

**INTEGRATING
CONSERVATION,
LIVELIHOODS &
GOVERNANCE**
LEARNING
FROM
EXPERIENCE

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▲ Mpingo tree of south-eastern Tanzania. Credit: MCDI

*"I cannot teach anybody anything.
I can only make them think"*

Socrates

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INTRODUCTION

In mid 2008, Anglo American and Fauna & Flora International (FFI) embarked on a strategic partnership to identify and implement opportunities to improve biodiversity conservation. One component of this partnership, managed by FFI's Conservation, Livelihoods and Governance team (CLG), explored approaches to the integration of biodiversity conservation, sustainable livelihoods and environmental governance in 3 case study projects in Brazil, China and Tanzania. It also offered the opportunity to use lessons learnt to inform both FFI and Anglo American's future programming given that both organisations share complementary positions with regards to conserving biodiversity and to respecting and addressing the rights and well-being of people living in and around the places we respectively work.

Organisational positions on biodiversity, livelihoods and governance

FFI recognises that biodiversity conservation and sustainable natural resource use are inextricably linked to people's rights to secure their livelihoods and live in dignity. The maintenance of ecosystem goods and services can contribute positively to the realisation of many human rights. At the same time, secure rights – e.g. land tenure and participation in decision-making – can enable more effective environmental stewardship. However, conservation activities can also have negative impacts on local people. FFI seeks to ensure that our work does not disadvantage poor, vulnerable or marginalised natural resource-dependent people, and, wherever possible, contributes to improving well-being and social equity. We are committed to respecting human rights, promoting their protection and realisation within our conservation programmes, and supporting the governance systems that can secure those rights.

Similarly, Anglo American are committed to the active stewardship of biodiversity in all phases of their activities. They operate in compliance with the International Council on Mining and Metals' (ICMM) Good Practice Guidance for Mining and Biodiversity and with ICMM sustainability principle 9: "to contribute to the social, economic and institutional development of the communities in which the Company operates". Furthermore, they regard respecting human rights as fundamental to all their activities, and have a longstanding commitment to the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

This document is one of the outputs of a process designed to distil, document and share the lessons learnt from the livelihoods and governance element of this partnership. The contents are drawn largely from individual project reports, from the insights gained through the support provided to these projects by the CLG team, and from the discussions held during a learning event held in Cambridge in April 2011. Participants in the learning event included representatives of the 3 case study project teams (FFI staff and partners), together with staff from 2 additional projects from Eurasia. The week-long event included a one-day workshop at which a number of common themes that arose during the learning process were further discussed and tested with a wider group of FFI staff involved in managing conservation projects around the world.

The key themes identified during the learning process were:

- Contextual analysis, monitoring & evaluation
- Socio-cultural and economic empowerment
- Gender
- Climate change adaptation
- Accessing relevant skills and expertise

THE CASE STUDY PROJECTS

The three projects supported under this partnership are introduced below and referred to throughout this document. Detailed case studies of each project are also available on the Fauna & Flora International website at www.fauna-flora.org/initiative/livelihoods-and-governance/

Cristalino:

Gateway to the Amazon

The protected areas along the Cristalino River in the northern part of Mato Grosso state are strategically placed to halt the deforestation threatening the Amazon. But their conservation faces many challenges. A 1970s government policy led to the establishment of farming communities made up of in-migrants from the South, forced to try and eke out a living with no knowledge of the Amazonian ecosystem, resulting in a cycle of land degradation and poverty. FFI, together with local partners, Fundação Ecológica Cristalino (FEC) and Instituto Ouro Verde (IOV), has been working closely with local communities to try to break this destructive cycle. The overall aim is to slow down the advance of small-scale agriculture into the forested lands of the so-called 'Gateway to the Amazon' and to reduce the pressure on Cristalino State Park, by enabling settlers to adopt more productive, sustainable uses of their land and natural resources.

Mpingo:

The tree that makes music

The mosaic of Miombo woodland and coastal forest in Kilwa District, south-eastern Tanzania, harbours many species of conservation interest, including substantial stocks of valuable hardwoods such as African blackwood, known locally as *mpingo*. There already exists a lucrative niche market for *mpingo* for use in the manufacture of high quality woodwind instruments. FFI's local NGO partner, Mpingo Conservation and Development Initiative (MCDI), works with the Kilwa District Council to facilitate Participatory Forest Management in forest-dependent communities to enable those communities to benefit from the price premium that sustainably harvested timber can gain on the international market. The project has been successful in securing the first FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) certification for a community managed forest in Africa and, in 2011, the first woodwind instruments from these forests have entered the global market.

Tibetan Plateau:

The roof of the world

The Tibetan Plateau contains a mosaic of internationally important habitats for a range of globally threatened and endemic animals and plants. It is home to over six million Tibetans, of whom nearly half are traditionally nomadic herders whose livestock have grazed the grasslands for thousands of years. It is also the source of the headwaters of the Yangtze, Mekong and Yellow rivers, on which the livelihoods of many million more people depend. Grassland degradation is affecting biodiversity and associated ecosystem products and services. FFI works with local communities, NGOs and government partners to better understand the grassland ecology, as well as assess the impacts of government policies for poverty alleviation and grassland restoration on herders and their livelihoods. Together we are helping develop the capacity of marginalised groups of Tibetan herders to take control of their future and engage in local development processes, in keeping with their strong cultural values.

CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

“The only true wisdom is in knowing you know nothing.”

Socrates

Embracing complexity, uncertainty and diversity

Project teams recognise that they work in complex and dynamic socio-cultural, economic, political and ecological contexts. A good understanding of the range of factors that affect how different people interact with their environment is key to designing and implementing interventions that achieve positive outcomes for both biodiversity and people. This is a fundamental premise of the sustainable livelihoods approach that FFI seeks to apply in our work with local communities.

“If you don’t understand the context, your [choice of] strategy will be a lottery.”

Learning workshop participant

Sustainable livelihoods approaches

FFI promotes the use of a sustainable livelihoods approach (SLA) to working with communities to achieve biodiversity outcomes. SLA seeks to use participatory, holistic methods to understand the reality and complexity of people’s lives and livelihoods. It comprises a theoretical framework and a set of principles. The framework illustrates the links between the different assets (or resources) that people need for a sustainable livelihood, as well as the influence of policies, institutions and processes, and the impact of shocks, trends and seasonality on access to and use of these assets. Crucial to the success of using a SLA to biodiversity conservation is the understanding that people’s livelihoods goals are usually not only to achieve increased income. Often of equal, or even higher, priority are basic food security and broader social well-being, including having a sense of control over their lives and the fulfilment of socio-cultural and spiritual values.

One common reflection that emerged early in the joint learning process was that the projects discussed seemed at first glance to have a lot in common. For example, in Tanzania and Kyrgyzstan we are working on participatory forest management, while grassland management is a key issue on the Tibetan Plateau and in Georgia, both places where there are also strong links between landscape, livelihoods strategies and cultural identity. All projects are also working closely with local communities, including in most cases strengthening village-level organisations and facilitating dialogue between community and government institutions. This might suggest that what works in one place will be equally applicable in another, apparently similar, situation.

However, more in-depth comparative analysis revealed important differences in both local and project context which affected how each project was designed and implemented. One example was the relative balance between interventions that link livelihoods to biodiversity conservation and those that seek to de-link, or diversify, livelihood strategies away from direct dependence on the biodiversity we are seeking to conserve. Examples of ‘linked livelihoods’ interventions include efforts to ensure sustainable use of biodiversity (*Mpingo* woodlands in Tanzania, fruit and nut forests in Kyrgyzstan, grasslands on the Tibetan Plateau and in Georgia). De-linked livelihoods interventions include: helping diversify income sources through revitalisation of traditional Tibetan building construction and religious stone-carving skills; and supporting sustainable, diversified agricultural practices and access to markets at the ‘Gateway to the Amazon’ in Brazil.

This phenomenon of apparent similarity but significant difference is reflected within the communities with whom we work. While the term 'community' implies a group whose members have something in common, these communities are likely to be far from homogenous. Nor should we assume that one community or village is the same as another. In order to better understand the complex relationships between these communities and their environment, we need to explore the diverse contexts in which different people make their livelihoods choices, including the differential access to assets, information and power, of women and men, of youth and older people, of the better off and the poorer members¹. Through the course of the projects, all project teams recognised and responded to the need to have increased presence in the project sites and more intense engagement with the communities in order to build trust and to better understand the livelihoods of different groups within those communities, including the incentives and disincentives for them to pursue livelihoods strategies in ways that are compatible with biodiversity conservation.

Developing and testing our 'theory of change'

Workshop participants recognised that contextual analysis is not just a one-off activity, such as a 'community meeting' or even a 'livelihoods assessment' undertaken at the start of a project but should be an on-going process. However, in practice, we often restrict our analysis to a fairly rapid data collection or discussion process in the early stages of our interventions. This was clearly illustrated during FFI's annual reporting process which identified 31 socio-economic surveys undertaken across our global portfolio in 2010 but only one reported instance of socio-economic *monitoring*. Initial contextual analysis at the beginning of a project can, however, help provide a baseline and aid identification of key indicators, and questions, to guide our monitoring of context and of change throughout the course of the project and for final evaluation of outcomes and impact.

In our learning event, discussions on monitoring and evaluation (M&E) led to a consideration of the usefulness of theories of change (ToC). White (2009) identifies understanding context and anticipating heterogeneity as crucial elements of such theory-based monitoring and evaluation. These models make explicit, and test, our assumptions about the relationship between the inputs, activities and outputs of project implementation and the desired short- to medium-term changes in outcomes and longer-term changes or impact. Developing a theory of change is an iterative process involving understanding project context, characterising our interventions, developing testable hypotheses, identifying data needs, and testing hypotheses and updating initial assumptions (Jagger et al 2010). Involving multiple stakeholders in ToC development strengthens both the theory itself and the engagement of those actors in the whole process of finding solutions to the problems to be addressed.

