

THE CONSERVATION CONSTITUENCY BLUEPRINT 2026

Methodological Guidance for African Parks Community Management

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Ministry of the Environment
of the Czech Republic



Where not explicitly stated, the views and methods described in this document do not reflect the official stance of African Parks.

Summary (Executive Synthesis)

*The long-term sustainability and ecological integrity of African National Parks (NPs) are inextricably linked to the socio-political resilience and economic well-being of adjacent communities. Historically, conservation models often operated in isolation from their human neighbors; this methodological guidance document fundamentally shifts that paradigm. It standardizes the approach to community management, transforming what has often been generalized outreach into a rigorous, evidence-based strategy focused on cultivating a local **Conservation Constituency**—a core objective of the African Parks (AP) model. A strong constituency functions as a social buffer, ensuring that the park is valued not just as a biodiversity haven, but as a critical engine for regional development.*

*The methodology is anchored in the **3E+ Strategic Framework** (Engagement, Education, Economy) and mandates a systematic, data-driven approach. The core function of this guide is to ensure that interventions are efficient, targeted, and measurable, moving away from ad-hoc activities toward strategic outcomes. This requires the mandatory use of specialized analytical tools, including the **Impact/Feasibility Prioritization***

***Matrix** for selecting the most urgent and actionable problems, and the **Barrier Analysis (Doer/Non-Doer technique)** for scientifically diagnosing obstacles to desired behaviours within target groups. By applying these tools, community managers can move beyond assumption-based planning to precision interventions.*

*The Akagera Community Development Strategy (ACDS) 2025–2050 serves as the operational prototype, demonstrating how high-density population pressure and complex socioeconomic challenges (such as Human-Wildlife Conflict, unemployment, and illiteracy) are addressed through a cohesive Theory of Change (ToC). The strategy's ultimate success rests on an unwavering commitment to ethical principles, including **Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC)**, **Do No Harm principles**, and the establishment of transparent **Grievance Mechanisms (GM)** to foster trust and long-term legitimacy.*

Acknowledgements of Authors

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Part 1:
**Context and
framework**

1.1. The strategic context of conservation constituency building

The African Parks model is fundamentally built on Public-Private Partnerships with governments and communities, aiming for the ecological, socio-political, and financial sustainability of protected areas. The core organizational philosophy holds that national parks and the ecosystem services they generate—such as water regulation, carbon sequestration, and biodiversity preservation—are necessary for human well-being and are therefore worth conserving. However, this value is not always immediately apparent to those living on the fence line.

Because conservation is ultimately a choice of land use made by people, AP recognizes the essential need to build a robust domestic support base, or constituency for conservation, where adjacent people clearly understand and value the parks. This elevates community engagement from a compliance activity to a strategic imperative. If the local population perceives conservation as the optimal, most beneficial land-use choice compared to alternatives like agriculture or grazing, the long-term viability of the protected area is secured. The comprehensive methodology presented here is designed precisely to achieve this constituency-building objective through standardized, institutionalized practice, ensuring that support is structural and not merely dependent on individual relationships.

1.2. Steps towards community outreach strategy in Akagera

The shift toward a formalized, impact-focused strategy in Akagera National Park (ANP) was initiated by a multi-day participatory workshop held from October 31 to November 3, 2023. This workshop, guided by the external consultants, functioned as an intensive on-the-job training program for the Akagera Community Outreach Team (COT), marking a departure from routine operations to strategic reflection.

1.2.1. Capacity building and methodological shift

The workshop's primary objective was capacity building, focusing on strengthening the team's strategic approach to outreach. The training emphasized moving beyond activities defined solely by output (e.g., number of meetings held, number of brochures distributed) toward interventions defined by measurable impact (e.g., adoption rates of conflict mitigation techniques). Specifically, the workshops integrated the principles of **Social Behaviour Change (SBC)**. The team learned that education alone is often insufficient for changing complex behaviours, as outcomes depend on a multitude of factors, including perception of self-efficacy, social norms, and access to resources. This training provided the foundation for subsequent evidence-based practice, equipping the team to diagnose why communities act the way they do.

Expected Impact of the guidance content on teams and processes

Effective planning: strategic planning of the teams moves beyond general concepts to specific applications.

Effective implementation: the teams get proficient in use of Social Behavior Change theory.

Field Validation as Standard Practice: the team engages in practical exercises to validate their assumptions about target groups and messages directly with community members. This includes assessing the relevance of identified problems and messages to specific groups.

Advanced Analytic Tools: ability to use advanced tools like the Barrier Analysis for teachers regarding Human-Wildlife Conflict (HWC), or the Key Informant Interviews.

Strategic Integration: use of Bridges to activities theory, integrating specific activities into the broader community strategy. This ensures that every activity has a clear strategic purpose and is not conducted in isolation.

1.3. What is Community Management?

1.3.1. Overall perspective

The methodology is founded on African Parks' overarching conviction that protected areas, when effectively managed, serve as a platform for securing biodiversity while simultaneously enabling the socio-economic development of people, thereby fostering long-term sustainability and resilience. Without the support of the people, the boundaries of a park exist only on paper.

The vision for community management is therefore centered on creating resilient communities that holistically advocate for protected area management because they receive tangible benefits from the National Park (NP) with minimum incurred cost. This strategic focus ensures that the community perceives the ANP not as a restrictive entity imposing limitations on their lives, but rather as a critical added value to the sustainability of their livelihoods—a neighbor that enhances their security and prosperity.

1.3.2. Definition and Goals:

Community Management is defined as the strategic, multi-faceted implementation of outreach programs designed to build an active domestic support base for conservation. This is achieved through the formalized strategic framework known as the 3E+ Model: Engagement, Education, and Economy. It is the discipline of managing the interface between a protected area and its human neighbors.

The strategic goals of Community Management include:

Conflict Reduction: Minimizing Human-Wildlife Conflict (HWC) incidents and addressing the high density of populations residing adjacent to the park. This is not just about compensation, but about prevention and mitigation to reduce the “cost” of living near wildlife.

Benefit Sharing: Ensuring that adjacent communities receive direct and indirect benefits, primarily through the Revenue Sharing mechanism, employment, and support for Income Generating Activities (IGAs), creating a tangible link between the park's success and the household's income.

Support for Sustainability: Securing the long-term viability of the protected area by influencing the local land-use choice in favour of conservation.

1.3.3. Why it is crucial for the long-term success of national parks in Africa

Community acceptance is the socio-political foundation upon which conservation efforts stand. Conservation is a strategic choice of land use. In contexts of high poverty, population pressure, and dependence on natural resources (as seen in Akagera, where 500,000 people border the park), conservation is constantly threatened by resource extraction (e.g., illegal fishing, firewood collection).

