no apparent issues, will alleviate concerns that meetings are problem-oriented and allow for open communication for both positive and negative performance feedback. Of course, check-ins should not be so often or lengthy that the community staff feel unappreciated or unable to complete their work. Finding the balance between offering necessary support and allowing professional growth and independence can be challenging, but it is critical in fostering a healthy environment of community-driven conservation. Individuals will have different preferences and strengths, so NGO managers must navigate these relationships carefully. Going back to the principles of community engagement is a great way to ensure that communication is open and respectful and that relationships between the community and NGO remain positive.

Lastly, for NGOs to maintain strong, healthy relationships with the people in their target communities—particularly large NGOs or those without offices in the communities—it is imperative that they demonstrate consistent presence. This can be achieved through program staff participating in community meetings—even if they are unrelated to conservation initiatives—monitoring and evaluation staff engaging

in frequent discussions with project beneficiaries, and NGO executives attending important cultural events in the community. Empathy with people is built as we share in their celebrations and ceremonies, grieve when they suffer losses, and engage in genuine human connection.

Having a consistent presence in the communities in which we work appeals to people's core values, demonstrating that the NGO does not view community members simply as "conservation objects" but as equals to be respected and valued.

"Indeed, people should not be seen as 'objects or empty vessels' but rather as drivers of their destinies and masters of their own development."

—Alais Morindat, International Institute of Environment and Development

MONITORING, EVALUATING, LEARNING, AND ADAPTING

Once implementation has begun, how do we, as NGOs and community leadership, know that the theory of change we developed is working as planned? In a complex world with diverse communities and limited financial resources, testing our theories is a critical aspect of program adaptation, evolution, and success. **Tool 9.1** in the toolkit provides more information on monitoring complex programs to increase confidence in intended outcomes.

The importance of monitoring, evaluating, learning, and adapting cannot be overstated. For communities to truly own their programs and support conservation initiatives, they must see measurable change in their livelihoods and environments. As with all aspects of community-driven conservation, community members must be empowered to monitor and evaluate conservation efforts. Monitoring and evaluation also help organizations and communities improve their program designs and create greater impact with limited resources.

Developing a Monitoring Plan

Working in collaboration with communities to assess change is critical to program effectiveness and a key strategy for maintaining strong relationships with community partners. If a program is ineffective and this goes unrecognized, community members may also lose respect and confidence in their NGO partner.

To begin creating a mutually beneficial monitoring plan, several angles or questions are important to consider:

- What needs to be monitored to effectively assess the program and test the program logic?

- What is useful for the community to measure so it can adapt programs to changing social and environmental conditions?

- What social, political, and ecological assumptions are inherent in the theory of change?

- What is useful for the NGO to measure to meet funding and reporting requirements?

From these questions, communities and NGOs can collaboratively begin to develop indicators to monitor their programs. Indicators provide a way to measure the current condition or state of outputs, outcomes, or impacts defined in a program's theory of change. Indicators should begin with the unit of measurement, or inherently be a unit of measurement (e.g., annual income). They are specific, observable, and measurable accomplishments or changes that show the program's progress, and they should aim to provide answers to predetermined questions (see Tips and Tools: Co-designing Evaluative Questions on the opposite page).

To ensure community engagement in the monitoring process, local people should be involved in developing indicators and included as monitors, enumerators, or interviewers in data collection. In the case of large, diverse monitoring teams, potentially spanning multiple landscapes (e.g., community game scouts, rangeland monitors, human-wildlife conflict officers), indicators must be well-defined to avoid ambiguity in methods and guard against variation in data collection from site to site and over time.

Examples of well-defined indicators include the following:

- **Number** of people who attended each training

- **Percentage** of local farmers who partook in a tree planting initiative

- **Hectares** of land showing at least a 25 percent increase in bird diversity

- **Annual income** of herders (in U.S. dollars)

- **Percentage** of survey respondents who demonstrate improved understanding of restoration targets

- **Percentage** of seedlings planted that survive to year two

Indicator definitions must clearly explain all terms and elements of the indicator to ensure both consistent

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TIPS AND TOOLS: CO-DESIGNING EVALUATIVE QUESTIONS

Just as a theory of change can be compared to a hypothesis, evaluation can be compared to scientific research wherein research questions are asked and the scientist seeks answers through experimentation. Formally, evaluation is a process that critically examines a program. It involves collecting and analyzing information about a program's activities, characteristics, and outcomes. Its purpose is to promote accountability, improve program effectiveness, and inform programming decisions. Formative evaluations generally take place before or during a project's implementation with the aim of improving the project's design and performance. Summative evaluations generally occur at the end of a program cycle and are used to assess program effectiveness.

Developing evaluation questions is a key part of designing a monitoring and evaluation system or framework. Including community members, leadership, and program staff in discussions about evaluation questions can set the stage for productive monitoring and ensure that communities are invested in the project outcomes and impact. A few examples of the types of questions useful to consider when developing a monitoring plan with the community are provided here.

Process → Focus on how a program was implemented

Process questions are relatively easy to monitor by reviewing project records.

- **What were the main barriers to completing the forest restoration project?**

Outcome → Focus on project effects in a target population

Most outcome questions require some evaluative work to answer.

- **To what extent did the native tree planting activity achieve restoration targets at the project site?**

Impact → Focus on whether results have been achieved due to the intervention

Impact questions are generally very difficult to answer and require costly experimental design.

- **To what extent did the forest restoration project contribute to improved habitat connectivity for wildlife in the landscape?**

Remember: Answers to process and outcome questions cannot be used to attribute observed changes solely to the project. Correlation does not imply causation!

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BEHAVIOR CHANGE

The science of behavior change is complex. This field is highly relevant to NGOs and conservation practitioners, who must frequently focus programming on human attitude and behavior change. Nevertheless, behavior change experts are rarely approached or consulted.

From a monitoring point of view, while a theory of change may logically outline the links between activities and desired changes in human behavior, social indicators can be much more difficult to measure than their biophysical counterparts. Human behavior change takes time—often more time than the ecological system restoration dependent on that behavior change.[1] Thus, monitoring plans for behavioral or attitudinal change must allow time for societal change to occur, while maintaining consistent indicators and avoiding shifting baselines.

Evaluations are often a more useful avenue for measuring behavior change than monitoring activities, due to the qualitative nature of perception and the need to capture unintended outcomes. Remember: Experienced and culturally sensitive interviewers with sociological knowledge and language competency will often prove more able to recognize behavioral and attitudinal shifts over time than conservationists.

ⓘ Participatory Learning for Action

An evaluation approach, formerly called Participatory Rural Appraisal, that includes a suite of participatory and largely visual methods for assessing local community perspectives. Participatory Learning for Action techniques often include tools for addressing children, illiteracy, or other vulnerable populations or issues.
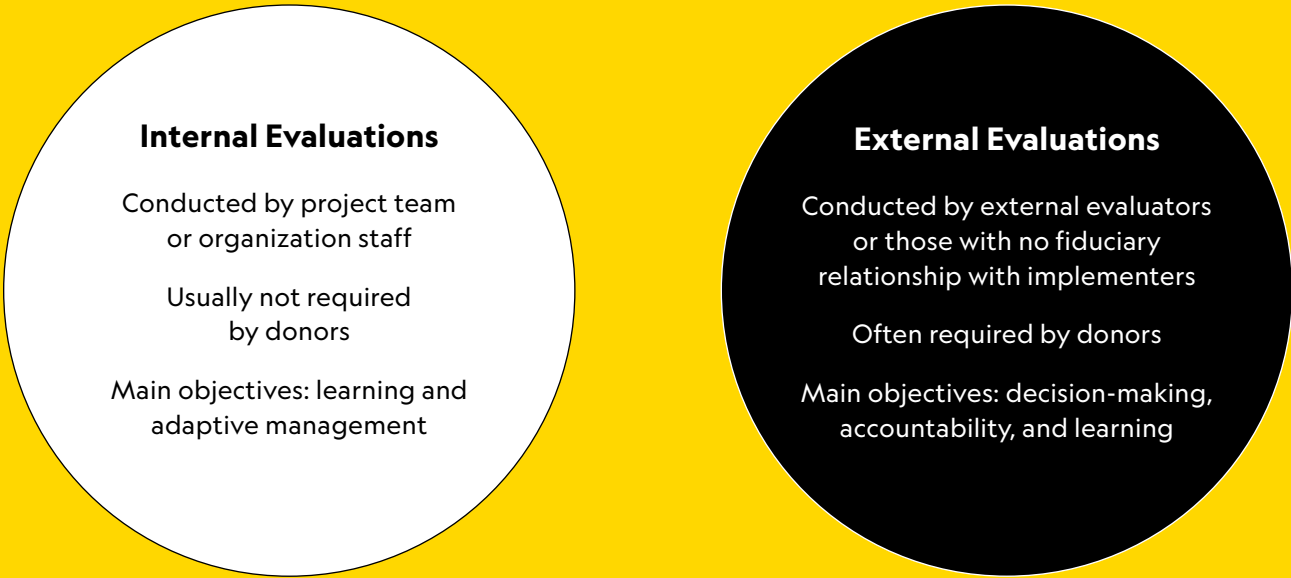
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interpretation and that the intended measurements are reliably collected. Vague terms (e.g., effective, quality, youth, vulnerable) must be defined. Indicators that pertain to populations, geographic areas, or test scores should include specified parameters or ranges. An equation or description of any calculations required to derive the data must be readily available to all data collectors. If the indicator is a percentage or ratio, there must be a description of the numerator and denominator. Monitor training should occur at least once per year, both to ensure continued engagement of community data collectors and to adjust targets and clarify methods as needed. See **Tool 9.2** in the toolkit for more detail on tracking your monitoring data.

Evaluation for Learning

While monitoring describes the consistent measurement of defined indicators aimed at achieving expected results, program evaluation allows NGOs and communities to understand the higher-level outcomes and impact of their programs, receive recommendations on program improvement, and recognize unintended outcomes. Planning for program evaluations should take place during the project co-design phase, and evaluations should be included in an illustrative project timeline. Some donors may require third party, or external, evaluations of programs, but even if they are not required, internal

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[1] Kollmuss, A., and J. Agyeman. 2002. Mind the gap: Why do people act environmentally and what are the barriers to pro-environmental behavior? Environmental Education Research 8 (3): 239–260.

