HOLISTIC APPROACH FOR HEALTHY AND RESILIENT SOCIAL-ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS

Attaining interdependent objectives
for optimal impact and sustainability

FINAL REPORT
December 15, 2020

Conservation Measures Partnership

A beekeeper maintains one of the suspending structure of beehives that the park is experimenting as a deterrent to block elephants that try to leave the. WWF Kui Buri Beehives. Thomas Cristofoletti WWF-US

Executive Summary
Holistic approach to social-ecological systems

A significant portion of the world's high conservation value areas are occupied, surrounded, and/or owned or managed by indigenous and local people, yet efforts by conservation and other social change organizations in these places are typically not sufficiently multifaceted to attain or sustain desired conservation and human well-being aims. A recent survey (November 2020) conducted the the CMP-Moore Population, Health, and Environment Learning Initiative showed that many aspects of human well-being are seen as highly linked to conservation effectiveness, but most organizations look to others to work on them or they don't work on them at all. **Many within and beyond the conservation space firmly believe that a paradigm shift is needed such that these holistic approaches become the norm of how we work in social-ecological landscapes.**

CMP and the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation sought to harness cross-organizational learning on priority topics to help inform and improve conservation action on the ground. Given the need outlined above, the topic of Holistic Approaches for Social-ecological Systems was prioritized as one of three strategies to be explored. This report is the result of discussions, contributions and elaboration by a 30-member working group of diverse backgrounds and expertise, which sought to:

- Rethink, as conservation and human well-being results are typically less than hoped and needed
- Think critically about community engagement in conservation
- Improve and adapt the holistic frameworks with which we work
- Discuss challenges and explore ideas for breaking barriers to increase uptake of holistic approaches and improve their design and implementation
- Better understand how trade-offs and synergies are managed in multi-objective programs
- Share, learn, and create tools to improve how we work in complex social-ecological landscapes

Work took place over a period of 3.5 months via a series of three convenings, complemented by two surveys, and review and comment on draft products along the way. Throughout, the process was iterative, with the working group contributing ideas and drafting content that was later reviewed and refined.

Executive Summary
Holistic approach to social-ecological systems

A Holistic Social-Ecological Approach recognizes the profound interdependency between the well-being of people and the health of biodiversity, by championing both of these through collaborations that negotiate and advance holistic solutions for the good of people and nature. Holistic approaches are characterized by a set of important hallmarks, including the social-ecological system as the ultimate target, inclusive, equitable collaboration, honest, pragmatic negotiations, and shifting mindsets and other key conditions as needed to ensure long-term resilience and sustainability -- the ultimate outcome of a holistic approach. A set of fundamental principles also are central to holistic approaches, including free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC), justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI), and gender equity. While the Conservation Standards present human well-being as a result of biodiversity conservation, a holistic approach considers both human well-being and biodiversity conservation as interdependent and equal ultimate goals to ensure the health, resilience, and sustainability of a social-ecological system.

The working group collaborative situation assessment outlined the ways in which holistic approaches should help attain and sustain desired impacts on human well-being and environmental health. As a start, the adoption of a holistic approach seeks to address the lack of full partnership/ collaboration and shared vision among rights holders, NGOs, stakeholders as well as the insufficient understanding of their needs, aspirations, and challenges. A holistic approach recognises that these factors often lead to the failure of solutions to respond effectively to the complexity or nature of challenges, to the lack of sustained change in attitude/ behavior, and to the ultimate inability to achieve attain or sustain desired impacts on human well-being and environmental health.

The fundamental theory of change is that if a holistic approach is employed (versus a more narrow or single sector approach), that will more effectively establish the awareness, conditions, mindsets, and practices that will lead to both near term positive impacts for people and nature as well as higher likelihood of longer term resilience and sustainability of the social-ecological system.

Executive Summary

Holistic approach to social-ecological systems

Broadly, working group members agreed that holistic approaches should be employed where a lasting, integrated solution is needed that achieves and sustains the health and resilience of a social-ecological system. At the same time, Holistic approaches are not appropriate everywhere; certain conditions should be met such as critical mass of those committed to the approach and a willingness to negotiate and adapt. For instance, holistic approaches are appropriate where a critical and representative mass of local parties, NGOs, and other key stakeholders agree and commit to using this approach over the long time period typically required to get to sustainable impacts.

The working group identified numerous barriers to effective uptake, design, and implementation and elaborated ideas to overcome those challenges. It was suggested that uptake of holistic approaches is limited primarily because of the inability to do, due to funding constraints, challenges around forming/maintaining multi-sectoral partnerships and broader stakeholder collaboration, and lack of proof of concept; design is also innately extremely complicated. Based on these priority barriers, the working group began to elaborate barrier-specific mitigation tactics.

Firstly, a significant increase in funders and funding is needed if holistic approaches are to be adopted and successfully advanced. Holistic approaches require more time, money, and flexibility than single sector approaches, including significant investment at the start to ensure that partnerships and collaborations are formed and reach a shared vision and set of priority objectives that will be advanced together. Expanding this type of funding will require major shifts in donor models, including willingness to fund integrated approaches, providing larger and longer term funding, and adjusting to have reasonable expectations for results.

Secondly, to overcome the barrier of lack of know-how regarding the design and implementation of holistic approaches, practitioners and funders need to increase their knowledge and skills, gain an initial understanding of the approach, and have greater access to training opportunities, materials, and support. It was suggested to generate innovative guidelines and tools, such as a clear and readily applicable theory of change and related indicators of success and a step-by-step guide on how to retrofit programming toward more holistic approach. These could be achieved by continuing to expand on the results of this learning initiative.

Executive Summary

Holistic approach to social-ecological systems

Thirdly, to encourage NGOs to work across sectors and overcome challenges in the development of critical partnerships, more focus is needed to build multi-disciplinary teams within conservation and other social change organizations, create convening spaces where collaborations can take shape, ensure that funding and implementing organizations' strategic plans include cross-sector work and goals, securing incentives from funders to support collaboration, and gathering evidence and information demonstrating that it is often in an organization's best interest to "play well with others" instead of going it alone.

Lastly, while many of the strategies and tactics supported and advanced in the conservation and other social change sectors lack evidence of their effectiveness, impact, and sustainability, the working group feels that this is a particular barrier to funding and adoption of holistic approaches. Greater evidence is needed regarding how to design such an approach, under what conditions it works or doesn't (from both biodiversity and social standpoints), the costs of the approach as well as costs incurred when such an approach isn't pursued or when it isn't executed well, and the potential for this approach to save money. Ultimately, greater evidence is needed to assess whether this approach indeed facilitates achieving objectives FASTER, with increased participation, local initiative, and sustainability.

In sum, Holistic approaches remain relatively new and limited in their application globally, and many important questions remain to enhance their uptake, design, and effective execution. Further investigation is needed to learn more about how to initiate and maintain effective collaborations, measure the outcomes and impact of holistic approaches, and whether and how holistic approaches lead to greater long-term resilience and sustainability.

Beyond this slide deck, further effort is needed to develop materials and publications that advance the uptake, support, and effective execution of holistic approaches. The group considered several options and believes it would be most worthwhile to carry the work forward in 2021, namely to develop a guidance document, to write and circulate an open letter to funders regarding the need for increased and longer term funding for holistic approaches, and to develop and provide a basic orientation to holistic approaches to CMP, CCNet, and other relevant sectors and communities.

THIS REPORT

Initiative purpose, process, and product

Community members on Mount Namuli, Mozambique. Image credit: Elizabeth O'Neill

The CMP-Moore Learning Initiative on Holistic Approaches
WORKING GROUP MEMBERS

This report is the result of discussions, contributions and elaboration by a 30-member working group hosted by the Conservation Measures Partnership with support from the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation. The group was facilitated by two coordinators who also served as the lead authors for this report. We note that the findings and conclusions of this document are those of the working group members and do not necessarily represent the views of their respective organizations.

Facilitators/ Lead Authors

- Elizabeth O'Neill, EON Impact Consulting
- Filipa Oitavén, Legado

Working Group Members

- Mary Allen, NOAA
- Diana ("Tita") Alvira, Field Museum
- Heather Barna, Independent
- Majka Burhardt, Legado
- Erica Cochrane, International Crane Foundation
- Jason Cole, Margaret A. Cargill Foundation
- Stuart Cowell, Conservation Management
- Clare Crawford, WWF
- Carol Damberg, US Fish & Wildlife Service
- Jennie Duberstein, US Fish & Wildlife Service

- Megan Hill, USAID
- Alan Holt, Margaret A. Cargill Foundation
- Emma Ignjic, Bush Heritage Australia
- Saras Kumar, Conservation Management
- Ana Lemos, Field Museum
- Matt Luizza, US Fish & Wildlife Service
- Gaye Mackenzie, Collective IQ
- Oscar Maldonado, Independent Consultant
- Cheryl Margoluis, Pathfinder International
- Madeleine McKinnon, Independent consultant

- Stella Mercurio, The Jane Goodall Institute
- Stephanie Mladinich, Legado
- John Morrison, WWF
- Matt Muir, US Fish & Wildlife Service
- Kristen P Patterson, Population Reference Bureau
- Susie Rice, NOAA
- Estuardo Secaira, Independent Consultant
- Caroline Stem, Foundations of Success
- Amy Vedder, Yale School of the Environment
- Michelle Wieland, Wildlife Conservation Society

The CMP-Moore Learning Initiative on Holistic Approaches
PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

Initiative Purpose

CMP and the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation sought to harness the collective knowledge of the partnership and use cross-organizational learning on priority topics to help inform and improve conservation action on the ground. In particular, Moore was interested in learning that helps build the foundation for, or shed light on, the conditions under which different strategies are effective.

Selected Strategies

The CMP membership prioritized for consideration three strategies that all deal with "the people side" of conservation, including:

- Holistic approach for social-ecological systems (this report)

- Broader environment-development agendas and links to conservation

- Population, health, and environment

Working Group Member Objectives

The learning initiative also sought to provide an opportunity for sharing and learning among CMP members and beyond. For the initiative on holistic approaches, working group members said they wanted to:

Rethink, as conservation and human well-being results are typically less than hoped and needed.

Think critically about community engagement in conservation.

Improve and adapt the holistic frameworks we work with.

Help organizations get clarity on their intentions and show how projects are intended to achieve conservation and HWB.

Discuss challenges and explore ideas for breaking barriers to make integrated approaches more common.

Better understand how trade-offs and synergies are managed in multi-objective programs.

Share, learn, and create tools to improve how we care for this planet.

Help provide tools / guidance for more folks to engage with these ideas and incorporate them into their work.

The CMP-Moore Learning Initiative on Holistic Approaches
FINAL PRODUCT

This deck-based report provides an overview and definition, a Theory of Change, and considerations for design and implementation of a Holistic Approach for Healthy and Resilient Social-ecological Systems.

Intended Audiences
People who we hope will use this document include:

- **Conservation and Other Social Change Organizations** that might be interested in using this approach.
- **Policy Makers, Companies, and Funders** who might want to promote and/or support this approach.
- **Researchers** who might want to assess the effectiveness of this approach.

Format
This is an annotated deck, design primarily for reading versus presentation. It is organized in sections that are akin to chapters, with slides containing detailed content.

The CMP-Moore Learning Initiative on Holistic Approaches
WHY IS THIS TOPIC RELEVANT TODAY?

Many of the world's highest biodiversity places are home to local communities. Often these communities are directly reliant on their surrounding natural resources for such things as food security, income generation, water, and aesthetic and cultural connection. Similarly, the conservation and effective management of biodiversity resources can be heavily dependent on the decisions and behaviors of local land- and resource-holders.

Together, the environment and resident human populations represent complex social-ecological systems in which the health of biodiversity and well-being of people is highly interdependent.

Recognizing this, there is a long history of approaches to engage local people in conservation efforts, including community conservation approaches and integrated conservation and development approaches.

Often, however, these approaches have largely focused on influencing human behaviors toward the ultimate attainment of biodiversity conservation goals and/or taken dichotomous and parallel approaches to advancing conservation of nature and well-being of people.