By rigorously applying the Community Management methodology, the NP strategically addresses the root economic and social drivers of illegal activity. When the park successfully makes conservation economically valuable (Economy component) and ensures local representation in decision-making (Engagement component), the risk of conflict and illegal activities decreases, securing the long-term viability and social license of the park. The continuity of the park's existence thus becomes intrinsically linked to the community's continued prosperity; if the park fails, the community loses a key economic driver.

1.4. Community outreach in APN: The Integrated 3E+ Model

African Parks defines all park activities through three interdependent pillars: **Biodiversity conservation**, **Community development**, and **Park revenue generation**, underpinned by **Management and infrastructure**. Community outreach draws primarily from the **Community development pillar**, but is closely linked to the other two pillars.

Within this framework, community outreach is not treated as an ad hoc set of activities, but as a managed function guided by network-wide standards and park-specific planning tools. At network level, the main reference document is the **African Parks Community Development Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) Technical Manual**, which is periodically updated. This manual sets out minimum requirements and recommended practices.

Each park then operationalises these principles through its own **Community Engagement (or Community Development) Business Plan**, usually covering a five-year period. These Business Plans translate the network-level standards into **context-specific objectives, interventions, budgets and indicators**, reflecting the ecological, social and political realities of each protected area. They also clarify the roles of community teams, management, and external partners, and provide an accountability framework for tracking progress.

The community business plans are built on so called 3E+ model- Economy, Education, Engagement. This structure is followed throughout the methodology.

1.5. Guiding principles

Adherence to core ethical principles is mandatory to maintain institutional legitimacy and ensure that conservation efforts do not unintentionally exacerbate existing social vulnerabilities.

1.5.1. Principles of Free, prior, and informed consent

FPIC is a non-negotiable commitment for the African Parks network. It mandates that communities and Indigenous Peoples must be consulted prior to the approval or commencement of any project or decision that may affect their rights, territories, resources, or livelihoods. This principle is particularly relevant in areas concerning the establishment of protected areas, physical resettlement, economic displacement, or demarcation decisions. Operating under FPIC ensures that engagement is respectful, procedural, and builds a consensual foundation for park management, shifting the dynamic from imposition to partnership.

1.5.2. Transparency, inclusion, and mutual respect

Trust is fostered by sincere communication that avoids creating false expectations or making promises that cannot be delivered. The strategy must focus on achieving behavioural change that is internally adopted and internalized by the community, rather than relying on dependency-creating contracts or deals.

Inclusion requires actively targeting marginalized segments of the population who are often invisible in traditional leadership structures. Specifically, the strategy must ensure accessibility of information to women, the elderly, and non-scholarised children/youth, ensuring that benefits and information do not just accrue to the elite.

1.5.3. Do no harm

The “Do No Harm” principle requires constant vigilance to ensure that conservation regulations and limitations—such as restrictions on firewood collection or agriculture—do not unintentionally deteriorate the situation of vulnerable households, particularly concerning food security, water access, or the workload of women. This requires continuous monitoring and a commitment to protecting all ethnicities and socio-economic groups from negative perceptions or “blaming and

1.6. How to use the guide

This guidance document is structured as a practical, iterative framework for continuous strategic improvement. It maps the four phases of strategic community management:

**Context and Justification
(Part 1 & 2):**
Defines the purpose and ethical foundation.



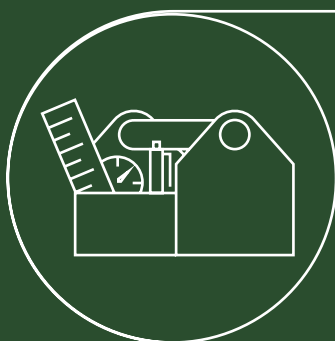
**Diagnosis and Strategy
Formulation (Part 3):**
Provides step-by-step instructions for identifying problems, analyzing stakeholders, and prioritizing interventions.



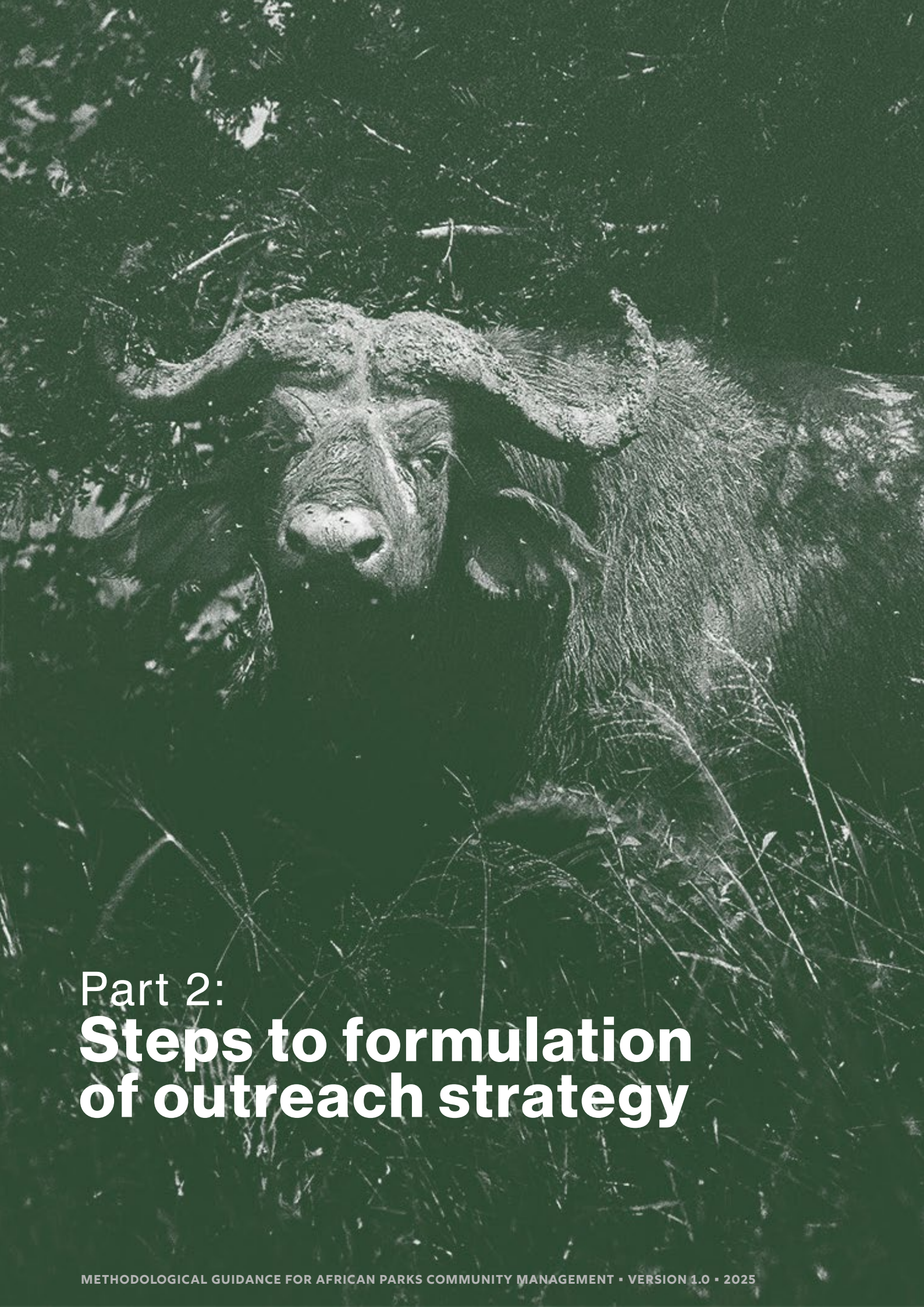
**Implementation and
Monitoring (Part 4):**
Details the Theory of Change and the use of evidence-based metrics.