Such an approach encourages learning through enabling us to analyse *why* change (both expected and unexpected) happens. This is in contrast to other causal models (e.g. logical frameworks) which tend to be solely focussed on *whether* planned activities have been undertaken and whether *anticipated* changes can be documented i.e. focus more on accountability than learning. Schreckenberget al (2010) identifies a lack of rigorous research showing how conservation and development projects are correlated with positive well-being outcomes. There are therefore currently no generic causal models to provide appropriate indicators for monitoring such projects; each has to develop its own theory of change based on local context and assumptions of logical, causal links. All 3 case study projects have either an implicit or explicit theory of change.

¹ See sections on Socio-cultural and economic empowerment and Gender for more discussion on this

Theories of change at the Gateway to the Amazon

The Cristalino project hypothesises that the so-called 'arc of deforestation' can be halted by encouraging behaviour change among existing small-holder farmers. It is based on the premise that these farmers are largely responsible for opening up new areas of forest as the fertility of their existing landholdings are quickly exhausted. The project therefore aims to help them to manage their land in an ecologically and economically sustainable way; to increase their awareness of forest biodiversity and ecosystem services; and to enable them to have more of a voice in decisions over protected area management. At the activity level, it is assumed that agro-forestry, restoration of springs and better access to markets will enable the first outcome (sustainable land management), environmental education the second outcome, and facilitation of community representation on the protected area consultative council the third.

Through monitoring and evaluation we can therefore test our hypotheses at different levels through a series of key questions such as *"In what ways has involvement in project activities affected livelihoods and well-being?"*, *"To what extent have any benefits (in income, food security, empowerment) changed participants' intentions to open up new areas of forested land or to increase tree cover on their existing land holdings?"* and ultimately *"Has the rate of agricultural land expansion into the forest decreased?"* Central to understanding the relationship between interventions and observed change is to keep asking the question *"Why?"*



▲ White-whiskered spider monkey (*Ateles marginatus*). Credit: Evan Bowen-Jones/FFI

Using a 'mixed-methods' approach

There is no single methodological blueprint to contextual analysis, monitoring and evaluation. Rather, it is recommended to design a mixed-methods approach appropriate to the project context and the questions we are trying to explore. This involves a combination of tools, and use of both quantitative and qualitative indicators, as well as a range of different information sources in order to validate the data ('triangulation').

Methods for contextual analysis, and monitoring and evaluation, can include 'formal' methods such as literature reviews, analysis of secondary data, surveys, key informant interviews and questionnaires. But they can also be more informal, 'participant observation' methods - spending time living in communities, taking the opportunity to learn more through informal conversations and observation of how people live their lives, their relationship with the environment, their fears and aspirations, and how these vary within and between communities. Key to making informal methods useful for M&E is to document the tacit knowledge accumulated through such social interactions. All 3 case study projects found it constructive to invest time in a combination of formal and informal methods, with the latter approach being found to also help to build stronger relationships between project staff and community members.

Participatory Learning and Action approaches (PLA) have proved particularly useful in understanding context and monitoring and evaluating change. For example, the Tibetan Plateau project team used participatory tools, such as seasonal calendars, to explore natural resource dependency of Tibetan herders. This process highlighted the significance of the cash income herders gained from harvesting a fungus used in Chinese medicine. In Brazil, the team used a participatory self-assessment process, involving actors identified through stakeholder mapping, to explore the links between biodiversity and livelihoods, thereby catalysing critical analysis for prioritising and decision-making.

While some would consider participatory approaches to yield only qualitative information, Chambers (2007) argues that they have in practice also been used to produce quantitative data that tend to be more accurate, insightful and useful than those from questionnaires and household surveys. They can also be used to collect retrospective data to establish a baseline during the course of a project if relevant baseline data are not available at project conception.

Participatory Learning and Action

'Participatory Learning and Action' is an umbrella term for a range of approaches and methodologies, including Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), centred on the full participation of people in the processes of learning about their own challenges and opportunities. PLA offers a creative approach to analysing local context, to exploring local people's concerns, and to joint planning, implementing and monitoring of activities and evaluation of outcomes. It challenges prevailing biases and preconceptions about people's knowledge, and the traditional extractive approach to research where outsiders ask questions in order to provide information to analyse by themselves for their own uses. The common theme of PLA is the promotion of interactive learning, shared knowledge, and flexible, yet structured, analysis.

Adapted from IIED (2005)

Classic, so-called 'gold standard' methods of monitoring and evaluation, involving quasi-experimental design, a focus on quantitative indicators, control groups and randomisation, are especially challenging to implement in relatively small, site-based biodiversity conservation projects. For this reason, FFI has been particularly interested in exploring innovative, participatory approaches based on stakeholders' perceptions and community-defined indicators of change in livelihoods and well-being. We also recognise that such methods can tell us more about the process of change, and that perception of change is particularly important in the conservation context given that this is one of the key drivers of people's behaviour.