Additionally, engagement of local land- and resource-holders often has been approached in a manner that has been "for" them or even offered "to" them, but not always fully "with" them, no less recognizing their ultimate leadership and decision-making power.

As a result, within the conservation sector, approaches intended to influence the well-being of human populations have often fallen short in the attainment of biodiversity and human well-being objectives, including ensuring sustainability of results that have been realized.

Understanding these limitations, a growing body of frameworks and approaches seek to holistically advance multi-sectoral solutions that ensure that social-ecological systems are thriving, resilient, and sustainable. These approaches are typically advanced by collaborations among land- and resource-holders, government agencies, other local stakeholders, and conservation and other social change organizations.

Many within and beyond the conservation space firmly believe that a paradigm shift is needed such that these holistic approaches become the norm of how we work in social-ecological landscapes.

This document seeks to document this more holistic approach by providing:
- A definition of the approach
- A situation assessment
- A high-level theory of change
- Conditions under which the approach would be needed and appropriate
- A discussion of barriers and overcoming challenges, and
- Priorities for further exploration.

The CMP-Moore Learning Initiative on Holistic Approaches
PROCESS STEPS

To carry out the steps at right, a working group of ~25 participants was formed. The group participated in a series of three convenings over a period of three months (Sep-Nov) and responded to two substantive surveys and one evaluation survey. Draft products also were provided along the way for the group to review and provide feedback. Throughout, the process was iterative, with the working group contributing ideas and drafting content that was later reviewed and refined.

Agree on a definition of what the approach is, including a high-level situation assessment.

Identify the conditions under which application of the approach would or would not be needed/ appropriate.

Develop a theory of change (TOC) for the approach to upload to the CMP Conservation Actions and Measures Library.

Identify and prioritize particular barriers that obstruct delivery on the TOC and realization of intended impacts.

Identify underlying reasons for the barriers to impact and factors that tend to facilitate the achievement of results.
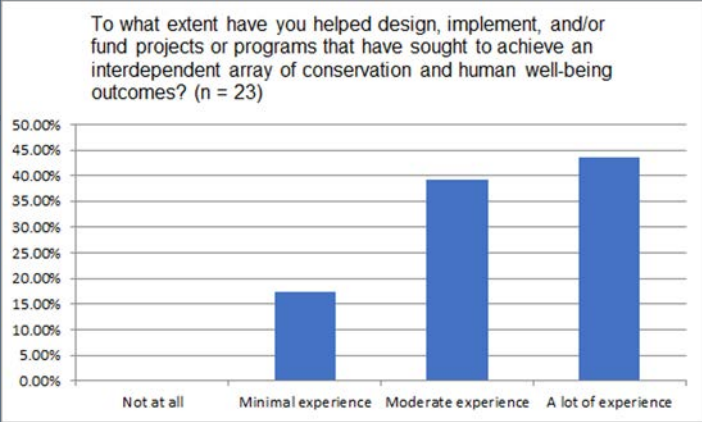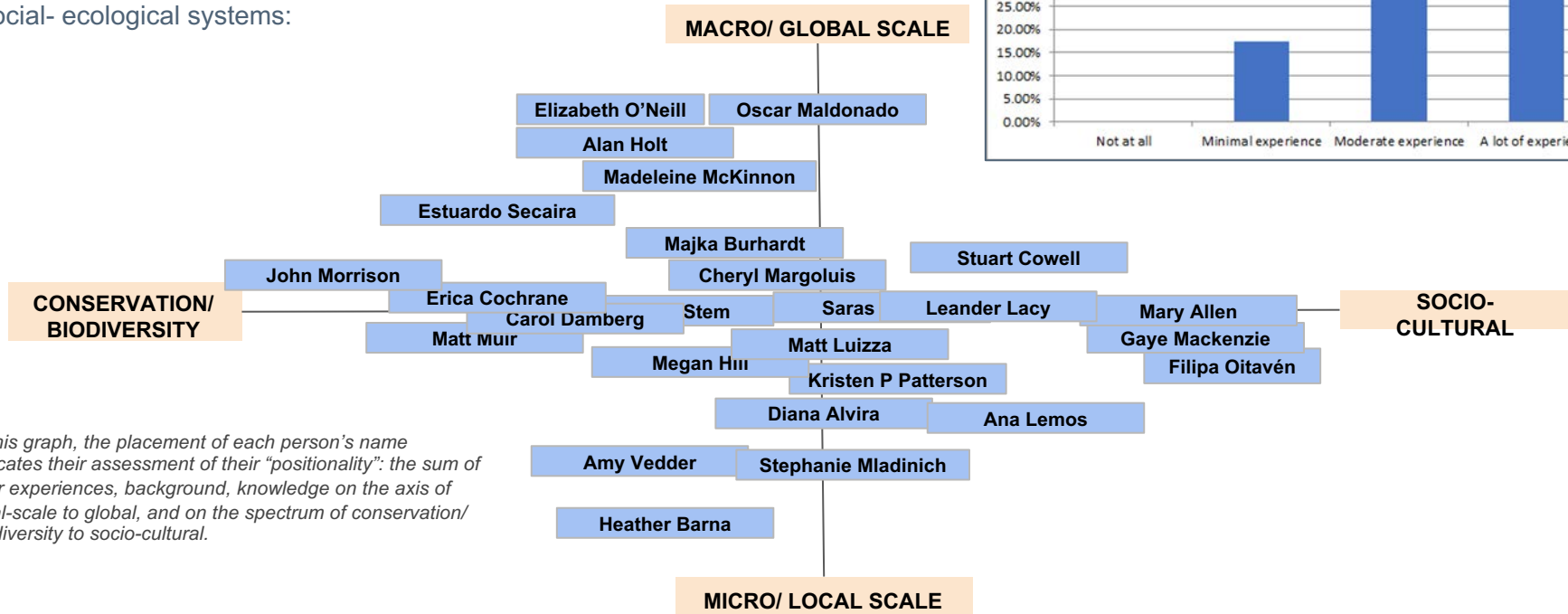
Problem solve around the barriers to craft recommendations for how to design and implement the approach successfully.

Identify priority issues in need of further and/or deeper research and analysis.

The CMP-Moore Learning Initiative on Holistic Approaches
WORKING GROUP EXPERTISE

Together, the members of the working group brought deep background and expertise to explore the topic of holistic approaches to social- ecological systems:

To what extent have you helped design, implement, and/or fund projects or programs that have sought to achieve an interdependent array of conservation and human well-being outcomes? (n = 23)

MACRO/ GLOBAL SCALE

Elizabeth O'Neill   Oscar Maldonado

Alan Holt

Madeleine McKinnon

Estuardo Secaira

Majka Burhardt

Stuart Cowell

John Morrison   Cheryl Margoluis

CONSERVATION/ BIODIVERSITY

Erica Cochrane   Stem   Saras   Leander Lacy   Mary Allen   **SOCIO- CULTURAL**

Carol Damberg   Gaye Mackenzie

Matt Muir   Matt Luizza   Filipa Oitavén

Megan Hill

Kristen P Patterson

Diana Alvira   Ana Lemos

Amy Vedder   Stephanie Mladinich

Heather Barna

In this graph, the placement of each person's name indicates their assessment of their "positionality": the sum of their experiences, background, knowledge on the axis of local-scale to global, and on the spectrum of conservation/ biodiversity to socio-cultural.

MICRO/ LOCAL SCALE

The CMP-Moore Learning Initiative on Holistic Approaches
CONSTRAINTS AND LIMITATIONS

The learning initiative on holistic approaches delivered tremendous results. Working group members remained dedicated to the process throughout, continuing to participate in convenings and make valuable contributions. This product represents an effective and valuable exchange of learning, elaboration of ideas, and exploration.

Nonetheless, our ability to delve deeply into this topic was constrained by:

- The need to deliver on highly ambitious objectives in a short timeframe (August - December 15) and with a limited ($14k) budget

- Advancement of a new model for supporting CMP community exchange and learning around focal strategies

- A challenging topic about which little has been written or developed

- Collaboration in the time of Covid, requiring virtual work and all participants balancing competing priorities

Consequently, this product is relatively high-level in nature, covering important aspects of need, situation assessment, definition, theory of change, application, design and implementation challenges and solutions, and ongoing questions. Many working group members have indicated that given the opportunity, they would like to continue to develop this approach further, including development of guidelines and advancement of activities that would increase uptake.

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*Image source: https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/
world/amp-stories-bolsonaro-amazon-indigenous-munduruku/*

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1. INTRODUCTION
Background and situation

Women standing with her baby, Mozambique. Image credit: Annie Spratt, Unsplash

More, and better, holistic approaches are needed

A significant portion of the world's high conservation value areas are occupied, surrounded, and/or owned or managed by indigenous and local people, yet efforts by conservation and other social change organizations in these places are not sufficiently multifaceted to attain or sustain desired conservation and human well-being aims.

There is a critical need for more holistic approaches to be used by the conservation community and other social change sectors.

Indigenous and local people are owners and stewards of a very significant portion of the world's biodiversity.

"The world's 370 million indigenous peoples make up less than five percent of the total human population, they manage or hold tenure over 25 percent of the world's land surface and support about 80 percent of the global biodiversity."[1]

"Indigenous Peoples manage or have tenure rights over at least ~38 million km^2 in 87 countries or politically distinct areas on all inhabited continents. This represents over a quarter of the world's land surface, and intersects about 40% of all terrestrial protected areas and ecologically intact landscapes."[2]

Needs among indigenous and local communities also are significant.

"Indigenous communities represent about 5% of the world's population but make up 15% of the world's extreme poor, and 1/3 of the rural poor. They live, own and occupy approximately one quarter of the world's lands and waters which represents 80% of the world's biodiversity."[3]

How often do you experience situations where you think a more holistic strategy (i.e., one that advances an array of interdependent conservation and human well-being objectives) is needed but is not being employed? (n = 23)

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More, and better, holistic approaches are needed

A survey conducted the the CMP-Moore Population, Health, and Environment Learning Initiative shows that many aspects of human well-being are se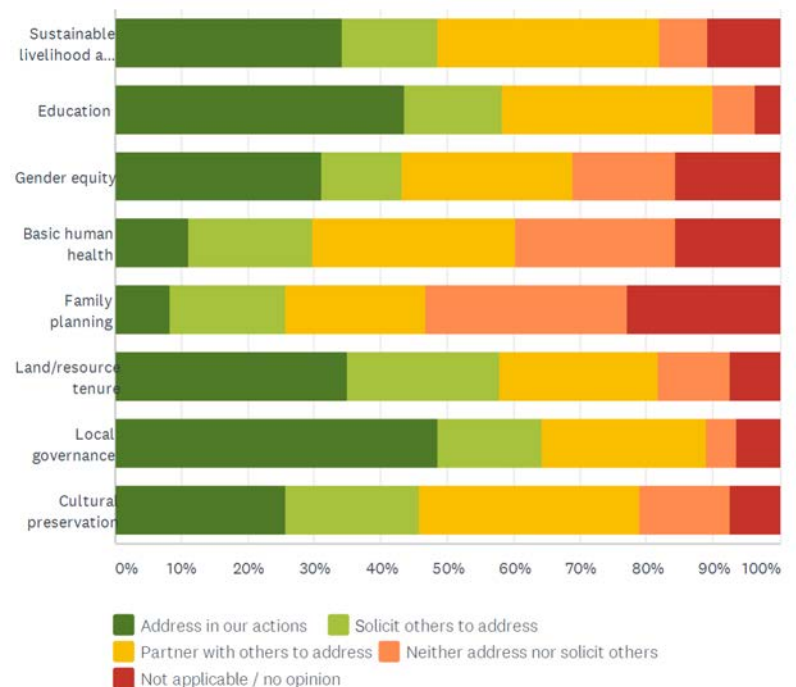en as highly linked to conservation effectiveness, but most organizations look to others to work on them or they don't work on them at all.

Q: In locations of biodiversity concern...I believe the following local needs, where they exist, are critical to address to ensure biodiversity conservation outcomes.