**Operationalization
(Part 5, 6, 7):**
Provides guidance on communication, crosscutting issues, and a detailed case study (Akagera) as a prototype



The guide mandates modularity in activity selection (choosing activities from the 3E portfolios) but requires rigidity in methodological steps (e.g., prioritization, barrier analysis) to ensure the outputs are evidence-based and aligned with the overarching strategic objectives.



Part 2:
**Steps to formulation
of outreach strategy**

2.1. Defining clear goals and objectives

Effective strategy formulation begins with clear, articulated goals. Without specific objectives, outreach becomes a series of disconnected events rather than a cohesive campaign.

2.1.1. Establishing SMART milestones

All objectives formulated within the strategy must adhere to the SMART criteria: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound. Activity indicators and targets should be recommended for quantitative management of field work.

Examples of SMART-compliant objectives include:

Reduce human-wildlife conflict incidents related to baboons by 10% through targeted HWC prevention measures: This ties a specific intervention (prevention measures) to a measurable outcome (incident reduction) for a specific species.

- **Increase participation in conservation activities by 20% within the next year:** This moves beyond simply holding events to measuring active engagement and attendance growth.
- **Gather community input on the new park boundary proposal by Q4 of the current year:** This sets a clear deadline for a consultation process, ensuring it doesn't drag on indefinitely.
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2.1.2. Discussion: Conservation Ultimate Goals vs. Coexistence

A key philosophical decision for any park management is defining the ultimate long-term relationship between the park and the human population. The traditional goal of conservation is often framed as strict protection and resource preservation (“Fortress Conservation”). However, the strategic direction adopted here shifts toward achieving a high-order state of **human-wildlife coexistence**.

Coexistence, at its best, represents a complex, resilient arrangement where humans and wild animals learn mutual accommodation and adaptation in shared spaces. **The overall objective of the ACDS is explicitly defined as creating communities with the capacity to adopt green practices and a feeling of ownership, perceiving the NP as an asset to their livelihoods.**

This implies a fundamental transition: the relationship is meant to evolve from one based on enforced exclusion (protectionism) to one rooted in shared value and mutual accommodation (coexistence), achieved by providing benefits with minimum cost to the community. While enforced protection remains necessary in the short term, the ultimate vision is a socio-ecologically resilient landscape where biodiversity thrives because local communities willingly choose conservation as the best land-use outcome.

2.1.3. Review past efforts

Before establishing new goals, the Community Outreach Team (COT) must systematically review previous programs. This review should utilize tools such as the Akagera National Park SWOT analysis (2022) to cross-check assumptions and identify institutional weaknesses, such as the previously identified absence of long-term monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of impacts. The review must distinguish between activities that were merely efficient (high outputs, e.g., many meetings held, many t-shirts distributed) and those that were genuinely impactful (measurable outcomes on attitudes or behaviours, e.g., a verifiable reduction in wire snares). This critical distinction prevents the repetition of ineffective “legacy” activities.

2.2. Identification of the problems

The success of the strategy is conditional on correctly identifying potential clashes or agreements of interests between the park's conservation efforts and the problems perceived by the community. Misidentifying the problem leads to solutions that fail to resonate.

2.2.1. Problems to conservation and wildlife protection

The Akagera workshop identified several core conservation threats within the Zone of Influence (Zoi). These are the direct drivers of biodiversity loss:

- **Direct Illegal Activities:** Poaching, Illegal fishing in the NP, Firewood collection in the NP, Illegal bushfire, and NP fence damage. Each of these activities degrades the park's ecological value and increases operational costs.
- **Encroachment and Land Use:** Agriculture encroachment to the buffer zone, Disrespect of the buffer zone, Deforestation of the buffer zone, and Use of invasive species. These pressures threaten to shrink the effective habitat available for wildlife.
- **Governance and Awareness:** Lack of ownership among local authorities and Lack of awareness in conservation objectives. Without local governance support, enforcement becomes an unending battle.

2.2.2. Problems of local communities

Simultaneously, the strategic analysis identified high-severity community problems that undermine resilience. These are often the drivers of the conservation problems listed above; a desperate community is a threat to conservation:

- **Livelihood and Health:** Human-wildlife conflict (HWC), Zoonotic disease in humans, Animal disease, Insufficient agriculture production (for self-use and sale), and Lack of clean water. These issues directly impact the daily survival and well-being of residents.
- **Socio-economic:** Unemployment, School drop out, Poor waste management, Illiteracy, Dependency culture, and Increased costs of land around the park. Structural poverty limits the community's ability to adopt long-term sustainable practices.

2.2.3. Identify the conflicting interests and alignments

The methodology mandates mapping problems to reveal potential friction points and areas of synergy. This mapping allows for targeted interventions:

- **Conflicting Interests:** Illegal activities such as poaching (conservation threat) are often rooted in community problems such as unemployment or insufficient agriculture. Recognizing this causal link shifts the response from purely punitive measures to integrated solutions. This conflict requires economic alternatives and support to ex-poachers rather than just enforcement, addressing the root cause of the behavior.
- **Alignments:** Shared risks, such as Zoonotic diseases and Farming-chemicals/pollution, are areas where park intervention (Education and Economy) aligns perfectly with community needs (health and safety). Addressing the community's environmental hygiene problem (Poor waste management, Poor sanitation) becomes a highly feasible and well-accepted niche for the COT, building trust for more difficult conversations later. By solving a problem the community prioritizes (waste), the park earns the social capital to discuss problems it prioritizes (poaching).

2.3. Conducting a comprehensive community and stakeholder analysis

2.3.1. Who to be included in the process and how

The strategy development process must be inclusive, incorporating perspectives from all levels of the operational structure and external stakeholders to ensure buy-in. Excluding key voices leads to blind spots and potential resistance during implementation.

