USAID BIODIVERSITY AND DEVELOPMENT HANDBOOK

IV BIODIVERSITY AND DEVELOPMENT INTERSECTIONS

Families rest in the shade while Northern Rangelands Trust community rangers pass by on patrol in Kenya. Nature-based enterprises and improved management earned about $1.3 million in 2013, in an area with low annual incomes and few economic options.

Photo: Juan Pablo Moreiras, Fauna & Flora International

IV BIODIVERSITY AND DEVELOPMENT INTERSECTIONS

Fishermen of the Hail Haor wetland in Srimongol, Bangladesh, have much to celebrate. After USAID helped local people participate in decision making and management of Hail Haor, fish diversity went up significantly, waterbirds that hadn't been seen for years returned, and fishermen regularly caught more fish in less time than they used to. This success with community co-management led the Government to change national policy on the rights of communities and initiated a large scale up in effort with USAID support.

Photo: Sirajul Hossein

IV BIODIVERSITY AND DEVELOPMENT INTERSECTIONS

4.0 OVERVIEW

This chapter supports Goal 2 of the Biodiversity Policy, "integrate biodiversity as an essential component of human development," as well as Agency integration goals and emerging best practices. Virtually all USAID programs are integrated with other sectors, whether intentionally or not, because they operate within socioeconomic systems. Biodiversity conservation programs are no exception. Conservation activities impact other sectors and vice versa. This chapter provides information on these linkages and impacts, for consideration in increasingly common multi-sector programming. Programmers and managers may also find this information useful in considering how working in different sectors contributes to sustainability. In addition, biodiversity and environment experts need to know enough about other sectors to be able to engage appropriately, though they do not have to be experts.

Integration does not mean doing everything; it means being strategic. Resources presented in this chapter can help planners make these strategic choices – identifying entry points and actions in other sectors that can lead to and enhance biodiversity conservation outcomes. For example, in the context of a threats-based approach, planners and practitioners could engage with efforts to strengthen legal and justice systems and apply best practices to specific conservation challenges such as trafficking or illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing.

As explained in Chapter 3, it is also evident that conservation approaches require knowledge about and engagement with the sectors to be covered here. Broad-scale landscape and seascape approaches often dictate integration of agricultural considerations; these could involve a mix of ecoagriculture, agroforestry, and intensification techniques, as well as improved fisheries management in seascape settings. Community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) approaches can improve conservation impacts and results by incorporating and facilitating the positive evolution of land tenure and property rights concerns. Similarly, many practitioners are increasingly realizing the importance of governance in biodiversity conservation programs: Integration of such basic principles as transparency and accountability can lay the foundation for more equitable, positive, and sustainable results. Finally, the crosscutting issue of global climate change has profound implications for natural resource management (NRM) and the conservation of biological diversity. Integrating climate change adaptation measures into conservation programs will be a necessity. At the same time, healthy and diverse ecosystems will provide resilience to climate change for other sectors.

4.7 SOCIETY, CULTURE, AND INSTITUTIONS

This section focuses on the intersection of conservation and human society as expressed in social institutions, including cultural norms and legal and regulatory systems. Humans are social animals; cooperation is essential to human survival. Yet humans are also intensely competitive. Society is the ultimate driver of the current epoch's catastrophic biodiversity loss, as well as the foundation for conservation. What knowledge about human social organization and behavior is necessary for biodiversity conservation programming? What are the best ways to tame conflict and leverage cooperation in the service of conservation?

The section reflects the ways that social science and conservation science have worked together to understand, model, and improve natural resource management. Insights have emerged from multiple disciplines, notably anthropology, rural sociology, psychology, political science, legal studies, human rights, and human geography, as well as cross-disciplinary work on common property (or common pool) natural resource management and environmental governance. Intersections with USAID programs that have significant social and institutional dimensions are included in the following sections: Land Tenure and Property Rights,

Democracy, Rights and Governance, and Conflict Management and Mitigation.

People living in the foothills of the world's third-highest mountain gather to assess red panda populations and habitat. Communities like this in the Sacred Himalaya Landscape of eastern Nepal and neighboring India manage their natural resources through forest-user groups and anti-poaching patrols. Photo: WWF

BOX 66. DEFINITIONS

Society. Society is human interaction that produces enduring structures. All humans are part of societies, which in turn comprise many levels, groups, and institutions. A person's role (functions served in the social group) and status (relative power and influence) strongly determine involvement in groups and institutions. People have multiple roles within social layers, from the household to the nation-state and, increasingly, within global societies.