FIG. 5
INTERNAL VS. EXTERNAL EVALUATIONS

Internal Evaluations

Conducted by project team or organization staff

Usually not required by donors

Main objectives: learning and adaptive management

External Evaluations

Conducted by external evaluators or those with no fiduciary relationship with implementers

Often required by donors

Main objectives: decision-making, accountability, and learning

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While both internal and external evaluations have pros and cons, they can be equally valuable to NGOs and communities implementing conservation programming. It is imperative to remember that evaluations, even those conducted by donor-contracted third parties, are not audits. Instead, they are generally used to promote accountability, improve effectiveness, or inform decision-making. It is the role of the NGO to impress upon community staff and beneficiaries that honesty and openness are key to receiving useful evaluation feedback.

For most conservation practitioners, we will not be conducting rigorous evaluations (although we may participate in evaluations if a donor contracts a third-party evaluator!). Likely, we will conduct our own monitoring, provide monitoring data to external evaluators, and perhaps conduct simple performance evaluation surveys and interviews. Thus, NGOs may want to focus less on technical evaluation methodology and more on what to do when we receive evaluation results, either from external evaluators or from simple internal reviews.

One of the most useful methods for evaluating programs in rural communities is **Participatory Learning for Action** (PLA). Formerly called Participatory Rural Appraisal, PLA techniques allow us to understand the effects of programs on vulnerable or stigmatized populations including children, refugees, and victims of abuse, among others.

Since many PLA tools are visual, and can be described as data collection games, the approach is also useful for gathering information when verbal communication is challenging due to language barriers or illiteracy.

Some examples of PLA data collection techniques include the following:

- Community mapping
- Priority sorting
- Role playing

The PLA approach ensures that evaluations are inclusive of perspectives that may be difficult to obtain and further emphasizes the importance of recognizing heterogeneity within communities.

ATTEMPTING TO RESPOND TO COMPLEX CULTURAL OR SYSTEMIC ISSUES WITH TECHNICAL SOLUTIONS IS A COMMON ERROR IN PROGRAM MANAGEMENT THAT CAN LEAD TO FURTHER INEFFECTIVE PROGRAMMING.

evaluations should be planned before implementation begins. Figure 5 shows some of the main differences between internal and external evaluations.

Results from evaluations can be daunting to receive, but remember that they are aimed at improving programming for better conservation outcomes. When you receive an evaluation report, keep an open mind, actively trying to reduce defensiveness. There may be places where NGOs feel the evaluators missed key aspects of their programming. In these cases, it can be helpful to return to the evaluators and ask for more information. Perhaps they did overlook certain programmatic efforts, or the NGO may have overestimated the effect of those efforts. Therefore, it is prudent to read recommendations with the mindset that they are there to help, not criticize. While not all recommendations may need to be enacted, they should all be read and considered as a learning tool.

Evolving with Communities

Through monitoring and evaluation efforts, years of program experience, and changes in social, political, and ecological trends, NGOs must adapt and evolve

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Complex Adaptive System

A system in which each component may change and have unpredictable effects on the whole. An understanding of the individual components of a complex adaptive system does not imply an understanding of the whole system due to the interdisciplinary and interdependent relationships between parts.

along with their community partners. Conservation is a field with ever-shifting ecological goal posts, and likewise, communities adapt, change, develop, and progress. True and meaningful engagement, with real impact, will occur over decades, not annual program cycles. As a result, complex communities and complex programs require flexible adaptive management practices and a systems-thinking approach.

As discussed in Appendix 4, *Community Engagement: A Brief Institutional History*, our world is comprised of social-ecological systems where humans and our environment are inextricably linked. As we learn about how our program interventions are affecting these systems, we must be open and willing to embrace system-level change. Our program interventions and their effects on society and the environment constitute a complex adaptive system (CAS). The part of this CAS

over which we have some control—our intervention—must change based on feedback from the monitoring and evaluation of program effects. Responding to this feedback in a timely and relevant manner speaks to our principles of community engagement, particularly flexibility and trust.

We must also recognize when the trends and changes we observe through monitoring and evaluation are purely technical or when they are embedded in broader institutional or cultural systems. Attempting to respond to complex cultural or systemic issues with technical solutions is a common error in program management that can lead to further ineffective programming. Thus, in NGO-community partnerships, we must define problems by their root causes, not by their symptoms. In identifying the basis of these problems, we are more likely to evolve our programming effectively.

But, how do we ensure that we are evolving along with the communities we partner with? Open communication, dissemination of evaluation results, and regular reviews of the theory of change can facilitate this evolution. Most importantly, we must maintain an evaluative mindset, constantly questioning our assumptions and striving to grasp shifting priorities.

In the process of this evolution, we may realize, as NGOs, that our guidance is needed less in program activities. The community may take ownership of certain programs and seek support with new, community-driven initiatives. They may become increasingly independent and, ideally, develop revenue streams to make conservation programming sustainable beyond the support of the NGO. This "pull factor," discussed in the next section, is our ultimate objective in genuine community engagement in conservation.

FINANCING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

As outlined in *The Enduring Impact of Communities in Conservation*, NGOs and conservation practitioners must begin to redefine their role in conservation efforts. We must actively blur the line between implementers and beneficiaries, acting as catalysts for community-driven initiatives and using our financial resources to support communities in designing sustainable programs. Through consistent monitoring and evaluation, we must work closely with the communities we support to verify their conservation and development outcomes. Moreover, we should be willing to shift financial support to efforts producing the greatest and most balanced results.

WHEN NGOS WORK WITH MULTIPLE COMMUNITIES IN DIFFERENT STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT, DIFFERENT FINANCING MECHANISMS MAY BE APPROPRIATE FOR EACH COMMUNITY. FLEXIBILITY WITH FINANCING OPTIONS AND TRANSPARENCY WITH THE COMMUNITY WILL ENSURE THAT NGOS RETAIN POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS THROUGHOUT THE FUNDING CYCLE.
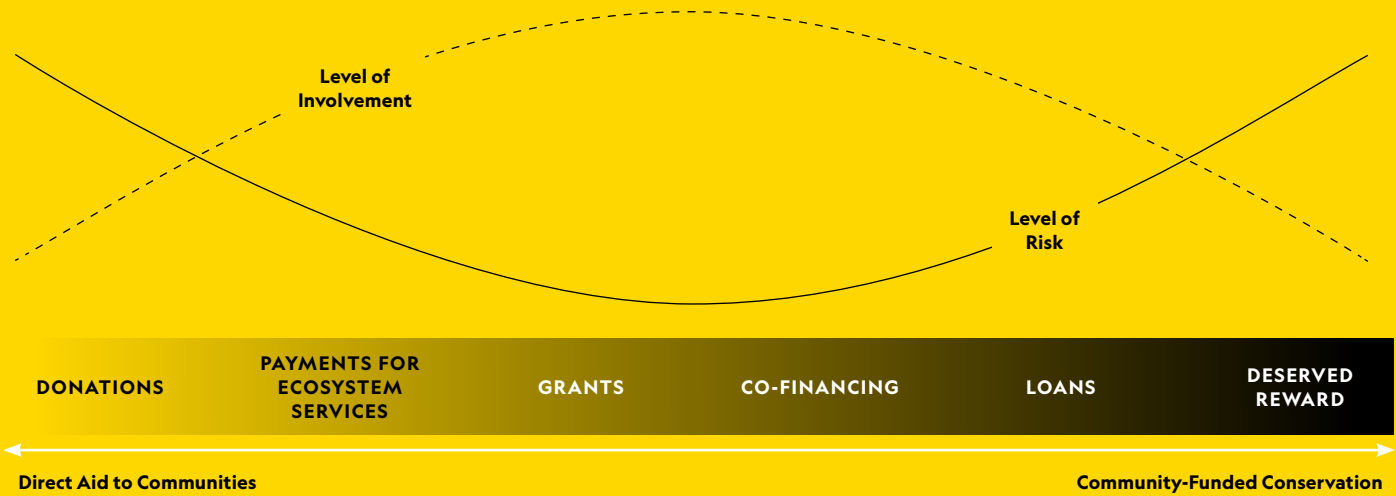
The Pull Factor

Conservation NGOs and practitioners may find that their level of involvement in financially supporting conservation initiatives changes as ownership of programs shifts from the NGO to the community. Ideally, communities will begin initiating program design and drawing from their own resources, seeking NGO technical and financial support when needed based on the positive relationship built between the NGO and community. Rather than the NGO pushing a conservation agenda on the community, the community will begin pulling the NGO into a mutually beneficial agenda, founded in common goals.

This "pull factor" often manifests in shifting management responsibility and increasing the community's financial self-sufficiency. Of course, the NGO will likely retain some form of fiduciary relationship with the community. Depending on the local capacity for financial management, level of program development, and donor requirements, there are a suite of options for financing community-driven conservation initiatives. Generally, these options fall along a spectrum from the least sustainable—direct aid and donations—to self-sustaining community programs, which may receive supplemental NGO support. Figure 6 shows six finance mechanisms frequently used in conservation programming and where they fall along this spectrum. The figure also shows the NGO's level of involvement in program implementation and the level of outcome risk to the NGO as we move along the axis of financial sustainability.

These financing mechanisms are not necessarily distinct, nor are they mutually exclusive. NGOs may find that they engage in programming financed through many of these sources simultaneously. When NGOs work with multiple communities in different stages of development, different financing mechanisms may be appropriate for each community. Flexibility with financing options and transparency with the community will ensure that NGOs retain positive relationships throughout the funding cycle.

> *"You know you're having success when you're doing less of the talking and more of the listening, and when the community is fully contributing their ideas to you. A challenge is to move away from a common situation where people wait for permission before they start to act, as this dampens their enthusiasm and stifles their creativity. When the community is cohesive and fully engaged, it creates an atmosphere for them to pull their own resources into their agenda, rather than waiting for the NGO to deliver an agenda to them."*
> —*Michael Thompson, Frankfurt Zoological Society*

FIG. 6
A SPECTRUM OF COMMUNITY FINANCING

Level of Involvement

Level of Risk

| DONATIONS | PAYMENTS FOR ECOSYSTEM SERVICES | GRANTS | CO-FINANCING | LOANS | DESERVED REWARD |

Direct Aid to Communities   Community-Funded Conservation

Direct Aid and Donations: Funding raised for communities, often without their involvement, that may or may not be used for conservation initiatives.

Payments for Ecosystem Services: Through international finance mechanisms such as REDD+, payments for ecosystem services (PES) provide incentives for communities to forego landscape degradation from deforestation, land conversion to agriculture, or other harmful practices such as monoculture farming and overgrazing. PES may be provided for active conservation efforts or simply for not partaking in destructive practices.