- **Members of the Community Outreach Team (COT):** Responsible for executing the strategy and providing ground-level data and operational feasibility analysis. They are the eyes and ears on the ground.
- **Members of the management:** Required for strategic sign-off, budget allocation, and ensuring alignment with the overall ANP Long Term Sustainable Strategy (LTSS). Their support ensures the strategy is resourced.
- **Feedback of stakeholders and target groups feedback:** Essential for the validation phase, ensuring problems and solutions align with community perceptions (using indices like the Conservation Constituency Index). This grounds the strategy in reality.
- **Organisations headquarters and management:** Providing organizational oversight and ensuring alignment with the broader African Parks policy (e.g., the 3E+ framework), ensuring consistency across the network.

2.3.2. Identify all stakeholders

Stakeholder mapping identifies all groups affected by or interested in the park's work. It moves beyond geographic neighbors to functional groups, recognizing that influence is not solely determined by proximity.

- **Residents:** Farmers (crop, livestock, fish, marshland), Fishermen (local/crossborder), Ex-poachers, Tourists (national/international), Elderly, and Women with children under 5. Each group interacts with the park differently.
- **Local economy/Civil society:** Traders/Owners of businesses/Market Managers (critical for regulating illegal trade), Artisans/Artists, and Cooperatives (women, mixed). These actors control the economic flows that can either support or undermine conservation.
- **Government/Authority Partners:** District Administrations, Sector Leaders (primary advocacy target), Agronomy/Health/Vet Officers (agenda overlap), and Local Police/Army/Courts (security and HWC resolution). These institutional partners are force multipliers for the park's mission.

2.3.3. Profile the target groups

Profiling goes beyond simple identification to understand the demographics, interests, communication preferences, and specific roles in conservation challenges. It answers the question “who are they really?” For example, young females are a “culturally hard to reach” target group, requiring specialized attention to ensure accessibility of information. Elderly members are valuable messengers of traditional knowledge, but their traditional know-how must be analyzed for its ecological content versus potential myths or misconceptions. Ex-poachers are profiled as potential ambassadors for positive change, requiring targeted economic support to ensure they sustain their behavioural shift. Understanding these nuances prevents “blanket” messaging that fails to land because it ignores the specific realities of the audience.

2.3.4. Power mapping exercises

Power mapping is a visual methodology used to analyze the relationships between stakeholders, categorizing them based on their decision-making power and their position (support or opposition) toward the conservation goals. It is a strategic tool for navigating the political landscape.

- **Purpose:** This exercise reveals which actors hold “Power Over” (direct control, authority) and helps identify necessary strategic alliances or targeted actions. For example, the power mapping exercise helps inform the Advocacy component of the strategy by defining whether a stakeholder (e.g., a specific mining company or a local authority) needs capacity building, engagement, or direct advocacy from senior management. It clarifies who needs to be influenced to achieve a specific outcome.
- **Strategic outcome:** By identifying clusters of stakeholders with shared positionality, the team can efficiently allocate limited resources, ensuring that advocacy and engagement efforts target the most influential individuals to achieve desired policy or social change. It helps the team avoid wasting effort on stakeholders with low influence and high opposition, instead focusing on “moveable” targets or key influencers who can sway others.

2.4. Prioritisation of the problems and objectives

The prioritization step is crucial for resource allocation, ensuring that the limited capacity of the Community Outreach Team (COT) is focused on the most impactful and feasible issues. Without this, the team risks burnout and diluted impact, trying to be everything to everyone.

2.4.1. Applying the Impact/Feasibility Matrix

Problems identified by the Akagera team were scored on two dimensions:

- **Impact:** The severity of the problem on the main conservation effort (stabilization of large wildlife populations) or the community's welfare (measured on a scale of 0 to 100). Does this problem threaten the core mission?
- **Feasibility:** The likelihood of the COT (and the broader ANP/APN network) to influence or solve the problem given its current capacities (measured on a scale of 0 to 100). Can we actually fix this?

Problems scoring highly on both metrics become the core mandate of the COT.

Problem	Relevance	Impact Score	Feasibility Score	Total Score	Strategic Implication
Illegal fishing in the NP	Conservation	80	80	160	Core COT mandate, integrated security/livelihood response.
Lack of awareness in conservation objectives	Conservation	80	80	160	Justifies intensive Education component.
Poaching	ConservationW	80	80	160	Requires direct SBC targeting ex-poachers and market channels.
Human-wildlife dynamics/contact	Conservation/Comm.	70	80	150	Requires HWC prevention/mitigation (Economy/SBC).
Lack of ownership among local authorities	Conservation	90	50	140	High Impact, lower COT Feasibility, justifying Senior Management Advocacy.
Poor waste management	Community	80	70	150	High Impact/Feasibility niche for COT Environmental Education.

Table 3.4.1: High priority problems (Impact/Feasibility matrix excerpt)

2.4.2. Determining scope and capacity

Problems with high impact but low feasibility (e.g., School dropout, Infrastructure development in Zol, Lack of clean water) must be recognized as requiring outsourcing. This realization confirms that the strategic direction cannot rely solely on the internal COT team; it necessitates the formal mechanism of **Plus Partnerships** to leverage external governmental or NGO expertise for financial and technical support in areas like water access, electricity, and health services. This distinction prevents mission creep, allowing the COT to focus on its core competency—conservation engagement—while still facilitating broader development through partnerships.



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2.5. Determination of outreach components

The problem prioritization guides the specific design of activities within the 3E components.

2.5.1. Awareness & advocacy

This component aims to disseminate key messages and foster trust. Advocacy is a crosscutting activity that involves engagement with decision-makers at regional and national levels, often requiring senior ANP/APN management. Activities include media coverage, village visits, and community social events used to convey positive messages.

2.5.2. Environmental education

Education activities focus on improving literacy and transferring critical thinking skills related to environmental risks. Activities range from developing teaching materials for Eco-Clubs to running literacy programs for adults in Kinyarwanda and English. The goal is to create a population capable of understanding complex environmental trade-offs.

2.5.3. Community livelihood support

- Through employment: The Economy component relies on Localized sourcing and recruitment as a non-project-based mechanism to increase employment within the ZoI, fundamentally altering the community's perception of the park from a "locked fortress" to a source of income and career opportunity.

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2.5.5. Building partnerships

Partnerships (Plus Partnerships) are strategically deployed to ensure complementarity of action in areas requiring deep sectoral expertise (e.g., WASAC for water, REG for electricity) or substantial infrastructure investment.

2.5.6. Conflict settlement and cohesion activities

This includes formal mechanisms such as the development and implementation of the **Human-Wildlife Conflict (HWC) guideline** and providing financial and technical support for HWC prevention measures. Cohesion activities, such as organized sport events (e.g., Rhino Velo Bike Race), serve as a platform to build goodwill while conveying conservation messages to a wide audience, using shared passions (like sport) to bridge the divide.

