Stakeholder Collaboration

Building Bridges for Conservation

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Ecoregional Conservation Strategies Unit

Research and Development

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World Wildlife Fund
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

By explaining the principles of collaboration, introducing a range of tools, and reporting on a number of case studies from around the world, this resource book aims to help practitioners and stakeholders develop a wider appreciation of how to approach and structure a collaboration process. Stakeholders are encouraged to use the ideas and information provided here to develop new and innovative relationships with those individuals and institutions who can help make collaboration a reality.

Stakeholder collaboration is a process that will go through many iterations. Full collaboration or partnership is not always going to be the outcome. Instead, the process that stakeholders go through may reveal that other forms of action—campaigns, education, policy development, or advocacy—are more appropriate given the conservation goals and objectives identified, and the roles, positions, and interests of the various parties involved. Remember that facilitators, convenors, education and communication specialists, capacity building and conflict resolution experts, policy advisors, or lobbyists all can offer important advice and support to the collaboration process.

Whatever the outcome, the stakeholder collaboration process can help a range of stakeholders—allies and opponents, public and private sector, communities and individuals—to develop a better understanding of the issues and challenges involved in achieving conservation goals and objectives at a variety of scales.

We encourage you to use this publication as a "working document." Test it and report back to us on the utility of the processes and tools that this resource introduces. Where new ideas, approaches, and opportunities emerge, we hope you will supplement what is presented here and share your learning with us.

At the end of the day, conservation is about managing human activity and its impact on the environment. Stakeholder collaboration is one of the processes that can help you achieve that goal. We hope that you find this introduction to stakeholder issues and options helpful to your daily work. For further information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

ECOREGIONAL CONSERVATION STRATEGIES UNIT, WWF-US

CHAPTER 1

Overview

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Overview

This publication provides an introduction to concepts relevant to stakeholder collaboration. It introduces a range of tools that conservation practitioners and partners can use to develop effective working relationships.

Key points made in this publication include

- Stakeholder collaboration can help to address conservation issues at any scale.
- All key stakeholders need to be involved in the collaboration process if conservation is to be achieved at ecoregional scales.
- It is important for stakeholders to have the opportunity to come together to develop and share their visions and agendas.
- Deciding who is "inside" or "outside" a collaboration process will always be relevant to conservation outcomes and their sustainability.
- The history and dynamic of stakeholder positions and interests must be understood before any form of collaboration is initiated.
- All stakeholders will come to the process with their own biases.
- Reaching consensus on the ground rules is fundamental to success.
- Monitoring and evaluation of the quality of collaboration is as important as measuring specific conservation outcomes.

The concepts introduced in this resource book will be relevant to planners and managers as they tackle conservation challenges. Given the pace at which collaborative ventures among conservationists, local communities, governments, and the private sector are evolving, it is assumed that the processes and tools presented here will be supplemented over time with new ideas and techniques. It is appropriate therefore to see this publication as a work in progress.

The purpose of this resource book

Effective conservation of biological diversity is dependent on a wide and diverse range of stakeholders acting collaboratively. Today, large-scale forces such as consumption, technology, investment and trade policies, corruption, and limited capacity drive the threats facing priority conservation areas worldwide. Working independently, organizations cannot by themselves respond adequately to these pressures. Therefore, cooperation between interested and affected people and groups is necessary if the problems are to be addressed coherently.

This resource book has been designed to assist people engaged in conservation at all levels to develop their understanding of, and capacity for, collaboration. The book poses a number of key questions about how you achieve stakeholder collaboration and discusses a range of concepts and actions that can assist practitioners in identifying potential stakeholder collaboration opportunities and needs, and determining what is best for each situation.

Central to the questions, discussions, processes, and tools presented in this resource book are lessons and conclusions that have emerged from past conservation experiences. Specifically:

- The increasing scope and ambition of conservation initiatives, such as ecoregional conservation, will require a commitment to dialogue and collaboration with a diverse range of stakeholders.
- The goals of any collaboration venture must be clarified before engaging stakeholders. Goals help identify and target those interests that need to be represented in collaboration processes and those that can be left out.
- Issues, rather than geographic limits (place), will increasingly drive stakeholder actions as conservation programs are conceived and implemented across larger scales.
- Dialogue that is open and transparent is critical to long-term success.
- Stakeholder collaboration is a process that requires the opportunity and space for participants to listen to and learn from each other.

NOTES

CHAPTER 2

Defining Stakeholder

CHAPTER 2

Defining Stakeholder

A stakeholder is any person, group, or institution that—positively or negatively—affects or is affected by a particular issue or outcome. This book uses "stakeholders" to refer to people, institutions, or social groups that are involved in, or affected by, decision making regarding biodiversity conservation issues. While this definition is seemingly straightforward, it is often difficult to answer fundamental questions such as these: Who are "the people"? What does "institution" mean? What are the limits to a "social group"? Yet, these questions must be answered if the right stakeholders are to be identified and mobilized.

This resource book is designed to help practitioners develop a more precise understanding of these and other stakeholder-related questions so that field-level interactions and collaboration efforts can be improved upon. Being aware of the imprecision or limitations of terms and concepts is a key first step in clarifying what is needed to enable stakeholder collaboration that results in conservation successes.

Are there different types of stakeholders?

Different interest groups will have differing stakes in the management of resources, based on their use of and historical relationship with resources.

Primary stakeholders include those who, because of *power, authority, responsibilities, or claims over the resources,* are central to any conservation initiative. As the outcome of any action will affect them directly, their participation is critical. Primary stakeholders can include local community-level groups, private sector interests, and local and national government agencies.

This category of stakeholder also includes, by virtue of the power they wield, those who have *the capacity to influence collaboration outcomes,* but who may not themselves be directly affected by them. This group can include politicians and officials at the local, national, and regional levels, and international agencies (such as multilateral donors) who control policies, laws, or funding resources. Failure to involve primary stakeholders in collaboration efforts from the start can lead to subsequent implementation, technical, or political difficulties in achieving conservation objectives.

Secondary stakeholders are those with *an indirect interest in the outcome.* Depending on the issue, secondary stakeholders may, for example, be the consumer (who is interested in the continuing availability of a product), the company employee (who is concerned about job security), or the tourism operator (who wants to know whether an ecotourism destination will to continue to be accessible to clients). These stakeholders may need to be involved in collaboration processes, but their role is peripheral to that of primary stakeholders, so they may need to be involved only periodically.

Secondary stakeholders may need to have a role, for example, in identifying the costs and benefits of their interests or products, yet they may not need to be involved in all aspects of conservation initiatives. Facilitators or convenors of collaboration processes need to plan when and how to include both primary and secondary stakeholders, as well as to monitor changes in their interests and influence.

Opposition stakeholders may have the capacity to adversely influence outcomes through the resources and influence they command. While they may negatively influence different aspects of conservation planning, particularly at early stages, it is crucial to engage them in open dialogue. While conservation groups increasingly recognize the importance of involving their adversaries, they have limited experience in doing so. This will no doubt have to change over time if conservation is to be achieved.

Marginalized stakeholders—such as women, indigenous peoples, and other impoverished and disenfranchised groups—may in fact be primary, secondary, or opposition stakeholders, but may lack the recognition or capacity to participate in collaboration efforts on an equal basis. Particular effort must always be made to ensure their participation. Strategic foresight is needed to determine the time and support required to enable them to organize themselves and to participate in a collaboration process.

In some cases stakeholders are easy to identify. In other cases, a more in-depth understanding of the issues involved in a particular situation is needed to determine who should be included in the early phases of the process. For a variety of reasons stakeholders may disagree about who should be included in dialogue. It may be that a group is perceived as too combative, or is not thought to have the appropriate skills to participate effectively. These objections may or may not be justifiable and may often be the result of historic biases held by stakeholder groups. While assumptions are inevitable, it is important that the initial stakeholder

CASE 1 From a Coalition of Allies to Broad Participation

The Gulf of California ecoregion covers an area of 280,000 square kilometers (108,108 square miles) and provides critical habitat for over 5,000 species and fauna (including 30 species of marine mammals).

In 1999, World Wildlife Fund (WWF) formed a coalition (the "Core Coalition") with Conservation International (CI) and the Mexico Fund. This formal coalition among WWF and two established organizations actively operating in the gulf developed a conservation vision for the Gulf of California ecoregion that it is now advocating and sharing with other local conservation organizations. As other organizations are recruited to share in the core coalition's vision, a wider coalition encompassing those who contribute to the conservation of the gulf will be established.

To date, the coalition established in the gulf has been open to conservation allies only. However, as the elaboration of a biodiversity vision and conservation plan for the ecoregion is gaining momentum, there is a growing recognition that a wider range of stakeholders needs to be involved in the planning dialogue. The power and influence of key stakeholders like the shrimp fishing industry, whose actions will be fundamental to achieving the vision for the ecoregion, necessitates that they be engaged in dialogue with the conservation coalition as soon as possible. Similarly, local communities who depend on gulf resources for their livelihoods need to know that the vision of the conservation coalition is not a threat to them.

In anticipation of the need to extend the vision and conservation dialogue to other stakeholders in the ecoregion, WWF has commissioned a stakeholder survey. The survey will be designed to explore the interests, needs, and desires of a wide range of audiences in the ecoregion so that appropriate collaboration, communication, and education strategies can be developed.

Initially conceived as a tool to shape communications in the gulf, WWF now sees the survey as a way in which it can begin to incorporate a wider range of stakeholder views and objectives into a conservation plan for the ecoregion. In addition, through open and transparent sharing of the survey process and results, the coalition partners hope that stakeholders will be encouraged to become actively engaged in conservation planning and programming for the gulf.

The lessons from the evolution of stakeholder engagement in the Gulf of California are

- When strong, established conservation organizations with like-minded visions are present in an ecoregion, it may be appropriate to explore coalition options with them.
- As a vision is developed for an ecoregion, and pressures and threats are identified, the primary stakeholders associated with those pressures need to be actively engaged in dialogue and action.
- Information, communication, and education tools and processes should be used from the outset to facilitate interaction with those stakeholders who are not involved in, or natural allies of, a coalition.
- Information gathered through surveys should be shared with all stakeholders (not just allies), to generate a wider understanding of the conservation issues and opportunities in the region.

SOURCE: BRONWEN GOLDER. GULF OF CALIFORNIA TRIP REPORT 2/00. INTERNAL REPORT FOR WWF-US, WASHINGTON, D.C.

identification process avoids reaching premature conclusions about which stakeholders should or should not be involved.

Initially, dialogue should be as open and participatory as possible, encouraging stakeholders from a variety of backgrounds and perspectives to contribute to the identification and framing of collaboration goals and objectives. If the process is not participatory there is a risk that it will quickly become dominated by the strongest, loudest, or best resourced groups who seek to shape the process for their own objectives. Over time it may be determined that additional interests must be brought into the dialogue and the process needs to be open enough to facilitate this.

Given the challenges that "open participation" in a collaboration process brings (in terms of multiple, often conflicting perspectives and interests), many groups choose to promote collaboration more gradually. In these cases, "start-up" involves bringing together like-minded groups and allies. Steering committees can be established by these groups to formulate shared goals and objectives, and assess and strengthen capacities before a wider collaboration process is initiated.