Legend: Stronly agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly disagree
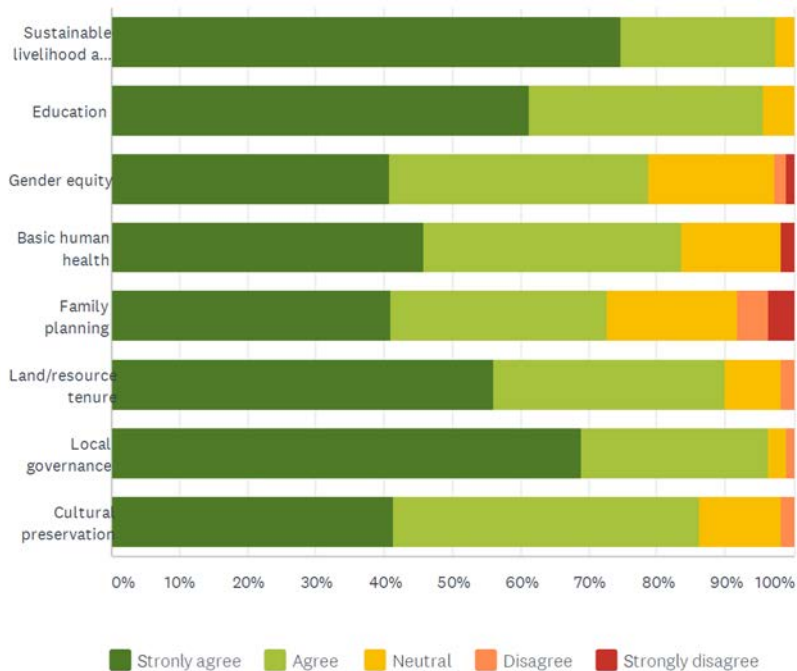
Q: In the locations where you or your organization work, when the following needs influence biodiversity conservation outcomes, what has been your most common response?

Legend: Address in our actions, Solicit others to address, Partner with others to address, Neither address nor solicit others, Not applicable / no opinion
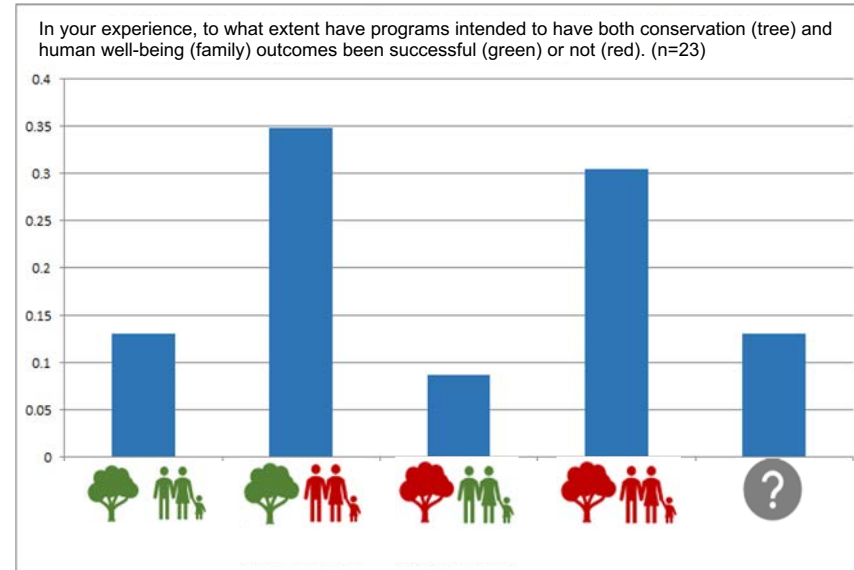
More, and better, holistic approaches are needed

Even where integrated conservation and human well-being approaches are used, results tend to fall short.

Regarding integrated projects, a third of working group members responding to a survey indicate that conservation outcomes tend to be realized but human well-being outcomes fall short, while another third say both tend to fall short.

These views are consistent with research on past effectiveness of Integrated Conservation and Development projects.

"A number of reviews suggest that integrated conservation and development projects (ICDPs) have not reconciled conservation and development agendas, and both conservationists and social scientists have harshly criticized ICDPs (e.g., Wells et al. 1998; Neumann 1998; Agrawal and Gibson 1999). Many believe integrated approaches have failed to deliver on their potential or promise. For example, in a review of 36 ICDPs, only five contributed directly to wildlife conservation (Kremen et al. 1994). McShane and Wells (2004) provide a comprehensive account of the difficulties of integrating conservation and development at the site level. Ferraro (2001) suggests that the indirect approach favored by ICDPs of providing alternative sources of products, income, or social benefits as a means of encouraging communities to cooperate in conservation initiatives is best described as 'conservation by distraction.'"[1]

In your experience, to what extent have programs intended to have both conservation (tree) and human well-being (family) outcomes been successful (green) or not (red). (n=23)

More, and better, holistic approaches are needed

In the view of the working group, single sector and even many integrated efforts have fallen short of delivery on planned objectives for an array of important reasons.

We developed a situation analysis to examine how lack of more holistic approaches undermines efforts to improve well-being of biodiversity and people *(next two slides)***. This situation analysis shows:**

Failure to deliver on intended impacts often begins at project start with **identification and engagement of collaborators** wherein conservation NGOs approach rights-holders as "threats" versus owners, leaders, and intended beneficiaries.

Approaches tend to be done "for" or "to" local land- and resource-holders rather than "with," impeding development of an **inclusive, equitable collaboration** from the start.

This leads to lack of definition of **a shared vision** toward which all collaborators are committed to working as equal partners.

As a result, subsequent **situation analysis** tends to be overly narrow, failing to recognize the **interdependencies** among the well-being of local people and the health of surrounding biodiversity.

Implementation constraints also limit success, such as narrowly targeted or time-limited funding and unrealistic expectations of collaborators and funders regarding the time needed to attain intended impacts.

Operating environment constraints also have significant influence on effectiveness, including factors such as unsupportive or undermining policy environments and socioeconomic or even geophysical conditions that limit potential economic options.

Therefore, **strategies to mitigate direct negative influences on human well-being and environmental health tend to fall short**, addressing only part of the equation, and often only part of that part (e.g., many "economic alternatives" projects).

And where near-term positive impacts may be realized, **long term sustainability** may be compromised because the local constituency, capacity, and capital required to maintain and amplify well-being impacts have not been established.

High level situation assessment

A more holistic approach should help to resolve an array of key factors obstructing attaining and sustaining desired impacts on human well-being and environmental health

Broader context constraints

Adoption of a Holistic conservation and human well-being strategy *seeks to remedy*

Lack of full partnership/ collaboration among rights holders, NGOs, stakeholders

Lack of shared and aligned vision among rights holders, NGOs, stakeholders

Insufficient inclusion/ participation of all key actors

Insufficient understanding of needs, aspirations, challenges

Failure of solutions to respond effectively to complexity or nature of challenges

Lack of meaningful, sustained change in attitude/ behavior or enabling conditions

Failure to achieve desired impacts on human well-being and environmental health

Implementation constraints

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BROADER CONTEXT CONSTRAINTS

| Unsupportive or undermining policy environment | Unsupportive or undermining socioeconomic context |

LACK OF FULL PARTNERSHIP

- Commitment and accountability of outside organizations
- Ability of conservation orgs. to partner w/ heath, development, etc.
- Desire for full, inclusive, equitable partnership..
- Ability of rights holders to engage effectively

LACK OF SHARED AND ALIGNED VISION

- Ownership of vision by those most likely to defend and invest in it over the long run.
- Shared holistic long-term vision for nature and people among (community members, government officials, locally-based NGOs, etc etc)

SOLUTIONS FAIL TO RESPOND EFFECTIVELY TO COMPLEXITY OR NATURE OF PROBLEM

- Creation of effective, sustainable solutions that activate the necessary synergies for long-lasting impact
- Inherent complexity, synergies, potential conflicts, inherent dilemmas and challenges explicitly addressed
- Project design/ implementation/ MEL reflect the complexity of people and systems
- Understanding and advancement of local people's needs and aspirations for thriving futures
- Ability of solutions to respond to meet social values and needs
- Adoption of innovative solutions
- Anticipation and mitigation of potential adverse effects
- Identification of locally appropriate and context specific strategies
- Relevance and acceptability of conservation interventions

LACK OF CHANGE IN ATTITUDE/BEHAVIOR

- Demonstration to local communities that their needs are valued as much as the needs of the natural resources on which they depend
- Motivation of local people to conserve based on understanding of how conserving natural resources will benefit them and their children
- Hope and empowerment of the people that influence the future to take leadership and ensure sustainability of the solutions/strategies /actions"
- Involvement, empowerment, and ownership of local people as allies for conservation, invested in the outcomes
- More local residents depend on and value healthy biodiversity and positive conservation outcomes
- Buy-in of local people to solutions that mitigate threats they pose to conservation outcomes
- Knowledge, attitudes, behaviors of local people to care for nature
- Empowerment of local people to manage and conserve their natural resources
- Creation of solutions by local people, increasing engagement and support

INSUFFICIENT INCLUSION/ PARTICIPATION

- Ownership of local people over design & implementation
- Awareness of issues influencing/ incentivizing participation
- Ensuring Justice, Equity, Inclusion, Diversity principles followed
- Decisions made in a participatory, inclusive, transparent manner
- Representation of multiple knowledge sources, perspectives, practices to enrich and inform design, implementation, evaluation and improvement
- Sustainability of participation/ ownership/ leadership of local people in conservation initiatives
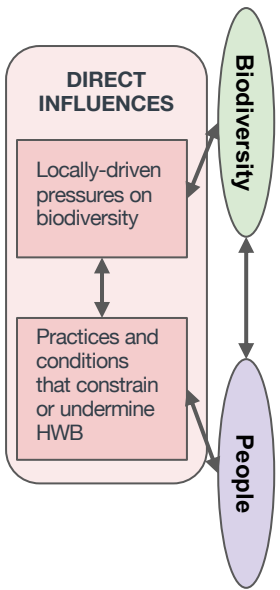
INSUFFICIENT UNDERSTANDING OF NEEDS, ASPIRATIONS, CHALLENGES

- Understanding of relationship between people and systems, incl. links between well-being and conservation
- Identification of immediate needs and long-term vision of local communities and tools to meet those needs
- Draw out, recognize, empower and build on rich and essential local/ traditional/ indigenous knowledge
- Failure to recognise/ explicitly addressed areas of conflict and areas of convergence/ synergy.

DIRECT INFLUENCES

- Locally-driven pressures on biodiversity
- Practices and conditions that constrain or undermine HWB

Biodiversity

People

IMPLEMENTATION CONSTRAINTS

Funding -- funders are siloed, funding term too short for this type of approach, funders don't support integrated approaches

time horizon (getting to success and sustainability with an approach like this takes a long time - must stay the course

scale of focus is local but scale of desired impact is usually much larger

2. APPROACH DEFINITION
Hallmarks, principles, example frameworks

A community conservation collective working in the buffer zone of Volcanoes National Park, Rwanda. Image Credit: Elizabeth O'Neill

Definition

Holistic approach for healthy and resilient social-ecological systems

A Holistic Social-Ecological Approach recognizes the profound interdependency between the well-being of people and the health of the world's biodiversity. The approach champions both of these through collaborations that negotiate and advance holistic solutions for the good of people and nature.

Such collaborations may include local land- and resource-holders, non-governmental organizations, government representatives, and other relevant stakeholders.