2.6. Analyze barriers to best practices

The methodological guidance mandates a critical shift from mere “good practices” promotion to a systematic approach based on Social Behaviour Change (SBC). This recognizes that information alone rarely changes behavior.

2.6.1. Formulation of the best practices and desired behaviours

Desired behaviours must be formulated with precision, following a strict structure to be actionable and measurable: **Target Group** → **Action to be taken** → **Specification** (frequency, quantification).

- Example: The behaviour designed to combat illegal commodity trade is: Market managers → Report suspicion for the occurrence of suspicious or uncertified goods... to relevant contact points... → on the day of occurrence.
This specificity allows the team to pinpoint the exact barriers preventing this action, rather than relying on vague "awareness" campaigns like "Stop Poaching," which give no specific instruction on how to help.

2.6.2. Analysing the barriers to positive desired behaviours: The barrier analysis toolkit

Promotion of positive behaviour relies on an in-depth understanding of the specific barriers to adoption. If interventions address only knowledge gaps, but the actual barrier is lack of access or low self-efficacy, the activity will fail to achieve the desired outcome.

- **The technical standard: Doer/Non-doe analysis:** This technique is recommended as the statistically verifiable method. It requires interviewing a comparative sample (e.g., 45 individuals who already perform the behaviour, or "Doers," and 45 who do not, "Non-Doers"). The measured differences between these two groups directly reveal the most significant barriers and motivators. For instance, if both groups know the rule, knowledge isn't the barrier.
- **Behavioural Determinants:** Analysis of behaviours must be framed around twelve determinants, including Perception of self-efficacy (confidence/ability), Perception of social norms (approval/disapproval of peers), Access (to products/services needed), and Perception of positive/negative consequences.

Strategic Implication: The necessity of this rigorous diagnosis confirms that successful community management is an applied social science. By diagnosing the root cause of non-adoption (e.g., low self-efficacy vs. lack of funds), the intervention can be precisely tailored (e.g., vocational training vs. seed money grants), thereby avoiding the creation of dependency culture by simply subsidizing the behaviour.



Part 3: **Implementation and Monitoring**

3.1. Formulation of the Theory of change

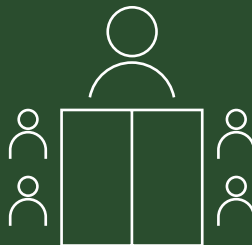
The Theory of Change (ToC) serves as the roadmap, explicitly outlining the causal links between the activities, the expected results, and the ultimate strategic objective. The Akagera Community Development Strategy (ACDS) ToC is structured around the three components (Engagement, Education, Economy), mapping the path from the initial identified problems to the desired long-term outcomes.

The ToC ensures programmatic logic is transparent and verifiable. For instance, under the Economy component, the problem of Insufficient agriculture and **Unemployment** (Initial Status) is addressed through activities such as **Support of Conservation-led business enterprises** and **development of HWC guideline**. These activities are expected to yield results such as **Increased income generation opportunities** and **Losses caused by HWC have been reduced**. All these actions collectively contribute to the objective of Akagera being valued as an employer and contributing to improved livelihoods. It connects the "what" we do with the "why" we do it.



Open Source Theory

Relies on open collaboration, decentralization, and voluntary participation.



Classical Theory

Focuses on efficiency through hierarchy, rules, and centralized control.



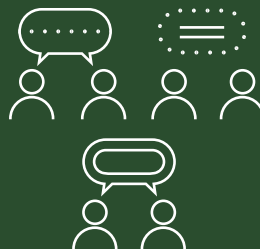
Neo-Classical

Emphasizes social relationships, morale, and informal group dynamics at work.



Modern Theory

Views organizations as open systems of interdependent and interacting parts.



Contingency Theory

Argues that effective management depends on the specific situation and context.



Motivation Theory

Explains work behavior through individual needs, incentives, and internal drive.

3.2. Monitoring of the outcomes

Effective monitoring is mandatory to assess progress, ensure accountability, and enable annual activity adjustments. The monitoring framework must integrate both quantitative management metrics and qualitative impact measures.

3.2.1. Developing SMART Indicators

Indicators must respect the SMART principle. They are categorized to track the full lifecycle of the intervention:

- **Activity indicators (Quantitative Management):** Measure the output and reach of activities, useful for logistics and performance evaluation. Examples include: # of members/beneficiaries attending activities, # of training materials provided, and % of women/youth included in outreach. This tells us if we did what we planned.
- **Result & impact indicators (Outcome Measurement):** Measure the overall progress toward the strategy objectives. These must quantify the change in attitude, behaviour, and economic status. This tells us if what we planned actually worked.

The Conservation Constituency Index (CCI)

The Conservation Constituency Index (CCI) is the primary tool used to measure the intangible impacts of the strategy—specifically, attitudes, perceptions, and readiness to act. By collecting structured data on perception, the CCI allows the team to track whether general awareness is translating into stronger attitudinal support.

Key CCI measures include:

- Perception of benefits derived from the park.
- Communal social motivation (belief that all must contribute to conservation).
- **Interpersonal communication about benefits of the NP:** This is a crucial metric, as active discussion of benefits within the community is a strong predictor of internalized conservation ownership and future adoption of promoted behaviours.

SBC Outcome Indicators

For the behaviour change component, the critical impact metric is the Uptake of the good practices and behaviours in the target groups, measured as the increased percentage of "Doers" in the population over time.

3.2.2. Strategy team progress milestones

Internal capacity gaps were identified as a critical barrier to strategy execution. Progress milestones serve to measure the internal capacity and readiness of the Community Development Department (CDD) to effectively implement the outlined methodology.

Component	Milestone	Key Indicator
Behaviour Change (SBC)	CDD team has the capacity to assess wkey barriers to adoption of good practices.	% of promoted good practices which are analyzed for the barriers to their adoption.
Awareness & Communication	CDD has capacity to regularly conduct a survey, report data, and understand its need for formulation of activities.	# and % of promotion campaigns monitored and quantified in terms of their impact on target groups.
Livelihoods (IGA)	CDD team is able to identify and validate problems experienced by individual target groups.	% of respondents in relevant target groups who perceive the problems addressed and prioritized by CDD as serious.

Table 4.2.2: Examples of Strategy Team Progress Milestones

These milestones ensure that institutional self-reflection drives capacity building, validating the team's ability to execute a rigorous, evidence-based strategy rather than reverting to intuitive or output-driven practices.

3.3. Communication

Effective communication is the operational mechanism for delivering the strategy and fostering acceptance; it requires specialized, intentional planning to ensure key messages resonate and lead to sustained engagement.