In some instances initial dialogue may lead to consortiums, alliances, or coalitions. While this approach can provide for a strong and coherent voice, there are associated risks. These include the premature establishment of partnerships before issues, opportunities, and appropriate stakeholder roles and responsibilities have been fully defined. When alliances with like-minded groups only are formed, the risk of generating negative reactions among other stakeholders can increase due to perceived "exclusivity." Effective *information sharing, communication, and public education* can help alleviate these risks. Development of a strategic plan for progressively bringing in other key stakeholders—primary, secondary, or opposition—will also be essential.

The number of parties engaged in the collaboration process is also an important consideration. All stakeholders do not need to participate all the time, or to the same degree. Review of who is participating in a conservation initiative should be made on a regular basis, and participation revised as needed.

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CHAPTER 3

Collaboration Goals

CHAPTER 3

Collaboration Goals

Stakeholder collaboration is a process through which groups with similar or different perspectives can exchange viewpoints and search for solutions that go beyond their own vision of what is possible.

Collaboration goes beyond people participating (passively or actively) in a process. It also extends beyond communication, cooperation, and coordination, even though these are key elements in the process. Collaboration in this resource book refers to *a mutually beneficial relationship between two or more parties who work toward common goals by sharing responsibility, authority, and accountability for achieving results.*

What are the characteristics of a collaboration process?

Collaboration relies on trust, inclusion, and constructive engagement to achieve a broad common purpose. It does not use advocacy, exclusion, and power over others to achieve its ends. Power and status differences among participants are de-emphasized and ownership of the process is shared *(see checklist, p. 3.3).* Stakeholder collaboration can, in the right circumstances, provide a powerful approach to responding to complex problems that isolated efforts cannot solve.

Increasingly, conservation organizations are pursuing collaboration that focuses on building and maintaining a long-term relationship with key stakeholders. This does not mean there won't be conflict, but when conflicts arise they can be addressed within a collaboration framework. It is therefore extremely important that organizations that take on the role of promoter or facilitator of collaboration processes understand how conflicts emerge or are exacerbated.

C H E C K L I S T

Key Characteristics of Collaboration

1. Inclusive and non-hierarchical participation.
2. Participant responsibility for ensuring success.
3. A common sense of purpose and definition of the problem.
4. Participants educating each other.
5. The identification and testing of multiple options.
6. Participants sharing in the implementation of solutions.
7. People being kept informed as situations evolve.

ADAPTED FROM: CARPENTER, 1990.

Collaborative processes are most likely to succeed when there is room for negotiation; when stakeholders need each other to achieve both individual and shared goals; and when there is a willingness to participate. Collaboration also tends to be effective when the likely results of not collaborating are increased conflict, resource degradation, threats of litigation, or worsened relations among interdependent parties.

Collaboration is not, however, always the most appropriate or effective way in which to achieve conservation results *(see checklist, p. 3.5)*.

In any collaboration exercise some powerful stakeholders may refuse to participate, some uninvited stakeholders may want to participate, and others who begin the process may choose to opt out. While each of these circumstances can make it difficult to work collaboratively, most situations do involve a mix of favorable and unfavorable conditions. It is more often a question of what degree of collaboration is possible or appropriate, rather than a black and white choice between collaboration or no collaboration.

Are there degrees of collaboration?

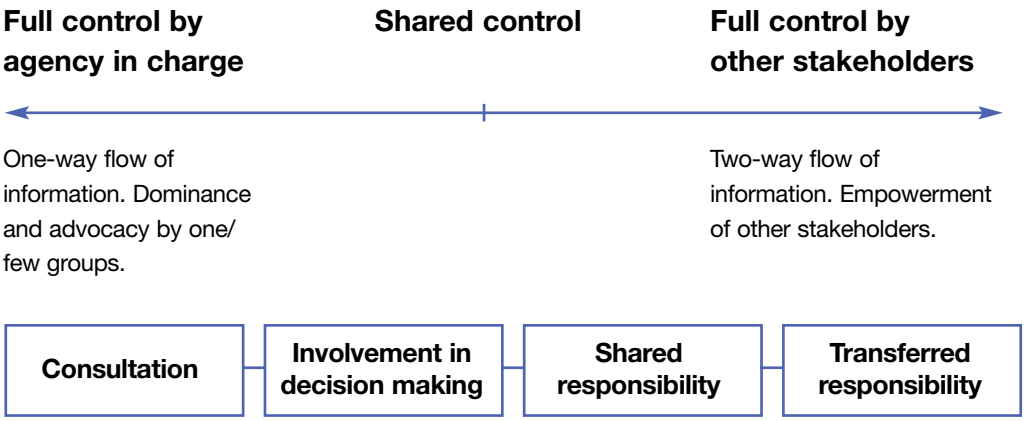
Collaboration is most effective when the objectives, process, and roles are clearly defined so that those involved know what to expect. Where initiatives lack a cohesive structure, or require unrealistic levels of participation (because all stakeholders—priority, secondary, and peripheral—demand equal access to the process at all times), collaboration may not be a feasible option. Other initiatives may lack credibility if certain groups have little or no say in decisions. Ensuring genuine collaboration involves recognizing the degree or level of opportunity for collaboration that exists or is desired.

The degree to which stakeholders are involved in collaboration processes can vary from a limited, consultative role in which they have little say in decisions, to shared management and decision-making responsibilities.

The categories of collaboration presented in the continuum diagram that follows can help participants determine the type of collaboration and possible roles that are appropriate and feasible in their situation.

Where are you on the collaboration continuum?

The diagram below presents the continuum against which the various degrees of collaboration can be identified. All points along the continuum reflect some form of collaboration, but the degree of collaboration increases as you move from left to right.



As you move from left to right on the collaboration continuum you will find that

- The contribution, commitment, and accountability of stakeholders increases
- Stakeholder participation in the learning process will increase
- The expectations of stakeholders will increase.

ADAPTED FROM: BORRINI-FEYERABEND, 1996, AND WORLD BANK, 1995.

While collaboration and advocacy both include consultation, the identification of stakeholders, communication, and coordination, a collaboration process goes farther than advocacy to address joint decision making at the field level. In some instances there is a need for both collaboration and advocacy. The challenge for any stakeholder group is to identify the degree to which they will pursue and promote collaboration or advocacy, or perhaps a combination of the two.

Generally the degree of collaboration pursued will depend on the mandate or objectives of the process, the scale and timetable of the effort, the authority and independence of the convenor, the resources needed to facilitate such a process, and the desire of potential partners to collaborate. Review of these issues will help to reconcile what type of collaboration is desirable; what is possible in light of the interests, needs, and capacity of various stakeholders; and what their role in the process might be.

What are the components of a collaboration process?

Most collaboration efforts involve a generic set of components, which are

- Stakeholder analysis
- Process design
- Development of a shared agenda
- Constituency building
- Implementation.

Activities under each component, and their sequencing, will depend on the context in which the collaboration is proposed. The process should be a flexible one, allowing opportunities to be taken whenever appropriate. If the effort is new, many activities may need to be undertaken simultaneously, and require the leadership or advocacy of a key stakeholder. If the stakeholders are already working together, some elements may not be needed while others may need to be reviewed to ensure that the appropriate stakeholders are involved and that the process is based on an understanding of the interests and issues at stake.

C H E C K L I S T

Collaboration May Not Work When

1. There are fundamental ideological differences and little or no room for negotiation.
2. Power is not evenly spread.
3. Key parties are not willing to participate.
4. There is a stark difference in the vision and goals of different parties.
5. There is not enough time to work through problems.
6. There is "burn out" over previous attempts to collaborate.
7. The price of collaboration will exceed the benefits gained.
8. The institutional culture of a stakeholder organization is unresponsive to collaboration.

What are the challenges for conservation organizations?

A review of World Wildlife Fund (WWF) integrated conservation and development projects (ICDPs) concluded

> The central challenge facing conservation organizations that are supporting ICDPs is establishing conservation agendas that balance the diverse and often conflicting interests of a wide range of interest groups. In general, ICDP implementers have not spent enough time engaging in a dialogue with key stakeholders about these groups' interests and priorities, nor in articulating clearly their own priorities. Problems often emerge during project implementation as a result of unclear or misunderstood objectives among different partners. Conservation organizations need to acknowledge that they often wear two hats: one as a facilitator of the process and the other as a stakeholder with specific biodiversity conservation objectives.
>
> ADAPTED FROM: LARSON ET AL., 1997.

Scale. The stakeholder challenges identified in the ICDP review of 1997 are still relevant. Today however, as conservation efforts are being "scaled-up" to ecosystem and ecoregional scale, the challenges associated with achieving effective stakeholder collaboration are becoming even more complex. Where ICDPs encouraged practitioners to direct their collaboration efforts within clearly defined physical boundaries at the site level, large-scale conservation efforts need to address a range of actors across multiple political, social, and institutional systems. This requires conservation organizations to think less about boundaries and more about issues and their impact at multiple levels.

Issues, Interests, and Incentives. Focusing on issues rather than sites requires conservation organizations to acknowledge, and ultimately work with, a broader range of stakeholders. As conservation efforts broaden in scale, there will inevitably be more issues, interests, and institutions that need to be addressed. Whether through politics, economics, information and education systems, or social and cultural patterns of behavior, stakeholders will hold the potential for the success of conservation efforts in their hands.

Diversity. Larger-scale conservation efforts will bring a new set of stakeholders to the conservation table from diverse national and cultural backgrounds. Local and municipal politicians, private sector businesses and industries, banks, trade unions, development sector actors, the media, and the armed forces are potentially relevant stakeholders. This is in addition, of course, to a broad array of local groups and institutions. In some instances they will not share a common language. In others, years of ethnic conflict, political tension, and economic competition may well generate significant barriers to cooperation. In these situations, the processes and tools associated with stakeholder collaboration become all the more important. Integrating this range of stakeholders in a collaboration effort will present challenges that require creative thinking, an informed understanding of interests and values, and innovative action. That said, not all situations will be amenable to collaboration processes.

Choices. Stakeholders can have a positive or negative impact on the state of natural resources. Determining who needs or wants to be involved in conservation decision making, and when and how it can be achieved, is the first step in any collaboration effort. It is fundamental that enough time be budgeted to explore stakeholder views, values, and perspectives so that a clear understanding of the human and institutional landscape can be established. Once stakeholder views are understood, a decision can be made on whether to pursue collaboration.

If, because of widely diverging objectives, opinions, and approaches, the decision is not to promote stakeholder collaboration, it may be possible that advocacy, policy development, capacity building, or education and awareness programs will yield results that can set the stage for collaboration at a later date. If collaboration is not an option it will be important to

assess the feasibility of undertaking the conservation initiative alone. A review of assumptions, risks, and strategies will need to be undertaken.

Stakeholder collaboration can happen at many levels and in many different forms. Only by understanding the stakeholder landscape will you be able to select the best approach for your situation. By asking and answering a number of critical questions, options for stakeholder collaboration will emerge *(see checklist, this page)*. It may be that a far-reaching collaboration process is needed. Or you may find that there is already a great deal of stakeholder activity and that the best contribution will be to support or complement the work of others and avoid duplication of effort.