Grants: Funding provided for community initiatives that may be managed or supported heavily by the NGO. Often grants are passed down from an NGO that received a larger or more comprehensive grant from an international donor. Grants usually require reporting on conservation outcomes and involve significant community engagement.

Co-financing: Joint programming requires a high level of NGO involvement in implementation but also empowers the community to manage aspects of the project. Projects are often conceived by the community and beneficiaries should be responsible for contributing to the costs. The principle behind co-financing schemes is that communities will put more value on conservation outcomes and feel more invested in programming if they are financially contributing.

Loans: Funding provided to community initiatives that requires start-up assistance but is intended to provide revenue from conservation initiatives to the community. Microloans or other microfinancing options encourage communities to take the lead on conservation programming. Loans provided to communities should have some accountability requirements through reporting and should *not* be provided interest free. However, payback mechanisms and timeframes should be flexible and cognizant of the local context, helping to mitigate potential constraints to repayment.

Deserved Rewards: Funding awarded to a community for continuing programs that demonstrate conservation successes. Communities may have to apply for such awards in a competitive process. NGOs may have little involvement in the program itself, as initiatives are entirely community managed. Deserved rewards often act as a supplement to self-sustaining revenue from a program and are not intended to externally finance a community initiative.

WE MUST VALUE AND LEVERAGE THE CHANGEMAKING ABILITY OF ECONOMIC INCENTIVES AND MARKET TRANSFORMATION, AS SUCH MECHANISMS CAN BE POWERFUL AND APPROPRIATE TOOLS FOR EMPOWERMENT AND COMMUNITY-DRIVEN CONSERVATION.

In general, as NGOs and communities work toward more community-driven efforts, program support will shift toward the self-sustaining end of the

spectrum. Of course, this may not and often cannot happen quickly. A gradual shift in management and financial responsibility for conservation efforts will also mitigate the insecurity potentially caused by NGOs terminating work in a community without prior planning. It is imperative that NGOs have consistent and open communication with community leadership regarding their exit strategies. And within an exit strategy, the NGO should include time for transitioning management roles, technical capacity development, and financial sustainability measures. Introducing co-financing schemes is an excellent way to begin this transition.

Most importantly, encouraging the community to develop conservation-based enterprises is a critical phase in program evolution. By using environmental outcomes to create markets, communities can begin generating their own income to support their livelihoods and further conservation initiatives. In time, and through facilitating linkages between communities and markets, NGOs will be able to shift financial resources toward the self-sustaining end of the spectrum. Through long-term engagement in this fashion, we as conservation organizations can support the development of large-scale conservation-based economies.

Creating Equity in Conservation-Based Economies

As conservation work continues to evolve, shifting from NGO-driven to community-driven initiatives and increasingly embracing economic and market-based incentives, it is important to recognize both the strengths and limitations of such engagements. We must value and leverage the changemaking ability of economic incentives and market transformation, as such mechanisms can be powerful and appropriate tools for empowerment and community-driven conservation. There are many instances where conservation outcomes can be improved and local communities empowered through the creation of conservation-based economies. However, we must

CASE STUDY

Private Sector Partnerships in Namibia's Communal Conservancies

Namibia boasts one of the most comprehensive and country-wide community-based conservation programs on the African continent. Founded on its three pillars of community conservation—natural resource management; institutional development; and business, enterprises, and livelihoods—the Namibian Ministry of Environment and Tourism, in collaboration with the Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organisations (NACSO), has spent over 20 years streamlining its approach to community-managed resources. Eighty-three conservancies are now registered in Namibia with nearly 44 percent of the country's land area under conservation management.[1]

Joint venture tourism lodges have formed a strong base of Namibian conservancy programming since the first conservancies were registered in 1998.[2]

The ≠Khoadi-//Hôas Conservancy, located in Namibia's Kunene Region, serves a population of over 4,000 Namibians, many of whom benefit from conservancy-based income generation. One such example is the Grootberg Lodge tourism enterprise which directly benefits local people through employment, skills training, and income-sharing schemes that support community development projects. Grootberg Lodge is owned by the conservancy but managed by a private sector tourism partner. As the first lodge in Namibia to be wholly owned by the community with a strong private sector partnership, Grootberg sets an example for the distribution of both financial and nonfinancial benefits. Today, 98 percent of Grootberg Lodge's employees are members of the surrounding communities, using traditional knowledge of wildlife movements and tracking skills to provide unparalleled wildlife experiences for tourists.[3] For example, the lodge supports six conservancy rhino rangers who lead the lodge's popular rhino tracking safari integrating their routine monitoring work. This activity generated significant income to the conservancy over the

past three years and sustained monitoring of the conservancy's rhino population. Rhino poaching, which plagued the area in 2014-15, has now been brought under control with the last rhino poached in August 2016.[4] Through stable employment for conservancy members and a sustainable revenue stream for the community to implement social programs, the ≠Khoadi-//Hôas Conservancy has seen a decrease in poaching incidents and a recovery of wildlife populations.

NGO presence in the Kunene Region includes Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation, which provides technical support to conservancies in natural resource management, and Save the Rhino Trust Namibia (SRT), which implements rhinoceros conservation through joint monitoring efforts and responsible rhinoceros tourism ventures led by SRT-trained local conservancy rhino rangers. Thus, through NGO support to conservancies and a nation-wide movement toward conservation-based economies, Namibia is creating a path toward more self-sustaining conservation efforts.

[1] Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) and Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organisations (NASCO). 2018. The state of community conservation in Namibia: A review of communal conservancies, community forests and other CBNRM activities (annual report 2017). Windhoek: MET/NASCO.

[2] Roe, D., M. Grieg-Gran, and W. Schalken. 2001. Getting the lion's share from tourism: Private sector-community partnerships in Namibia. London: International Institute for Environment and Development.

[3] Grootberg Lodge. ≠Khoadi //Hoas Conservancy. https://grootberg.com/conservancies/khoadi-hoas-conservancy.

[4] Save the Rhino Trust Namibia. http://www.savetherhinotrust.org.

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DESPITE LIMITED FINANCIAL RESOURCES AND CONFLICTING DONOR SCHEDULES, MANY NGOS HAVE NAVIGATED THE FUNDING MAZE WHILE SUCCESSFULLY ENGAGING COMMUNITIES IN CONSERVATION EFFORTS.

in restricting or dictating local ownership or use of resources.[8] For example, the demand for illegal timber or ivory may have just as much to do (or more) with the exploitation of these resources as actions at a local scale. Similarly, distant markets and other socioeconomic factors may create barriers to the long-term adoption of sustainable practices.[9] By extension, financial incentives, economic compensation, and open access to markets to promote alternative livelihood solutions all require paying close attention to questions of equity and empowerment—and a gaze that is not purely focused on the local.

To build trust and promote sustainability over time, NGOs should be sensitive to issues of budget transparency and funding cycles in addition to understanding the complex economic entanglements of communities. In fact, some of the most cited necessary conditions for achieving conservation and development under multiple-use and community-engaged management include trust building, communication, and revenue distribution.[10] Ensuring transparency and open communication with local communities with respect to project budgeting and funding allocation is imperative to maintaining positive community relationships. Community project managers may express frustration, a lack of trust, and a feeling of being used by NGOs when such information is hidden.

ensure that, as programming is increasingly linked to livelihoods, we are not perpetuating a cycle of environmental injustice or expanding economic gaps in communities.

As with payments for ecosystem services, financial incentives can be used to provide economic benefits to local people who engage in positive community engagement conservation activities.[5] Examples of such engagement include participation in local meetings, community mapping, altered hunting practices, and forest restoration initiatives. Yet to gain true community investment in conservation efforts, it is imperative to link livelihoods to sustainable

natural resource management. Conservation-friendly livelihood activities must align with people's core values, recognizing that individuals will act in their own self-interest. Programs incorporating conservation outcomes and revenue for local communities, such as through producing shade-grown crops or harvesting honey, offer economic value and encourage communities to control their resources sustainably.[6]

However, it is crucial to gain a deep understanding of community economic relations and the asymmetrical power dynamics at play, which may be perpetuated by market-based community engagement. If programs and benefit distribution mechanisms are inadequately

researched and designed, they can lead to bankruptcy, dependency, and poverty traps.[7] To avoid such externalities, we must not only consider the local context but also embrace the broader socioeconomic system within which local communities are situated, allocating financial and nonfinancial benefits appropriately.

Further, conservation programs that place the blame for degradation and seek to correct only local practices risk being deeply misguided, since broader institutional forces can play important roles

5   Hazzah, L., M. B. Mulder, and L. Frank. 2009. Lions and warriors: Social factors underlying declining African lion populations and the effect of incentive-based management in Kenya. Biological Conservation 142 (11): 2428–2437.

6   Nilsson, D., G. Baxter, J. R. Butler, and C. A. McAlpine. 2016. How do community-based conservation programs in developing countries change human behaviour? A realist synthesis. Biological Conservation 200:93-103.

7   Redpath, S. M., J. Young, A. Evely, W. M. Adams, W. J. Sutherland, A. Whitehouse, A. Amar, R. A. Lambert, J. D. C. Linnell, A. Watt, and R. J. Gutierrez. 2013. Understanding and managing conservation conflicts. Trends in Ecology & Evolution 28 (2): 100–109.

8   Dove, M. 1993. A revisionist view of tropical deforestation and development. Environmental Conservation 20 (1): 17–24.

9   Slusser, J. L., A. Calle, and E. Garen. 2015. Sustainable ranching and restoring forests in agricultural landscapes, Panama. European Tropical Forest Research Network (ETFRN) News 57: 31–38.

10 Radachowsky, J., V. Ramos, R. McNab, E. Baur, and N. Kazakov. 2012. Forest concessions in the Maya Biosphere Reserve, Guatemala: A decade later. Forest Ecology and Management 268: 18–28.

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WHEN EQUALITY ISN'T EQUITABLE

We often reference the need to ensure that benefits are distributed equally within a community, or between community and conservation. But equal distribution of benefits— that is, providing the same benefits to all parties— can result in the perpetuation of existing social hierarchies or economic imbalances.

In conservation and development work, we must instead strive for the equitable distribution of benefits, or HARVEST EQUITY. While equality implies sameness, equity implies fairness. In providing equitable benefit distribution, we seek to close the social and economic gaps in communities by raising up minority groups, vulnerable populations, and those disproportionately affected by environmental justice issues.