One such methodology, tested by the Mpingo project team in Tanzania, is a modified version of Most Significant Change (MSC) – also known as “monitoring without indicators”. Reflecting on their experience of this approach, the team concluded that it *“generated very useful qualitative stories of change and provided vital context to understand what was happening in the communities. It has proved a useful system that we will continue to integrate into our evolving work practices”*.

Most Significant Change (MSC)

This technique is a form of participatory monitoring and evaluation. The process involves the collection of significant change stories emanating from the field level, and the systematic selection of the most significant of these stories by panels of designated stakeholders or staff. The staff and stakeholders are initially involved in ‘searching’ for project impact. Once changes have been captured, various people sit down together, read the stories aloud and have regular and often in-depth discussions about the value of these reported changes.

MSC is participatory because many project stakeholders are involved both in deciding the sorts of change to be recorded and in analysing the data. It is a form of monitoring because it occurs throughout the programme cycle and provides information to help people manage the programme. It contributes to evaluation because it provides data on outcomes and impact that can be used to help assess the performance of the programme as a whole.

Davies & Dart (2005)

Experience shows that multiple benefits arise from enabling local stakeholders to be involved in defining the indicators of the kinds of change that they value. It not only engages them in analysis and learning but can highlight the importance of process indicators. These are often related to aspects of governance, including a sense of empowerment – having more of a say in decisions that affect their lives, improved confidence and increased social capital – as discussed in the next section.

Adaptive management

“For the things we have to learn before we can do, we learn by doing.”

Aristotle

A key opportunity identified by workshop participants to address some of the challenges of working in complex contexts was the use of an adaptive management approach to our livelihoods and governance work. Adaptive management builds on complexity theory in socio-ecological systems. Conservationists in general are comfortable with the concepts of both complexity and adaptive management, given that ecosystems are classic examples of complex adaptive systems.

Adaptive management is particularly appropriate in the context of natural resource use and conservation since it recognises the uncertainty of the links between cause (*what factors account for the problem?*) and effect (*what effect will any given intervention have?*). It is based on the premise that learning from experience and applying that learning to future behaviour or activities will result in better outcomes.

An adaptive approach can be useful both in project management and in the practical management of natural resources. In addition, in the latter context, adaptive co-management brings in concepts of governance through an emphasis on collaboration, and on shared rights and responsibilities among different stakeholders at multiple levels. This resonates well with FFI’s vision of biodiversity being *“effectively conserved by the people who live closest to it, supported by the global community”* and is discussed in more detail in the following section on empowerment.

SOCIO-CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

“For the poor to be empowered requires us to change, to interact in new ways, to become not controllers, teachers and transferors of technology, but convenors, facilitators and supporters.”

Robert Chambers (1996)

One of the common threads running through the 3 case studies was that in each case project teams realised that community empowerment was central to achieving positive conservation outcomes. Whilst there is no single commonly accepted definition of empowerment², most definitions recognise it as both a process and an outcome of meaningful participation, enabling people to take more control over their lives. Workshop discussions on empowerment included references to rights and responsibilities, environmental and organisational governance, and increased access to economic opportunities, as well as the importance of cultural identity and values. Participants recognised that in order for the people closest to the biodiversity we want to conserve to be actively involved in its conservation without themselves being further disadvantaged, they need to have access to information to make informed decisions, the ability to organise, and the opportunities to engage with, learn from and influence other stakeholders.

² For an introduction to empowerment see: Anthem H. (2009) Notes on empowerment and rights-based approaches. FFI Internal Briefing Note



▲ Participatory data analysis for PFM in Tanzania. Credit: Lizzie Wilder/FFI

Access to information and knowledge

“Knowledge is power. Information is liberating. Education is the premise of progress, in every society, in every family.”

Kofi Annan

Access to information is fundamental to both socio-cultural and economic empowerment. Knowledge is an essential element of human capital and hence key to sustainable livelihoods. Information enables people to make better informed decisions, take advantage of opportunities, access services and markets, exercise their rights, negotiate effectively, and hold duty bearers, whether government or non-state actors, to account. For people to take effective action, they require information that is relevant, timely, and easily understood.

In the Mpingo project, team members helped increase local community members' and other stakeholders' access to information on a range of issues related to sustainable forest management and Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) standards for certification. As part of an analysis of local governance the project identified which institutions and individuals were most trusted and relied upon for information. This helped them develop effective strategies to facilitate information flows within the communities and between communities and other actors.

In Cristalino, a range of methods was used to increase understanding of the importance of biodiversity, ecosystem goods and services, and links with livelihoods and the local economy. With schools, environmental education using flagship species was a key strategy. 'Immersion' – overnight trips into the forest – was an innovative practice used to both increase knowledge and to inculcate a sense of place for in-migrants who had no innate connection with the forest. Providing internet access and working through local community radio were other approaches taken to improve access to information on a broad spectrum of issues related to sustainable agriculture and agroforestry, water spring rehabilitation, markets for produce and protected area management.