C H E C K L I S T

Before Starting a Collaboration, Ask

1. Is any stakeholder collaboration already occurring in the region?
2. Are there particular factors or conditions enabling this?
3. If stakeholder collaboration isn't happening, are there reasons why?
4. Can existing stakeholder efforts be built upon (rather than starting a new collaboration process to simultaneously achieve conservation objectives)?
5. Are there any "collaboration gaps" that your organization can fill? By filling the gap can you meet your agenda and complement the agenda of established stakeholders in the region?

NOTES

CHAPTER 4

Stakeholder Identification

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Stakeholder Identification

Stakeholder analysis is the process by which the various stakeholders who might have an interest in a conservation initiative are identified. A stakeholder analysis generates information about stakeholders and their interests, the relationships between them, their motivations, and their ability to influence outcomes. There are numerous approaches to stakeholder analysis, ranging from the formal to informal, comprehensive to superficial.

The goal of stakeholder analysis is to

- Identify the stakeholders (by category).
- Develop a strategic view of the situation, and the relationship between the different stakeholders and identified objectives.
- Guide the design of collaboration approaches, including the strengthening of existing positive relationships and the improvement of confrontational ones.
- Clarify stakeholder interests and roles (including one's own).

Stakeholder analysis is a continuing process that should engage appropriate groups as issues, activities, and agendas evolve.

At the initial stage there are a number of guiding questions that can be used to identify the stakeholders who will be relevant to conservation success. These include

- Which stakeholders can effectively identify issues/problems in relation to identified conservation goals in situations where there appears to be little room for negotiation?
- What are the perceptions of these stakeholders about the conditions that need to be met if agreement is to be reached?

- Who best represents the interests for each stakeholder group?
- Are there marginalized stakeholders who should be involved but need support to participate? What support is required?
- Who is directly affected by the issues, and who will be affected by the solutions?
- Who can generate the political and institutional will to achieve significant change?
- Who controls the resources needed to effectively implement agreed solutions?

As Case 2 illustrates, engaging different stakeholders in a collaboration process is not always straightforward. While some stakeholders can be readily identified as natural partners in a collaboration initiative, other stakeholders with power and influence also need to have their interests and insecurities addressed. The challenge is to identify which stakeholder interests need to be addressed and when.

Once stakeholders have been identified, a stakeholder assessment should be conducted to explore the characteristics, interests, and intentions of the different stakeholders. *A stakeholder assessment can include the following elements.*

1. A stakeholder table. A "stakeholder table" can be created to categorize all stakeholders relevant to an initiative. This chart should be used as a tool to identify

- Whether the stakeholders listed are primary, secondary, or opposition stakeholders.
- The nature and limits of their stake and interest in the issues being explored (jobs, profit, lifestyle, etc.).
- The basis of this stake (customary rights, ownership, administrative or legal responsibilities, intellectual rights, social obligations, etc.).
- Whether their relationship with proposed actions and objectives is supportive or in opposition to others.
- Stakeholder perceptions of (a) the feasibility of a conservation initiative, and (b) the degree of collaboration and/or compromise required for success.
- Stakeholder profiles by gender, socioeconomic status, political affiliation, or profession.

2. Validation of stakeholder profiles and positions. Accurate assessment of stakeholder positions can be complex given the number of categories of stakeholders that need to be accounted for, and the number of subgroups in any given category. Stakeholder positions can also be dynamic, a reflection of changing interests and circumstances. As a result, validation and revalidation of stakeholder positions over time is essential. Any changes should be recorded on the stakeholder table.

CASE 2 Finding the Balance among Different Stakeholders

In the Bicchiwara block of Dungarpar district in India, several decades of acute deforestation resulted in the area becoming particularly barren. When the impact of the deforestation was compounded by a three-year drought, the situation reached a crisis point. As a result, many men left the area to find employment in urban areas.

It became obvious to an education and development organization working in the region that the natural economy needed to be revived. Since women were the major remaining stakeholders, the organization held a meeting for women to give them an opportunity to propose appropriate strategies. The women requested various species of trees to plant on their private lands, and assistance in rehabilitating common lands. In agreeing to these requests the organization asked that the families holding rights to the common lands accept responsibility for the protection of the trees.

A women's group was the first to contribute a fixed sum towards building a village fund from which payments for the protection would be made. Despite this positive outcome, the fact that the project worked only with women began causing tension with men in the community.

In response, the decision was made to begin actively engaging men as well. As a first step a joint meeting of men and women was arranged. At this meeting, men's suspicions were alleviated once organization representatives explained why they were meeting (and needed to continue to meet) with the women separately. The organization also began a dialogue with the men to see if there were opportunities for them to participate in the collaborative reforestation effort.

Several lessons on stakeholder identification can be drawn from this case:

- Identification and organization of stakeholders in a community can focus around common issues or problems.
- If objectives are not clearly explained to all stakeholders in a community, actions involving only one group of stakeholders can lead to conflicts with other stakeholders.
- The formation of mixed stakeholder groups can help eliminate suspicions, but care must be taken to ensure that this does not lead to a decreased participation by particular or marginalized stakeholder groups.
- Developing activities with marginalized stakeholders around generally nonthreatening issues can create the space needed for those stakeholders to discuss their needs.
- Confidence building is critical to collaboration and can be achieved through formal interaction with groups, awareness raising, and training activities.

ADAPTED FROM: WOMEN AND NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT: A MANUAL FOR THE ASIA PACIFIC REGION. 1996.

3. Projection of stakeholder interest in collaboration. Not all stakeholders will desire, or have the ability, to collaborate in a stakeholder conservation initiative. It is important to project—even hypothetically—how particular stakeholders might respond to different situations.

4. Initial strategic vision for promoting stakeholder collaboration. Based on the above steps, an initial strategic vision for stakeholder collaboration can be developed by those stakeholders who have actively engaged in the analysis and assessment process. The earlier that primary and other key groups are brought into the strategic process, the more sound and realistic ultimate collaboration is likely to be.

It is important to remember that a stakeholder may have more than one stake in an issue. Therefore, it is critical to assess the relationship between the stakeholders and the current initiative. This assessment should be based on the stakeholder's influence and importance, both within their own stakeholder group, and among other stakeholders.

5. Gender analysis. The stakeholder assessment phase is also an appropriate time to explore whether or not gender will be a factor in the elaboration and implementation of future conservation efforts.

Conservation organizations increasingly recognize that while women in many developing countries are often the primary managers and users of land, forests, water, and other natural resources, they have traditionally been excluded from participating in many conservation efforts. By examining the many roles women play in society, the impact of environmental degradation on their lives, and the different ways in which women around the world have responded to environmental challenges, one finds compelling evidence to support the important role that women can play as both participants in and beneficiaries of conservation projects. The inclusion of women as crucial stakeholders has the potential to achieve both better management of the resource base and improved community welfare.

Gender analysis involves assessment of

- The distribution of tasks, activities, and rewards associated with the division of labor at a particular locality or across a region.
- The relative positions of women and men in terms of representation and influence across the chosen scale.
- The benefits and disincentives associated with the allocation of tasks to women and men.

Gender analysis also can identify the various roles of women and men as household and domestic managers, economic producers, and community leaders. Associated with each role will be a set of concerns, interests, and values that will influence why and how each group may collaborate in a conservation activity. Gender analysis should also explore the possible impacts of proposed conservation activities on men and women *(see Case 3)*.

CASE 3 Women as Important Stakeholders

Women should be encouraged to participate in all aspects of any collaborative conservation project, but special attention needs to be paid to respecting local traditional social structures. The following example illustrates both the complexity and importance of gender roles in the success of a project.

In western Kaokoland, Namibia, pastoralist women use fronds of the doum palm to make baskets to hold both milk and water. To generate income to buy corn flour, women began making baskets to sell to the tourists to the area. Conservationists became alarmed at the increased consumption of the palm and warned the villagers not to make too many baskets. In discussion with the local community it was agreed to continue the traditional management of the trees, removing only one or two fronds per tree each season. In addition, the status of the palms would be monitored by a member of the male lineage head of the community.

A few months following the meeting, people noticed the palms dying at an increased rate. The lineage head placed the blame squarely with the women and said that they were incapable of managing the resource sustainably and instead were stripping bare the trees close to the village. However, the women provided a different explanation:

> In the morning I milk my husband's cows. I milk into the wooden pails carved by my man. Then I pour the milk into the baskets I have woven. That milk is then mine to do with as I wish. I would not refuse my husband if he asked me to give the milk to his visitor but he would not take it without asking my permission. Now you are asking us to give the palm trees to the men. Who could be surprised if the men start behaving as though they own the cow's milk as well?

By encouraging men to monitor the palms, the project staff had unwittingly altered the community's relationship with a vital natural resource and in turn interfered with traditional gender relationships. The women felt their right to control the milk, as symbolized by the transfer from "male" bucket to "female" basket, was under threat now that a man held responsibility for monitoring the trees. By deliberately ignoring the traditional management of the trees, women were resisting the apparent attempt to change the social balance. When the palms were "returned" to the women, they assumed sole responsibility for the use and monitoring of the trees, and the palms continue to thrive.

A successful outcome such as this would not have been possible had the role and perspective of women not been heard. Had this voice been explored during the stakeholder identification and assessment process, the disruption to the village social structure might have been avoided.

ADAPTED FROM: JACOBSOHN, 1993.

Who should be involved, and when?

From the perspective of conservation organizations, there are no hard and fast rules about who to involve in a collaboration process, how to involve them, or when. Stakeholder involvement is context-specific and what is appropriate in one situation may not be appropriate in another. Institutional structures, cultural values, and approaches to representation and communication will vary at different political levels and within different social, cultural, and political environments. In some cases all the stakeholders will need to be present or represented for decision making to be effective or legitimate. In others, a subset of the stakeholder group (whether it be ministers of a government, elders in a community, or major shareholders in a private sector development) will naturally and effectively assume a representative role.

Those promoting and facilitating stakeholder collaboration need to consider how stakeholder involvement in different aspects of conservation programming will play out at different levels. For instance, representation at the local level will often allow many individual voices to be heard, but achieving a balance between the numbers of participants and quality of participation will require careful attention. At higher organizational levels, stakeholder views tend to be communicated through individuals who present a representative view, rather than those of their individual constituents. Assuring that the range of views, when aggregated, can be said to adequately represent a stakeholder group position is both challenging and essential *(see Case 4)*.

The reality is that individuals are often members of several stakeholder groups simultaneously. In some instances individuals will come together around an overarching set of issues at the ethnic group or religious group level, while for other issues this same population may splinter into subgroups based on political or economic interests. It is therefore important to try to understand the conditions under which membership or adherence to the position of a particular group is established.

Understanding who the key groups are in relation to particular issues, how those groups are constituted, and ultimately how they are structured and function, is a fundamental step toward building bridges for conservation. A stakeholder assessment can help clarify and guide this process.

Is stakeholder representation important?