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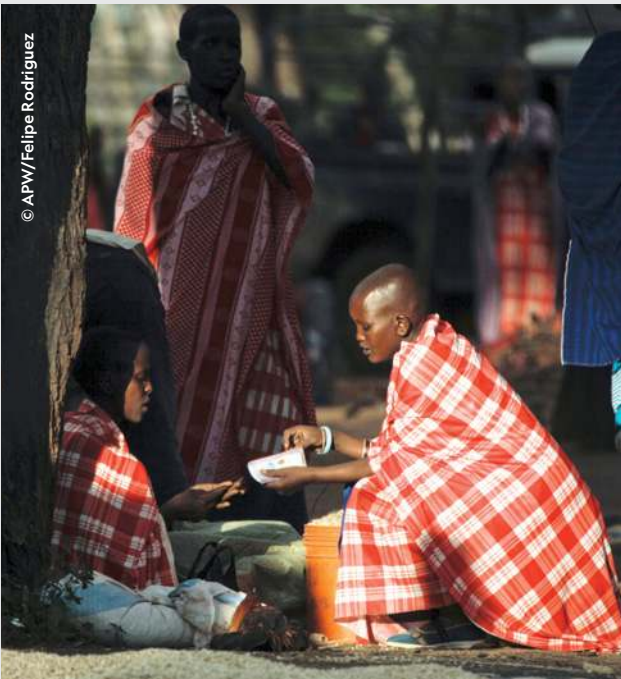
Finally, conservation often operates at different scales according to the interests of various parties.[11] This is particularly true in the world of international conservation, whereby donor governments, philanthropists, or foundations provide grant-based funding to NGOs or other agencies, which in turn carry out conservation projects with local communities. With this structure, conservation NGOs may be operating at a time scale that corresponds to donor cycles and project timelines but fails to adequately address the timelines for decision-making and action that are most appropriate at the local or community scale. Ultimately, a reconciliation between local and global interests is needed—and a longer-term commitment and flexibility of external donors and actors is required.[12]

Despite limited financial resources and conflicting donor schedules, many NGOs have navigated the funding maze while successfully engaging communities in conservation efforts. As a whole, conservationists continually demonstrate the financial and social resilience necessary to work in complex environments. The next section highlights NGOs that implement best practices in community engagement with a variety of funding mechanisms.

"Relationships with communities are not based on annual funding cycles. This work is long term."
—*Charles Trout, African People & Wildlife*

[11] Redpath et al. 2013.
[12] Radachowsky et al. 2012.

CASE STUDY

The Gorongosa Model

In Mozambique's Gorongosa National Park, the park's Human Development Department (representing about half of Gorongosa's budget) engages with surrounding communities in education, health care, and small farmer support to ensure the park is beneficial for all. While a substantial amount of funding for the park's budget comes from private and government donors, an increasing percentage is generated through conservation enterprise. Gorongosa's Sustainable Finance Plan seeks to shift financial stability from donors to earned income through sustainable green businesses owned by the park, ranging from the tourism sector to Gorongosa brands of coffee, cashews, and honey.

At the core of the Gorongosa model is a strong emphasis on gender mainstreaming. By focusing on lifting half of the population up through women's education, employment, and empowerment, Gorongosa is leading the field of conservation to gender equity.

"By reframing Gorongosa National Park as a 'human development engine,' we are supporting and enhancing national health services, agricultural programs, and education for local people, trying to lift them out of poverty and create more support for the park in a positive feedback loop—with a special focus on providing more opportunities for women and keeping girls in school."
—*Greg Carr, Gorongosa Project*

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN PRACTICE: EXAMPLES FROM THE FIELD

While there are many organizations that successfully engage communities, the following pages highlight programs in Africa that exemplify the principles and practices we have emphasized throughout this framework as most effective. For simplicity, they are grouped into five categories: natural resource management, wildlife conservation and human-wildlife conflict prevention, environmental education, enterprise and economics, and development. Best practices appear in italics. Please see Appendix 3 to access a full list of the organizations and programs reviewed for this framework.

NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Communities are not homogenous groups with a singular mindset for how natural resources should be managed. *Addressing the complexity and diversity within communities* can prove challenging for outside organizations, and therefore understanding the social-ecological structures involved is crucial to facilitating community-based resource conservation. *Finding a balance between community ownership and organizational involvement* is key to equitable and effective community-based natural resource management (CBNRM). The following organizations exercise a variety of strategies, including the establishment of conservancies, ecosystem services preservation, and policy and governance strengthening, to engage, empower, structure, and support local communities in conservation.

Environmental Alert

Environmental Alert advocates for policy, practices, and activities that represent communities while promoting the sustainable use of natural resources. It has members from and partners with several organizations including the Wetlands Advisory Committee, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Secretariat of Prolinnova Uganda country program, Secretariat of the Environment and Natural Resources Civil Society

(ENR-CSO) Network, and the Uganda Forest Working Group (UFWG). Its programs focus on areas including environmental and natural resource management, water sanitation and hygiene, food security, promoting community innovation, and governance.

Environmental Alert focuses on policy development and strengthening to support the sustainable use of natural resources in areas that lack representation, have fragile ecosystems, or have high levels of poverty. *It addresses the links between poverty and the environment* to promote resource conservation as well as food security and health. Natural resource management programs target forests, wetlands, land and soil, and energy, as well as weather and climate. Its forest programs include a partnership with the IUCN to promote pro-poor REDD+ principles and rights-based approaches to strengthening the conservation, governance, and sustainable management of landscapes in Uganda. Through its partnerships, Environmental Alert *involves an appropriate mix of actors with the power, capacity, mandate, and motivation to assume the roles required to advance conservation.*

Website: envalert.org

KWCA, MCDI, AND NRT

These terrestrial CBNRM organizations recognize that *land-use planning is a key component to community-driven conservation and must be done in collaboration with community leadership*. These organizations *implement decision-making institutions which have a mechanism that holds them accountable to local people who bear the burden of exclusion and management.*

Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association

Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association (KWCA) works with communities to establish conservancies for the sustainable management of natural resources outside of protected areas. Its theory of change states that by giving conservancies a voice, providing knowledge and support, and establishing regional collaboration in a way that *emphasizes the involvement of youth and women*, the conservancies will improve governance and be better placed to decrease human-wildlife conflict and poaching. Results *provide benefits to the community from conservation* and ensure that wildlife is conserved. KWCA's programs are rooted in policy, collaboration through networking and communication, and capacity building to protect ecosystems and use natural resources sustainably. Its approach highlights the importance of *including capacity building and information sharing in project design* and *emphasizes the importance of including women and youth in strategies to conserve resources.*

Website: kwcakenya.com

Mpingo Conservation & Development Initiative

Mpingo Conservation & Development Initiative (MCDI) promotes forest conservation in southeastern Tanzania by finding and creating opportunities where local communities can benefit from sustainably managing their forests. MCDI's goal for community-

based forest management is to see communities own, manage, and benefit from their forests in a way that is ethical, sustainable, and long-lasting. It seeks out income-producing ecosystem services that empower communities to protect their forests and end cycles of deforestation, resource depletion, and inefficient land use. Its process is to support local community ownership of forests, train local people in responsible techniques for timber extraction, connect communities with customers, and ensure communities decide how funds will be used. The resulting benefits further the desire to conserve natural resources. MCDI illustrates the best practice of *maintaining long-term support and engagement while also being flexible with the management of that support*. It *emphasizes self-determination in community management of acquired funds*, showing an *understanding that communities know their needs better than external actors*. It addresses the need to *connect conservation with economic incentives* and, along with many of the organizations highlighted in this document, *treats local communities as contemporaries with equal or even greater interests at stake.*

Website: mpingoconservation.org

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Northern Rangelands Trust

The Northern Rangelands Trust (NRT) supports community conservancies throughout northern Kenya. NRT conservancies aim to encourage community conservation of natural resources and the development of sustainable economies. Key targets of its work include peace and conflict resolution as well as an emphasis on good governance. Conservancies *rely on traditional cultural structures and the empowerment of women and youth* to improve governance and increase participation. Its programs focus on areas including wildlife protection, rangeland management, security and peace, governance, and livelihoods and enterprise development.

NRT's rangeland initiatives address decreased productivity resulting from changing grazing patterns, human population growth, climatic change, and invasive non-native species proliferation. Establishing community conservancies is a strategy to tackle the multifaceted issues surrounding rangelands through better planning and restoration of rangelands. Each conservancy has a rangeland coordinator who leads

a community-elected grazing committee to help improve and implement conservancy grazing plans. This *ensures that decision-making institutions have a mechanism that holds them accountable to local people*. In certain conservancies, these committees manage invasive plant species and replant perennial grasses *using local ecological knowledge to inform conservation work*. There are still challenges to working at the community level, and NRT aims to broaden conservancy rangeland management to coordinate on a larger landscape scale. NRT's rangeland program emphasizes the importance of *land-use planning as a key component of community-based conservation, which should be done in collaboration with community leadership*.

Website: nrt-kenya.org/community-conservation

World Wildlife Fund, Coastal Tanzania

The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) is a global conservation organization focused on six major areas—forests, oceans, wildlife, food, climate and energy, and freshwater—by addressing three main drivers of environmental degradation—markets, finance, and governance. WWF's Coastal Tanzania division has established over 60 Beach Management Units, in conjunction with local communities, to conserve and manage natural resources used in coastal areas. Fishing is a critical part of coastal community livelihoods in Tanzania, both economically and for subsistence. Irresponsible fishing practices, however, have endangered not only coastal ecosystems but also food security, public health, and the economies of coastal communities. WWF's support for Beach Management Units *empowers local communities to manage their marine environment* and its use in a sustainable way. These units are legally binding partnerships between communities and government that *allow local people to have decision-making power* over their fishing areas and coastlines. WWF trains and supports Beach Management Units to plan and execute

the rehabilitation of fish stocks and preserve wildlife populations by helping communities decide how to determine quotas, monitor fishing, prevent illegal activities, and protect endangered species, such as turtles.

WWF's Beach Management Units *take into account the complexity within communities* and the need to pursue conservation efforts with an awareness of the social-ecological systems involved. By establishing legal partnerships for resource management, these units *ensure that local ownership and good governance are priorities, protecting the resource and property rights of communities*. Conserving coastal natural resources is a critical environmental concern for local people. Therefore, *determining goals in a way that includes a range of stakeholders is necessary* to successfully change trends in overfishing and natural resource depletion.

