Measuring Socio-Economic Impact in a Conservation Setting

Lessons from a Decade

Presented by Ann Koontz

EnterpriseWorks/VITA

About EnterpriseWorks/VITA

- Recent merger of EnterpriseWorks Worldwide and Volunteers in Technical Assistance (VITA)
- Work experience, 40 years in over 60 countries
- Natural Products/Natural Resource Management portfolio since early 1990s with work in Asia and Africa
- Systematic use of value chain analysis (production to market), impact tracking system (ITS) and leading conservation tools (threats analysis, community land use planning, etc.)
- Assist producers in linkages with multiply intermediaries throughout the value chain, while building enforcement and incentive mechanisms for conservation

EWV's Socio-Economic Based M&E

- Starts with feasibility studies, participatory design, and baseline work.
- Distinguishes between process (pre impact) and impact indicators.
- Uses annual impact tracking system (ITS) combined with mid-term and final evaluations and studies and ongoing monitoring.
- Group monitoring tools, in addition to household level surveys key.
- M&E systems used throughout the project cycle (design, implement, evaluate, adapt).

Common M&E Goals in Projects that Integrate Socio-Economic and Conservation Goals

- Track and document progress toward improved socio-economic condition (e.g. poverty reduction) and conservation of a target geographic area. (**process indicators**)
- Document impacts on socio-economic condition (e.g. poverty reduction) and biological condition of a geographic area (**impact indicators**)
- Important to understand the difference between process and impact indicators. A project could achieve all process steps but not have desired impact, so important to have both types of indicators.

Examples of Process Indicators

Project Activity	Process Indicators
Capacity building of local community based organization to initiate and manage a forest products processing enterprise	Number and type of trainings held, number of participants by gender and ethnic groups, production of business plan for enterprise, enterprise/economic activity launched
Research on alternative forest products extraction and management policy and advocacy work with local governments to get recommendations into law	Meetings with key government officials on proposed policy, progress on proposed policy moving through local legislative system, forest management policy revised and enacted into law to support better conservation

Taking the "Process" to the Next Step

Economic Activity Launched

- When does the enterprise become profitable and sustainable?
- How much income does it generate and for who?
- How many and what kind of jobs does it generate and for who?
- Are there indications that the people employed have improved socio-economic conditions (more children able to go and stay in school, improved housing, food security, health improvements, etc.)?

Improved Forest Policy Enacted into Law

- How is the policy implementation plan being constructed and what entities are charged to implement the policy?
- Does policy require budget allocations and other investments from outside government; is this taking place?
- Are policy violations being pursued and punished?
- Are policy implementation efforts resulting in changes to the biodiversity condition of the target geographic area?

EWV's Impact Tracking System (ITS)

- Initiated in 1993 and has been updated and simplified four times since then.
- Administered annually for EWV's entire portfolio; combines quantitative and qualitative information.
- Strategic focus on economic benefits and beneficiaries, that can be tied back to project interventions.
- Used in conjunction with project specific baseline studies, sector studies, household and group surveys, mid-term and final evaluations.
- ITS externally evaluated.

Major ITS Components

Qualitative

- Project summary – objectives, major activities, funders, partners, documentation, lessons learned, success stories, unintended consequences and other social impacts
- Qualitative is drawn from day-to-day ongoing monitoring and project design

Quantitative

- Number and type of project interventions and men and women participating (process)
- Monetary benefits (sale of goods/services, producer and consumer cash savings) (impact)
- Clients/participants (men, women, owner, workers, group enterprises) (impact)
- Quantitative collected annually, but data is collected at field level to match with local economic conditions (harvest, peek sales periods, etc.)

What ITS does not Answer, but helps to make survey instruments more targeted

- What did the people do with the money and increased opportunity for employment?
- Did the increased income and employment lead to improved socio-economic conditions?
- EWV survey instruments build off of ITS trends, documentation of project conditions and changes to get at changes in socio-economic condition, but these factors difficult to roll-up