Stakeholder representation is crucial. Determining appropriate representation for different stakeholder groups is an important factor in the manner and form of their participation in any collaboration process. Interest groups will have different leadership structures—ranging from hierarchical, where all decision-making power is vested at the top, to relatively flat organizations, where decision making is spread across a number of group members. Understanding how different groups reach decisions on representation in public negotiation is important.

CASE 4 Exploring Local Representation Options

Among the Antandroy and Mahafaly ethnic groups that live in southern Madagascar, wealth is determined by the number of cattle you own. As a consequence, cattle theft has long been an opportunistic activity in the region. To protect themselves, and their cattle, local communities in the area have organized themselves into dinas.

The Malagasy dina is a traditional form of agreement between the members of a community. Through it, communities set rules and enforcement procedures to deal with intrusions into their village, organize security patrols, and deal with other security-related issues. Often the dina is expanded into a dina fotratra, an agreement between several communities to provide mutual assistance in the case of attacks by cattle rustlers.

The dina is recognized as a legal entity by the Malagasy judicial system. When disagreements between community members cannot be settled locally, they can be referred to the court system. Some security dinas have existed for decades, showing the potential resiliency of this type of structure. Although relatively few dinas have been created to deal with natural resource management, several conservation programs in Madagascar have tried using them to promote forest management.

Unfortunately the nature of these institutions, and the environment in which they operate, can make collaboration difficult. This is because dinas were originally designed to prevent cattle theft, so they traditionally have been dominated by male members. By comparison, many natural resource management tasks in Madagascar involve women. This implies that if dinas are to have a role in conservation, it will be necessary to start including women, a difficult shift from tradition.

Another major constraint to the operation and sustainability of "conservation dinas" is the weak Malagasy judicial system, which lacks resources and has reportedly been compromised by corruption. In this context, any collaboration process will need to identify the policy advocacy efforts necessary to bring about enabling conditions at the national level to facilitate operationalizing conservation dinas.

The lessons of representation to be taken from this example are

- Existing community level structures (not necessarily linked to conservation) may provide effective mechanisms for assuming conservation functions under a collaboration process.
- Where strong institutions do exist, it is important to identify any structural weaknesses that may compromise their ability to provide balanced representation in a collaborative exercise.
- The quality and breadth of representation within a collaboration process will depend on the capacity of national judicial and administrative systems, together with policy frameworks, to enable the implementation of stakeholder decisions and recommendations.

This can prove to be one of the more frustrating aspects of collaboration. Energies invested in collaboration efforts by stakeholders may ultimately be negated if the government has not fully bought into the process.

SOURCE: RAZANATAHINA, 1999.

Without this understanding, illegitimate or "non-representative" representation of specific groups may go unnoticed.

Collaborative processes rely on the participation of broadly representative voices that effectively include, to the extent feasible, all the elements of their constituency. While many stakeholder groups can identify their lead representatives (who have gained that position through inheritance, elections, appointment, or job description), other stakeholders (including women, indigenous peoples, and minority groups) may not have formal or traditional means for identifying a representative.

C H E C K L I S T

Garnering Participation by All

In order to encourage full stakeholder participation in the dialogue process it is important to

1. Verify that those attending a meeting as representatives of a stakeholder group are in fact legitimate representatives.
2. Structure meetings to suit the social and cultural traditions of involved parties.
3. Use a facilitation style and format that will encourage the participation of ostensibly less dominant stakeholders.

Ideally, all members of primary stakeholder groups should be involved in determining how they will be represented throughout a given collaboration process. They may choose to represent themselves (where it is possible and appropriate), be directly represented by someone else, or be indirectly represented through an elected official. Whatever the choice, it is important that in those instances where no obvious mechanism for identifying representatives is in place, time is taken to listen to and work with the stakeholder groups to ensure their effective representation in the collaboration process *(see checklist, this page)*.

This will not always be easy or straightforward given the diversity of interests, values, and traditions that stakeholders represent. In the case of indigenous groups especially, young, educated members increasingly put themselves forward as community representatives. This can cause problems if they don't accurately represent the views of the community, don't keep the community informed of what is taking place in other forums, or don't carry legitimacy as decision makers in their community. Improved information sharing and the provision of education programs for stakeholder groups (rather than individuals) can help to reduce this domination by "elites."

Based on what the stakeholder analysis reveals, it may be necessary to pursue capacity building initiatives that support the development of effective representative structures for some key stakeholder groups. This may imply a significant investment in time and financial resources. Depending on the state of existing structures, representation, and communication processes, capacity building initiatives may need to include institutional development, training, and/or education programs.

CASE 5 Coalitions for Conservation

The African Timber Organization. Founded in 1976, the African Timber Organization (ATO) brings together 11 regional timber producing countries under a sustainable development agenda. The ATO helps members understand how to influence the price of wood, and wood products, by providing them with a continuous flow of information on forestry matters. The organization also supports the harmonization of commercial policies, and undertakes training and industrial research.

In recent years, the ATO has worked in Central Africa on the standardization of forest management and the certification of forest products. The ATO works closely with the International Tropical Timber Organization. The ITTO's underlying objective is to promote the sustainable development of tropical forests by encouraging and assisting the tropical timber industry and trade to manage and conserve the resource base upon which they depend. The organization has no price regulation mechanisms or market intervention activities and accords equal importance to trade and conservation. It also gathers both producer and consumer members, offering a framework and platform for exchange between them. For the Northwestern Congolian lowland forests, where timber exploitation is a major threat, an organization like the ATO may be able play an important role in promoting conservation.

The African Forest Action Network (AFAN). AFAN comprises African NGOs whose goal is to promote the conservation and sustainable management of forests for the well-being of civil society. The network has more than 90 members from 9 African countries. Network activities include awareness campaigns on environmental protection and socioeconomic benefits for local populations; the review of, and lobbying on, the layout of the Chad-Cameroon pipeline; and monitoring the evolution of regional forestry policies such as the Conference on Humid Forest Ecosystems of Africa. Given the scope and focus of the AFAN objectives, the coalition clearly has the potential to influence forest management attitudes and practices at a transnational scale.

A Sector Representative Model in Canada. A "Sector Representation model" was used to promote public participation in the Vancouver Island Regional Negotiation process in Canada. A sector was defined as a "coalition of groups and organizations who share common concerns and values." This process model made no assumptions about which interests would be represented or by whom. Instead, the facilitating organization convened community meetings and orientation workshops for interested parties, and asked what the process would have to look like for each group to participate. This process led to the development "from the bottom up" of broad but cohesive sectors of interests. The model focused on the representation of sector-wide public perspectives, not special interest groups.

Assistance also was provided to the groups to select representatives and develop communication strategies with constituencies. Most groups already were able to communicate effectively with their constituency and already had a structure in place (a newsletter or regular meeting, for example). Those groups that lacked appropriate communication mechanisms thought that this was due to inadequate resources.

ADAPTED FROM: KELLY AND ALPER, 1996.

Is there a role for coalitions, associations, and sector groups?

For collaboration efforts at the national, ecoregional, and international level, stakeholders may want to group together in coalitions, associations, or sectoral alliances to represent their interests more effectively *(see Case 5)*.

Engaging and supporting existing coalitions or developing and maintaining new ones can require significant effort, time, and funds. In addition, it is important to recognize that while associations and sectoral alliances can provide important opportunities for collaboration, this will only happen if the goals of collaboration are not in conflict with the goals of the individual participants. Recognizing these realities early on in the collaboration process will save time *(see checklist, this page)*.

By comparison, forming coalitions among marginalized stakeholders can often create a powerful and unified voice. For example, in northern Canada indigenous peoples are organized into Hunter/Trapper associations. In comanagement processes with the national government, these associations are the lead representatives of indigenous peoples' interests.

C H E C K L I S T

Factors Affecting Coalition Involvement

Deciding whether or not to establish, promote, or involve a coalition in the collaboration process will depend on a range of factors. These include

1. **The need for a range of stakeholders to participate in a balanced collaboration process.** If the coalition is made up only of powerful groups the balance may be weighted towards their interests. If it can also include weaker stakeholders, the coalition may contribute to a more balanced process.

2. **The need for a united voice.** While a coalition can provide the means by which like-minded organizations can come together, a coalition structure does not necessarily ensure that parties will speak with a united voice unless consensus is the operative decision-making criterion. If the range of voices and objectives within a coalition are too divergent under non-consensus scenarios, it is unlikely that the coalition will contribute anything of value to the collaboration effort. Coalitions will work best when they represent and promote a single set of goals and objectives. Consensus seeking is the best way to achieve this.

3. **The existence of effective information sharing and communications mechanisms.** If a coalition does not have the mechanisms available to ensure that all of its members are provided with the same level of information and access to decision making, then there is a risk that the coalition will be dominated by a few members. Consensus seeking is one way to reduce this risk, given that consensus will likely be achieved only when all parties share equal information.

Moreover, the fact that associations exist can provide leverage in negotiating management modalities with government. The case of the Isusenos in the Bolivian Chaco is instructive. After disparate Isusenos communities allied to collectively identify resources and resource use in their territory, a map was produced. This led to the Bolivian government delegating management responsibilities to the Isusenos in the Kaa-Iya National Park, the second largest in land area in South America (Chapin and Threlkeld, forthcoming).

How do differences in power affect stakeholder participation?

Power differentials exist in all forms of social organizations and between social groups. The source of these differences may be based on the heredity rights that leaders enjoy in certain cultural settings, or the power differences earned through channels that economic and political opportunity afford individuals and groups.

Two power issues are particularly relevant to facilitators of stakeholder collaboration: addressing power inequalities between key parties so that adequate representation and collaboration can be achieved; and reaching agreements among parties on how disagreement over issues will be resolved.

Conflicts involving core group values and identity are difficult to resolve. For example, less politically powerful stakeholders may fear that a powerful outsider will impose its views on a process. This may provoke them to withdraw from a given negotiation process even if they stand to benefit from staying involved. Similarly, distrust can make it particularly difficult for the parties to begin constructive talks. Facilitators need to understand the source of this distrust, and determine what, if anything, can be done to remove it.

In situations that become polarized around opposing values or identities, facilitators of a collaboration process need to be resourceful in sensitizing participants to the validity of different stakeholder perspectives. Instrumental techniques such as adapting the meeting structure and process to better enable constructive cross-stakeholder learning can be useful.

NOTES

CHAPTER 5

The Collaboration Process

CHAPTER 5

The Collaboration Process

Given the range and diversity of stakeholders and situations, no two stakeholder collaboration contexts will be the same. Nonetheless, there are a number of generic elements of the collaboration process that are likely to be relevant in all situations where collaboration for conservation is sought. Some central elements follow.

Clarifying objectives. From the facilitating agency's perspective, it is important to clarify the purpose and boundary of collaboration processes so that participant expectations are consistent. For example, it may be necessary to clarify whether the purpose of collaboration is to facilitate information exchange, with conservation decision-making occurring at other levels, or whether the purpose is to enable stakeholders to set the conservation agenda in full partnership with others, even though some may already have ideas about what should be done.