The priorities of local land- and resource- holders are paramount, but ultimate intervention objectives reflect negotiated solutions that support and balance diverse interests, including human health, environmental conservation, food security, economic security/advancement, preservation of cultural values, education, and/or policy/governance, among others.
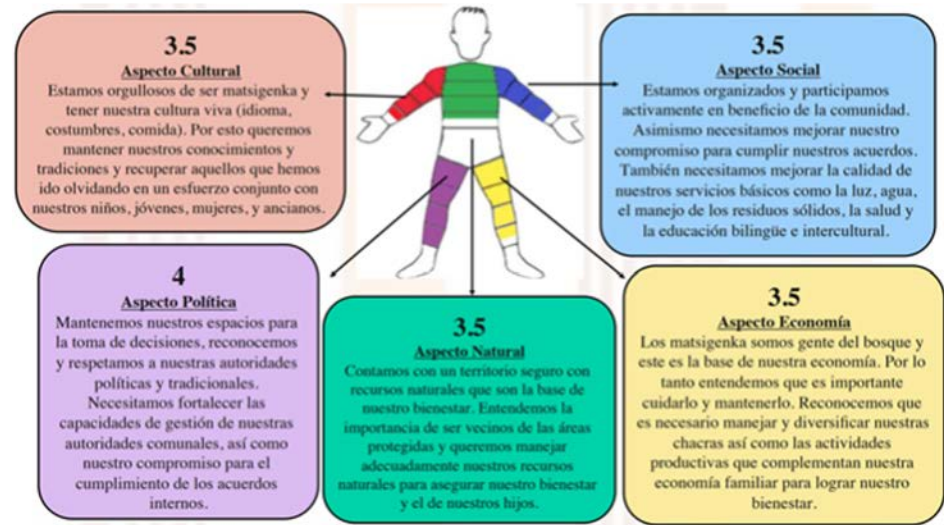
A holistic set of objectives, from the **Community Life Plan for Comunidad Nativa Poyentimari, 2018-2028**, a result of a planning process supported by The Field Museum's Conservation for Well-being Program.

For a quick and helpful overview of **social-ecological systems**, see: https://www.stockholmresilience.org/research/research-videos/2017-11-27-understanding-social-ecological-systems.html

Definition: Hallmarks

Various hallmarks highlight the unique nature of a holistic approach for healthy and resilient social-ecological systems
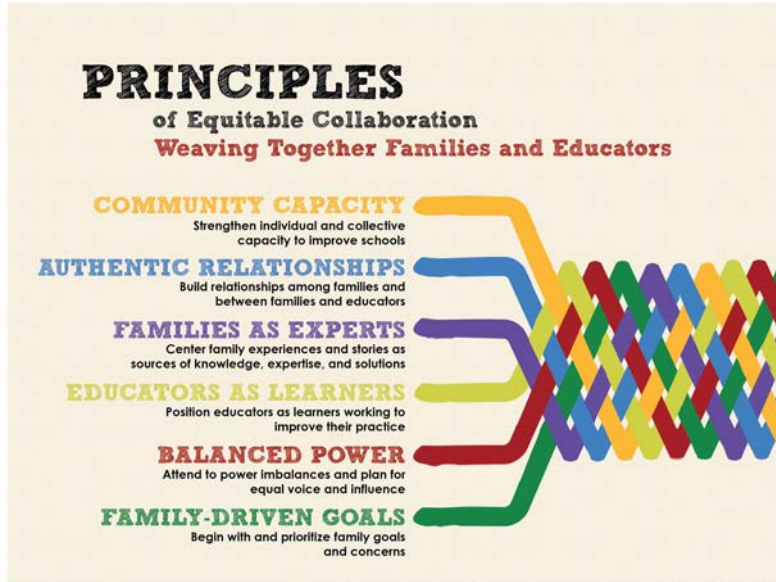

PRINCIPLES of Equitable Collaboration
Weaving Together Families and Educators

COMMUNITY CAPACITY
Strengthen individual and collective capacity to improve schools

AUTHENTIC RELATIONSHIPS
Build relationships among families and between families and educators

FAMILIES AS EXPERTS
Center family experiences and stories as sources of knowledge, expertise, and solutions

EDUCATORS AS LEARNERS
Position educators as learners working to improve their practice

BALANCED POWER
Attend to power imbalances and plan for equal voice and influence

FAMILY-DRIVEN GOALS
Begin with and prioritize family goals and concerns

Figure by Research Designers, http://researchdesigners.com/   © Copyright 2015, University of Washington

Equitable collaboration is a hallmark of a holistic approach, which the working group characterized in a manner very similar to the graphic above, taken from the field of education. *From: Equitable Collaboration Framework, https://organizingengagement.org/featured/equitable-collaboration-framework/*

A holistic social-ecological approach is characterized by a set of important hallmarks that include:

A focus on a **social-ecological system** *as the ultimate target*

Inclusive, equitable collaboration (similar to the graphic at left), including considerations of gender

Interdependency between well-being of people and health of biodiversity

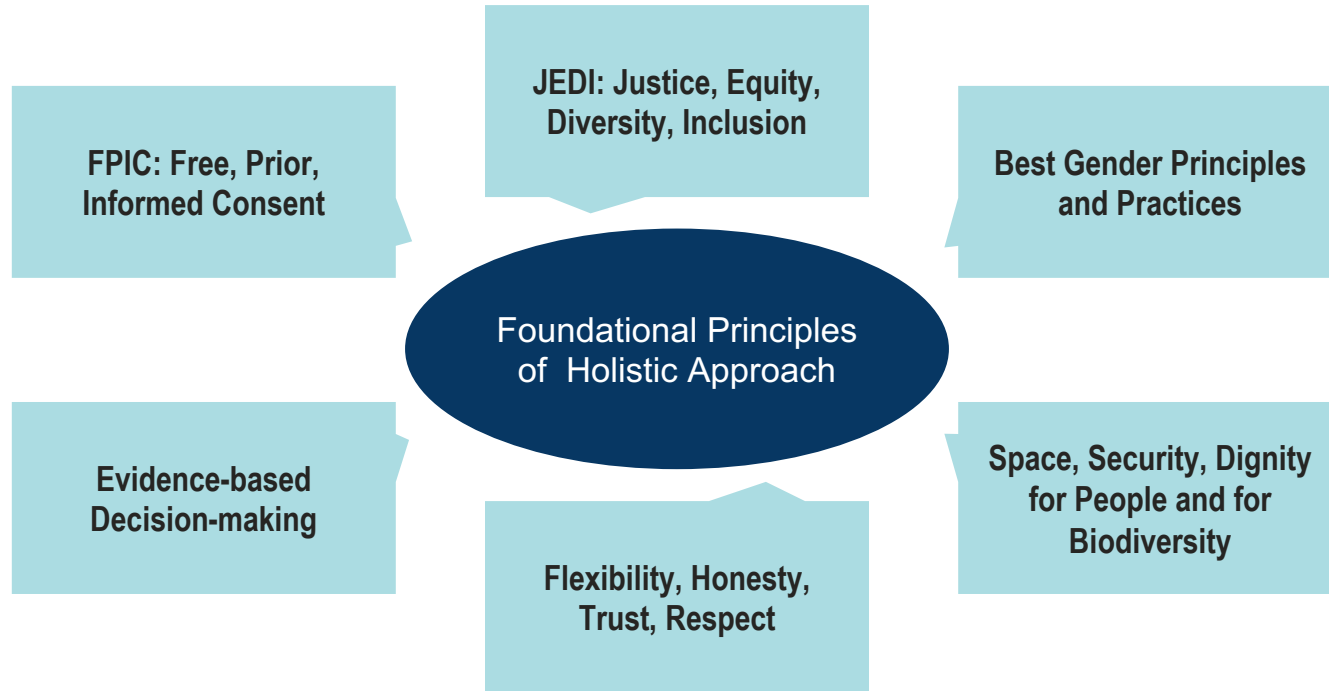Alignment around and advancement of a **shared vision**

Honest negotiations toward **pragmatic, viable, cross- sectoral solutions**

Respect for local owners as decision-makers and leaders, and enabling attainment of their visions for the future (versus bringing them along toward NGO visions)

Working toward **near-term impact** and *shifts in mindsets and behavior as needed to attain long-term sustainability, which is viewed as the ultimate intended outcome*

Definition: Principles

Holistic approaches, as central to their nature, give diligent attention to fundamental principles that underpin all engagement, collaboration, design, and execution

JEDI: Justice, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion

FPIC: Free, Prior, Informed Consent

Best Gender Principles and Practices

Foundational Principles of Holistic Approach

Evidence-based Decision-making

Space, Security, Dignity for People and for Biodiversity

Flexibility, Honesty, Trust, Respect

Definition: Examples

Although holistic approaches as we are defining them are not in wide use, an array of holistic approach frameworks, examples, research, and other resources exist

Programs

- Federal Subsistence Program in Alaska
- Leadership Program by the Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa organisation in the Pilabara region of W. Australia
- Warddeken Land Management Limited in the Arnhem Land region of Northern Australia
- PHE programs, e.g. the Tuungane Project, by TNC

Frameworks & Toolkits

- Field Museum Life Plans Tool Kit https://www.conservationforwellbeing.fieldmuseum.org/tools
- Community Action Planning (CAP) Framework
- Adelaide International Bird Sanctuary: Collective Impact Plans
- Healthy Country, Healthy People
- CSIRO, Our Knowledge Our Way in caring for Country: Indigenous-led approaches to strengthening and sharing our knowledge for land and sea management.

Research

- Common pool resource theory (Ostrom)
- A social–ecological approach to conservation planning (Natalie Ban et al.)
- Systems thinking for planning and evaluating conservation interventions (Mahajan et al.)
- African community-based conservation: A systematic review of social and ecological outcomes (Galvin et al.)
- using community empowerment for sustainable well-being (Wali et al.) https://doi.org/10.5751/ES-09598-220406

Monitoring and Evaluation

- Biocultural approaches to well-being and sustainability indicators across scales (Sterling, Filardi,Toomey, et al.)
- Standardized Protocol for Evaluating Community Conservation Success (SPECCS) (Brichieri-Colombi et al.)
- WWF/CI/TNC collaboration in the Birds Head Seascape of Papua, Indonesia (experimental impact evaluation)
- Bush Heritage Australia, Intercultural Monitoring and Evaluation Project (partnership with Arafura Swamp Rangers and Olkola Aboriginal Corporation).

Organizations

- The Field Museum
- PEruvian Ministry of Culture and the Peruvian Protected Area System SERNANP
- Conservation Management
- Legado
- Maliasili
- Northern Rangelands Trust
- Colorado State University's Center for Collaborative Conservation
- Instituto del Bien Común, Peru
- Gaia Amazonas, Colombia
- Amazon Conservation Team, Colombia
- FENAMAD, Peru
- IUCN The Commission on Environmental: Economic and Social Policy (CEESP) The Human Wellbeing and Sustainable Livelihoods theme (HWSL)
- Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies

Definition: Notes

A holistic approach differs in important ways from a traditional integrated conservation and development approach

The working group believes than a holistic approach differs importantly from an ICDP in that:

ICDPs tend to focus on "two buckets" where a holistic approach deals with the whole system, inclusivity, and the array of needs

ICDPs can be more focused on conservation than people, or vice versa, versus advancing interdependent objectives together

Objectives of ICDPs often are more externally imposed; holistic approaches are derived more with/from local people; this "true collaboration" aspect sets it apart

A holistic approach tends to be comprehensive in its design and elaboration of assumptions

ICDPs often have time-bound project lifespans, versus an ongoing commitment designed to last until interdependent human well-being and conservation objectives are achieved, including indications of long-term sustainability of results, minsets, and resilience

A holistic approach is possibly more akin to community-based conservation, community-based natural resources management, and collaborative conservation
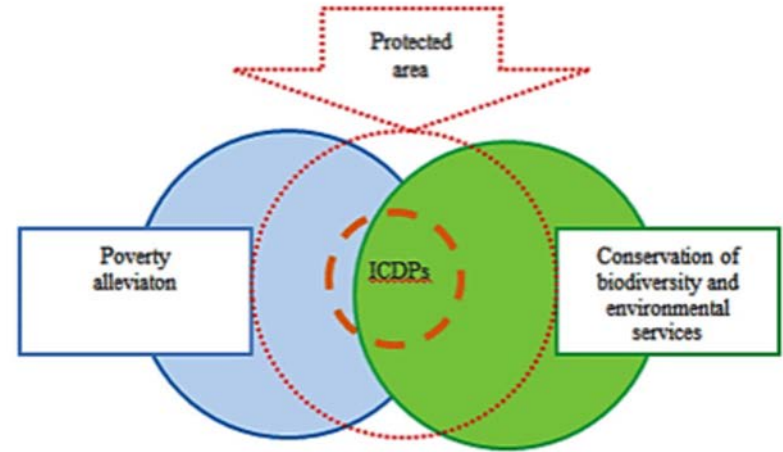

Image from: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/ntegrated-Conservation-and-Development-Project-ICDP-scheme-applied-to-Protected-Area_fig1_339104122

Definition: Notes

In a holistic approach, well-being of people and environmental health are viewed as interdependent, but opinions of the working group members differ on the nature and degree of interdependence

In response to a survey question regarding the interdependence of environmental health and human well-being, working group members' responses fell into four clusters.