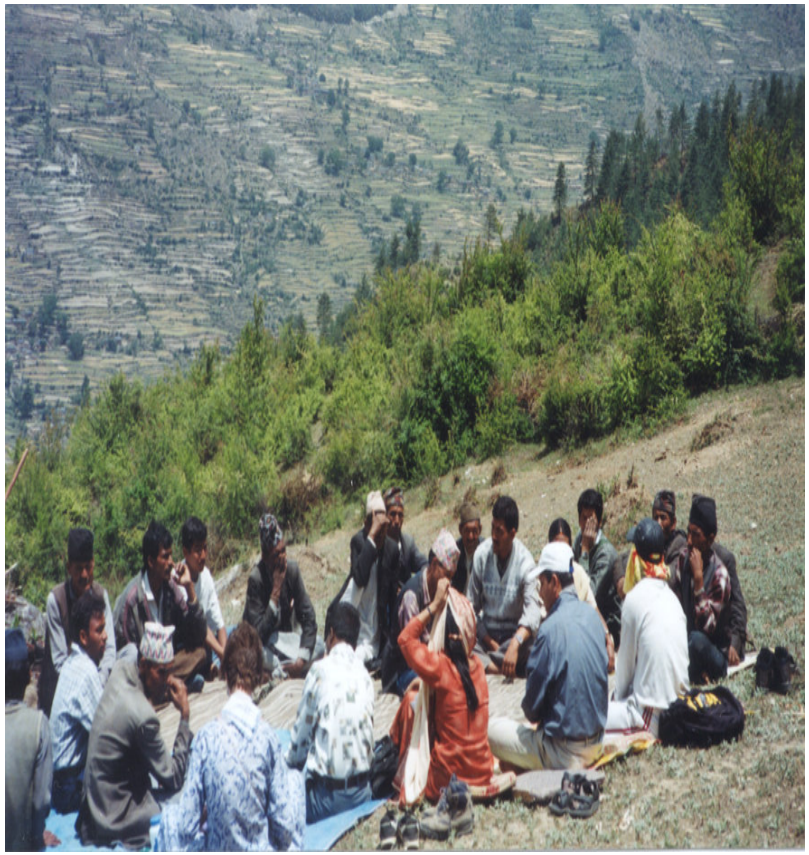
From a Decade of Data – Key Socio-Economic Improvements Documented

- The majority of increased income is used for education, improved food security, and health care.
- Reduction in seasonal out-migration, increase in literacy rates, increased political involvement and empowerment to protect land and economic interests, greater protection of natural resources, improved linkages with markets that increases incomes for broad categories of poor producers.

Lessons Learned from Implementing ITS

- Less is More – Have to concentrate on collecting a few good pieces of data on a regular basis, rather than lots of data once (A system cannot be all things to all people)
- Must have top down management push and a bit of arm twisting at the field level to get going (listen to the field, but enforce collecting of data at early stages – took 2 – 4 years to convince field programs of usefulness)
- Good impact tracking has to start BEFORE you have impact. EWV used a term called "pre-impact" to document project progress and most program officers hated this, but helped to identify faulty strategies and implementation early on.
- Not all impact will be positive and in some years there may be back-sliding on impact, important to be able to say why and take corrective measures if possible.
- The ITS system is robust – used across over 100 projects in three continents under a wide range of conditions.
- Cost, once set up (investment to establish several hundred thousand dollars) about $3,000 - $5,000 per year, per project.

Group Baseline and M&E Survey Tool – Going Beyond Household Surveys



- Especially in natural resource management context, group management and actions key for socio-economic and conservation improvements
- Household level surveys did not lend themselves to building group M&E capacity
- Common complaint from target clients - many NGO studies, surveys, but we don't learn results or results are in forms we find difficult to use to track our progress. Little or no ownership of information.

The Group Assessment Tool

- Use of group baseline and monitoring tool in Philippines and joint trial in Kimana with AWF
- In Philippines over 100 groups used tool, and in 2006 about 70% of forest groups surveyed (N = 75 groups) during baseline in 2001, completed follow-up assessment
- Tool also used to work with Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to assess groups when group forestry management compliance is challenged.
- Despite thousands of community forestry agreements around the world, few ongoing M&E tracking efforts for large numbers of groups

Group tool advantages over household surveys

- Requires groups to take ownership of integrated socio-economic, governance, and conservation M&E data
- Promotes transparency in groups and tracking mechanism for measuring group effectiveness
- Allows for individual rewards, while promoting areas where group cooperation is necessary to achieve conservation and socio-economic improvement
- Covers: organizational governance, finances, enterprise/economic development, conservation, conflict resolution

Pulling Socio-Economic and Conservation Monitoring Together

- Draw from approaches already implemented at the field level; village committee, tenure systems, etc.
- Budget time to get community, government and other major stakeholders input and involvement – participatory threats assessment module and group baseline survey form facilitates process
- Move quickly to actions with risk mitigation made explicit
- Balance top down and bottom up approaches. Don't discount stakeholders' perceptions; budget in coordination time during M&E activities and implementation

Priority actions that promote conservation and improve socio-economic conditions

- Combine incentives and enforcement mechanisms to achieve conservation and socio-economic advancement
- Increase capacity of local actors to sustainably manage and monitor the condition of their resources and management capacity
- Facilitate linkages among key stakeholders to achieve economic security and conservation

Conclusion and Thanks

- THANK YOU TO ALL THE ORGANIZERS OF THIS WORKSHOP!