Selection of tools. The tools that are selected for the process will generally be chosen to identify objectives. In some instances the identification of appropriate communications media may be all that is required in basic information networking scenarios, while in others, tools to generate consensus for planning purposes may be required.

Cost-benefit analysis. Stakeholders should rapidly appraise the costs and benefits of their involvement in the exercise. The facilitator can develop a matrix of criteria with relative weights that can help guide the process. This should be adjusted based on feedback from the group.

Adaptive management of the process. As the process unfolds it is likely that adjustments will need to be made. Preparing for this is imperative. It requires understanding what options exist, which service providers are available to assist, and what indicators can be used to trigger adaptive responses.

When do stakeholders commit to collaboration?

Stakeholders can be identified and engaged in a variety of ways and at multiple levels during the course of a collaboration process. It is also likely that stakeholders will be engaged in more than one relationship or activity at a time, so it is important to provide flexibility to enable participation to evolve into collaboration.

Before entering into a collaboration process it is important for the facilitating agency to consider stakeholder motivations for participating. Participation is expensive and can carry political costs for stakeholders who may be seen to be "sleeping with the enemy," so people will get involved only if they believe it is worth their effort. Alternatively, some stakeholders may believe or discover that facilitating or participating in a collaboration process is not the best option for furthering their objectives *(see checklist, this page)*. Instead, they may prefer to take on an advocacy role.

C H E C K L I S T

Before Committing, Organizations Should Ask:

1. Will the stakeholder consultation process include those with a vested interest in the issues and goals being considered?
2. Will the collaboration process seek to address issues and threats that are relevant to stakeholders' key concerns and interests (specifically their identity, recognition, and sense of security)?
3. What costs and benefits do different stakeholders associate with participation in the collaboration process? Are they acceptable to the participants?
4. Are there opportunities that stakeholders will need to relinquish in order to pursue collaboration? Is this acceptable to those stakeholders?
5. Does the collaboration process provide stakeholders with incentives to fully engage in the process?
6. Is high quality information (in a form that is understandable) freely available to all stakeholders to enable this full engagement?
7. Will the necessary space and opportunity be provided for stakeholders to come together to develop a common agenda?

These are key questions that need to be considered before organizations commit to a collaboration process. Depending on the answers, preparatory fieldwork may be required, or the objective may need to be abandoned.

How do stakeholders define reasons for collaboration?

One of the very first conversations that needs to take place among stakeholders is how they view the issue, challenge, or opportunity that has brought them together. Strikingly different emphases can emerge from this discussion. For conservation groups, the emphasis may be on how to conserve biodiversity over the long term. For local communities, the emphasis may be on how to improve their livelihood or preserve their culture. They may or may not view conservation of the existing natural resource base as central to these goals. So too, different groups may in fact share similar views on the issue but express their objectives in different ways.

Any differences in perception and definition of the central goal and objectives need to be identified and addressed before the dialogue can move forward in a meaningful way. This is a key moment, as the stakeholders decide whose objectives will be at the heart of the collaboration venture, and whose will be less central. Next, the stakeholders must decide how to frame the central issues and tasks of a collaboration effort. Willingness to be flexible about how

CASE 6

Bringing Stakeholders Together

The Rio Grande/Rio Bravo basin (Rio) is an enormous watershed on the border between the United States and Mexico. The only major river system in the Chihuahuan Desert, the Rio watershed supports a large agricultural economy and provides water for industrial and municipal uses, including several large urban centers in the United States and Mexico. As a result, reduced flows in the river system and pollution pose a serious threat to wildlife and aquatic and riparian habitats in the basin.

In the parlance of the American West, "whisky is for drinking, water is for fighting." There are few issues in the West that arouse more passion than the use and allocation of water. On the Rio, a diverse group of activists from government, the private sector, NGOs, Indian tribes, and academia are struggling to preserve the natural communities of the watershed. While all of these individual efforts are valuable, WWF thought that further benefits for conservation could be secured if action were taken to integrate efforts and collaborate on major policy issues affecting the watershed.

In September 1999, WWF hosted a retreat at a wildlife refuge on the Rio. The retreat was driven by a central question: *Is the time right for a basin-wide collaboration initiative to conserve the Rio?* Invitations went out to a diverse group of stakeholders with a common interest in conserving the basin's natural and cultural resources. Attendees from the United States and Mexico included state and federal government officials, local and national conservation group representatives, academics, landowners, municipal water managers, small business owners, and others.

This question was reviewed with the help of guests from other watersheds—the Chesapeake Bay, the Florida Everglades, and the Central Valley of California—where very large-scale conservation efforts have been undertaken with some success. In plenary and in small group discussions, the participants explored what the goals of such an initiative might be, how it might be organized, and what obstacles would have to be overcome to make it a reality. At the end of the meeting, there was general agreement that the time was right for a collaboration process. There were, however, widely divergent views on what shape the process should take. The group established a steering committee to move the process forward by developing further the ideas discussed at the retreat.

Since the retreat, the steering committee has been working to gather information and develop a strategic plan for the initiative. It is still unclear whether a long-term collaboration initiative will come together. The stakeholders involved, though they share a common interest in Rio conservation, have differing agendas, diverse opinions on how the problem should be addressed, and a sense that a larger effort will somehow interfere with or trespass upon their own prerogatives.

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the overall task is framed will be key to securing the collaboration of a range of stakeholders *(see Case 6)*. This negotiation toward collaboration can be expected to take some time. It may also result in some stakeholders opting out of the collaboration process.

All stakeholders will not necessarily have the skills and capacity to convey their positions in the language and cultural setting originally foreseen for the collaboration effort. In such cases, measures should be taken to help all stakeholder groups—even those with lower initial capacities—join more fully in the process. Not doing so can lead to setbacks further down the line.

What capacities do stakeholders need?

While many stakeholders may have the desire to participate in a collaboration process, they may lack the necessary capacity. Unless care is taken to communicate and negotiate on technical or political levels at which all stakeholders can engage, the broad collaboration processes required for many conservation settings will be precluded. As already noted, powerful stakeholders can end up controlling the process, particularly when activities are designed using the language and approaches that they develop.

Therefore, an essential step in the collaboration process is determining the actual (or potential) capacity of stakeholder organizations to participate actively and effectively in the process. The knowledge base, institutional and operational mechanisms, and skills of stakeholders are all capacities that should be assessed at the outset. This assumes that participating groups agree to this. Being aware of a stakeholder organization's operational strengths and weaknesses can inform the design and implementation of projects to help build the capacity of stakeholders to participate effectively in the collaboration process.

Capacity assessments are not a one-time exercise. They are part of a continuing process that enables long-term collaboration. There are a number of approaches to organizational capacity assessments. These can be used in combination with other methods—most specifically a stakeholder analysis, which can provide the initial profile against which capacities and expectations can be assessed. It is often a good idea to use outside experts to facilitate the assessment process, as they can bring a critical objectivity to the approach that stakeholders acting as convenors normally cannot.

Here are some possible capacity assessment frameworks:

A social audit. This is a tool for assessing the performance of an organization. In a social audit the organization is assessed on its social impact in relation to its own aims, and from the perspective of its stakeholders. The closer the link between the organization's values and operational practices, the greater its capacity to perform effectively.

Appreciative Inquiry (AI). By listening to those who participate in an organization's activities, AI aims to identify organizational strengths, weaknesses, incentives, or barriers to collaboration. Typically, the status of management systems, the transparency of

communications and activities, and standard criteria for participation and representation in management systems are the core operational features assessed.

Historical analysis. A stakeholder organization's track record is relevant to its future operational capacity. Therefore, it is important to understand the conditions under which the organization was formed, the evolution of the structures and divisions within it, and the background behind its management and administrative systems. Understanding these features will help determine how the organization is likely to perform in a collaboration process.

Based on the strengths, needs, and gaps identified during an assessment of organizational capacity, it may be necessary to strengthen the current and future performance of stakeholders in collaboration processes. This may include development of human resources through skills training; improvement of the knowledge base through information dissemination and education programs; development of institutional capacity to develop and manage policies, processes, and projects; and reform of stakeholder structures and functions to increase representation and accountability.

Capacity building of a stakeholder organization should focus on what is right for the organization and its constituency and not on what the convenor or facilitator of a stakeholder collaboration process wants. That said, contingency plans for divergent viewpoints must be anticipated in advance by the facilitating agency. For example, will the agency fund capacity building for organizations that are important to the collaboration agenda but have potentially conflicting agendas?

Because the legitimacy of any organization lies in its purpose, performance, and representational capacity, it is unrealistic to think that all organizations need the same structures and controls. However, while stakeholder analysis and organizational assessments allow capacity building efforts to respond directly to individual stakeholder needs, it is also true that a common denominator set of skills, shared by all parties, is likely to make a particular collaboration exercise easier. Ideally these skills will be identified during the early phases of any collaboration process.

How important is the design phase?

The importance of process design in planning and conducting successful collaborations cannot be overemphasized. Good-faith efforts to undertake collaboration are often derailed because the parties are not skilled in the process, and because insufficient attention is given to designing and managing it. Stakeholder stereotypes, institutional mistrust, and historical animosities can create powerful disincentives to collaborate unless opportunities are created through which they can be tested and modified.

Like other aspects of collaboration, using or supporting an inclusive, transparent approach during the design phase of a collaboration conservation initiative will help build ownership

and commitment *(see checklist, this page)*. If it is not possible, or realistic, to have all key stakeholders involved from the outset, then a process for gradual involvement might be needed. That said, facilitating agencies must be prepared to explain why certain decisions involving goals and objectives were made. This is because the legitimacy of the collaboration initiative will rest on the transparency and credibility of the process invoked.

C H E C K L I S T

Elements the Facilitator Should Address

In all cases where a collaboration process is being designed or expanded, the following elements will need to be addressed by the facilitator/convenor:

1. Ground rules for process and decision making
2. Roles and responsibilities of respective stakeholders
3. Mechanisms for stakeholder involvement
4. Communication mechanisms
5. Stakeholder preparation.

Ideally, these elements will anchor the collaboration process. For the process to succeed, it is likely that they will need to be negotiated so that the process can be launched on a collaboration, versus top-down, footing.

What are the ground rules?

Once stakeholders have agreed to pursue a collaboration approach to address a common agenda, ground rules will provide structure for the process. Ground rules that are developed in a participatory and self-organizing manner are what distinguish collaboration processes from top-down, mandated processes. They provide a framework within which different stakeholders can express their views and objectives without having the objectives of others imposed on them. Ground rules also embody a series of decisions about what is on the table, and what's not; who receives recognition as a legitimate party to the process and who doesn't; how information will be developed and handled; and other key issues. Important decisions about the final outcomes of the collaboration effort are made through the ground rules. This is why it is highly preferable for ground rules to be negotiated.

Typical questions that should be answered in the ground rules include

What are the roles of stakeholder representatives?

- How do representatives demonstrate their legitimacy so that all parties to the process feel comfortable with who they are dealing with?
- Will representatives have authority to take binding action on behalf of their constituency?
- Can alternates serve in a representative's place? If so, what is their authority?

Is there a timetable for meetings and a deadline for reaching a decision on the issue under discussion?