The interdependence between the well-being of biodiversity and of people depends on context

"It depends on the goals of the program, nature of the initiative, who it is working with and what it is seeking to achieve."

"Well-being can be a useful catch all phrase but there is a danger that not enough thought is given to what it actually means in each context."

"In the most degraded scenarios it is a means to an end. Where there is stability it may be more an end in itself."

Advancing human well-being must be an end in itself

"HWB outcomes should be treated as core-benefits rather than co-benefits."

"HWB is not only ensuring sustainable efforts but a moral imperative."

Advancing human well-being is a means to the end that is biodiversity conservation

"HWB outcomes are a necessity identified from failed efforts to protect areas by marginalizing the people who depend on them."

"Without including HWB, most conservation efforts are doomed to fail."

Advancing human well-being is a means to the end that is conservation AND an end unto itself

"Conservation cannot be done in a vacuum so HWB needs to be considered AND some conservation goals may not be dependent on HWB."

"In an ideal situation, you need both to be successful. Not all situations are ideal so you might have to have trade offs between to the two."

"A conservation project should yield 'biodiversity' and 'HWB' outcomes.

Definition: Notes

The Conservation Standards present human well-being as a result of biodiversity conservation, while a holistic approach considers both human well-being and biodiversity conservation as interdependent and equal ultimate goals to ensure the health, resilience, and sustainability of a social-ecological system

The *Conservation Standards* (CS) place Human Well-being Scope and Targets to the right of conservation scope, and constrained by human well-being that is impacted by conservation and subsequent provision of ecosystem services.

The underlying logic of this is that the CS are for organizations whose principle mission is conservation; human well-being benefits are therefore framed as benefiting from conservation results being realized.
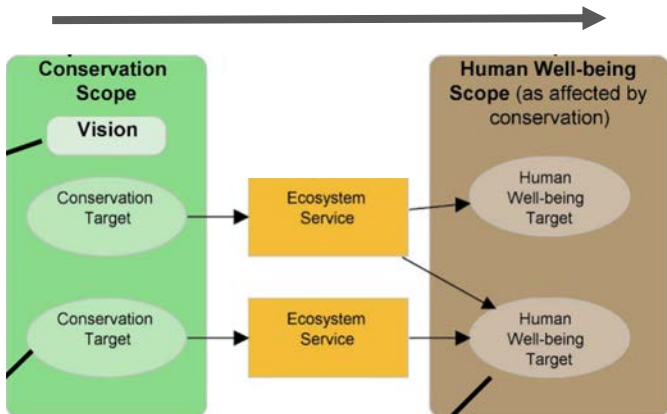
The fundamental distinction between the CS model and a holistic social-ecological approach is the interdependence and circularity recognized by a holistic approach: In a social-ecological system, if environmental health is not assured, human well-being will suffer and if human well-being is not assured, conservation success is unlikely.

A holistic approach is based on the hypothesis that social, cultural, economic, environmental, and political/governance aspects must be in good condition for desired impacts to be achieved and, most importantly, _sustained_. Thus if any of these factors are not in a good state, *as defined first and foremost by local actors,* they must be advanced alongside conservation aims, whether there is a clear and direct contribution to conservation outcomes or not.
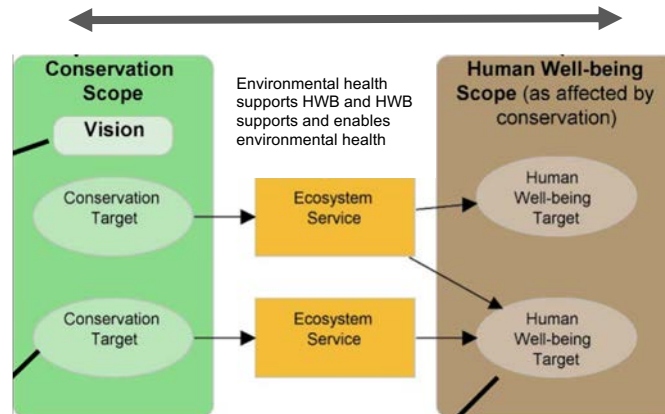
Definition: Notes

Lack of attention to key factors that local people define as fundamental to their well-being may ultimately undermine conservation aims

The fundamental assumption of a holistic approach is that **achieving a healthy, resilient social-ecological system is more like a Rubik's Cube than a 2d puzzle**. While the environment is one critical element, solving only for that while leaving other key aspects in a poor or weak state (e.g., health, livelihoods, governance) means "job done" has not been achieved, as these factors ultimately will undermine any conservation gains made.
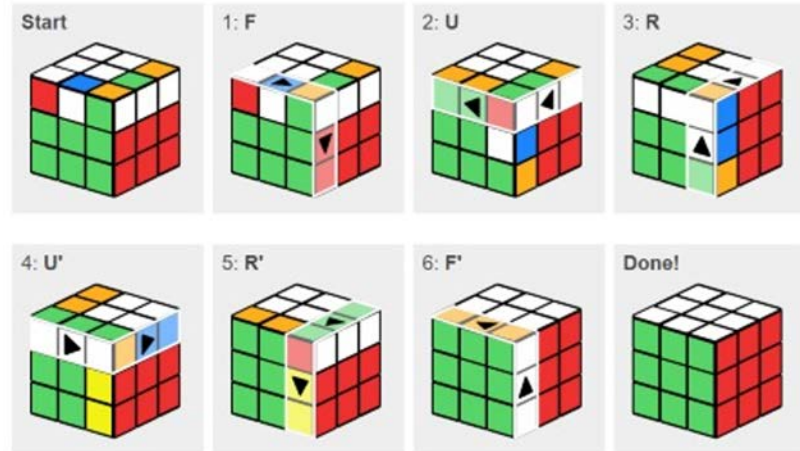
3. THEORY OF CHANGE
Logic, Assumptions

A village on the banks of the Ucayali River, Peru. Image Credit: Elizabeth O'Neill

Theory of Change: Summary

The very basic theory of change is that if a holistic approach is employed, versus a more narrow or single sector approach, that will lead to both near term positive impacts for people and nature as well as higher likelihood of longer term resilience and sustainability of the social-ecological system.

The theory of change for a holistic approach posits that:

If necessary enabling conditions are established (e.g., funding and willing, interested partners) then an equitable collaboration can be formed within which relevant parties (local people, NGOs, other key stakeholders) decide to pursue a holistic approach, which leads to open, honest, and pragmatic communication regarding values, needs and aspirations such that a negotiated and shared vision can be elaborated.

Based upon this vision and the trust, understanding and communication supported by the equitable collaboration, collaborators can define a holistic strategy comprised of a suite of solutions that navitate trade-offs and respond effective to the complexity and nature of challenges to achieving a healthy, resilient social-ecological system.
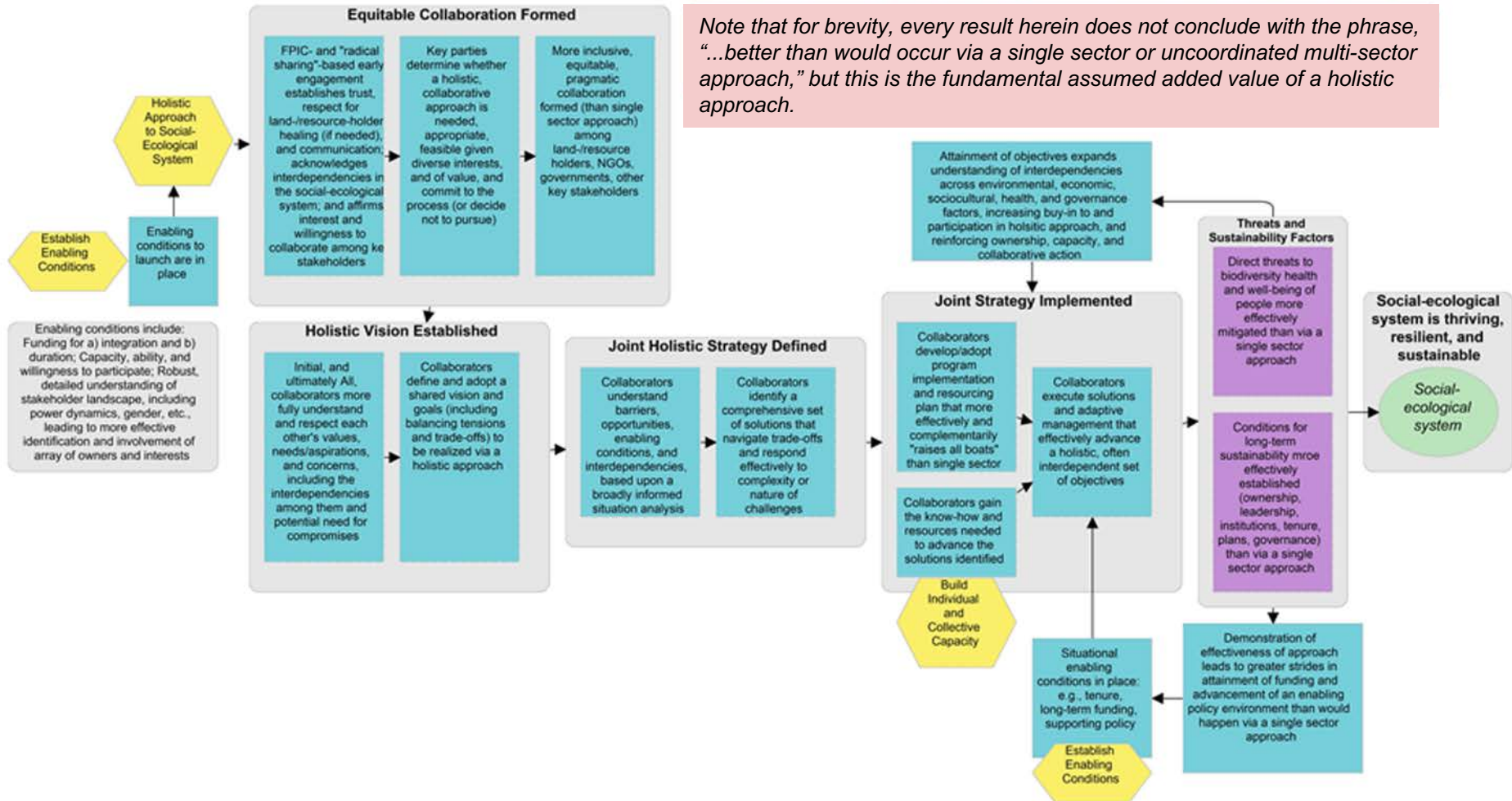
Assuming that the critical resources can be found, including necessary human and financial capacity, and that the collaboration continues to work together effectively, the joint holistic strategy can be implemented that advances the holistic and interdependent set of objectives articulated within the vision.

By "raising all boats" in this integrated manner, direct threats to biodiversity health and well-being of people are more effectively mitigated, and conditions for long-term sustainability are more effective established (e.g., ownership, leadership, institutions, values, tenure), than via a single sector approach.

Attainment of objectives and demonstration of positive results contributes to two feedback loops. First, it expands understanding of interdependencies, increasing buy-in to and participation in the holistic approach, reinforcing broad participation and effective collective action. Secondly, positive results helps to establish and strengthen enabling conditions such as funding and supporting policy and institutions and in turn these advance effective collaboration and implementation.

Ultimately, this chain of results leads to a social-ecological system that is healthier, more resilient, and more sustainable than would be achieved through a single sector or uncoordinated approaches.