Institutions. Institutions are structures that govern the way societies act, as well as the expression of how people organize themselves to act. A legal, market, or governance system is thus an institution or an organization created to work within these systems, such as a legal advocacy group, Chamber of Commerce, or political party.

Culture. Material culture refers to the physical tools, artifacts, and structures that people create. But culture also comprises symbolic structures, such as music, art, different forms of written and spoken language, concepts, and ideas – indeed, the whole architecture of knowledge. The essence of culture is pattern and structure that is passed on via learning rather than genetic inheritance. A "culture" is thus a constellation of learned behavior patterns. Non-human primates, such as chimpanzees, have been found to employ cultural transmission of such knowledge as hunting and gathering techniques; however, "culture" in its full complexity is a unique human characteristic. A worldview is a knowledge system that comprises the ways that people perceive and understand causality, family, strangers, space, time, nature, and other concepts. For instance, in some cultures, nature is integrated into human society.

Behavior. Behavior is what people do and how they react to situations. It is shaped by humanity's primate heritage, as well as by social status, gender, locality, power relations, and other social variables. There is a difference between normative behavior – people saying or doing what they think they should do to conform to culture and society – and actual behavior. This difference is crucial to an understanding of behavior change.

Community. This term is vague and often not useful in understanding and interacting with individuals, groups, and institutions. Social scientists prefer to use more specific terms that refer to a locality, for instance "village," "hamlet," and "district," or to a social function, such as "forest user group" or "marine management institution."

Conservation requires **social capital** and **collective action** in the management of common property natural resources, such as forests, fisheries, coasts, rivers, and grasslands. Social capital is the intangible quality of being able to work together productively on common tasks. The glue is trust that comes from common values and adherence to rules. Collective action is needed because natural resources and biodiversity are not the province of one individual, family, group, or actor; they cross boundaries. People must work together to manage them.

4.7.1 Social Safeguards and Soundness

Definition and Significance

A USAID-supported conservation program in the South Pacific got off to a rocky start in developing relationships with landowning clans in the conservation area. Project staff interviewed project implementers, who described what happened:

We organized a landowner forum. It was supposed to be a big meeting where we were going to develop an agreement between the project and the landowners. But the meeting was very poorly planned and facilitated. Our facilitator, who was from the outside, brought policemen to the meeting and kept pushing for conservation in a very open way. This ended up getting the people angry at us. They were saying, "This is our land – who are you to tell us how to run it?" This kind of forum needs much better planning so that you can work out a deal that benefits both sides, including provisions for what happens if the deal is not upheld by either side.[1]

This story illustrates two key elements of social safeguards and soundness: due diligence and building trust. The bottom line of due diligence is assuring that programs do not cause harm or generate conflict – or that when they do, managers put in place a sound mitigation plan agreed upon by all stakeholders. To avoid negative outcomes, managers need comprehensive and reliable data about target populations, their institutions, and their history on the land, as well as knowledge about appropriate and effective modes of engagement, communication, and even proper manners and dress.

Communicating in culturally appropriate ways not only prevents misunderstanding and conflict, it builds trust. And relationships of trust are essential for conservation success. A study in three protected areas by Marc Stern of the University of Vermont found trust and legitimacy to be key factors related to voluntary compliance in situations where general agreement with conservation regulations does not necessarily exist.

In developing countries, the stakes are higher now, as local communities and other actors become better informed, more organized, and empowered to challenge and/or collaborate with initiatives. There is also more potential for conflict, in the absence of effective, legitimate state-society relations, due to the growing scarcity of land and natural resources and rapidly shifting demographic trends.

Social safeguards have the aim of assuring that projects "do no harm" to people and groups, parallel to USAID's environmental safeguards embodied in 22 CFR 216, which mandates initial analysis and regular monitoring of possible environmental harm that can come from a given activity. Social safeguards require review of projects to assess stakeholder consultation processes and possible impacts on vulnerable groups and indigenous peoples. They flag such key concerns as dislocation and resettlement of populations and potential loss of livelihood.

Safeguards are critical both to protecting affected populations and to mitigating risk to project implementers. They are, in a sense, a minimum standard, often legalistic in nature; for example, they may mandate stakeholder consultation but not necessarily assure the quality of this consultation. Or they may involve compensation for displacement and redress mechanisms in the case of harm or perceived/alleged harm, but not necessarily analysis that would prevent such harm in the first place. As such, an organization can have excellent safeguards but not necessarily incorporate the social soundness approaches that improve prospects for social sustainability.