- What happens if a timely agreement is not reached?
- How often and where will meetings take place (this often determines who can participate and how)?

How will the media be handled?

- Who will speak to members of the press?
- When and in what form will information be released?
- What will be kept confidential?
- How will confidential information be handled?
- Who will have access to the information during and after the collaboration? Who will decide what is to remain confidential and what should be public?

How will a record of the proceedings be kept?

- What will be recorded? By whom?
- Who will have access to it?

How will decisions be made?

- Will decisions be reached through a vote? If so, will a plurality, a majority, or some other fraction authorize the decision?
- Will the group choose instead to make all decisions by consensus? If so, how do you define consensus? How will the group know and agree that it has reached consensus?
- Do some decisions need to be made by voting and others by consensus? Which decisions will be made by which method?
- Will a neutral third party be sought to act as mediator or facilitator of the discussions? If so, who will this be?
- Must all parties reach full agreement on all issues before decisions are presented to others? If not, what are the decision-making criteria for moving forward?

What roles might emerge during the process?

Once initiated, a collaboration process will require that the various stakeholders assume roles and responsibilities in addition to those they normally carry. In processes where broad, integrated collaboration effort will be needed, identification of stakeholder roles will depend on how stakeholders wish to position themselves in terms of the initiative's identified goals and objectives. In some instances, it may emerge that the stakeholder responsible for bringing the various groups together is not in fact the best convenor because of strongly held views. In other situations, a high profile stakeholder may need to take the lead so that the collaboration process gains the status and influence it needs to promote change. To ensure that the roles and responsibilities that emerge are taken on by the most appropriate stakeholders, it is important to understand the scope of work and level of effort required by the different roles.

Convenor. The role of the convenor in a collaboration process is to help identify stakeholders, bring them to the table, and propose a process for collaboration *(see checklist, this page)*. The convening organization should have legitimacy based on its formal and informal roles in the region or sector, its experience, or its reputation for being objective. The convenor may or may not be a stakeholder in the outcome. If the covenor does in fact feel very strongly about achieving specific outcomes, it may be appropriate to delegate facilitation roles to a neutral third party.

In many instances, the ideal convenor may be a group or organization that is already filling a networking or facilitation role in the region. If no organization is filling such a role, it may be appropriate for a number of stakeholders to serve as co-convenors, or for a new organization to be established to take on the role. Whatever the choice, convenors need to understand and appreciate the costs and benefits of the collaboration process. They must also be realistic about what can be achieved within the available timeframes (or push for extending the timeframes if required) and have the experience and flexibility to recognize when third parties need to be brought in to facilitate particular aspects of the process.

If a convenor is not explicitly defined, selected, and agreed to by the key parties, some stakeholders may choose not to participate. This, in turn, may lead to a breakdown in the process or a lack of support for the desired outcome. In cases where influential organizations assume the role of convenor with little consultation or endorsement from local stakeholders, success becomes less likely.

C H E C K L I S T

The Convenor's Role

Convenors are not necessarily the ones who know the most about an issue, or have a major stake in achieving associated objectives. Instead, convenors

1. Have the credibility to get the right people together to create visions, solve problems, and reach agreements.
2. Believe that people can work together to address their own needs.
3. Are not patronizing, but motivate parties to draw on their own resources and skills to work together constructively.
4. Catalyze, convene, energize, and facilitate others to take action.
5. Believe that change is possible through participation.
6. Create a credible, open process in which participants have confidence.
7. Rely on their credibility, integrity, and ability to promote a process.

Skills needed to convene and guide collaboration efforts:

1. The ability to both listen and hear
2. Facilitation
3. Negotiation
4. Communication
5. The ability to work in complex and possibly conflict-filled situations
6. Experience and understanding to identify essential issues
7. Capacity to be strategic and fair
8. Capacity to modify positions through the consultative process.

Experience in project implementation has shown that high profile organizations need to be more aware than most of the multiple roles they can play in any given situation. Possible roles they may have the capacity to assume include leader, catalyst, technical expert, stakeholder, negotiator, capacity builder, convenor, or funder. In most instances it will not be appropriate or feasible for any one organization to assume all of these roles.

CASE 7

Two Stakeholder Participation Structures

A Stakeholder Platform in Madagascar. AGERAS (Appui à la Gestion Régionalisée et Approche Spatiale) was created in 1996 to provide support to the USAID-funded Madagascar national environmental program. AGERAS has been defined not as a program, but as a process that provides a platform for stakeholders within an ecoregion to engage in regional planning, build synergy and coherence between their efforts, and negotiate trade-offs. The process also promotes an adaptive management approach to natural resources management.

At the local level, AGERAS "organizational units" comprise community members, local elected officials, representatives of government agencies from various sectors, local entrepreneurs, and traditional leaders. These units are linked to similar structures across an ecoregion.

Because AGERAS was designed as an integral part of an ecoregion-styled natural resources management approach, it would appear to offer institutional partnership opportunities for ecoregion-based conservation activities in Madagascar. However, an important question remains: To what extent can a process designed and facilitated by a foreign donor (in this case, USAID) be fully integrated in the local Malagasy social and cultural fabric?

Stakeholder Commissions in Bulgaria. Under the Multi-Cultural Cooperation Project in Bulgaria, commissions have been created in five separate communities to encourage and conduct dialogues among different ethnic groups and social institutions. These commissions are largely composed of leaders from different ethnic communities and local municipalities, although each commission varies in its particular composition and mission depending on local issues and needs.

The commissions undertake a variety of activities, but their central role is to facilitate a variety of consensus-building and dialogue processes in each community. Commissions have brought together different groups and institutions for consideration of how to handle environmental disputes, improve relations between schools and communities, create dialogue between ethnic communities and media representatives, handle conflicts, and provide better information about services and resources available to disadvantaged communities. Most of the commissions have now been officially chartered by their municipal governments, or have become licensed NGOs.

Third Party Facilitators. Third parties may be brought in by the convenor to facilitate at critical times during the collaboration process. Generally the role of third parties is to assist convenors in bringing stakeholders to the table, in communicating more effectively, and in reaching a mutually agreeable solution *(see checklist, this page)*. They are particularly effective when a large number of parties are involved; the relationship between parties is contentious or unbalanced; and/or the issues are particularly complex.

While third parties can play an important role in the collaboration process, it is important that they approach the process with neutrality and flexibility. Facilitated dialogue, regulated negotiations, or traditional mediation will not always work in societies where the necessary level of participation by civil society, institutional structures, and political culture does not exist. Third parties (whether consultants or representatives from external agencies) can act as catalysts in these situations. Their presence can encourage the participation of community and ethnic leaders, and of government or private sector representatives who might normally stand back from a collaboration process. When these various representatives do come together, it is important to have trained facilitators available who can transform situations of potential mistrust and conflict into genuine consensus building and collaboration processes.

When third parties are needed, it can be helpful to set up a small team who will carry out the convening, mediation, or facilitation. Members of the team would bring important strengths to the task. Teaming a local person with an outsider also carries the benefit of potentially strengthening local capacities.

C H E C K L I S T

The Third Party Facilitator's Role

The freedom to be objective and critical allows third party facilitators to fulfill a number of roles in a manner that treats all stakeholders equally, irrespective of their power and influence. Third parties can contribute to the collaboration process by

1. **Assessing stakeholder readiness to collaborate**
   - — determining the interests of parties
   - — assessing objectives
   - — helping groups to make the decision to enter a collaboration process
2. **Clarifying issues and objectives**
   - — gathering and analyzing information
   - — presenting results to all parties in a form they understand
   - — ensuring that all parties have access to information
   - — meeting individually with groups to consolidate their interests
3. **Helping to get the parties to the table**
   - — evaluating the effectiveness of existing planning and decision-making forums
   - — heightening awareness of costs of noninvolvement
   - — creating standards of fairness and a safe climate
   - — ensuring all parties have resources to participate
4. **Ensuring effective representation**
   - — ensuring that appropriate stakeholders participate and that representation is assessed periodically
   - — assisting less organized stakeholders with selection of representatives
   - — assessing the awareness of constituents regarding the issues and conveying this to the representatives
5. **Designing and managing consensus-building or decision-making process**
   - — keeping participants on track and focussed on the agenda
   - — enforcing ground rules
   - — facilitating communication with constituents, including community forums
   - — coordinating the roles and responsibilities of technical experts, staff, decision makers, stakeholder representatives, and constituents
6. **Helping to build a shared perspective among stakeholders**
   - — transmitting information
   - — helping to formulate solutions
   - — highlighting consequences of non-agreement.

Which organizational structures encourage involvement?

Those facilitating a stakeholder collaboration process will often need to determine what type of mechanisms will work best in their situation or context to bring stakeholders together for consultation, negotiation, policy formulation, and decision making.

The selection or design of mechanisms and a forum to help bring people together should be determined in large part by the profile of the stakeholders who need to be engaged in the collaboration process, and the attitude they have towards different facilitation and organizational options. Stakeholder perceptions of organizational structures can range from respect to suspicion depending on whether they see them as credible or corrupt, representative or exclusive. The key is to find those organizational structures which best facilitate dialogue among relevant stakeholder combinations so that ever-increasing consensus in planning and action can be reached.

In some circumstances, existing organizational structures such as planning authorities, business councils, community development committees, farmers cooperatives, and church groups may be involved; in others, new entities that will allow for broad, apolitical representation (such as steering groups, councils, committees, commissions) may need to be created. An overarching organizational structure that all involved stakeholders can feel comfortable with is ideal, but if that is not achievable, it may be necessary to use or develop a number of different structures to pursue different aspects of the collaboration process.

How can communication help?

A lack of information and transparency can create unproductive tension among stakeholders. It is therefore necessary to make quality information freely available to stakeholders throughout the collaboration process. Mechanisms for communication and information sharing need to be in place from the outset. To be successful, the information sharing, communication mechanisms, and media chosen should reflect stakeholder information sharing capacities and traditions. For example, detailed information provided electronically is of no value to societies without the infrastructure and equipment to access and disseminate it. In such circumstances, possible options for effective information sharing include regular one-on-one meetings, workshops, newsletters, dialogue groups, and reports.

In addition to sharing information about objectives, the collaboration process, and its participants, it is important to ensure that any information gathered is shared with those who contributed to the collection of that information. Failure to do so can lead to the development of misunderstandings that can threaten the entire process.

To ensure that the most appropriate communications mechanisms are used to support collaboration efforts, it is important to work with education and communication experts at

whatever level (regional, local, etc.) is most appropriate. The processes and tools that they use to build knowledge and share information can significantly enhance collaboration efforts.

Are shared goals important?

As previously discussed, collaboration is most effective when based on issues that are of mutual interest or concern to stakeholders. Using this common ground as the basis for collaboration, shared goals and objectives and joint strategies can be developed. Identifying issues of mutual concern and establishing common ground are usually among the first steps in any collaboration process. The development of shared goals and objectives will demand further clarification of the values, priorities, and expectations that have established common ground.