Website: wwf.org.uk/what-we-do/projects/ recovering-community-fishing-grounds-and-turtle-populations

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION AND HUMAN-WILDLIFE CONFLICT PREVENTION

Coexisting with wildlife and preserving biodiversity are among the most important challenges for conservation. These pressures will only intensify with the escalation of human population growth and climate change. Connections with nature, ecosystems, and the overall environment are diverse and unique to each country, region, society, and individual, which adds to the complexity of conservation at the community level. The organizations highlighted in this section apply successful methods to prevent conflict, protect wildlife and habitats, and maintain biodiversity in collaboration with the relevant communities.

African People & Wildlife

African People & Wildlife (APW) partners with local communities to create effective, sustainable solutions that improve the lives of rural Africans while protecting the natural world. Operating on the ground in Tanzania, APW establishes long-term relationships with local residents based on the respectful integration of science and tradition. APW's strategic, holistic approach to conservation is widely applicable in landscapes where people and wildlife coexist. Its program areas focus on preventing human-wildlife conflict, conserving endangered species and vital habitats, building capacity for the management of natural resources, and fostering local conservation incentives.

To prevent livestock depredation and promote coexistence with large carnivores, APW has partnered with local communities to develop the Living Walls program. Living Walls fortify traditional thornbush corrals with live *Commiphora* trees, surrounding the corrals and then securing the gaps between trees with chain-link fencing. This project highlights the principle of participation by *relying on community knowledge to co-design* Living Walls *using locally relevant and environmentally sound methods* to protect livestock and reduce conflict. *Instead of relying solely on outside knowledge and expertise*, APW's Living Walls *program results from the wealth of information and knowledge local communities have amassed through generations.* The program also requires community members to pay a portion of construction costs, which *ensures*

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© APW/Charles Trout

that recipients are invested financially and not simply receiving aid. APW's methods employ *flexible and adaptable solutions, which can be applied to varied contexts and communities*. Its strong monitoring protocols *ensure targeted outcomes and financial responsibility*. Living Walls are an excellent example of a win-win solution, demonstrating *equal balance between community benefits and conservation outcomes* as both livestock and wildlife are protected.

Website: africanpeoplewildlife.org/living-walls

Community Forests International

Community Forests International (CFI) was formed to address drastic and severe deforestation on the island of Pemba, off the coast of Tanzania. With help and advice from local communities, CFI began to combat deforestation by replanting native trees with the *consideration of local ecology*. What began as a small group with limited resources expanded into a network of community members who have turned to conservation as a sustainable livelihood through beekeeping, earth block building, permaculture, and agroforestry. Islands are among the most affected ecosystems by climate change; consequently, communities living on islands face many challenges, from rising coastlines to coral bleaching. The community-based conservation efforts to combat deforestation and climate change in Pemba have led to the replanting of over two million trees, the establishment of the first school and water collection system, and economic growth for the community. CFI shows how *connecting economics with the environment is often necessary for conservation projects working with communities. Assuring that economic functions are considered as part of the solution* was a goal from the project's inception, swhich has contributed greatly to the project's success. CFI relies on community members as the main drivers of reforestation and conservation in Pemba, and its program emphasizes *working side by side with communities instead of simply delegating tasks and responsibilities*.

Website: forestsinternational.org/about-us

© Charles Capel

Conservation Through Public Health

Conservation Through Public Health (CTPH) is a Uganda-based organization that works to prevent and control the transmission of diseases between people and gorillas, cattle, and buffalo while advancing the quality of life for communities to decrease their dependency on fragile ecosystems. It strives to prevent conflict through three programs that encourage local communities to be caretakers for both their environment and public health: Village Health and Conservation Teams (VHCTs), Human-Gorilla Conflict Resolution Teams, and Community Animal Health Workers.

The VHCTs are made up of trained community members who volunteer to provide integrated community-based public health information and services—including hygiene practices, infectious disease prevention and control, family planning, nutrition, and conservation education—to individual households. Through this program, networks are established in communities living adjacent to protected areas and gorilla populations, allowing VHCTs to provide health services while advocating for conservation and education. The aim is to *establish a mutually beneficial relationship and open dialog between the community and the organization*. Conservation Through Public Health's VHCT program exemplifies the importance of *empowering community members to take command of their personal and*

environmental well-being. CTPH uses the best practice of *treating health care programs as complex adaptive systems and not as linear cause-and-effect models*. Its reliance on local community VHCTs *recognizes the community as equals in the process of advancing health and well-being and ensures messages are delivered by fellow community members who understand local languages, customs, and culture*.

Website: ctph.org

East African Lion Conservation Projects Centered Around Community Inclusion

Many of the organizations working to prevent conflict between humans and lions in East Africa rely on similar techniques. One method commonly used is to enlist community members as ambassadors for wildlife. In East Africa, pastoral tribes like the Maasai historically killed lions as part of cultural coming-of-age rituals. Today, lion hunting occurs in the form of retribution for conflict between lions and livestock. NGOs working in these regions must *be mindful of the cultural and political agendas involved in program design and implementation*, specifically with an awareness of the cultural background of lion killing.

Attitude is a key parameter of behavior change and can have significant impacts on human-wildlife conflict. Therefore, *project implementers must test their assumptions about behavior and causation before embarking on a project*. Many of East Africa's

lion conflict prevention organizations have created programs that *rely on local members of the community to be a voice for wildlife in an attempt to mitigate and prevent conflicts*. Organizations using this model include **Ewaso Lions' Warrior Watch**, the **Ruaha Carnivore Project's Lion Defenders**, **Lion Guardians**, and **African People & Wildlife's Warriors for Wildlife**. These programs demonstrate the *use of local knowledge in project development* as local herders track lions and livestock, alerting fellow community members about the lions' locations to help prevent conflicts and advocating for peace between humans and wildlife. These projects *embrace the complexity of communities and take into account the social-ecological systems that cause conflicts while also being mindful of the cultural and historical reasons for conflict*. *Treating community members as equals at the discussion table and empowering local communities is key to increasing engagement*. These organizations also *recognize the power in hiring local staff as voices for wildlife as this encourages participation and strengthens community investment in a project's success*.

Websites:

- ewasolions.org/conservation/warrior-watch
- ruahacarnivoreproject.com/lion-defenders-6
- lionguardians.org/about-us
- africanpeoplewildlife.org/warriors-wildlife

East African Organizations Focused on Elephant Conflict Prevention

Preventing conflict between humans and wildlife is particularly challenging in the case of elephants, which are highly at risk of poaching and killing in retaliation for destroying crops and infrastructure. Preventative solutions and on-the-ground programs are needed for true coexistence, instead of relying too heavily on compensation programs.

The Elephants and Bees Project practices meaningful community engagement by *searching for flexible and applicable solutions to mitigate conflicts* in response to crop degradation by elephants. This research-based project aims to protect crops from elephants by using an elephant's natural avoidance of honey bees as a deterrent through the creation of "beehive fencing." Similar techniques to reduce crop destruction include the **Southern Tanzania Elephant Program**, which also uses beehives as a preventative tool, and the **Mara Elephant Project's Chili Fences program.** These programs demonstrate the importance of *recognizing that community livelihoods are linked to conserving wildlife and that they must be mutually protected*. These programs understand human-wildlife conflict as a *complex and multifaceted issue that must be addressed by finding solutions that promote coexistence*. As human populations continue to grow, finding solutions that protect wildlife as well as people and their livelihoods will be increasingly difficult. These projects search for *unique solutions that are easily applied by communities* to discourage negative wildlife interactions.

Websites:

- elephantsandbees.com
- stzelephants.org/projects/human-elephants-co-existence
- maraelephantproject.org

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ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

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Environmental education is essential to the future of conservation, and *educational components are critical for sustainable community-based conservation initiatives*. Increasingly, conservation-based education programs recognize that education systems are complex and that oversimplified solutions may do little to generate meaningful change within a community. The following organizations and programs treat conservation education as a fundamental part of their community engagement.

African Parks

African Parks' community engagement programs aim to provide benefits to surrounding communities by establishing mechanisms for local involvement with parks while also guaranteeing community interests are considered in management decisions. African Parks' community projects include the construction of schools, the provision of educational support, and the facilitation of enterprise development. These programs focus on building enthusiasm for conservation while supporting communities' access to jobs, education, health care, and commercial enterprise development. African Parks establishes environmental education programs that share with the local population the importance of conserving natural resources and their sustainable use. It seeks to *ensure that communities, especially local youth, have access to the parks and are able to see the benefits of conserving them*. It also implements mechanisms and structures that ensure communities have access to education at feasible times, developing seasonal curricula based on agricultural calendars. This practice emphasizes the importance of *corresponding program timelines with a community's seasonal and cultural timelines*. African Parks' education programs illustrate the importance of *recognizing the complexity involved in environmental education and awareness* as well as the critical need to *ensure that community members are able to access the areas they are being asked to conserve*.

Website: africanparks.org/our-work/community-development

Coaching for Conservation

Coaching for Conservation works in South Africa and Botswana to inspire schoolchildren to become stewards of their environment through sport. Its programs build confidence, teach team-building skills, and provide a fun pathway for students to become engaged in conservation. Through after-school programs, summer camps, and exposure to wildlife, Coaching for Conservation works to show the importance of protecting the environment while providing community youth the opportunity to grow, learn, and play. Its model is *not to evangelize to communities that caring for the environment is important, but to instill a love for the environment through positive experiences and meaningful connections*. Instead of relying on homogenous solutions to the provision of conservation education, Coaching for Conservation employs a unique and *flexible solution that is adaptable to different contexts and communities*.

Website: coachingforconservation.org

Gorongosa National Park

The resurrection of Gorongosa National Park is the result of a partnership between the Carr Foundation and the government of Mozambique aimed at restoring the park after civil conflict destroyed an abundance of the wildlife. Due to new protections and the reintroduction of many species, animal numbers have significantly increased in the park. More than 200,000 people also live in communities around the park, and Gorongosa recognizes the importance of *working in unison with local communities and government*. Its community development programs include education initiatives that support girls' clubs, primary and secondary school programs, and scholarships for higher education. Cross-cutting goals include the following: ensuring that all children, and particularly girls, have access to primary and secondary education; educating students and teachers about the environment and conservation; ensuring local environmental awareness and understanding are sufficient to make wise decisions regarding the environment; and supporting adults to be literate

and to pursue careers with skill building and development opportunities that are linked directly back to the park and wildlife conservation.