Theory of Change: Diagrammatic

Establish Enabling Conditions

Holistic Approach to Social-Ecological System

Enabling conditions to launch are in place

Enabling conditions include: Funding for a) integration and b) duration; Capacity, ability, and willingness to participate; Robust, detailed understanding of stakeholder landscape, including power dynamics, gender, etc., leading to more effective identification and involvement of array of owners and interests

Equitable Collaboration Formed

FPIC- and "radical sharing"-based early engagement establishes trust, respect for land-/resource-holder healing (if needed), and communication; acknowledges interdependencies in the social-ecological system; and affirms interest and willingness to collaborate among key stakeholders

Key parties determine whether a holistic, collaborative approach is needed, appropriate, feasible given diverse interests, and of value, and commit to the process (or decide not to pursue)

More inclusive, equitable, pragmatic collaboration formed (than single sector approach) among land-/resource holders, NGOs, governments, other key stakeholders

Note that for brevity, every result herein does not conclude with the phrase, "...better than would occur via a single sector or uncoordinated multi-sector approach," but this is the fundamental assumed added value of a holistic approach.

Holistic Vision Established

Initial, and ultimately All, collaborators more fully understand and respect each other's values, needs/aspirations, and concerns, including the interdependencies among them and potential need for compromises

Collaborators define and adopt a shared vision and goals (including balancing tensions and trade-offs) to be realized via a holistic approach

Joint Holistic Strategy Defined

Collaborators understand barriers, opportunities, enabling conditions, and interdependencies, based upon a broadly informed situation analysis

Collaborators identify a comprehensive set of solutions that navigate trade-offs and respond effectively to complexity or nature of challenges

Attainment of objectives expands understanding of interdependencies across environmental, economic, sociocultural, health, and governance factors, increasing buy-in to and participation in holistic approach, and reinforcing ownership, capacity, and collaborative action

Joint Strategy Implemented

Collaborators develop/adopt program implementation and resourcing plan that more effectively and complementarily "raises all boats" than single sector

Collaborators gain the know-how and resources needed to advance the solutions identified

Collaborators execute solutions and adaptive management that effectively advance a holistic, often interdependent set of objectives

Build Individual and Collective Capacity

Threats and Sustainability Factors

Direct threats to biodiversity health and well-being of people more effectively mitigated than via a single sector approach

Conditions for long-term sustainability mroe effectively established (ownership, leadership, institutions, tenure, plans, governance) than via a single sector approach

Social-ecological system is thriving, resilient, and sustainable

Social-ecological system

Situational enabling conditions in place: e.g., tenure, long-term funding, supporting policy

Establish Enabling Conditions

Demonstration of effectiveness of approach leads to greater strides in attainment of funding and advancement of an enabling policy environment than would happen via a single sector approach

5. WHEN TO USE
 Need, appropriateness

Living on the grasslands at the border of Georgia and Armenia. Image Credit: Elizabeth O'Neill

When a holistic approach is *needed*

Some say holistic approaches are needed wherever you have people living in proximity to nature, while others say some specific conditions should be met

When asked under what conditions a holistic social-ecological approach should be used, working group members say:

Where it will be **beneficial to attain a mindset** among rights-holders and other key stakeholders **of the interdependent nature of well-being of people and environmental health**.

Anywhere **people coexist with nature**.

Where a **lasting, integrated solution is needed** that achieves and sustains the health and resilience of a social-ecological system (e.g., via improvements in environmental health, human health, livelihoods).

Where **people identify a fundamental cultural or spiritual connection** with their lands/resources, as with some indigenous peoples.

Where there is clear interdependence; where people make, or are impacted by, land-/resource-use decisions that affect biodiversity/ environmental health, and where environmental health impacts people.

Where **such an approach is wanted** (asked for or agreed to) by local people, e.g., local people have goals/priorities that require external support to achieve.

Where **there is conflict/tension** over resource use and/or pressure from outside forces and/or stakeholders on those resources.

> "if there is pressure from the outside that the local people cannot control"; not just pressure from outsiders on resources, but also climate change; needed in all settings where diverse stakeholders are involved in partnership, doesn't require conflict"

Where **enabling conditions exist or can be built** (e.g., funding, …) through a collaborative, holistic approach.

Where it is **possible to have a meaningful, positive, sustainable impact**.

When a holistic approach is *appropriate*

Holistic approaches are not appropriate everywhere; certain conditions should be met such as critical mass of those committed to the approach and a willingness to negotiate and adapt

A holistic approach is appropriate when, at a minimum:

A critical and representative mass of local parties, NGOs, and other key stakeholders **agree and commit** to using this approach (both the ends and means to get there).

Local residents have, or are seeking, autonomy and ownership over their future (and ideally where land and resource tenure are secured or are being secured).

There is **long term commitment** (10 plus years) to the place by the conservation partner (if used as a conservation approach).

There is willingness and ability of all parties to be **flexible, negotiate, and compromise**.

There is a commitment to assessing and **re-assessing emergent needs and adapting** plans.

Trust can be established and maintained (e.g., may be challenging in unstable contexts or where past experiences or relationships make it difficult to engender trust).

"Hesitant to suggest excuses for not using this approach. We have some **responsibility in overcoming these barriers by either acting as a backbone organization or advocating for this approach.**" -- *working group member*

"It is appropriate where national governments have made steps to initiate regulations and build institutions for **recognizing the rights of Indigenous Peoples**." -- *working group member*

"It is **always appropriate**, I think what it changes are the circumstances, but what is key is to follow the principles." -- *working group member*

6. BARRIERS
To uptake, launch, design, implementation

Roadblocks following heavy rains, Mozambique 2015. Image Credit: Filipa Oitavén

Barriers to uptake

Inability, lack of knowledge/ awareness, and limited will all are barriers to uptake of holistic strategies

Working group members suggest that uptake of holistic approaches is limited primarily due to inability to do so. Most attribute this inability to 1) lack of funding for holistic and integrated approaches, and in particular for integration activities and 2) to the constrained missions of implementing organizations and the perspective that adopting more holistic suites of strategies can be perceived as mission drift.

Additionally, working group members say that lack of knowledge/awareness and lack of will also are moderate to major barriers to uptake.

In cases where a holistic strategy would be beneficial but isn't being employed, to what extent do each of the following represent the typical barriers to uptake (n = 23 for Ability, Knowledge, Will; n=5 for Other)
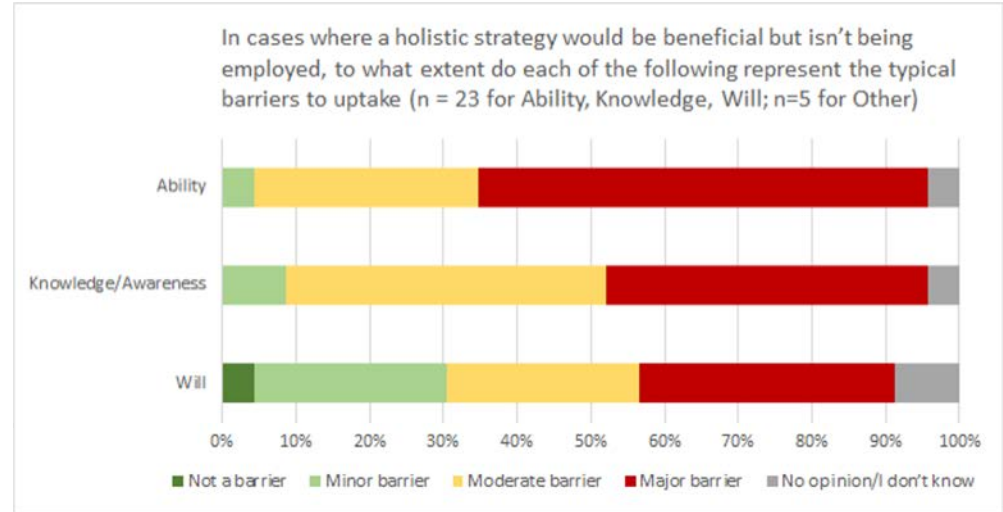
Barriers to launch and design

Initiating a holistic approach can be challenged by funding constraints and forming/maintaining partnerships and the broader collaboration, and lack of proof of concept; design is also innately extremely complicated

Key barriers to launch and design of holistic approaches include:

The **funding landscape** (considered **the top challenge**), including:
- Lack of funders organized to receive or guide such proposals
- Single sector funding needing to be combined at the project level
- Lack of funding to design with stakeholders and pressure to have a solid plan before receiving any money
- Lack of willingness/ability to fund long-term
- Lack of willingness/ability to fund integration activities

Initial **NGO partnership formation**, including:
- Identifying qualified and interested partners to form a sufficiently well-rounded "holistic team"
- Overcoming issues of antagonism, trust, and competition across sectors
- Aligning/integrating complex strategies
- Limited capacity/experience of interested partners with holistic approaches
- Significant transaction time to maintain

Forming the broader, multi-stakeholder collaboration, including:
- Capacity and motivation of different organizations, groups, and individuals to collaborate and 'broker' effectively
- Communication barriers and challenges
- Navigating diverse representation of views, priorities, power, ability, and skills, including across and within communities
- Ensuring communities and members thereof are effectively engaged and represented
- Maintaining everyone's staying power over the long haul

Lack of proof of concept, due to:
- Lack of a body of data or case studies that demonstrate success
- Past integrated projects (like ICDPs) not having a strong track record of success

Various **specific design challenges**, including:
- Defining theories of change, goals, outcomes, and MEL indicators for very complex systems
- Capturing and framing the nature of interdependency Defining proximate results as well as the long time-scale outcomes related to sustainability and resilience
- Being pragmatic and defining efficient, impactful strategies
- Fully understanding and determining whether and how to address the many important pressures (micro to macro) on biodiversity and on people that are driven by external actors/forces that cannot be overcome through local action alone

Barriers to implementation

Key challenges to implementation include maintaining alignment, staffing, community and collaboration dynamics, navigating the external environment, and funding

Key barriers to launch and design of holistic approaches include:

Maintaining alignment across the diversity of objectives, including:
- Agreeing on prioritization of objectives and advancing them accordingly with partners old and new
- Funding skewing toward some outcomes over others
- Human well-being activities not clearly connecting to, or at least remaining consistent with, environmental objectives
- Limited established practice for successfully integrating conservation and human well-being activities
- Creating messaging that works across the array of objectives and conveys the importance of their integration and interdependence
- Getting everything done within a reasonable and desirable timeframe
- Adapting a complex program of work to a constantly changing context

Organization and staffing challenges, including:
- Lack of staff w/ social science background
- Expertise and capacity/ bandwidth of implementing organizations
- Different policies for various partners (e.g. travel/M&IE, prof dev, policies)

Lack of necessary funding/ resources for implementation, including:
- High and long term costs of implementation
- Ability to fundraise for different parts of the program of work, and some elements getting funded at different times than others, making it challenging to move work forward in sync
- Lack of focus/resourcing for specific conservation or human well-being aspects

Community dynamics, including:
- The need for strong local leadership to keep project momentum going
- The need for adequate and appropriate representation of the diversity of stakeholders, needs, and views
- Uneven benefits capture, often by a few (elites)
- Activities not targeting the 'right' audiences to achieve/sustain change
- Low capacity or motivation of community members

Collaboration dynamics, including:
- The need for effective mechanisms for coordination, communication, and alignment
- Shared responsibility for implementation can lead to diffusion of responsibility
- The need for enough time for integration to reconcile / broker among different views
- Maintaining commitment to continuous advancement of holistic objectives

Supporting political environment, including:
- Lack of political will for selected strategies
- Lack of buy-in from key stakeholders, particularly those in positions of government power and decision-making e.g. regional authorities

Issues related to **monitoring, evaluation, learning, and reporting,** including:
- Can be easier to report on some outcomes and not others
- Monitoring to measure outcome/impact is weak
- Limited data on effective interventions

7. BARRIER REMOVAL
Funding, know-how, partnering, evidence

Mt. Ololokwe, sacred site for communities who live in the dry low land of Samburu county, Kenya. Image Credit: Filipa Oitaven

Overcoming barriers

The working group prioritized the barriers to effective uptake design, and implementation and elaborated ideas to overcome those challenges

The working group prioritized the following barriers to begin to identify mitigation tactics:

Lack of funding for holistic approaches, considered to be the number one barrier to uptake and implementation

Lack of awareness or capacity in design and implementation of holistic approaches

Challenges around **NGO partnership development**

Lack of evidence and case studies demonstrating the "how" and "why" of holistic approaches, including showing that impact, resilience, and sustainability are greater

Within the timeframe of the learning initiative, it was possible to capture only the group's initial thinking on barrier removal approaches. The following slides present these early ideas.