Because the development of short- and long-term goals and objectives can often be a future-oriented task, it offers an especially positive starting point for collaboration. Groups that start their joint work identifying their optimal futures can think expansively and constructively. Even if achieving that future becomes difficult, the shared sense of achievement that comes from the process can lay an important foundation of good relations that can help the group get through hard issues.

Most often, stakeholder representatives and their constituents will need time and space to formulate their own goals before coming together with the other interest groups to elaborate shared goals. In Namibia, for example, a group of Ju/'hoan Bushmen were only able to create a shared vision with the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) after they had established their own wildlife management objectives. These objectives were then negotiated with the MET as part of a broader visioning process.

Support for the outcomes of collaboration is built and reinforced when constituencies actively participate in the development of goals. When goals belong to the larger group, rather than to a single individual or institution, broad support for implementation is more likely.

There are a number of stages that parties will need to pass through as they work to develop a common agenda for future action. Each stage may occur only once, or it may repeat itself, depending on the issues being addressed and the diversity of participating stakeholders.

What are the stages in developing common goals?

Stage 1: Adversarial. This is traditionally the starting point for most groups. "Others" are seen to be the problem and everyone wants to know "who wants what." Consensus is considered to be impossible.

Stage 2: Reflective. Reflection will allow the parties to share stories and describe their identity, interests, hopes, and motivations in terms of past and potential interactions. This process of dialogue can change the way in which conflict is defined—i.e., from an outward

view to an inward-looking analysis. By stating underlying concerns, parties can make more progress in defining what is required for a mutually acceptable solution to be forged.

Stage 3: Inventing solutions. Parties are invited to find the intersections of their underlying concerns and develop cooperative solutions to their common problems. This stage should answer the question "How can all our needs be fulfilled?"

Stage 4: Agenda setting. Having clarified their interests, common frustrations, and perceived threats, stakeholders can develop an agenda for joint problem solving. The key question is, "Who needs what, and why, how, and when?" The process includes cooperatively structuring procedures for negotiation. (Stages adapted from Rothman, 1995.)

How do you distinguish positions from interests?

Negotiation may be necessary during various phases of the collaboration process. Many groups enter into negotiation having identified the positions they wish to take, rather than the more fundamental interests they wish to defend. Because it is important for stakeholders to be flexible about the way their fundamental interests are satisfied an effort must be made to distinguish positions (specific solutions) from interests (general concerns).

Interests are a combination of desires, concerns, and needs. They motivate people and underpin the choice of positions. Reconciling interests, rather than compromising between positions, is an effective strategy for two reasons: for every interest, there are usually several possible positions that may satisfy it; and behind opposing positions, there frequently lie more shared and compatible interests than conflicting ones, hence increased opportunities for compromise solutions.

DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN POSITIONS AND INTERESTS

	A Position	An Interest
Definition	Concrete things stakeholders say they want; action perceived as meeting immediate needs, beliefs, values, and concerns	Intangible motivations that lead stakeholders to take a particular position; the desires or fears that groups hope to advance
Example	We want less regulation. We want more park land.	Concerns about personal well-being
Attributes	A specific action Has a single outcome Is minimally negotiable Demands results in the near term Easy to evaluate	Abstract Has many possible outcomes Fosters maximum discussion Suggests long-term approaches Complex to evaluate

How can you assess options?

Conflict management experts stress the importance of exploring multiple options before deciding on any of them. Developing a range of options, even if some of them are not viable, forces stakeholders to think in terms of trade-offs and be creative in seeing a range of solutions *(see checklist, this page)*. Brainstorming sessions, held early in the development of options, can be very helpful. In these sessions, participants are asked to propose solutions they think could be useful, no matter how unusual or unrealistic they may seem. No evaluation or elimination of options is allowed at the opening stage; the purpose is to support creativity. After a brief period of brainstorming, the group is asked to set criteria for what a really good solution would look like and must proceed to evaluate the brainstormed ideas in light of the criteria. The result can be new and unexpected solutions.

If complex options are numerous, it can be worthwhile to have a smaller group of stakeholder representatives review them and develop a "short list" of multiple options to present to the larger body of stakeholders. A third party can play an important role at this stage, communicating between the various interest groups and helping formulate the final options to consider. Assessing the various options presented may involve a cost-benefit analysis or, more likely, some form of cost-effectiveness analysis. Employing someone versed in the techniques of this kind of analysis will probably be necessary.

C H E C K L I S T

Conflict Resolution

There are at least four possible ways of moving from apparently irreconcilable interests (i.e., mutually exclusive demands) to the reconciliation of these conflicting interests.

1. **Expanding the pie.** Some stakeholder conflicts are based on a shortage of resources (natural, financial, institutional, professional). In such circumstances, increasing available resources can provide solutions. This approach is useful when the parties find one another's proposals inherently acceptable, but reject them because only one group's proposal can be accommodated with existing resources. Expanding the pie allows all proposals to be considered, if not implemented. Sometimes a donor can provide the resources to "expand the pie." In natural resource management, new technological, institutional, or legal options may be available that can provide ways of combining different interests (such as livelihood, economic, or conservation) to accomplish this. Expanding the pie often starts when parties approach the issue to be resolved with the question, "How can we accomplish (a) my interest, and (b) your interest?", rather than getting trapped in a strictly competitive stance.

2. **Low priority/high priority.** In this solution, each party concedes on issues that are of low priority to itself and high priority to the other party. This approach is possible only when several issues are under consideration at once and the parties have different priorities among these issues. A variation on this approach involves *building on differences*. In this approach, parties could, for example, take advantage of different aspects of resources that they each care about (a wildlife refuge could be closed off to recreational visitors during bird hatching season, but open to visitors during the rest of the year).

3. **Cost cutting.** Using this solution, Party A gets what it wants, and the costs that Party B incurs for agreeing to Party A's proposal are reduced or eliminated. If this approach is used, it is necessary to understand what costs are posed by the different proposals, and how these can be mitigated or eliminated for other stakeholders.

4. **Bridging.** In this approach no party achieves its initial demands. Instead, a new option is devised that satisfies the most important interests underlying those demands. This solution usually means that there has been a reformulation of the issues based on an analysis of the underlying interests. Most often, high-priority interests are served while lower-priority interests are discarded.

NOTES

CHAPTER 6

Supporting Implementation

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Supporting Implementation

Collaboration processes often encounter problems when the legitimacy or capacity of stakeholder representatives is questioned by the constituency they represent. It is therefore extremely important to have clear and effective communication between stakeholder representatives and their constituents throughout the process so that everyone understands what is required.

A plan for monitoring intra-stakeholder group processes is important, as constituencies may not understand or buy into decisions being made on their behalf. The convenor/facilitator must therefore be prepared to listen to different constituencies at all times throughout the collaboration process—particularly if a majority of that constituency is expressing opinions that differ significantly from their representatives. In regions or localities where traditions of public participation in planning are weak, this situation may be common.

Constituencies will need the space and opportunity to express their views and have them inform the overarching consultative process, even if it means delaying decisions or actions at higher levels. Once an understanding is reached among stakeholders, representatives need to ensure that (1) they clearly communicate the trade-offs of possible positions to their constituency, and (2) they accurately represent their constituencies' positions in any negotiations.

Why is external support important?

In most cases, external support will be needed to help implement any plans or policies developed by stakeholders. For example, it may be that collaboration efforts produce draft policies that need external support in order to become law, or they may produce resource management programs that require the private sector to introduce new harvesting or production regimes. Whatever the plan, the most appropriate individuals or groups should be identified to implement it, even if they lie outside the usual circle of associates that participating stakeholders

are accustomed to working with. In some instances, further collaboration planning will be needed, particularly among official land use planning agencies, local resource management entities, and external private sector interests.

Lessons on engagement from the WWF International Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) Project have shown that it is critically important to adopt a step-by-step engagement of external stakeholders. This may require a commitment of time and resources to awareness raising, lobbying, advocacy, and building and nurturing mutual confidence. In working to introduce new ideas and approaches to governments and multilateral agencies at the international, regional, and national levels, the CBD Project has used a variety of means to engage stakeholders. These techniques, including face-to-face discussions, the preparation and dissemination of policy and position papers, regular and persuasive correspondence, and the free provision of technical advice, were used to effectively allay actual and perceived government wariness of new concepts and proposals.

Stakeholder groups need to be aware that good ideas do not translate into action unless those with the power and influence to make change happen understand and support the new common agenda. External stakeholders may often be helpful in assisting local stakeholders to reach unified visions and develop realistic action plans that are feasible at key administrative and political levels.

What implementation structures are needed?

Stakeholders may or may not be involved in implementation activities. In cases where they are not, shifting responsibility to the implementers can be problematic if the latter are not aware of what went on during the planning process. Implementation of broad, innovative, conservation approaches (like ecoregion conservation) will require new relationships and an evolution in the way stakeholders interact. New organizational arrangements can help facilitate this interaction if strategically positioned and resource equipped.

Implementation arrangements at the larger scales (national, regional, and ecoregional) will often need to be the product of specific, negotiated stakeholder agreements. These will have to specify the objectives, frameworks, and processes required to reach actual management plans. In some instances, the agreements may indicate that existing organizations will assume implementation responsibilities, or they may explain how new entities can be created. In some instances it may be that existing structures will only be able to provide implementation services if their capacity is enhanced.

How important is monitoring?

When thinking about monitoring the quality and effectiveness of the collaboration process, stakeholders should be reminded of the Columbus Syndrome: When Columbus set out

CASE 8 Implementation Structures

Klamath-Siskiyou. Over recent years, a number of promising stakeholder collaboration initiatives have occurred at the site level in the Klamath-Siskiyou Forests ecoregion of the U.S. Northwest. Local volunteer leaders generally initiate these efforts and participants are usually involved as individuals. Several collaboration initiatives already under way include the Healthy and Sustainable Communities Project facilitated by the Rogue Valley Civic League, the Humbolt County Planning Initiative, ecotourism in and around Pleasant City, and the work of Sustainable Northwest and their partners under the Healthy Forests-Healthy Communities Partnership.

However, despite this range of sectoral and site-based effort, there has been little coordination or integrated action across the Klamath-Siskiyou region. As a result there is still no coherent vision for the use and management of resources in the region or for the lifestyles and livelihoods of the people who live there. This in turn has led to continued conflict between various stakeholder agendas.

In light of this, a new organization—the People and Nature Partnership (PNP)—has been established. It is hoped that this new entity can offer a forum for communication and coordination of stakeholder efforts at the ecoregional scale. Participants hope that the breadth of support for this coalition structure will help it in outreach to landowners and resource managers, county planners, and representatives of local, state, and federal government. It is hoped that this will help minimize the potential for controversy across the ecoregion. To be effective, the PNP will need to maintain independence from other interests in the region that have clear goals and objectives that are more suited to an information and environmental advocacy role.

Madagascar. Recognizing the importance of local institutional arrangements in supporting natural resource management, the Malagasy government passed a law in 1996 promoting community-based management of renewable natural resources. Under this law, the government (represented by the Ministry of Water and Forests) can, through a management contract, transfer the responsibility for managing natural resources to local communities. These communities are required to organize themselves into legally constituted bodies and use "environmental mediators" as their liaisons to negotiate contracts with the government. Due to delays in the promulgation of the legal texts, this process has not yet been fully tested. In addition, while the intention of the law is positive, major constraints have already been identified. These include the complexity of the administrative procedures required for achieving the contracts, and the limited availability of mediators and the lack of capacity of government institutions to be responsive.