While safeguards and other project- or institution-level policy mechanisms are used to avoid or mitigate harm and conflict, **socially sound programming** complements safeguards by proactively assessing and addressing key social dimensions and issues in design and implementation. These dimensions include existing and historical relations among stakeholders, institutional capacity, good governance, conflict sensitivity, and approaches to behavior change.

Behavior change: Although often a stated goal of conservation efforts, it is not easy to change behavior. An individual's behavior is shaped by a multitude of personal and social factors. Over-reliance on data gathering

1 BSP, If Only I Knew Then What I Know Now: An Honest Conversation About a Difficult Conservation and Development Project. Lessons from the Field, Biodiversity Conservation Network, c. 1998.

through surveys and focus groups limits understanding of behavior and thus the ability to impact it. Observed behavior is often very different from stated behavior, which reflects social norms, particularly with respect to activities that may be sensitive, illegal, covert, or socially discouraged. Thus, the understanding and trust needed to implement socially sound conservation requires time and effort, as well as the emotional intelligence to listen and learn from others.

Constituency building: While knowledge about social institutions, norms, and history is critical, social soundness also involves how that knowledge is used – how one goes about doing the work, as much as what one knows or does. For instance, an assets-based approach builds on, and builds up, the assets of involved stakeholders (see Section 3.3.5). It uses an understanding of what matters to people and how to best communicate and work together to ground an initiative in stakeholders' knowledge, values, skills, networks, and institutions. These concepts are the basis for building constituencies for conservation that may be outside of the "conservation sphere" but have intersecting interests, concerns, and values.

Key Questions

Is conservation an essentially benign activity?

Virtually all conservation actions involve some measure of risk or tradeoff. Indigenous and environmental justice activists, journalists, and social scientists have focused on issues of resettlement and dislocation in the creation of parks and protected areas, as well as other perceived human rights violations. Protected areas are often located in the territories of indigenous, tribal, and marginalized peoples who have weak political and economic influence at the national and international levels. As with all USAID programming, it is important for the planners and managers of conservation programs to be alert to international and national treaties, laws, and safeguards and – given USAID's mandate to end extreme poverty – to consider actions that may put poor people at risk.

What social safeguards does USAID apply to biodiversity programming?

Although USAID has no formal social safeguards, such as those found in the multilateral development banks and other agencies (e.g., World Bank, Overseas Private Investment Corporation [OPIC]), efforts to develop guidelines that serve a similar purpose are proceeding on multiple tracks:

The Forest Carbon, Markets, and Communities (FCMC) program has analyzed the social dimensions of REDD+ and assisted USAID in evaluating policy and practice options. This analysis includes a review of all donor and large NGO safeguards and standards for REDD+.

The Democracy Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance (DCHA) Bureau has developed a human rights strategy to guide program managers in considering impacts on such vulnerable populations as indigenous peoples and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals.

The Policy, Planning, and Learning (PPL) Bureau has mandated project-level "sustainability analysis" that addresses some elements of social and benefit sustainability.

The mandated gender analysis is increasingly stressed Agency-wide. Understanding the differential impacts on men and women of a given activity is a critical component of social soundness (See Section 3.1.6).

In Chapter 2, many approaches to assessment and evaluation are described that can be used to measure the social impacts of projects and activities. If appropriate indicators and learning systems are put into place, these impacts can become apparent early on to avoid possible harm and increase engagement of more marginalized stakeholders.

In terms of USAID-funded research, USAID's new research policy calls for oversight of an Institutional Review Board (IRB) for human subjects research – this typically applies more to laboratory research. The American Anthropological Association has a detailed code of ethics with respect to field research informant and data confidentiality.

How are social soundness principles incorporated into USAID programming?

In the past, USAID required a social soundness analysis (here is as an example from an agroforestry project in Haiti) as part of project design. The current guidance is better suited to the type of integrated development project that was implemented in the 1980s than to the range of today's projects and this analysis is now optional. At present, consideration of social soundness may depend on the type of program, the experience of managers and implementers, the country, and site-level concerns. The following are suggested approaches to integrating social soundness in programming:

Pertinent resources to consider in design of socially sound programs include institutional assessments, conflict assessments, and political economy analysis in addition to the required gender and sustainability analyses (See Section 2.3.4). Review social and economic indicators, which indicate vulnerability of different populations in a country, and project reports that discuss implementation lessons in terms of adoption, spread, and sustainability of specific approaches.