On the Tibetan Plateau, environmental education was also a key strategy, often in collaboration with Buddhist monks and grounded in Buddhist beliefs and values. In addition, the project team facilitated communities' access to information on how to grow winter forage, to revitalise traditional religious stone-carving techniques, and to manage the grasslands sustainably.

Strengthening local organisational capacity

Local organisational capacity refers to the ability of people to work together, organise themselves, make decisions and mobilise resources to solve problems of common interest. Such community organisation is often informal, as in the case of groups who share labour or other assets between themselves. They may also be more formal, sometimes with legal registration, as is often the case with farmers' groups or village savings and loans associations. Organised communities are more likely to have their voices heard and their demands met than communities with little organisation. In terms of economic empowerment, organisation can enable small-scale producers to achieve collective bargaining power with input suppliers, credit providers and buyers.

Community-based organisations

Community-based organisation (CBO) is a generic term applied to all organisations controlled by a community. CBOs generally fall into two broad categories: (a) institutions such as the Village Development Committee that have “public” functions at community level and are meant to represent the interests of the entire resident population, and (b) Common Interest Groups that have “private” functions, and represent the personal interests of their members. Examples of the latter might be a women's enterprise group or a water users' association or a farmers' association or a village savings cooperative.

Carlioni (2005)

All 3 projects worked to strengthen local organisational capacity in different ways. On the Tibetan Plateau, project teams worked with local communities to either strengthen existing groups of herders or help establish new ones. They supported these groups to develop increased capacity to plan and implement small-scale livelihoods and community development initiatives based on community identified needs. Such initiatives were designed to improve livelihoods in economically viable and environmentally sustainable ways, in keeping with local cultural values.

In the Mpingo project, the team commissioned a governance analysis in order to understand existing community decision-making structures and processes that they could build on, rather than creating new ones. They worked with Village Natural Resource Committees to implement Participatory Forest Management to FSC certification standards and in line with Tanzanian forest policy. Key to building local organisational capacity was to work on governance within these structures to improve their transparency, inclusiveness and accountability, particularly with regard to management of the increased income to communities from the sale of certified timber.

In Cristalino, early experience showed that the community representatives initially engaged in the protected area consultative council didn't communicate the range of concerns of different community members through the council. Nor were discussions on the management decisions communicated back to other community members. Learning from this experience, the team recruited two representatives (one male and one female) from each community to be trained and act as community organisers. These people played a key role in the subsequent participatory self-diagnosis and action process³ that the project employed to strengthen community organisation and action.

Facilitating stakeholder relationships

A major empowerment strategy of the 3 projects was to facilitate links and dialogue between communities and other stakeholders with influence over their livelihoods and over biodiversity conservation. This included both government and private sector market actors. Such relationships can help communities advocate for their rights, access services and markets, and provide fora for discussing and managing potential conflict and trade-offs between livelihoods and conservation goals. They can also help all stakeholders understand each other's perspectives and challenges. As the Cristalino project team reflected, multi-stakeholder meetings can provide *"time for people to learn how to work with others and to respect diversity and difference"*.

On the Tibetan Plateau, facilitation of communication between geographically dispersed communities enabled the sharing of declining traditional knowledge and skills, for example on stone-carving, building construction techniques, cultivation of winter forage, and grassland management. Tibetan herders were also connected to other actors in the handicraft value chain to explore the viability of producing handicrafts for regional markets. Of equal importance was the project's strategy of involving relevant local government staff in project activities which facilitated the formal registration of the community groups, a prerequisite for successfully accessing government support and resources.

In Tanzania, a key element in the success of accessing a price premium for certified timber was to facilitate links between communities and other actors in the value chain. Equally important was the development of good relationships and communication channels with relevant district government bodies.

In Cristalino, the partnership with local NGO Instituto Ouro Verde (IOV) enabled small-scale farmers to connect with local consumers willing to pay a premium for fresh produce. The project team also facilitated representation of local communities in the Cristalino State Park consultative council, as well as taking a multi-stakeholder approach to local economic development. Once community priorities had been identified through the latter participatory process, the team also played a crucial role in linking farmers to specific technical expertise from research institutes and government extension officers, for example on cocoa production, soil analysis and artificial insemination of livestock.

³ See <http://dlis.wordpress.com/> for more information (in Portuguese) on this process, based on the UNDP integrated and sustainable local development methodology.

GENDER

“The beginning of wisdom is the definition of terms.”

Socrates

There is a widely held misconception that gender is about women or ‘women’s issues’. In fact, gender is a term used to describe the culturally and socially prescribed attributes, roles, activities and responsibilities associated with being male or female. It is about the relations between men and women and about how power is distributed between the sexes.

Gender is not about biology, it is socially, culturally, politically and historically determined. As such, our attitudes to gender are not pre-determined but are learnt – as we grow up, we are taught by parents, schools, the media and society at large what is expected of us as males or females. Like all cultural and social norms, gender is not static, it can change over time. Nor is it the same in all contexts, in fact there is considerable variation between different cultures and communities.