To be truly inclusive in community engagement, organizations must actively involve marginalized groups. Gorongosa demonstrates this by *emphasizing that women and young girls are part of education projects*. Its projects also *aim to improve environmental education for all ages*, emphasizing that older community members are essential to fostering change in cultures where elders are highly respected. *Providing access to higher education and teaching adults usable skills* can be a tool for increasing awareness of environmental issues as well as overall community well-being. (See Case Study on page 61.)

Website: gorongosa.org/human-development

Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa

The Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa (WESSA) works in a variety of capacities to promote conservation and environmental protection while addressing the economic and social challenges involved with environmental management, ecotourism, education, and youth development programs. Its education program works with schools and teachers to improve and support curricula focused on environmental education. It is a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) partner supporting education across South Africa. WESSA runs three environmental education centers that provide students with the opportunity to learn hands-on in an outdoor classroom. The education programs offered include outdoor adventure, environmental awareness, leadership, and capacity building, as well as continuing education programs focused around investment, curriculum building, support, logistics, and youth engagement. WESSA demonstrates the best practice of *maintaining long-term support, commitment, and engagement while being flexible with how this support is managed*. It pairs environmental education with work trainings that benefit the community while increasing awareness and *encouraging youth to conserve natural resources*. This creates a positive feedback loop of *empowering local communities to increase engagement*.

Website: wessa.org.za

ENTERPRISE AND ECONOMICS

Developing conservation-focused enterprise and economic programs that are relevant to community needs and viable for a range of individuals (including women) can be difficult, to say the least. Diverse challenges may arise, from acquiring materials to implementing best business practices and addressing market forces. The organizations and programs in this section demonstrate some of the best strategies for developing conservation-based economies, fighting poverty, creating businesses, and offsetting the economic costs of conservation.

Community Markets for Conservation

Community Markets for Conservation (COMACO) establishes economic incentives for the conservation of natural resources to combat poaching and unsustainable resource depletion in Zambia. Farmers and poachers pledge to pursue sustainable practices determined by the community to maintain ecosystem health. In return, COMACO provides training, support, and the capacity to pursue a sustainable livelihood via farming. Its methods include training farmers to use organic composting, minimum tillage, and a crop rotation scheme that increases crop yields, avoids nutrient depletion, and saves farmers from the cost of purchasing chemical fertilizers. COMACO then purchases the resulting premium products and resells them under its brand, *It's Wild!*

COMACO's model is based off an *understanding of the economic complexities behind why people poach*. It aims to break positive feedback loops that exacerbate poverty, which leads to further poaching. COMACO's methods have led to a 450 percent increase in farmers' annual incomes, providing food for families and removing the driving force behind poaching for sustenance. It *addresses the costs of conservation and the connection to social justice by finding a way to compensate communities* for conserving their natural resources and protecting wildlife.

Website: itswild.org

Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organisations

Namibia is a pioneer in both community-based and national conservation and was the first nation in Africa to include conservation as part of its constitution. The Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organisations (NACSO) helps conservancies and rural groups by facilitating community-based natural resource management. NASCO—an association of various consultants, regional conservancy associations, allied organizations, and the University of Namibia— aims to combine the knowledge and skills of various stakeholders for the benefit of communities through improved governance, natural resource management, and the expansion of economic opportunities. Namibia's National Protected Area System is divided into national parks and private and communal concessions. Benefits of concessions are used to grow the local and national economies. A majority of funding goes toward the communal concessions, which were established as a means to empower communities and reduce poverty by providing the benefits of capital growth, job creation, business expansion, and increased community capability.

NACSO views *conservation-based enterprise development* as something that *should benefit the communities most affected by land conservation and the restriction of land use*. This strategy *combines the conservation of natural resources with economic growth and incentivizes sustainable practices*. (See Case Study on page 56.)

Website: nacso.org.na

Small-Scale Enterprise Support

Community-based economic development projects that support small-scale conservation enterprises *focused on entrepreneurship and capacity building* are often both successful and enduring, particularly when they encourage self-reliance and resilience. Small-scale enterprise support can be used to *engage communities as active participants and create entrepreneurs within the community in a way that is targeted and collaborative*. The following programs *rely on communities as partners* to create small businesses that are applicable, simple, and beneficial to both the community and the environment. These programs *tie economic incentives to conservation initiatives* in a way that encourages community members to create enterprises that are self-reliant, resilient, and collaborative.

African People & Wildlife's Women's Beekeeping Initiative combines entrepreneurship with eco-friendly business principles in a way that uplifts communities while protecting the environment. APW facilitates the training of Maasai women in enterprise management, record keeping, project supervision, and monitoring and evaluation. APW provides trainings—from the creation of their business through its development over time—to strengthen and expand the women's knowledge. Its program *empowers women* in a male-dominated culture *to be involved in community conservation*. The program also highlights the best practice of *facilitating horizontal knowledge and experience sharing* between women by working with existing women's groups and forming new connections.

Website: africanpeoplewildlife.org/womens-entrepreneurship-empowerment-initiative

Conservation Through Public Health's Gorilla Conservation Coffee partners with farmers living near protected areas in Uganda to promote conservation while providing an alternative livelihood to decrease reliance on fragile environments. Its program provides trainings and supports capacity building and the introduction of products into larger national and international markets. CTPH highlights the best practice of *focusing on geographic hot spots of human-wildlife conflict as well as tying conservation efforts to economic incentives*.

Website: ctph.org/alternative-livelihoods

Gorongosa National Park's Rainforest Coffee supports 1,000 families to establish sustainable, small-scale production of coffee in partnership with the park, the government, and the private sector. This program works to *link sustainable development and land use with biodiversity conservation* while supporting families in the community. Through an integrated focus on education, health, and enterprise development, Gorongosa aims to thoroughly *address community issues* and simultaneously protect indigenous species and ecosystems.

Website: gorongosa.org/our-story/rainforest-coffee-people

Northern Rangelands Trust's BeadWORKS initiative provides support to local women's groups in order to create small businesses run by women. It supports women's groups by providing trainings, materials, business management, and access to international markets. Programs like this demonstrate the *importance of empowering women in the community to be a force of change in the integration of community economics and conservation*.

Website: nrt-kenya.org/beadworks

DEVELOPMENT

Organizations and programs in this section link conservation to broader development objectives. In addition to contributing to economic development, they also support infrastructure improvements and the strengthening of local and national security. These organizations recognize development as a multifaceted challenge to the conservation of nature and approach sustainable development by directing efforts toward the underlying problems of inadequate governance, education, economic development, and capacity.

African Parks, Akagera and Majete

Akagera National Park was headed for disaster in the 1990s as refugees from the Rwandan genocide turned to the natural landscape for relief from poverty and starvation. Poaching, environmental degradation from livestock, and deforestation brought the park to the verge of collapse. Majete Wildlife Reserve in Malawi was in a similar state as local communities were uninvolved in park operations and received very few benefits from its existence. Consequently, community interaction with wildlife was mostly limited to illegal poaching for subsistence.

Decreased wildlife populations caused both parks to struggle with low tourism numbers and revenue until African Parks began projects to address these issues. In Akagera, African Parks partnered with the Rwanda Development Board to increase law enforcement and improve benefits for local communities by creating more tourism and employment opportunities. While focusing on the drivers of wildlife population declines— poaching as well as forestry and livestock grazing within the park—African Parks *simultaneously created opportunities for alternative livelihoods*. African Parks' initiatives in both Akagera and Majete focus on *hot spots of human-wildlife conflict* surrounding the park to prevent illegal poaching through economic, education, and infrastructure development.

African Parks has worked in both Akagera and Majete to provide employment through the park, establish education and scholarships for those in need, involve the community in park management, establish small community-based tourism and local product

enterprises, develop and improve infrastructure, and increase regional tourism to boost the economy. African Parks is furthering the *development of these parks in a way that is sustainable and impactful for local communities. Its education, health, development, conservation, and enterprise programs employ complex adaptive systems* to develop tourism in these regions by *working with the communities in a way that is mutually beneficial*. In Akagera, African Parks *addresses the economic factors involved* with wildlife poaching *and the cultural issues* behind increases in livestock. Its programs in Akagera and Majete *make sure that alternative livelihoods are both available and supported*.

Websites:
- africanparks.org/the-parks/majete/community-involvement
- africanparks.org/the-parks/akagera/community-involvement

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Tuungane Project

Tuungane Project is a collaborative effort between The Nature Conservancy, Pathfinder International, the Tanzanian government, and local communities. Rapidly growing populations combined with severe poverty have led to the endangerment of local communities and their environments in rural areas around eastern Tanzania's Lake Tanganyika. The project's goal is to *preserve local ecosystems and their ability to support healthy communities*. Lack of access to education, health services, clean and safe drinking water, and modern contraception have all contributed to the exploitation of natural resources. The Tuungane Project implements water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) programs along with conservation activities in the region to *support community health, education, and the empowerment of youth and women* while also protecting the local environment.

This *project has a defined theory of change that* measures both its biologically and socially intended outcomes and *demonstrates sound logic in linking project activities to those intended outcomes*. The Tuungane Project *recognizes the importance of ensuring monitoring and evaluation are primary aspects of program operations*.

Website: nature.org/en-us/about-us/where-we-work/africa/stories-in-africa/tuungane-project

Virunga Alliance

Virunga National Park, located in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, is a leader in linking conservation with community development. Political, social, and military conflict in the region challenges the integrity of Africa's most biologically diverse protected area, and Virunga relies on its team of rangers to conserve the park's wildlife. In conjunction with its conservation programs, the Virunga Alliance supports local communities through natural resource management programs targeting hydropower, sustainable agriculture and fisheries, and tourism to create sustainable livelihoods and combat poverty. The Virunga Alliance partners with various private sector, civilian, and public organizations to bring peace and economic relief to an area torn by conflict and poverty.

The Virunga Alliance *addresses a significant impediment to social justice as lands are allocated for conservation and potentially prevent people in need from using natural resources*. In an attempt to fight the illegal extraction of resources and provide an alternative means of livelihood, the Alliance strives to improve local infrastructure, governance, and development. The challenges to developing the economy in eastern Congo are immense, and the Alliance is targeting some of the largest of these problems: roadways, power, and governance. The park *seeks input and support from the local community to prioritize its development initiatives and recognizes its dependence on community support to operate many of its programs*.