Overcoming barriers: Increasing funding

Lack of funding for holistic approaches is considered the top barrier to uptake and effective implementation

A significant increase in funders and funding is needed if holistic approaches are to be adopted and successfully advanced. Holistic approaches require more time, money, and flexibility than single sector approaches, including significant investment at the start to ensure that partnerships and collaborations are formed and reach a shared vision and set of priority objectives that will be advanced together. Expanding this type of funding will require major shifts in donor models, including willingness to fund integrated approaches, providing larger and longer term funding, and adjusting to have reasonable expectations for results.

To expand funding for holistic approaches, the working group proposes the following tactics:

- Identify a core group of funders willing to organize and/or participate in a funder collaborative on holistic/integrated approaches
- Articulate clearly the importance of holistic approaches to funders and how this work can be supported, including:
  - Assembling convincing pitches for C suiters (e.g., CMP's framework process)
  - Preparing counterargument to "mission drift"
  - Writing/publishing an open letter to funders with the problems we perceive and how this can be a constructive solution in many cases
  - Educating funders on timeframe and expectations
- Continue to build the evidence base and clearly communicate results, including:
  - Collecting rigorous monitoring, evaluation, and learning information on holistic approaches that can demonstrate it works
  - Gathering evidence that demonstrates that local communities, who are the owners/holders, prefer this approach, in many cases
  - Demonstrating that business-as-usual (i.e., single sector or other narrowly defined approaches) isn't working, including publicizing/ demonstration of examples of what happens when you DON'T approach things this way
- Give rigorous focus to the 'technical' requirements of sustainable funding (prospectus / financial management) (e.g. conservation finance thinking)

Of these ideas, **the working group feels there is presently a "social change wave to ride,"** in that various organizations are experiencing significant and very public consequences of not being more holistic in their thinking and approaches. As a result, programs are failing to deliver near term results and long terms sustainability or even, in some cases, realizing that they have contributed to human rights and labor abuses.

Overcoming barriers: Increasing *know-how*

Lack of awareness of or capacity in holistic approaches across all relevant sectors impedes effective design and implementation

To overcome the barrier of lack of knowledge and skills in the design and implementation of holistic approaches, practitioners and funders need to:

Perceive a need to increase knowledge and skills, which could be advanced through:

- Mandates: Holistic approaches need to become the norm--an expectation set by organizational leadership and funders
- Funders signaling that they will fund the approach
- More, and more regular, exposure to opportunities for learning by observing and doing
- More case studies of holistic approaches to provide examples of how they have been done and how they work

Gain an initial understanding of the approach, which could be achieved by:

- Generating and making widely available basic informational materials
- Building on this project by joining forces with and complementing other relevant learning products and efforts (e.g., Bridge Collaborative, the CMP-Moore PHE group)
- Sharing products of this initiative with practitioners and environment and development funders

Have greater access to training opportunities, materials, and support, which could be aided by:

- Generating innovative guidelines and tools, such as:
  - A clear and readily applicable theory of change and related indicators of success (i.e., continuing to expand on the results of this learning initiative)
  - A step-by-step guide on how to retrofit programming toward more holistic approach that defines clearly the capacity need, gap, and path between
- Creating and offering training courses and other capacity-building opportunities
- Developing strong facilitation and collaboration leadership skills within organizations
- Identifying and making accessible a pool of resource people and mentors

Overcoming barriers: Encouraging NGOs to work across sectors

While NGOs across relevant sectors may acknowledge interdependency of conservation and human well-being objectives, many fail to pursue effective multi-sectoral partnerships

A key challenge to advancing holistic approaches occurs at the very start with development of critical partnerships that can advance the array of objectives as needed in the social-ecological system. Obstacles include everything from perceived competition or lack of alignment across sectors, to NGOs of different types simply not being able to find one another.

To make it easier and more likely for multi-sectoral partnerships to form in support of holistic approaches, the working group proposes the following tactics:

- Upgrade conservation organizations teams and human resource capacity, including:
  - Hiring both ecologists and social scientists for our teams
  - Having staff dedicated to partnership development to pursue collaborations as a central strategy
- Create convening spaces where collaborations can take shape, and be piloted and refined, for example:
  - Setting up a platform for dialogue among different sectors
  - Holding more frequent formal/informal engagements among NGOs from different sectors that work in the same social-ecological systems
  - Learning with and from interdisciplinary working groups who are already having these dialogues
- Ensure that organizations' strategic plans include cross-sector work and goals, allowing for this work to happen, including efforts like:
  - More thoroughly mapping who the different sectors/ actors are in a landscape
  - Identifying trusted partner organizations and design projects/proposals together
  - Having honest conversations at the start so that trade-offs/synergies can be understood and addressed
  - Declaring approaches publicly, with transparency about uncertain outcomes (i.e., willingness to learn by success & failure)
  - Developing a shared lexicon and indicators to measure success across different organizations' efforts
  - Syncing planning approaches and processes so that organizations working in the same social-ecological systems
- Secure incentives from funders to support collaboration, including encouraging funders to:
  - Do more matchmaking
  - Require engagement with other sectors
- Gather/share evidence and information demonstrating that it is often in an organization's best interest to "play well with others" instead of going it alone

Overcoming barriers: Demonstrating effectiveness

Lack of evidence regarding the how and why of holistic approaches impedes their uptake, funding, and effective implementation

Many of the strategies and tactics that are supported and advanced in the conservation and other social change sectors lack evidence regarding their effectiveness, impact, and sustainability. the working group feels that this is a particular barrier to funding and adoption of holistic approaches. Greater evidence is needed regarding how to design such an approach, under what conditions it works or doesn't (from both biodiversity and social standpoints), the costs of the approach as well as costs incurred when such an approach isn't pursued or when it isn't executed well, and the potential for this approach to save money. Ultimately, greater evidence is needed to assess whether this approach indeed facilitates achieving objectives FASTER, with increased participation, local initiative, and sustainability.

To strengthen the body of evidence regarding holistic approaches, the working group proposes the following tactics:

- Have a concrete plan for monitoring, evaluation, and learning (and enduring challenge across all strategy types, we recognize) and create enabling conditions to follow through, including:
  - Increasing project budgets for monitoring, evaluation and learning (with more emphasis on outcome vs. output indicators)
  - Having dedicated monitoring, evaluation, learning staff
  - Ensuring funding for monitoring, evaluation, and learning is green-lighted at the start of holistic programs
- Change expectations about what constitutes credibly data and evidence, including:
  - Thinking in new types of evidence/different types of evidence combined
  - Focusing on process indicators (alongside impact indicators that might take a longer time to observe)
- Develop robust longitudinal studies, comparing single sector with holistic programming, including:
  - Beginning to sort out and clearly articulate differences of costs-benefits across different temporal and geographic scales by disaggregating data across different scales in design and implementation.
  - Supporting more long-term, site-specific studies that measure social and ecological impacts and sustainability of results of a given project (requires definitional clarity/shared lexicon for comparison)
- Generate and publish evidence from M&E of community-based conservation, including supporting communities to share their stories
- Communicate the importance of social-ecological systems/holistic approaches to other disciplines, and how all of our work is linked and part of a common goal
- Work collaboratively with other organizations that share the "burden" of collecting information or who might already have it

7. LOOKING AHEAD
Research questions, future products

Western lowland silverback gorilla, Dzanga Sangha National Park, Central African Republic. Image Credit: Elizabeth O'Neill

Priority Research Questions

Holistic approaches remain relatively new and limited in their application globally; many important questions remain to enhance their uptake, design, and effective execution

Further investigation is needed regarding the following priority research questions:

- How can we measure a "mindset" toward ensuring health, resilient, sustainable social-ecological systems (among practitioners, actors, donors)?
- What type of standard indicators can holistic projects use for monitoring and evaluation?*
- What is restricting organizations' ability to pursue more holistic approaches?
- How can we influence policy at different levels of governance to support more holistic approaches? What broad and contextual barriers to this exist, and how can we overcome them? What policy fora effectively bring local to national to international voices together?
- How can frameworks and systems such as the Conservations Standards and Miradi change and improve to support the design and implementation of holistic approaches?
- How do partnerships/ collaborations change and how do they hold together as partners' specific mission-oriented objectives advance to different degrees over time?
- What key aspects/ components can be identified that are key to the interdependencies of social-ecological systems?
- In what ways do holistic approaches lead to greater "conversion-resistance" than single sector or narrower approaches? In what ways do holistic approaches lead to more sustainable results than single sector/ more narrow approaches?
- What link is there between social safeguards, FPIC, etc. and improving wildlife conservation and human well-being outcomes?

Build on recently-published MEL framework for gathering evidence on the effectiveness of community-based conservation for more specific research questions--a product of the Alliance for Conservation Evidence and Sustainability (ACES= WCS, WWF, TNC, FFI, CI, and others).

Immediate and Potential Future Products

Beyond this slide deck, further effort is needed to develop materials and publications that advance the uptake, support, and effective execution of holistic approaches
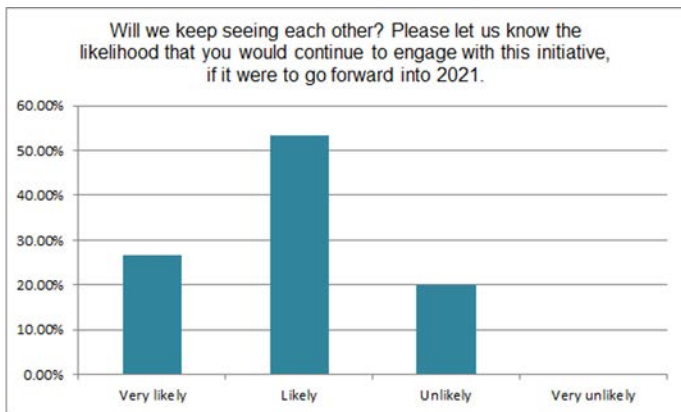
The working group members found great value in participating in this learning initiative and advancing the subject of holistic approaches for social-ecological systems.

To carry the work forward in 2021, the group considered several options and believes it would be most worthwhile to:

Develop a guidance document

Write and circulate an open letter to funders regarding the need for increased and longer term funding for holistic approaches

Develop and provide a basic orientation to holistic approaches to CMP and CCNet and other relevant sectors and communities

What should we strive to accomplish or produce re: holistic approaches?

Legend: Top priority #, Med Priority #, Low priority #, Don't do #

Categories: A guidance document; An open letter to funders regarding the need for increased and longer term funding; A basic orientation; Collective review and comment on the Conservation Standards Human Well Being guidance; A publication re: the need for broader uptake and better execution of holistic approaches; A training course

Will we keep seeing each other? Please let us know the likelihood that you would continue to engage with this initiative, if it were to go forward into 2021.