▲ A herder family using a guide to the flora of the Tibetan Plateau. Credit: FFI

Taking a gender-responsive approach

“Gender equality and women’s empowerment are important prerequisites for environmental conservation and sustainable development.” CBD (2008)

Although there was some appreciation of gender issues amongst workshop participants, the level of understanding of its importance in relation to our livelihoods and governance work was very mixed. Similarly, the relevance of gender to achieving conservation outcomes was not widely acknowledged or appreciated amongst staff and partners. One key issue that arose during discussions was that, as conservationists, we tend to largely work with men and therefore overlook the different skills, knowledge, needs and aspirations of women and men, as well as the differential impact of conservation activities and livelihoods interventions on them.

Conservation organisations, including FFI, are increasingly recognising and analysing the links between poverty and conservation, and in particular the need to ensure that conservation activities promote, or at least respect, human rights and improve, or at least do not undermine, the livelihoods of poor people. It is generally accepted within the international development sector that gender is an important dimension of poverty and that women tend to be poorer, more vulnerable and more marginalised than men. However, this wasn’t widely recognised by workshop participants perhaps precisely because conservationists largely work with men. In practice, few conservation organisations have proactively promoted a consideration of gender or the empowerment of women in their programmes despite international commitments to do so under the Convention for Biological Diversity and UN Agenda 21.

Whilst gender equity is not the primary concern for conservation organisations there are implications for conservation of not following a gender-responsive approach. Low participation of women in decision-making over natural resources can have implications for conservation outcomes because women and men use and understand natural resources in different ways. For example, in many communities women are the primary collectors of herbs, spices and medicinal plants, as well as fuelwood and water, because they are responsible for their families’ health. Women can also be powerful advocates for sustainable resource management as they often have a longer-term view, concerned as they generally are with their children’s future.

Research has shown that in many cases men participate in - and thus benefit from - conservation (and development) activities more than women, including in project decision-making (Flintan 2003, Watson 2005, Mamo 2007). A review of 16 FFI projects drew similar conclusions (Anthem 2008). Without an understanding of how men and women use and control natural resources, our interventions are likely to be less effective both in achieving conservation goals and in reducing marginalisation and vulnerability of women.

Practical steps for addressing gender in conservation include involving both women and men in analysis, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, including taking measures to ensure that women’s voices are heard. This requires that attention is paid to the timing, location and facilitation of meetings to enable women not just to attend but to actively participate, based on an understanding of the barriers to women’s participation. Such barriers may include issues such as status, self-confidence, literacy levels, and time poverty. Collection of sex-disaggregated data for analysis, monitoring and evaluation, while not a panacea for addressing gender, is a concrete step towards better understanding differences between women and men. The CLG team has produced a list of key questions to help project managers think through relevant gender issues in project development and management.

CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION

Workshop participants expressed awareness of climate change as both a current phenomenon and as a future threat. We understand many natural systems and already vulnerable people will be significantly affected under future scenarios of climate change. Although significant climate change may be some decades away, actions we initiate now may be vital to the long term ability of ecosystems, and the communities around and within them, to withstand the consequences.

FFI has developed a process to help project teams work with partners and communities to think about the potential impacts of climate change, and to identify what actions they might take to reduce these impacts on associated habitats, species, services and people. It draws together information from other existing climate plans as an aid to planning.

Climate foresight planning

All 3 project teams have tested FFI's climate change foresight planning tool in their own specific project contexts. They reported finding it useful in helping them think through the potential threats to biodiversity of changes in climate, including how climate change may affect local communities' dependence on, and use of, natural resources. It was noted that the process benefits from combining community perspectives with available scientific data, and is helpful in identifying knowledge gaps. In most cases, it was found that the exercise validated the relevance of current project approaches and activities. It also provided an additional rationale for biodiversity conservation to increase ecosystem resilience to climate change impacts, and maintain the ecosystem goods and services on which livelihoods, both locally and globally, depend.

Workshop participants discussed the use of a climate foresight planning tool to help prioritise those projects with highest potential risk from climate change and identify the feasibility of appropriate strategies for addressing this risk. They concluded that foresight planning should be integrated into project cycle management, rather than seen as an additional, separate process. The aim would be both to try to mitigate climate-related risk for current projects, and to ensure that our interventions do not encourage mal-adaptation - actions that increase vulnerability to climate change-related hazards by delivering short-term conservation gains or economic benefits but lead to exacerbated vulnerability in the medium to long-term.



▲ Forest clearance in the buffer zone of Cristalino State Park. Credit: Rob Bensted-Smith/FFI



▲ Community meeting on the Tibetan Plateau in winter. Credit: FFI

Adaptive capacity of ecosystems and people

There are many challenges to developing strategies to enable ecosystems, and the people who are most closely dependent on them, to adapt to the effects of climate change. These include lack of accurate scientific data to predict the timing, frequency, distribution and nature of changes in climate and their impacts. Despite current knowledge gaps and uncertainty, most climate change scenarios predict increased variability in precipitation, temperature, and wind systems, and greater frequency of extreme events such as floods, droughts, and storms. Given the high degree of uncertainty over climate change impacts, and the danger of choosing any particular strategy based on incomplete data, the best option for addressing climate change within conservation projects would appear to be to build the adaptive capacity of ecosystems and local communities.