Website: virunga.org

A SUSTAINABLE WAY FORWARD

We are now, undoubtedly, in the era of the *Anthropocene*. No ecosystem on our planet is untouched by humanity, and yet humans are so often the last factor to be considered in efforts to protect those places. It is well recognized that the human-nature binary underpinning the conventional conservation paradigm is flawed. Yet many conservation organizations struggle to meet their financial needs, purely in terms of environmental and wildlife management objectives. Given this, how do we even begin to meaningfully and systematically advance community engagement in conservation across broader landscapes?

More Than Change

In this framework, we have outlined a process by which conservation organizations can build their capacities to partner with communities, act as catalysts for community-driven conservation, and work toward conservation-based economies. Moving forward, we cannot superimpose a model of community engagement on a fortress conservation system and expect lasting change. Our efforts must become more holistic and embrace community engagement as a key aspect of the management of conservation landscapes, where multiple land uses and a spectrum of protective designations form a sustainable Earth. We cannot do this in a system where conservation and development remain distinct. These sectors are intimately linked; no development project should be without a conservation component and no conservation program can ultimately succeed if the surrounding communities do not embrace sustainable livelihoods.

Rather, we must transcend the system.

To make this paradigm shift and to implement programs on an impactful scale, the field of community-driven conservation needs *more than change*. A doubling of conservation budgets (not a reallocation of existing funds) is needed to meaningfully advance environmental initiatives in the lands humanity depends on. While any implementation of community-driven conservation is a step forward, resilient outcomes require that real community engagement be adopted broadly by all organizations working in conservation and development. Small-scale market solutions to environmental problems are effective locally, but they do not define a global shift toward sustainable living. This work must be implemented on national and regional scales, impacting not just individual communities but whole landscapes.

We must do *more than change* our program design retroactively—embracing communities and their goals needs to be a core component of our conservation models from the outset. By demonstrating the complex processes involved in community engagement, we must also advocate for long-term efforts that uphold the principles of flexibility and relevance as circumstances inevitably change on the ground.

By deepening our involvement with communities and engaging in development and conservation work simultaneously, we can create win-win solutions. We can revitalize our relationship with nature and repair our relationships with those who have suffered environmental injustices. Within these pages, we have demonstrated that real impact is possible when we embrace the values of equity, justice, and human dignity. We cannot create a sustainable Earth alone. We must advocate for communities, for conservation, and for collaboration—all in one.

Many of us, as conservationists, entered this field for a love of wildlife and wild places—but the future of our work is with people. With the passion and innovation that have ignited our efforts thus far, we create positive change for the Earth's last wild places. When we share that passion with communities, we create *more than change*.

We create a transformation.
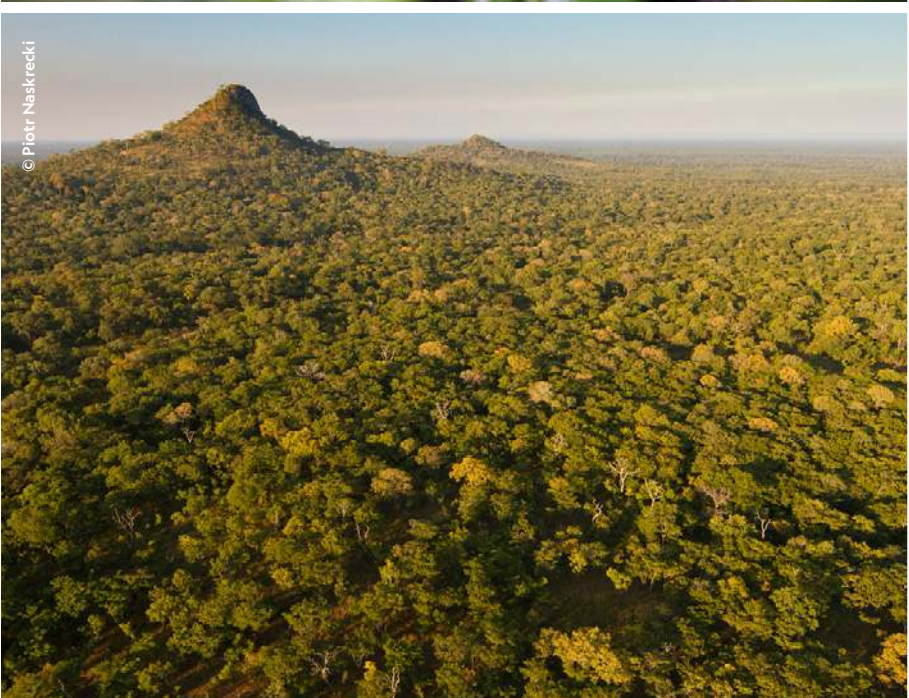
APPENDICES

This framework for community engagement in conservation strives to provide actionable recommendations, real-world examples, and tangible tools to assist NGOs and conservation practitioners in their efforts to create positive change in Africa. These appendices include a list of best practices in community engagement, the toolkit items referenced throughout the framework, a reference to conservation programs reviewed for *Community Engagement in Practice: Examples from the Field*, and a brief history of community engagement. We intend for these appendices to help bring this framework to life as we transition from theory to practical application.

APPENDIX 1
BEST PRACTICES IN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: A QUICK REFERENCE

Throughout the process of reviewing literature, analyzing programs, and discussing strategies with experienced practitioners in the field of community-driven conservation, we compiled a shortlist of best practices in community engagement. Many of these practices are implemented on the ground through the projects highlighted in *Community Engagement in Practice: Examples from the Field*, but we recognize that there are contexts where implementation may vary. This list is intended to be generalizable, a list from which NGOs, donors, and practitioners in other fields can draw on for inspiration in strategic planning. Of course, practices must be tailored to the strengths of the NGO and community context.

These best practices cover the entire project cycle from planning through evaluation and touch on topics as specific as activity logistics and as broad as systems thinking. We encourage NGOs to delve into this list by recognizing which best practices they may be implementing, which they are overlooking, and which may be adapted to fit their local contexts.

Flexibility, Complexity, and Systems Thinking

Practices referring to high-level program design, the interconnected nature of development sectors, and the philosophy of conservation

- Use flexible solutions that are adaptable to different contexts and communities.

- Education, health, development, conservation, and enterprise programs comprise complex adaptive systems, and should not be considered as linear cause-and-effect models.

- Complexity should be embraced in communities, programs, and theories of change, and be understood in terms of social-ecological systems.

Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning

Practices relating to logical, results-based planning, strategic goal development, and program evolution

- Monitoring and evaluation are crucial. Indicators should be developed for multiple layers of a theory of change and be measurable—quantitatively or qualitatively.

- The determination of biological and social goals should be participatory, informed by a range of stakeholders and people affected by the project, and embedded in traditional knowledge and legal systems.

- Reporting, transparency, and knowledge-sharing with communities during monitoring and after independent evaluations is necessary for effective feedback loops.

Culture, Beliefs, and Perception

Practices referring to the human dimensions of conservation, behavioral science, social justice, and inclusion of heterogeneous views

- Ethnographic, sociological, and anthropological studies can help inform the social and cultural dimensions of conservation initiatives.

- In addition to biodiversity and habitat preservation goals, NGOs should pursue conservation aims that respond to the environmental concerns of local people (such as soil fertility and water quality).

- Attitude is a key parameter of behavior change and can significantly impact conservation efforts. Managers should test their assumptions about behavior and causation before embarking on a project and during implementation.

- Consider indigenous and local peoples as equals at the discussion table and as drivers of local conservation efforts.

- Commit to conservation with a social justice– and human rights–based approach.

- Projects should emphasize the empowerment of women and youth.

Harvest Equity

Practices relating to the distribution of conservation program benefits, cost allocation, and financial incentives

- Programs should tie the strengthening of local livelihoods directly to conservation.

- A portion of monetary costs can be covered by the outside organization; however, money should not be freely distributed, and it is often better if all stakeholders financially contribute.

- Financial and development benefits should be distributed equitably, not just equally, to avoid perpetuating wealth gaps.

Governance and Institutions

Practices regarding decision-making authority, social processes, and institutional capacity to support conservation programming

- Local ownership, local control, and good governance are fundamentally important to successful programs. Central governments and conservationists must be willing to delegate authority to the local level and support clear and sufficient property and resource rights.

- Decision-making institutions should have a mechanism that holds them accountable to local people who bear the burden of exclusion and management.

- Understand time scale differences (e.g., donor, conservation groups, project cycles, community, and political timelines).

- Communication with community members should, when possible, occur in the local language, and information should be delivered by either a member of that community or a member of the ethnic group being addressed.

- Honor the principle of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent, ensuring that participating community members are informed of and consent to new programs and changes in existing programs and feel empowered to withhold consent as they see fit.

Activities and Strategies

Practices referring to specific and implementable activities, project logistics, and human resources

- Projects should include capacity-building and learning components.

- Land-use planning is a key component of many community-based conservation programs and should be done in collaboration with community leadership.

- Use local ecological knowledge to inform conservation work when possible.

- Support a significant percentage of team members from local communities—not just in assistant roles but also management roles—to increase investment in project success.

- Projects dealing with environmental crime should address economic and cultural issues that encourage conflicts and illegal activities. Alternative means of living should be available and supported.

- Where evidence supports it, focus on geographic hot spots of human-wildlife conflict.

- Facilitate horizontal knowledge and experience sharing among local actors (e.g., farmer to farmer).

APPENDIX 2
A TOOLKIT FOR MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT

This toolkit is intended to provide NGOs and conservation practitioners with practical instruments for implementing the guidance provided in Community, Conservation, and Collaboration: A Framework for Success. The tools within are generic templates, applicable to any community-based conservation effort. While some of the tools were created specifically for this framework, most have been adapted from instruments used in other sectors or created by partner organizations. As this toolkit is a living document, we invite input on the existing tools and call for additional tools that may be helpful to the conservation NGO community.

Just as NGOs must adapt to changing community contexts, these tools must be tailored to reflect the needs of the users. In some cases, the tools provide hypothetical examples to demonstrate their appropriate use, but only the format and organization of the tool is generalizable. We encourage users of this toolkit to adapt, adjust, and modify these tools to best fit their needs. Note that these tools are listed in the order they appear in the framework text which does not necessarily reflect the order in which they may be completed. As community engagement is cyclical and cannot be categorized in rigid steps, when an NGO completes each tool will depend on the project, the NGO's level of establishment in a community, and the rate at which conditions in the community and NGO change. The tools are intended to be living and flexible documents and should be reviewed and revised as needed.

To access the tools listed below, please visit **africanpeoplewildlife.org/community-conservation-collaboration**.