In line with *USAID Forward*, project planners should consider ways to support local organizations that have high social capital and the ability to mobilize collective action in socially and culturally appropriate ways to meet USAID funding requirements. These institutions may or may not be in the conservation or environment sphere.

It is important to start at a broad social scale rather than piloting and scaling up. The SCALE methodology (see Section 3.1.1) can be used to identify active umbrella institutions and networks. These institutions and groups may be formally or informally organized. For instance, a market or value chain for a product may have no formal organization but have a structure that links actors. Note that some formal umbrella institutions may be weak because they lack a mandate or were created to fill donor or government needs for consultation or harmonization, rather than the needs of local constituencies. **Working with journalists and media on campaigns that promote social soundness is one vital avenue**.

Social science research should be consulted and supported during the course of the program.

As noted in other chapters and sections of this handbook, social soundness is part of USAID's legacy in the biodiversity and NRM sector – a sector that has learned through the decades to take a holistic, participatory, long-term approach that builds on and bolsters local institutions. There is no substitute for relationships built on trust and partnership.

4.7.2 Effective NRM Institutions

Social soundness does not mean sustaining specific institutions, but sustaining and improving institutional *capacity* to meet social needs. Steps include assessing the capacity, evolution, and context of partner institutions and seeking appropriate roles for local institutions while taking care not to overload them or put them at risk.

Key questions in sustaining and improving institutional capacity include the following: What services do local environmental NGOs provide to their constituencies? Have they become more service providers to donors and lost touch with local needs and constituencies? What can be done to help them build skills that will aid local constituencies? What about government institutions and their capacity and performance with respect to people's needs for security and livelihood (and beliefs, values, and sense of dignity)? Perceptions about ineffective or illegitimate performance by institutions can drive grievances around natural resource management and fuel conflict. (See Sections 3.3.7 and Section 4.8.2.)

Nobel Laureate Elinor Ostrom devoted her life's work to the study of effective institutions for "common-pool" natural resource management. Her quest was motivated by the desire to disprove "tragedy of the commons" theories that posited that when resources were managed in common they would inevitably be depleted because individuals would look out for themselves, rather than the common good. Orstrom and her students and colleagues developed a master database on common property NRM and identified conditions for successful common property institutions and their outcomes:

- clearly defined boundaries

- adapted to local conditions
- inclusive decision-making
- effective/accountable monitors
- conflict management institutions
- graduated sanctions for enforcement
- nested in larger systems
- recognition/acceptance of resource ownership by external authorities (the state)

USAID has invested intensively in NRM institutions and learned a great deal as well. Much of this learning was distilled in the January 2013 workshop on CBNRM. Box 67 describes some of this experience related to support to NRM institutions.

USAID's Human and Institutional Capacity Development Handbook is a great resource for gauging the competencies and needs of local institutions.

Some Missions implementing *USAID Forward* are also developing guidance and tools for local partners to strengthen their capacity.

Many scholars continue Orstrom's work. The International Forest Resources and Institutions (IFRI) database is a major resource for understanding institutional dimensions of forestry and human-ecological systems linkages such as this one:

By using original data on 80 forest commons in 10 countries across Asia, Africa, and Latin America, we show that larger forest size and greater rule-making autonomy at the local level are associated with high carbon storage and livelihood benefits; differences in ownership of forest commons are associated with tradeoffs between livelihood benefits and carbon storage. We argue that local communities restrict their consumption of forest products when they own forest commons, thereby increasing carbon storage.

BOX 67. NATURAL RESOURCE INSTITUTIONS: LESSONS LEARNED

Rural institutions are presented with a number of challenges.

- There can be a proliferation of organizations.
- Organizations can be tools of empowerment, representation, and self-determination, but they may also be coopted as an extension of command and control.
- They face prescriptive and onerous processes.
- Documentation requirements (e.g. to obtain a community forest) often reflect a double standard and top-down thinking.
- Groups face low economic margins and high transaction costs: meetings, monitoring, trainings, meetings, paperwork, planning, meetings.

Local government and community-based organizations' needs must be harmonized.

- LG needs resources to have credibility, legitimacy, and discretionary powers.
- In some cases, resource-based CBOs and technical committees undermine the authority and resource base of LG by locking up the tax base and creating parallel structures.

Apex organizations (networks of CBOs) and externally-created groups may not be the most beneficial to local actors.

- CBOs may need to represent themselves rather than through apex organizations or NGOs.
- CBOs need legal advice pertinent to their situations and capacities.
- Resource-specific organizations (e.g., forest or water user groups) often duplicate existing organizational legislation.
- Multipurpose and flexible organizational types are often more appropriate.
- Resource rights may be obtained through other avenues, such as land legislation.