The IPCC (2007) define adaptive capacity as the ability of a system to adjust to climate change, including variability and extremes, to moderate potential damages, to take advantage of opportunities, or to cope with the consequences. One recently developed local adaptive capacity framework identifies five interrelated characteristics relevant to the adaptive capacity of socio-ecological systems: assets, institutions and entitlements, knowledge and information, innovation, and flexible forward-looking decision-making (Jones et al. 2010). Much of our livelihoods work inherently builds elements of adaptive capacity as it focuses on diversifying the asset base of local communities, while the governance aspects of this work includes strengthening local institutions, increasing awareness of rights and responsibilities, better access to knowledge and information, and more inclusive and better informed decision-making.

Addressing skills and knowledge gaps on climate change

Given the highly specialised nature of climate science, workshop participants discussed the need to access external knowledge and expertise on addressing climate change. It was recognised that accessing and analysing scientific data requires particularly specialist skills and knowledge that will need to be brought in from external sources, through partnerships and consultancies. The Cristalino team, for example, have commissioned an expert review of existing information and knowledge on climate change at the local, regional and national level in order to inform FFI's project planning and management in Brazil.

However, several workshop participants also advocated for further internal capacity building of staff and partners to better understand potential impacts of climate change and how to address them. FFI has begun this process by training key staff in climate foresight planning so that they can act as 'climate change champions' throughout the organisation. More work will be done over the next 3 years to further increase the capacity of these champions and to support them to cascade their learning to other staff and partners. We will also look to improve and, where necessary, adapt the foresight planning tool based on experience gained from wider application in different ecosystems and landscapes around the world.

Further reflections on approaches to accessing the relevant skills and expertise to integrate conservation, livelihoods and governance are discussed in the following section.

ACCESSING RELEVANT SKILLS AND EXPERTISE

“If all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail”

Bernard Baruch



▲ Revitalising traditional stone-carving skills on the Tibetan Plateau. Credit: FFI

Range of specialist expertise

Workshop participants recognised that a wide range of skills and expertise is needed to address livelihoods and governance issues in conservation. Some of the subjects identified as important in different contexts include: sustainable agriculture, sustainable forestry, and climate change; value chain analysis, market facilitation, microfinance, small and medium enterprise (SME) and co-operative development; and rights-based approaches (RBA), co-management models, equitable benefit-sharing, and gender mainstreaming. Participatory socio-cultural and economic analysis, planning, monitoring and evaluation, and associated facilitation skills are also considered key to working with communities to better understand livelihoods choices and the relationship between people and their environment. Not only are many of these skills not usually acquired as part of the traditional education and training of conservationists, but it is unrealistic to expect any individual to have all the necessary skills and experience to address such a range of issues. We therefore need to look at appropriate, feasible ways of accessing relevant expertise.

Partnerships, consultants and recruitment

All 3 case study projects have successfully used a range of methods to access the skills and knowledge needed to integrate livelihoods and governance issues into their conservation work. Focussed support has been provided from the CLG team: for Mpingo particularly on governance and equity issues; for Cristalino on sustainable livelihoods approaches and theories of change; and for the Tibetan Plateau on assessing the viability of livelihoods diversification strategies and on integrating indigenous knowledge into climate foresight planning.

All projects have developed formal and informal partnerships and other relationships to enable them to access specialist expertise. As an example, FFI in Cristalino has formal partnerships with the protected area authority (SEMA) and with local NGOs Instituto Ouro Verde - on community organising and access to markets, and Fundação Ecológica Cristalino (FEC) - on environmental education. But we also have more informal partnerships with the local agricultural department, Cocoa Research Centre (CEPLAC), and the Rural Research, Assistance and Extension Enterprise (EMPAER), which provide local communities with practical technical advice on a range of sustainable agricultural issues. In recognition of the need for increased field presence and community organising skills with more remote communities, the project also recruited an additional staff member with relevant experience to facilitate a participatory process based on the UNDP Integrated and Sustainable Local Development Model. Consultants have also been utilised for very specialist, short-term inputs, such as synthesising current understanding and information on climate change scenarios, policy and opportunities.

Different project teams will have to make their own decisions on which combination of strategies to use in order to access the skills they need. Some may decide that, as their expertise lies in biodiversity conservation, they should develop partnerships with local or international community development organisations for the livelihoods and governance aspects of their work. Others may choose to invest in building their own capacity to work effectively with communities, perhaps initially through learning from partnerships with such organisations or through recruitment. Whilst short-term consultant inputs can be useful in some circumstances, due to the complex nature of local people's livelihoods and the importance of building relationships of mutual trust, use of such consultants is often not appropriate when taking a Participatory Learning and Action approach. A further disadvantage is that often a lot of the tacit knowledge gained through the process of community engagement can be lost. Unless project team members are able to closely accompany the consultant in their work, opportunities for our own learning and capacity-building can be lost.