3.3.1. Effective communication strategies

The methodology advocates for specific communication practices designed to cultivate long-term trust and mutual acceptance:

- **Two-Way Engagement:** Communication must be a two-way road. The team is instructed not to "preach but listen," building communications around the real and practical problems the communities face. This shifts the dynamic from "instructions" to "dialogue."
- **Trust Building:** Crucially, the team must avoid making promises or creating false expectations, as unfulfilled commitments seriously undermine trust. The communication should focus on building the long-term stability and acceptance of the ANP.
- **Positive Messaging and Personalization:** Communication should emphasize positive attitudes and utilize personalized stories of individuals living in the Zol, including both community members and park staff. Presenting ecological dynamics within the context of daily lives ensures relevance.
- **Accessibility:** Language must be simple and understandable, particularly since messages will often spread via word-of-mouth. Clear content is essential to mitigate the high risk of misinterpretation or rumor.

3.3.2. Aligning objectives with communication activities

The choice of communication activity must be determined by the specific strategic objective being targeted, recognizing that solely transferring information is insufficient for changing values or norms.

Education /SBC Objective	Primary Target	Recommended Activity Examples
Provide Information	Knowledge acquisition	Face-to-face meetings, Distribution of printed materials, Radio broadcast
Foster Commitment	Motivation (Pride)	Awards, Certificates of accomplishment, Community days
Communicate the Norm	Social Proof	Role models (Ex-poachers), Success stories, Social marketing campaigns
Increase Skills	Capacity building	Training/Workshops, Demonstrations, Hands-on activities
Remove Barriers	Opportunity & Access	Exposure visits, Focus groups, Facilitation for group planning

Table 5.2.1: Communication strategies matched to objectives

3.3.3. Developing accessible education materials

Materials must be developed in parallel with defined activities and tailored to the specific target groups. Given the existence of illiterate populations, materials must be highly graphic and user-friendly to ensure inclusivity.

Literacy Support

Environmental education (EE) must be coupled with fundamental literacy programs. While EE is traditionally concentrated in elementary schools, significant communication gaps persist among illiterate adults and school dropouts, posing a barrier to employment and uptake of good practices. Therefore, the strategy includes dedicated activities for English and Kinyarwanda literacy programs and ICT literacy programs. This structural support ensures that individuals gain the foundational capacity to access information related to green practices and IGAs promoted by the COT, effectively democratizing access to opportunity.



Part 4: **Recommendations on crosscutting issues**

The strategy must embed non-negotiable principles across all activities to ensure ethical consistency and social protection.

4.1. Do-no-harm and conflict prevention

The methodology requires proactive measures to prevent conservation activities from inadvertently causing harm or exacerbating conflict.

- **Vulnerability Monitoring:** The monitoring system must track indicators related to food security, water access, and household workload, especially concerning women, to ensure that park regulations (e.g., restricted access to natural resources) do not cause hardship.
 - **Ethical Communication:** The team must avoid fostering negative perceptions or using strategies of "blaming and shaming" against any specific group (e.g., poachers, farmers), as this can stir social tensions and conflict within the community.
-

4.2. Gender mainstreaming and inclusion

Gender mainstreaming is a critical component of inclusion, focusing on four key operational areas:

- **Accessibility of information:** Ensuring women receive conservation information directly, not relying solely on male household heads as conduits of information.
- **Workload assessment:** Monitoring that park limitations do not increase the physical workload of women (e.g., increasing the distance to fetch fuel wood and water).
- **Targeting hard-to-reach groups:** Specifically capitalizing on opportunities to engage young girls, women, and female youth clubs in environmental education.
- **Team structure:** Establishing gender balance within the COT staff to ensure successful field engagement with female community members, as women are often more comfortable speaking with female staff.

4.3. Grievance and feedback mechanisms

A robust and accessible Complaint Response Mechanism (CRM), or Grievance Mechanism (GM), is essential for maintaining transparency, accountability, and building trust. The GM must ensure that community suggestions, misconceptions, and complaints regarding ANP regulations or staff misconduct are systematically recorded, verified, and addressed.

Key components of the GM structure include:

- **Communication channels:** Establishing multiple, accessible channels, such as a hotline, email, physical "Mail-boxes" in key community points, and social media contacts.
- **Procedure and tracking:** Assigning responsible personnel to analyze and filter incoming messages, log them on a tracking system, and ensure feedback is provided to the community within a defined timeframe (e.g., 5 working days for acknowledgement).
- **Anonymity and integrity:** The system must allow stakeholders to submit grievances anonymously, particularly for integrity-related issues (corruption, abuse), and guarantee that there will be no retaliation for complaints. This is vital for uncovering issues that community members are too afraid to voice publicly.

4.4. Strategic implementation of Partnerships +

Plus Partnerships are a formal mechanism for securing external financial and technical resources for projects that support community development but fall outside the ANP's core conservation mandate or capacity.

- **Mandate:** Plus Partnerships are employed when the complexity or scale of a project requires logistics and resources beyond the internal COT capacity.
- **Focus areas:** Addressing critical infrastructure and development gaps, such as improving access to drinking water and irrigation (WASAC), connecting houses to electricity (REG), and establishing health facilities.
- **Model of Sustainability:** ANP provides the initial kickstart or support, but the long-term management and staffing responsibility for the service is transferred to the relevant government agency or partner organization to ensure sustainable operation and avoid perpetual dependency on park funding.



Part 5: **Case study from Akagera**

The Akagera Community Development Strategy (ACDS) serves as the primary example of the application of this methodology, showcasing the integration of SBC principles into the 3E framework.

In the two workshops, spread over two years- 2023 and 2024, the CDT with the consultants cooperated in order to respectively provide and follow the comprehensive guidance in streamlining the development of the CDT, taking into account the methods of the project and strategy management (e.g. theory of change, overall vs activity objectives), progress monitoring (formulation of activity and impact indicators), while clarifying the purpose of the variety of community outreach methods, such as education, livelihood support, awareness, advocacy and communication among the target groups.

It was formulated in following phases:

In 2023

The subsequent capacity building in November 2024 further refined the methodological approach, focusing on bridging the gap between theory and field application. This phase was critical for operationalizing the strategic concepts introduced earlier.