APPENDIX 3
A REFERENCE TO CONSERVATION PROGRAMS REVIEWED

Conservation initiatives often depend on community involvement to be impactful, and communities also have their own conservation priorities. Over 50 organizations in eastern and southern Africa with strong community engagement components were reviewed for this framework and grouped into five categories: natural resource management, wildlife conservation and human-wildlife conflict prevention, environmental education, enterprise and economics, and development. Of course, in practice there is often overlap as many program objectives, targets, and applications address multiple categories. Nevertheless, for simplicity, organizations and projects have been allocated to a category based on their most relevant application.

This is not an exhaustive representation of the many organizations meaningfully engaging communities on the African continent. Examples have been selected from a combination of remotely collected information and direct communication with the relevant organizations. However, on-the-ground practices have not been directly observed. A full list of the organizations and programs reviewed for this framework is available at **africanpeoplewildlife.org/conservation-programs-reviewed**.

TOOLS*

Tool 1: **Assessing Community Interest**

Tool 2: **Rapid Response Kit**
  2.1 Budget Template
  2.2 Project Timeline Template

Tool 3:   **Clarifying Internal Goals**

Tool 4: **STEP Analysis for Internal Capacity**

Tool 5: **Stakeholder Mapping**
  5.1 Identifying Community Champions
  5.2 Power Ranking with Radargram

Tool 6: **SWOT Analysis for External Capacity**

Tool 7: **Role Clarification**
  7.1 RACI Chart for Decision Process
  7.2 RACI Chart for Implementation

Tool 8: **Theory of Change Template**

Tool 9: **Monitoring for Results**
  9.1 Complexity and Confidence
  9.2 Performance Indicator Tracking Table

* **Note:** These tools are listed in the order they appear in the framework text which does not necessarily reflect the order in which they may be used.

APPENDIX 4
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: A BRIEF INSTITUTIONAL HISTORY

On March 1, 1872, U.S. President Ulysses S. Grant signed the Act of Dedication, which created the world's first national park: Yellowstone. An iconic park representing the "quintessential American wilderness," Yellowstone has long been regarded as the landscape that inspired conservation efforts around the globe.[1]

Yellowstone was but the first of many wildlands set aside for conservation purposes, and its creation began a global movement toward land protection. Nevertheless, its demarcation also set off a great debate regarding the meaning of wilderness and the question of humanity's relationship with and connection to nature.

Establishing Yellowstone meant displacing Native American tribes that had lived on the landscape for centuries. Keeping the park free of human settlement and safe for tourists and recreationists required the force of the U.S. Army.[2] Former residents of the park were seen as destructive, and Yellowstone was marketed as untouched, pristine, and wild, despite extensive human influence on the landscape. To preserve natural places, early conservationists sought to create fortresses, seemingly protected from the perceived damaging effects of human inhabitants.

This classification of some lands as *wild* and others as *human dominated* perpetuated the belief that humans are separate from our environment. This human-nature dualism has been a subject of debate, philosophical discussion, theological writings, and existentialist thought for centuries, and the newly created national parks reinforced the trend toward human separateness from nature. And yet communities around the world have profoundly influenced the global environment, managing resources and impacting landscapes for millennia.

The important relationships between communities and nature necessitate a broadening of conservation scope from localized "fortresses" to landscape and ecosystem-scale conservation. The U.S. National Park Service embarked on such a mission with the 1995 reintroduction of wolves to Yellowstone, intending to restore natural trophic cascades in the region. In the same year, environmental historian William Cronon published "The Trouble with Wilderness"; its adoption marked a significant shift in conservation philosophy, and it is now one of the most notable pieces in 20th-century conservation literature.[3]

> *"The dualism at the heart of wilderness encourages its advocates to conceive of its protection as a crude conflict between the 'human' and the 'nonhuman'—or, more often, between those who value the nonhuman and those who do not. This in turn tempts one to ignore crucial differences among humans and the complex cultural and historical reasons why different peoples may feel very differently about the meaning of wilderness."*
> —William Cronon, 1995

Cronon's work highlighted an existing problem in conservation where the peoples with a direct connection to the natural landscapes under protection were excluded from these protection efforts. He critiqued the policies that negatively impact the peoples most dependent on wild landscapes and offered environmentalists an alternative, self-critical, and cross-cultural land ethic.[4]

Through Cronon's writings and those of other environmental philosophers, theories of conservation gradually saw a shift from "fences-and-fines" toward more people-friendly approaches.[5] The concept of

1 West, P., J. Igoe, and D. Brockington. 2006. Parks and peoples: The social impact of protected areas. Annual Review of Anthropology 35: 251–277.

2 West et al. 2006.

3 Cronon, W. 1995. The trouble with wilderness; or, getting back to the wrong nature In William Cronon, ed., *Uncommon ground: Rethinking the human place in nature.* New New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 69–90.

4 Cronon. 1995.

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AN EVOLVING TIMELINE OF ENGAGEMENT

Despite the strong conservation intentions of early national parks, wilderness was typically identified in terms of its benefits to recreationists. Not only were indigenous peoples removed from parks, but even wildlife deemed dangerous for tourists were extirpated; gray wolves (*Canis lupus*) were hunted to local extinction in Yellowstone in an ironic attempt to preserve the natural landscape for human enjoyment. Thus, while indigenous peoples were seen as the destructive force in wildlands, park authorities also often enacted anti-predator policies that caused lasting damage to the very ecosystems they were tasked with preserving.

1872
President Ulysses S. Grant signs the Act of Dedication, creating the world's first national park: Yellowstone.

1916
The National Park Service Organic Act is signed, creating the U.S. National Park Service.

1926
Due to prolonged hunting by the U.S. Army and tourists, wolves are extirpated from the Yellowstone ecosystem.

1975
Grizzly bears are listed as a threatened species in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.

1995
Wolves are reintroduced to Yellowstone from Canada's Jasper National Park.

2017
Studies confirm wolf reintroduction impact on Yellowstone ecosystem recovery. Park visitation reaches an all-time high.

1886
The U.S. Army arrives in Yellowstone to manage the park. Institution of "fences-and-fines" conservation.

1918
The U.S. Army leaves Yellowstone, turning over management and protection to the U.S. National Park Service.

1934
A National Park Service Director's Order prohibits the killing of predators.

1975
The IUCN passes the Kinshasa Resolution on the Protection of Traditional Ways of Life.

1995
William Cronon publishes "The Trouble with Wilderness," calling for a new conservation paradigm.

2017
Oswald Schmitz publishes *The New Ecology: Rethinking a Science for the Anthropocene.*

"pristine" nature and "unfettered" wilderness gave way to the modern ideals of sustainable social-ecological systems.[6] In steep contrast to the human-nature dualism that dominated conservation thought for decades, social-ecological systems provide a model for including humans as an integrated part of the natural world.

Oswald Schmitz, Oastler Professor of Population and Community Ecology at the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies, takes the discourse a step further in his 2017 book, *The New Ecology: Rethinking a Science for the Anthropocene*. Schmitz expands the social-ecological system model, recognizing that humans are not just integrated in the natural world but engineers of it. Elaborating upon a new approach to conservation science, he recognizes humans as stewards of biodiversity. Rather than viewing humanity as a destructive force against wilderness, Schmitz's new ecology recognizes human communities for their crucial role in its protection.[7]

Of course, Cronon and Schmitz are far from the first to conceive of a conservation ethic that requires the engagement and inclusion of indigenous peoples. Long before the theory of human inclusion in conservation was so eloquently laid out by academics, some practitioners in the field recognized the necessity of engaging with people. As far back as the 1970s, international human rights bodies condemned the forced displacement of indigenous peoples from protected areas. In 1975, the IUCN passed the Kinshasa Resolution on the Protection of Traditional Ways of Life, and the UNESCO World Heritage Convention created a classification to protect areas of historical and cultural significance.[8] However, these regulatory changes, while significant at a high level of governance, did not always influence the implementation of conservation

> ### ℹ️ Social-Ecological System
>
> The integration of both the natural and social sciences with systems theory, recognizing the interdependent interactions between biology, ecology, and social systems.

initiatives on the ground, which were historically managed by ecologists with minimal exposure to the social sciences.

The disciplinary divide between social and natural sciences—still prevalent in academia today—began to be challenged in the late 1970s. Notably, Amy Vedder, an ecologist, and her husband, Bill Weber, a social scientist, moved to Rwanda in 1978 to study gorillas and their conservation at Karisoke Research Center, founded by Dian Fossey. The couple arrived just weeks after a well-known silverback gorilla named Digit had been poached.[9] As one of the first interdisciplinary teams to work in wildlife conservation, Vedder and Weber defied the status quo by insisting that including the concerns of Rwandan people neighboring Volcanoes National Park was necessary to protect gorilla habitat and reduce poaching.

In the aftermath of Digit's death, Fossey's team reacted with strict anti-poaching measures. While thousands of postcards arrived from angered Americans demanding justice for the gorillas, few expressed concern for the people of Rwanda or their development and conservation priorities.[10] Vedder and Weber sought to change this by founding the Mountain Gorilla Project, which used the first ecotourism model in the region to implement holistic conservation and development programming. By partnering with Rwandans at

national and local levels in their project, conducting environmental awareness programs, and providing financial benefits for the nation and people surrounding the park, the Mountain Gorilla Project became one of the first community-oriented conservation initiatives in Africa.[11]

Integrated conservation and development projects (ICDPs) like the Mountain Gorilla Project emerged in the 1980s. Those projects emphasizing sustainable-use initiatives gained international support.[12] The 1990s brought about the rise in community-based natural resource management programs, founded in the belief that economic benefits for rural people would further incentivize communities to partake in wildlife and wildlands protection and to manage their own natural resources sustainably.[13] By the time Cronon published his iconic piece critiquing "wilderness" in 1995, few conservation initiatives could obtain donor support without referencing community inclusion. Ecotourism projects and locally managed conservancies rose up all around Africa, with Zimbabwe's Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) being perhaps the most well-known.[14] Community-conserved landscapes and the co-management of protected areas with indigenous peoples were solidified in international protocol in the Durban Action Plan of 2005, which states that "the rights of indigenous peoples, including mobile indigenous peoples, and local communities should be secured in relation to natural resources and biodiversity conservation."[15]

In the 15 years since the Durban Action Plan was passed, conservation practitioners, academics, and governments around the globe have made great strides in ensuring that environmental efforts are inclusive of and often led by local peoples, but there is still much more to do.

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