Attitudes and behaviour

“Behaviour and attitudes matter more than methods. Again and again, we have rushed and dominated, imposing our reality. We have to behave differently; it is our attitudes that have to change.”

Robert Chambers (1996)

In integrating livelihoods and governance issues in conservation, appropriate attitudes and behaviour are fundamental to establishing relationships of trust and enabling collaborative exploration and implementation of strategies to benefit both biodiversity and the people who live closest to it. As the Mpingo project team recognised, there is a crucial need to be able to *“adapt to different community situations, have empathy for the life of rural communities, and an ability to understand village politics”*. Similarly, Cristalino project staff reflected on the importance of taking a personal approach to meeting and talking to a wide range of people *“essentially getting across the message that ‘we are listening to you’”*.

Developing such attitudes and behavioural skills requires more than just formal training in participatory approaches, tools and methods. They develop from extensive experience of working closely with communities, and from taking time to reflect on, and learn from, our own and others experience. Coaching and mentoring support can play a vital role in supporting the development of conservationists' capacity to take a participatory learning and action approach to working with local communities.

A blended learning approach to building relevant capacity

While formal training is often seen as fundamental for building individual and organisational capacity, experience suggests that it is not enough on its own to enable project teams to successfully integrate livelihoods and governance issues into their conservation work. Indeed, the final evaluation of FFI's first livelihoods focussed capacity-building programme concluded that while some FFI staff have been able to *"broaden their level of appreciation and understanding in relation to livelihoods"*, increased awareness of livelihoods issues did not necessarily translate into *"the confidence to apply this knowledge to project design, monitoring and evaluation"* (Richardson 2007).

We recognise that different members of project teams require different levels of capacity appropriate to their roles within their organisation, whether FFI or partner organisations. It is not therefore feasible or even necessary to try to build the capacity of all staff and partners to the same level across the same wide range of skills and knowledge. In many roles staff only require sufficient understanding of livelihoods and governance issues to be able to effectively manage and maintain quality assurance for work undertaken by consultants and partners.

In recognition of the need to provide more support to translate increased awareness into the skills and confidence needed for practical implementation of this knowledge, the CLG team proposes to take a blended learning approach to capacity-building, using a variety of methods to suit different learning needs and preferred learning styles. Key to this approach is what we call 'accompaniment' – providing focussed and tailored practical training, together with 'on-the-job' coaching and mentoring support, to project teams as they design, implement, monitor and evaluate their projects. Workshop participants also identified the accessing and sharing of examples of good practice (from our own and others experience), and the development of practical tools and guidelines, as additional useful capacity-building approaches.



▲ Buddhist monks participating in a biodiversity project planning workshop. Credit: Mark Infield/FFI

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

Participants agreed that the learning process through which the above lessons were distilled was a very useful approach. Project teams particularly valued the opportunity “to take time out to stop and reflect”, and to learn from others, although some felt they needed more time to reflect on what it all meant in terms of practical implementation in their particular project sites.

Participants' workshop evaluation comments

I thought the way we distilled down so much information into a few key issues was very good.

The feedback I got from others about my project was good so hopefully others learnt from me as well. The overall relationship between conservation, livelihoods and governance was definitely clearer to me although there was room for debate as well. It was good to be able to work with a mix of project staff, partner organisations and FFI HQ staff together.

Very good techniques and exercises that made one think, reflect, discuss and learn not only from others but also from and about themselves!

It was helpful to exchange ideas, discuss different points of view, and challenge my perceptions on how things should be.

Suggestions for the future included providing more face-to-face contact between the CLG team and project teams, and between different project teams, including support and cross-learning visits, and training sessions at regional meetings.

Over the last few years, in keeping with developments in international research and debates, both FFI and Anglo American have become increasingly aware of the links between biodiversity and the maintenance of essential ecosystem goods and services, both those with non-monetary as well as monetary values, locally, nationally and globally. This lays an increasingly strong foundation and rationale for continued work to integrate biodiversity conservation with sustainable livelihoods and more equitable natural resource governance.

Building on the results of this first phase of the FFI Anglo American partnership, phase II (2011-2013) will focus on further building capacity to institutionalise sustainable livelihoods and environmental governance approaches within our conservation projects. Sharing lessons learnt within FFI, between FFI and Anglo American, and with the wider conservation and development communities will remain a key element of the partnership.

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About Fauna & Flora International

Fauna & Flora International (FFI) is a biodiversity conservation organisation working in more than 40 countries around the globe, mostly in the developing world. Our vision is a sustainable future for the planet, where biodiversity is effectively conserved by the people who live closest to it, supported by the global community. Founded in 1903, FFI is the world's longest established international conservation body and a registered charity.



▲ Community member undertakes forest inventory of village forest reserve in Tanzania. Credit: MCDI