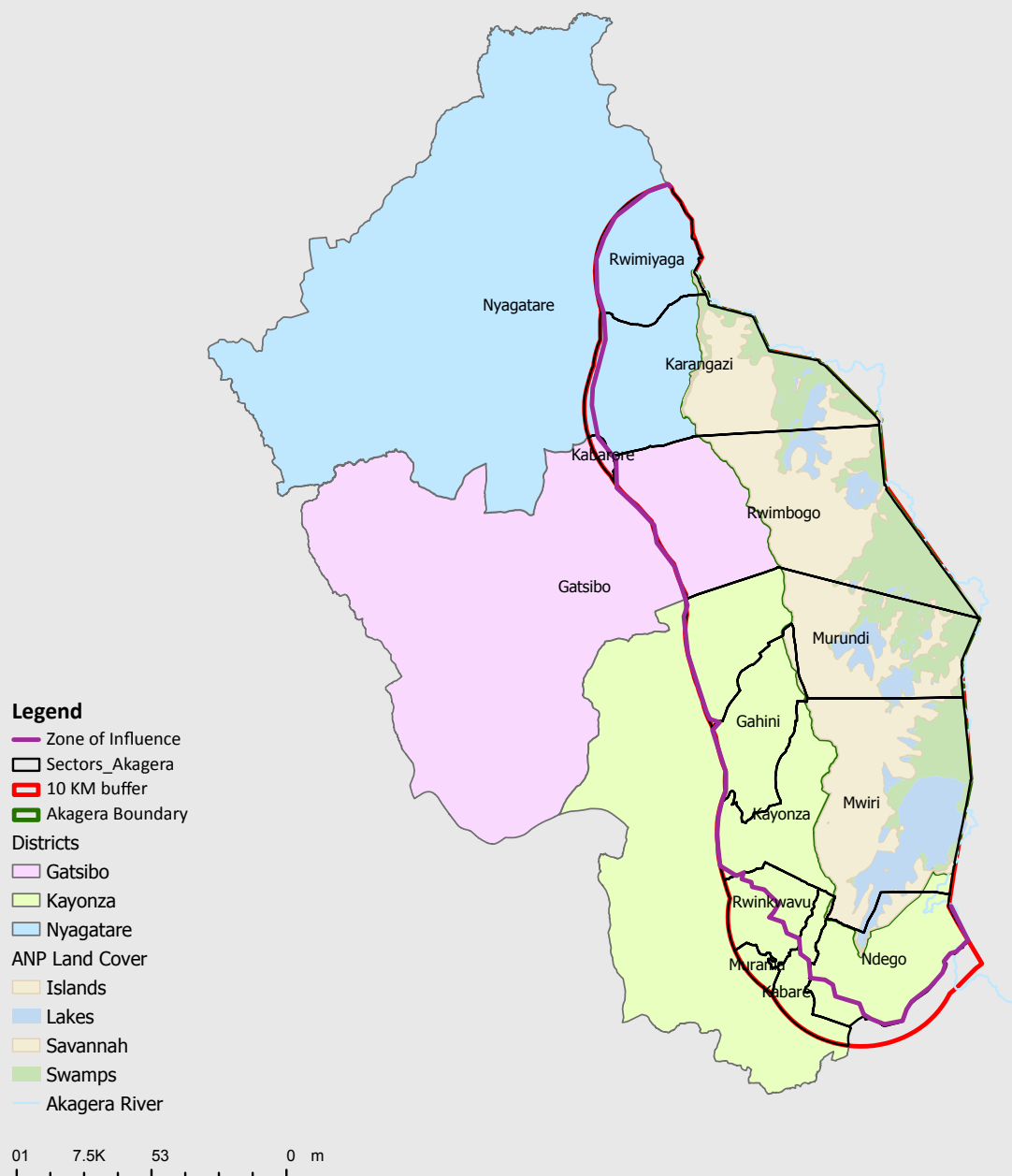
Steps toward the strategy:



5.1. Development of the Community Outreach Strategy in Akagera 2025–2050

The Akagera Community Development Strategy (ACDS) 2025–2050 represents a commitment to long-term sustainability. The strategy focuses on the roughly 500,000 people residing within the Park's Zone of Intervention (Zoi), primarily concentrated in village settlements (80% of the population). This high population density and reliance on agriculture and livestock farming impose significant social pressure on the protected area, necessitating a comprehensive development response that goes beyond sporadic charity.

Akagera community of influence:



5.1.1. Strategic alignment and governance

The ACDS is explicitly aligned with existing national frameworks, including Rwanda's NST2 (National Strategy for Transformation) and the Vision 2050. This alignment ensures that conservation activities contribute directly to the national pillars of economic transformation, social development, and good governance, positioning the park as a partner in national development rather than an obstacle.

The necessity of this integrated approach is underscored by the operational reality that ANP must influence land use indirectly, primarily through enforcing environmental law and collaborating with local governance.

The Park Management Company (AMC) functions as a de facto regional development partner. Collaboration occurs at all levels of government, from the Provincial Governor down to the nine sectors and 40 villages. Critically, the park manager chairs the **Revenue Sharing (RS)** committee in each of the three districts (Kayonza, Gatsibo, Nyagatare), which determines and implements community projects funded by tourism revenues. This structure confirms that the Community Development Department (CDD) must operate strategically within the development sphere, justifying the broad scope of the Economy component of the strategy.

5.2. Deep dive: Akagera's prioritized problems and target groups

Establishing a comprehensive list of community and conservation challenges matched against specific target demographics (e.g., farmers, ex-poachers, market managers). This ensured that interventions were not "one-size-fits-all" but tailored to specific livelihoods.

Applying the Impact/Feasibility analysis to select the most relevant problems for the COT mandate, filtering out issues that were beyond the park's scope or capacity.

The problem prioritization exercise in Akagera identified three highest-priority challenges, all scoring 160 points on the Impact/Feasibility matrix:

- **Poaching:** Direct threat to wildlife integrity.
- **Illegal fishing in the NP:** Direct threat to biodiversity and ecosystem health.
- **Lack of awareness in conservation objectives:** Foundational barrier impacting social acceptance.

This high prioritization mandates that the strategy address these problems using integrated 3E solutions. For instance, the threat of poaching is not simply addressed by security (outside COT mandate), but by targeting associated community factors:

- **Target group: Poachers** → Economic activities (cooperatives, alternative livelihoods) to provide viable alternatives.
- **Target group: Traders/Market Managers** → Engagement/SBC activities (reporting illegal commodities) to cut off the supply chain.
- **Target group: Park Staff** → Engagement activities (reporting suspicious activities) to ensure internal integrity.

This systemic mapping ensures that the problem is attacked from economic, social, and security angles simultaneously, maximizing the likelihood of sustainable behavioural change.

The team complemented and updated a list of threats to the ANP identified previously by a SWOT analysis in 2022) and listed challenges of the relevant community (Table 2).

5.3. Actionable behaviours and messages

Developing specific, measurable desired behaviours tailored to prioritized problems and groups, moving from vague slogans to actionable instructions. The Akagera workshop demonstrated how SBC methodology creates targeted, measurable behaviours, moving beyond generalized outreach.

Example: Illegal Commodity Trade (Poaching/Illegal Fishing)

- **Desired Behaviour:** Market managers do report suspicion for the occurrence of suspicious or uncertified goods, such as meat, wood, charcoal or other products from unknown sources to relevant contact points (Vet officers, police, or ANP team) on the day of occurrence.
- **Associated Message:** "Help us to protect wildlife and your neighbour's health also in your market place".