Structural change is needed for local NRM institutions to thrive.

- Public interest law firms can assist groups.
- Regulating agencies can adopt a minimum standards approach.

4.7.3 Cultural and Spiritual Values in Conservation

Definition and Significance

Project designers should not assume that economic rewards are the only conservation incentives. Improved security, reduction in conflict or corruption, pride in stewardship and in culturally or spiritually important landscape features, and opportunities to learn new skills and competencies can be compelling reasons to sustain conservation.

People are motivated to conserve that which they value, treasure, and even worship. The last decade has seen a proliferation of initiatives linking conservation with religion and spirituality. In addition, research on conservation and beliefs, values, and norms has uncovered many important conservation approaches that are grounded in the spiritual and transcendental. "A sense of place" – a term coined by Wendell Berry – describes how the value of rootedness translates into emotions about home landscapes and terrains, which in turn can spark a conservation ethic.

Key Questions

How do people perceive their landscapes?

The concept of biophilia asserts that people are evolutionarily adapted to experience strong ties with nature, as well as preferences for certain landscapes. But biophilia may fade as societies become removed from nature. In his book *The Spell of the Sensuous*, author David Abram argues that "our Western worldview has evolved to be based on literacy, abstract thought, and separation from the body. By 'the body' I mean not just our individual, animal bodies, but the body of the earth and the material cosmos. By removing ourselves from this sensuous realm, we have lost the connection to the living dream that we share with the soaring hawk, the spider, and the stone silently sprouting lichens on its coarse surface."[2]

Do people prefer natural areas to be "wildernesses," or are they attuned to more domesticated landscapes? Local cultures may not understand or be attuned to the concept of wilderness or may perceive what we see as wilderness as cultural space. Research into land histories has encouraged critical reflection regarding long-held assumptions, such as the myth of the pristine Americas (Denevan, 1992). Landscapes once viewed as "wild" are now increasingly being recognized as shaped by human societies. The presence of human-mediated disturbances such as fire, pathogens, and viruses provides evidence for past human settlement in such landscapes.

How is the sacred embodied in conservation?

Examples of the way the sacred can be represented in conservation include

sacred landscapes – Included in the subcategory of "organically evolved locales" are sacred landscapes and sites, such as the groves of Ghana, Uluru in Australia, and Tongariro in New Zealand, that link natural features to cultural identity. UNESCO recognizes that this connection, a blend of human and natural forces, "enriches and humanizes life the world over." USAID's SCAPES support to the Sacred Himalaya Landscape provides an example.

customary taboos and restrictions in NRM systems – Similarly, societies used taboo or off-limits zones or time periods, such as restricting hunting during animal reproductive season, to manage exploitation. Fiji's successful locally managed marine areas were built around these principles, and scientific monitoring was added to confirm and reinforce the effectiveness of the off-limits/taboo approach. Recently, Muslim authorities issued a fatwa against wildlife crime in Indonesia, a huge step in engaging the largest Muslim nation on earth.

species as totems and icons – The conservation organization RARE uses species as cultural icons to foster conservation action through social marketing. This practice is based on ancient traditions that closely linked specific species to human groups. Within a society, different clans or sub-groups adopted different totems or iconic species to represent them; often, they were prohibited from hunting or eating these species. Or certain groups would be tasked with hunting a species such as lions or sharks but would be subject to specific rituals and behaviors to protect them in their role. Such practices serve to limit the number of people involved in hunting.

2 David Abrams, *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997).

How can implementers capitalize on cultural and social values in conservation?

- Build on existing efforts, such as those mobilized for the social and economic benefit of certain communities or groups, including faith-based groups.
- Define stewardship in a cultural context and enhance pride in stewardship; reward stewardship by groups rather than individuals, building the capacity of key groups.
- Encourage collective action for conservation that also achieves development objectives.
- Use social media to build and reinforce group solidarity.
- Find common purpose with culturally valued institutions and symbols.

In the Maya Biosphere Reserve of Guatemala, a common understory palm generates hundreds of thousands of dollars each year for local people while providing a strong incentive to keep the natural forest standing. The palm, xate ('sha-tay'), is certified sustainable and sold to U.S. buyers at a premium for floral arrangements and Palm Sunday celebrations. USAID partners have trained local people to collect only high-quality fronds, without hurting the plant or damaging the product, then sort and pack them to maximize value and profit.

Photo: Dani Newcomb, USAID

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