This is clearly a case where, despite the intentions of the law, capacity building is needed to ensure that the institutional structures being promoted can be effectively implemented.

he didn't know where he was going; when he arrived he didn't know where he was; and, when he returned he didn't know where he had been. Given the range of lifestyles and livelihoods that depend on effective stakeholder collaboration processes, organizations promoting stakeholder collaboration cannot afford to make the same mistake.

Collaboration can be especially susceptible to collapse during implementation, even if issues are addressed during planning stages. If stakeholder group relations have historically been characterized by mistrust, stakeholders are likely to be skeptical about commitment to follow-through (which underlines the need for first-rate facilitation). Blending the cultures of public and private sector institutions in joint implementation, as large-scale conservation initiatives require, is a difficult challenge.

Mechanisms for assessing whether the collaboration process is achieving its goals, and monitoring changes in the state of the issues that concern stakeholder groups, is critical. While the composition, influence, and agenda of stakeholders can change over the short term, the goals and objectives agreed on during a collaboration process will require monitoring over the long term. The collaboration management structure is also likely evolve over time. Leaders will need to respond to changes and continually assess how structures and institutions function to ensure they continue to serve the vision established by stakeholders.

What indicates progress?

Because the achievement of conservation objectives depends on the successful implementation of complementary functions, it is important to monitor progress indicators throughout the stakeholder collaboration process. This may involve looking at the steps taken prior to implementation, as well as the quality of the collaboration process itself. For instance, if one stakeholder appears to have exerted its will over other stakeholders, then the process may have ignored the voice of minority or dissenting stakeholders. This is a qualitative indicator, and in the end, it is the quality of collaboration that is most likely to ensure the sustainability of conservation objectives. Hence, indicators of the quality and strength of collaboration can serve as proxies for progress during the early phases of collaboration activities. Based on monitoring, decisions can also be made on how to address obstacles.

When developing systems to monitor the quality of the collaboration process, it is useful to pose key questions for which a number of indicators can be developed. Clearly, questions posed and information generated must be linked to progress in achieving collaboration objectives.

Questions that can be posed to identify indicators include these:

Is participation inclusive?

Possible Indicators:

- All the primary stakeholders are actively engaged in the collaboration process (assessed

by monitoring attendance at meetings, commitment of resources, formal participation in decision making, etc.).

- Minority and disadvantaged stakeholder views are reflected in dialogue and decisions (as identified by specific objectives or actions).

Are participants sharing the responsibility for ensuring success?

Possible Indicators:

- Stakeholders participating in the process invest time and resources (relative to their importance and influence).
- The costs and projected benefits of collaboration are equitably shared among stakeholders.

Is there a clear definition of the problem and development of a common sense of purpose?

Possible Indicators:

- Stakeholder positions and interests are identified and discussed.
- Collaboration objectives are developed and agreed to by all primary stakeholders.
- Areas of contention or potential conflict are identified, along with possible mitigating actions.

Are participants informing and educating each other?

Possible Indicators:

- Mechanisms for transparent exchange of information are in place.
- Inter-stakeholder group dialogue occurs in a timely and relevant fashion.

Are multiple options being identified and tested?

Possible Indicators:

- A cost-benefit analysis of implementation options has been carried out.
- Pilot actions to test options have been developed and implemented.

Are decisions being made by consensus?

Possible Indicators:

- Decision-making mechanisms to achieve consensus are in place and being followed.
- Decisions taken reflect broad stakeholder input.

Choosing appropriate progress indicators for stakeholder collaboration requires an understanding of what the process has been designed to achieve. This should be described in the

shared goals and objectives. The targets associated with those goals and objectives should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound.

Indicators do not represent the ultimate truth, nor are they meant to. The whole point of establishing indicators is to tell a story about the big picture while using only a small sample of information. If the sample signals something alarming, it is important to verify the accuracy of this information and seek out possible causes and remedial action. If the indicators signal positive outcomes and impacts, then the collaboration process may be a success.

NOTES

CHAPTER 7

Conflict Resolution

CHAPTER 7

Conflict Resolution

Over the course of stakeholder collaboration, conflicts and power struggles may emerge. Some conflicts can be anticipated from the outset, while others may develop over time. If longstanding stakeholder conflicts exist, or new conflicts emerge during the collaboration process, it is important to address them constructively. A skilled convenor or facilitator can help to identify the most appropriate strategy for a given situation. Mediators are often able to "level the playing field" among parties by making sure that all sides receive the same information at the same time, that none is disadvantaged by the time or place of meetings, and that ground rules are handled with neutrality.

How can facilitators address conflicts?

Convenors and facilitators can better address stakeholder conflicts and power struggles if they work to do the following:

Understand the causes of stakeholder conflicts or power struggles by

- identifying the symptoms of the conflict
- understanding why these symptoms exist
- formulating general approaches to address the symptoms (such as creating neutral situations in which stakeholders can meet, or facilitating information sharing through third parties) and taking appropriate action.

Address the difficulties associated with cooperation on a procedural level among conflicting groups by

- seizing the opportunity to explore differences and assumptions
- asking others to help

- getting parties together for other reasons
- initiating joint activities
- encouraging personnel exchanges
- dealing appropriately with negative and disruptive people.

Lay the groundwork for collaboration by

- promoting a common understanding of issues, process, and problems
- initiating one-on-one meetings
- providing the opportunity for everyone to comment on issues and proposals
- encouraging peer learning
- helping stakeholders (irrespective of their importance and influence) to define their role.

What are the most effective methods?

There are a number of conflict resolution methods and techniques that can be used to prevent or overcome conflicts and power struggles among stakeholders. Depending on the nature of the conflict that has emerged, the issues and interests at stake, and the capacity of stakeholders involved, any number of these methods can be used, either independently or in combination. It is best to consult with experts in each method or technique before introducing them into a collaboration process.

Among the effective methods of conflict resolution are meetings and roundtable discussions; joint initiatives; mediation; training; awareness raising and education; and joint fact-finding.*

Meetings and roundtable discussions bring together opposing stakeholder groups to discuss issues of shared interest. The meeting may produce an agreement, or at least help the stakeholders better understand some of the underlying causes of their conflict.

Example: The Columbia Slough Watershed Council
The Columbia Slough Watershed Council, formed in 1994, develops consensus recommendations for regional policy makers in the management, development, and protection of a series of lakes, wetlands, and channels situated in the Columbia River's flood plain. The council—which comprises representatives from diverse interests in the area (businesses, landowners, conservationists, recreational users, Native American tribes, and government agencies)—reaches consensus through roundtable discussions. A key benefit of the council is the development of constructive relationships among its members. Council members with very different perspectives now engage in productive dialogues (both within and outside council

*NOTE: All examples in this section are from Stern and Hicks, 2000.

meetings) on issues of mutual concern. The increased trust and respect among council members has led to progress on several environmental and development issues, while reducing tensions.

Joint initiatives address common concerns, including those of stakeholders who may not necessarily be in conflict. Real estate developers may, for example, find it advantageous to work with environmental organizations, even in the absence of any conflict, to create a conservation easement for their mutual benefit.

Example: The Prairie Crossing Subdivision
Needing to ensure that the open space within Prairie Crossing, a new development outside Chicago, remained protected in perpetuity, the developers forged a joint initiative with a national nonprofit land conservation organization. The land conservation organization holds a conservation easement, a legal agreement stipulating that landowners will not develop the protected land. The partners also established two new nonprofit groups to care for the common land and to enhance the stewardship ethic and ecological awareness of the community members and the public at large. The developer also forged cooperative relationships with government agencies, neighboring landowners, nonprofit conservation organizations, and businesses during the formulation and implementation of its plan for Prairie Crossing. These relationships have enabled the developer to benefit from a large pool of ideas and knowledge and build support for its plans, while not relinquishing control of the project.

Mediation provided by professional third parties can assist stakeholders who have reached an impasse.

Example: Rainforest Action Network and Mitsubishi Companies
In an effort to compel changes to allegedly damaging forestry and timber-purchasing practices by a Japanese holding company, Mitsubishi Corporation, Rainforest Action Network (RAN) staged a boycott and protest campaign against Mitsubishi Corporation and other members of the corporate family. Although the corporation as a whole refused to negotiate, mediation helped two affiliates, Mitsubishi Motor Sales of America and Mitsubishi Electric of America, break through their preconceptions about RAN and come to the negotiating table. The parties eventually reached an agreement: RAN would end the boycott against the affiliates, and the affiliates would fund a study on improved efficiency and sustainability in the forestry sector, and to try to influence the environmental practices of the whole operation.

Training in negotiation, creative problem solving, and dispute resolution techniques can help build the capacity of stakeholders to support and participate effectively in collaboration efforts. Depending on the resources and time available, training programs can include professional courses delivered by specialist institutions, and/or community-based training using participatory learning and action approaches to workplace training. The nature and target of training programs should be informed by a stakeholder analysis and the information

gathered during an assessment of the issues surrounding conflict and power struggles. Whatever training option is pursued, it is best to engage professionals who can design and deliver programs to the identified target audiences.

Awareness raising and education can increase stakeholder understanding of issues. Frequently, stakeholders lose sight of the issues. This is particularly true for those embroiled in conflict. Education can facilitate the development of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values and help people contribute constructively to a collaboration process. Education can address a wide range of stakeholders in formal and informal settings and is as relevant for political and business leaders as it is for members of the general public.

Delivered by professionals, education programs combine the strategies of teaching and learning with behavioral research, social marketing, gender analysis, participatory methods, information, and communications. Thought will need to be given to how to integrate these elements into a package that is transferable. Such a package can be introduced into collaboration processes using different combinations, to encourage people to explore and evaluate their actions around specific issues. Education programs will also help develop the knowledge and skills required to undertake a broad range of longer-term changes in social and economic settings that challenge collaboration efforts.

Joint fact-finding requires stakeholders to work together to investigate issues involving factual and scientific disagreements. Building stakeholder consensus requires that groups reach agreement, usually based on information gathered from a variety of sources. It is important that all stakeholders have common access to available information and data. If they do not, and stakeholders end up basing their interpretations and positions on different sets of facts, considerable time can be lost arguing over source credibility and who is right.

Joint collection and examination of data can help stakeholders to develop a common basis for discussion. This shared process can also allow stakeholders to get to know one another and create a basis for increased trust. Nevertheless, well-intentioned initiatives like joint data collection can also backfire if the information gathered, and the outcomes derived from it, are not freely shared. For example, a recent data gathering exercise that crossed national borders required that information be sought from a variety of organizations and community groups. All of the groups approached for information provided it without hesitation. However, as time passed and no feedback was provided to the groups on how the information they provided was used and what outcomes might result, suspicions were unleashed among the various parties. In this instance, a series of reports back to the various parties was needed to restore confidence in the original data gathering process and instill a sense of interest in, and support for, future steps.

NOTES

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