This formulation is strategic because it shifts the motivation from forced compliance to **shared self-interest** (protecting neighbours' health from uncertified meat) and clearly defines the specific action required and the contact points (Veterinary officers, police). This high specificity allows the subsequent Barrier Analysis to precisely diagnose why the manager is not reporting (e.g., fear of retaliation, lack of a safe reporting channel, or not knowing the procedure).

Validation

This process of collecting qualitative data on behavioural determinants ensured that the strategies were grounded in the empirical reality of the community rather than assumptions made in an office. The validation phase is a crucial stage in strategy formulation, ensuring that internal perceptions of problems are cross-checked against the community's own experiences, thereby reducing the risk of programmatic failure.

5.4. Akagera Community development strategy ToC visualized and analysed

Newly formulated overall goal of Akagera Community Development Strategy aims at long-term sustainability of the protected area existence within changing social contexts. Objectives of each component lead all together to reaching the overall ANP Community Development Strategy goal. The ACDS 2024 ToC provides a clear example of how the three components interlock to achieve resilience.



5.4.1. Engagement (I)

The Engagement component focuses on mechanisms and structures necessary to maintain connections, foster trust, and ensure positive relationships between the park and communities. It is about governance and voice.

- **Objective:** Ensure all levels of governance, private sector, and community individuals perceive they are well represented in park management and that their concerns are heard.
- **Activities:** Park-community gatherings (Umuganda), village visits, establishment of Grievance Mechanisms (GM), active participation in land-use planning discussions, and coordination with government agronomists and local leaders.

5.4.2. Education (II)

The Education component promotes conservation understanding and skills necessary to execute sustainable livelihoods that reduce resource dependence. This component moves beyond simple awareness (knowing something) to building critical capacities (being able to do something).

- **Objective:** Develop a community that understands and advocates for conservation policies, possessing the capacity and motivation to influence conservation efforts.
- **Activities:** Curricular environmental education (Eco-Clubs, students park exposure visits), teacher capacity building, community social/cultural/sport activities (which convey anti-poaching messages), and crucial adult literacy programs (English and Kinyarwanda) to overcome barriers to accessing information and job opportunities.

5.4.3. Economy (III)

The Economy component facilitates and bolsters local cooperatives and livelihood programs, aiming to give communities a direct economic stake in the park. It addresses the "wallet" drivers of behavior.

- **Objective:** Ensure Akagera contributes to improving livelihoods, is valued as an employer, develops economic opportunities and quality access to amenities, and effectively mitigates the risks associated with living near a protected area.
- **Activities:** HWC management and prevention support, conservation-led business enterprises (e.g., beekeeping, mushroom farming), localized sourcing and recruitment, amenity development (water sources, workshops), and vocational training.

Causal Pathway: Economy Component

The Economy component addresses the initial status problems of insufficient agriculture and unemployment. The activities are designed to mitigate risks and develop opportunities:

- **Activity examples:** Development of HWC guideline (C3.1), Support of Conservation-led business enterprises (C3.6), and Water sources development (C3.4).
- **Results & outcomes:** These activities directly lead to Increased income generation opportunities in Zol, Sustainable access and distribution of ANP's natural resources (water), and Losses caused by HWC have been reduced.
- **Overall objective contribution:** By achieving these results, the community gains economic benefits and mitigation of park-linked costs, fulfilling the core objective that resilient communities advocate for conservation because they earn benefits from the ANP.

5.5. Lessons learned and future capacity needs

The Akagera methodology testing confirmed several critical findings for future strategy implementation across the network:

- **Being specific is a key:** The team realized that highly specific, targeted messages and behaviours must replace generalized conservation issues communicated during large community meetings. Effective SBC cannot be achieved by mass communication alone; it requires precision.
- **Addressing barriers:** The initial workshop reinforced the need for barrier analysis, confirming that park staff often implement activities that are merely feasible without fully assessing their true impact on conservation or the underlying determinants of behaviour change.
- **Institutionalizing SBC:** There is a recognized internal capacity gap for fully implementing the strategy, specifically the need for specialized roles in **SBC coordination** and **Monitoring and Data Analysis**. Future capacity building and recruitment must focus on securing expertise in technical innovation, youth outreach, and sustainable agriculture to fill these gaps and ensure the effective execution of the strategy



Part 6: **Conclusions**

6.1. Overall recommendations

The methodological shift documented herein represents a mature evolution in community management strategy, transitioning from a relationship based on necessary transactional support to one focused on systemic resilience and co-management.

- **Mandate rigorous diagnosis:** It is recommended that the **Impact/Feasibility prioritization matrix** and the **Barrier analysis (Doer/Non-Doer)** technique be mandated as non-negotiable prerequisites for funding and implementing any major community outreach project. This ensures that resources are allocated efficiently to address highly impactful problems whose constraints have been empirically verified, moving away from subjective or politically motivated project selection.
- **Elevate SBC capacity:** The strategy requires specialized institutional capacity. It is recommended that dedicated roles focused solely on **social behaviour change coordination and M&E data analysis** be established within the Community Development Department. This ensures that the qualitative, evidence-based data generated by the SBC tools (CCI, Barrier Analysis) are continuously integrated into activity adjustment and long-term planning, fulfilling the goal of long-term impact monitoring.
- **Formalize Partnerships +:** To avoid dependency culture and manage the immense scale of development needs (such as infrastructure and amenities) in the Zone of Influence, the formal Partnerships + model should be institutionalized across all applicable parks. The NP should function as a catalytic partner, providing technical expertise and initial funding for green development, but swiftly transferring management and operational sustainability to specialized external government bodies or long-term NGOs, thereby concentrating the COT's limited capacity on core conservation-linked behaviour change initiatives.
- **Prioritize ethical infrastructure:** Unwavering commitment to ethical principles is paramount to socio-political sustainability. It is recommended that the **grievance mechanism** be established as a primary, multi-channel communication instrument, explicitly allowing for anonymous reporting to safeguard integrity and foster trust across all organizational levels.

6.2. Useful tools and documents

This methodology mandates the integration of standardized tools to ensure evidence-based practice:

- **The 3E+ community engagement business plan:** African Parks framework for strategic alignment.
- **Prioritization matrix template:** Used for Impact/Feasibility analysis.
- **Behavioural determinants checklist:** Diagnostic tool for barrier analysis.
- **Doer/Non-Doer analysis field questionnaire templates:** The rigorous standard for identifying barriers to behaviour adoption.
- **Conservation Constituency Index (CCI) template:** Tool for tracking attitudinal and perceptual impact.
- **Grievance mechanism reporting flowchart:** Standardized procedure for receiving and addressing community feedback and complaints.
- **SMART Conservation Tools (SMART Collect):** Mobile application template for decentralized data collection, enabling community reporting on HWC or illegal activities.

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