Categories: Very likely, Likely, Unlikely, Very unlikely

"We're on the verge of delivering useful learning products to the wider conservation field. Important to follow through." -- *working group member*

"This is important to [our organization], and we want this to be something that we have coordinated with the whole sector so that we have much more common ways of working." -- *working group member*

"I think this was an important first step in what will hopefully be a longer-term sustained discussion. I was impressed with the group's ability to grapple with a complex topic, challenge their own assumptions, and work towards shared, conceptual/definitional clarity (which alone is a huge feat)." -- *working group member*

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8. CONCLUSIONS

A traditional house of the macua people, Mozambique. Image Credit: Filipa Oitavén
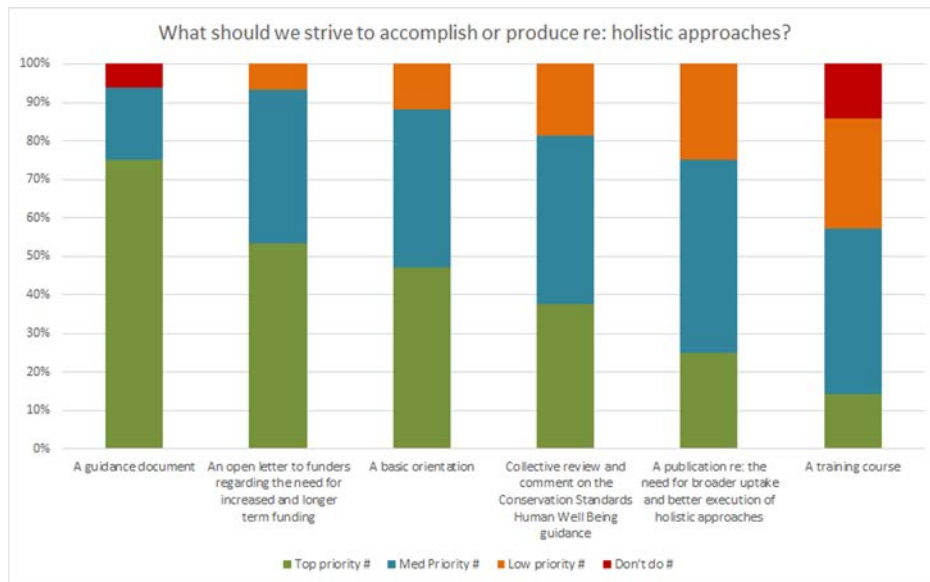
Conclusions

Holistic approaches to social-ecological systems

A significant portion of the world's high conservation value areas are occupied, surrounded, and/or owned or managed by indigenous and local people, yet efforts by conservation and other social change organizations in these complex social-ecological systems are typically not sufficiently multifaceted to attain or sustain desired conservation and human well-being aims. **Many within and beyond the conservation space firmly believe that a paradigm shift is needed such that these holistic approaches become the norm of how we work in social-ecological landscapes.**

This CMP-Moore Learning Initiative on Holistic Approaches to Social-ecological Systems reinforced the broad interest in advancing thinking, methods, tools, and uptake of multi-sectoral, collaborative programming that promotes the health, resilience, and sustainability of places where the well-being of people and that of nature are highly interdependent. Through a very ambitious and rapid-fire effort, the holistic approaches working group crafted what we refer to as a beautiful "tip of the iceberg," including a clear definition of this approach, a situation assessment that lays out when more holistic approaches are needed, a working theory of change, thoughts on when using this approach is needed and appropriate, and identification of barriers and barrier removal strategies regarding uptake, design, and effective implementation.

While we feel that what we have achieved has been tremendous, significant work remains. In particular, an array of outstanding questions need to be answered to strengthen the conceptual and evidentiary foundations of the approach, including clarifying where and how such an approach can lead to optimal, sustainable impact. Additionally, given that the working group believes that this is an important approach that is not yet well elaborated or supported, we believe it would be valuable to build on the work we have done to date to elaborate a set of guidelines, develop and circulate and open letter to funders to encourage increased and longer term funding for holistic approaches, and orient the CMP, CCNet, and other relevant communities to this approach. We valued the opportunity to learn and think together and hope we can continue this important work in 2021. While adoption and advancement of holistic approaches faces numerous and significant challenges, ultimately, we believe the paradigm shift it represents is central to ensuring the near- and long-term good of people and nature living in interdependent systems across our planet.

8. LEARNING
Value of and improvements to this process

A forest from above. Image Credit: Nathan Anderson, Unsplash

Learning about Learning

Many working group members derived value from the learning initiative and say they would participate in something similar in the future

Working group members' responses to the question, "What is the first thing that comes to mind regarding the holistic approaches learning initiative?"

Masterfully managed, useful product.

Stimulating conversations at an exploratory level.

Very much needed by the conservation world, filling a big gap.

A big task! These discussions have moved the dial towards better addressing the need to include broader approaches to address conservation issues.

Important thinking across a dedicated and experienced group of participants, yet not enough time to go beyond initial discussions to sort out more complex realities

Very engaging and well thought out process that was run smoothly, involved a great diversity of professionals, and successfully gathered some excellent information.

Engaging, enriching, and rapid-fire.

Learned a lot and left with some questions better answered and many more new questions in need of exploring.

"I am very interested in these initiatives as I think they lead to very solid products and results that will benefit those working in the conservation field." *-- working group member*

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with this statement: Participating in this learning initiative was a worthwhile investment of my time.

Should CMP continue to run learning initiatives like this one, that form working groups to explore and elaborate key strategies?
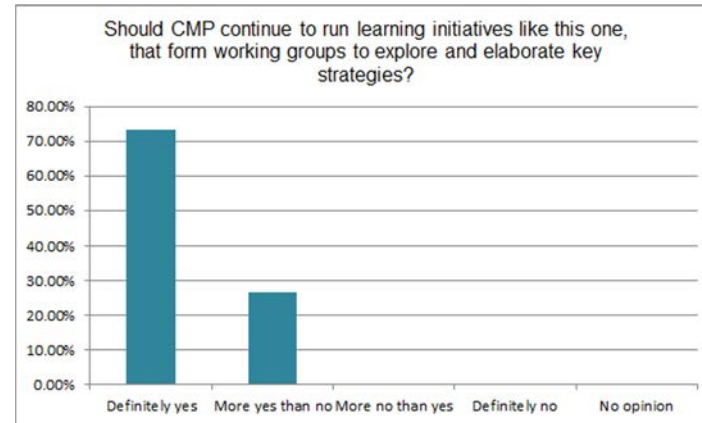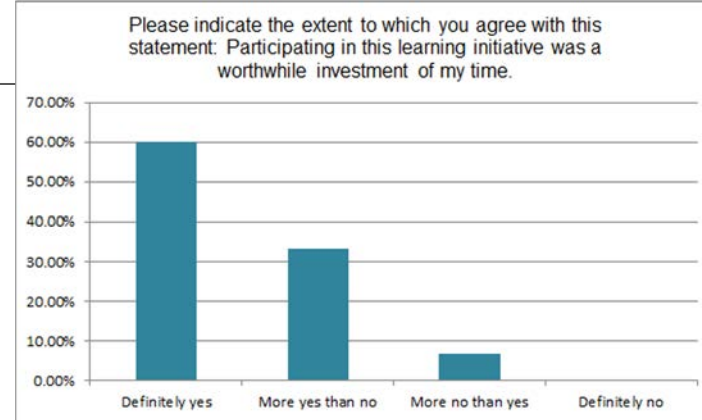
Learning about Learning

To improve similar learning initiatives in the future, more time and budget would be needed to enable working groups to go deeper and have greater exchange of knowledge and learning

Working group members' feedback regarding what could be improved:

The program was ambitious, and didn't set up enough time to flesh out differences and complexities.

It's a very complicated topic and would take more than 3 conversations to really address.

We had good discussions on what it means to be "holistic" but we never got into any "strategies".

It has been a good approach to learning, BUT with those who already care, we have (I hope) a product, but until we have got the less bothered on board, we do not know if learning translates to change in approach and then change in delivery and impact ...

Great facilitation and mix of plenary and breakout sessions- it was rapid fire but the most was made out of the limited time we had.

I liked the breakout groups and activities, but it was a lot of information to digest in a short period of time.

I was hoping for more conversation/dialog/sharing of experiences with others and I don't think we had time for that.

We did not have time to crosswalk with the PHE initiative.

Do you think the Learning Initiative met its Objectives?

When looking back at your reasons for joining and expectations at the start of the learning initiative, do you feel they were fulfilled?
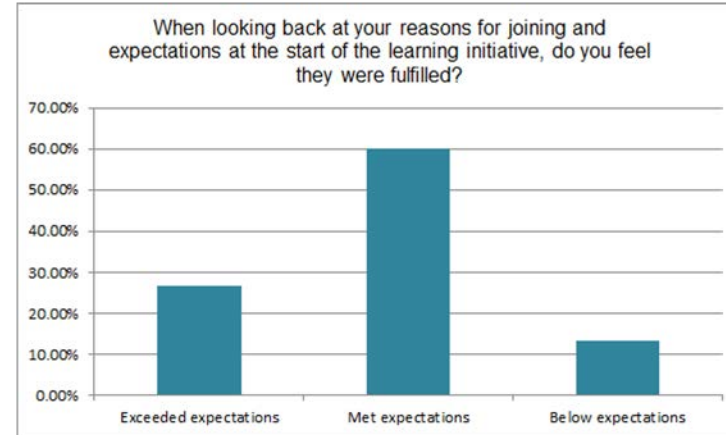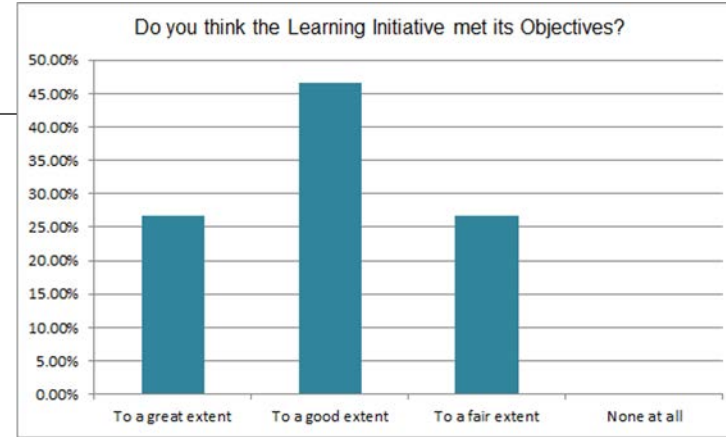
Learning about Learning

While this was framed as a learning initiative, the purpose--more clearly defining and articulating a theory of change for a priority strategy--necessitated soliciting participation by people with expertise in the topic

Overall, participants thought this was a worthwhile effort, that CMP should continue to pursue such efforts, and, to a greater or lesser extent, that they learned new information. A future challenge for these learning initiatives will be to ensure that they draw on existing expertise in the community while also ensuring that participants acquire new information and expanded thinking.

This process really opened my eyes to the importance of spending time unpacking and clearly defining concepts/terms within a given collaboration. Although many of us in the group come from overlapping backgrounds (and complimentary conservation worldviews), I still feel there was a level of disagreement or at least clear distinctions in how we each defined certain concepts/terms, which fed into our personal assumptions. We eventually got to a shared understanding, but it took some time and energy.

I thought it was just my organization struggling with this topic, but I guess not!

I felt that this is where I am anyway, and I want to see more folk on this journey, but there was not so much to learn personally. I suspect many of us were like - the holistic practitioners or wannabes …

[This process helped me to see] the need to shift "including" community as an important consideration or even a beneficiary of conservation action, to seeing community as the architects of their future and the future in that place.

Information and thinking was not very new, so ranked "to fair extent." I still see many barriers to actually practicing this approach.

To what extent did you learn new information and/or expand your thinking as a result of participating in this learning initiative?
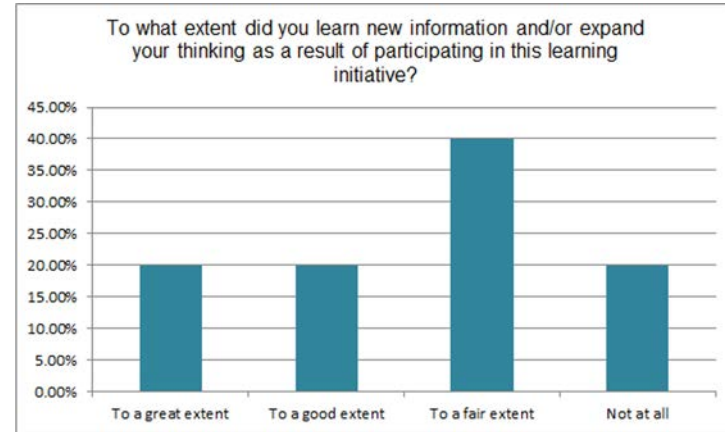
The discussions helped me identify my own biases and this will help me recognise and challenge them in myself and others when I'm facilitating processes.

I learned that many are engaged in holistic approaches to planning that integrates the human element. I was exposed to new ways of effectively eliciting participant feedback. I learned a great deal about the importance of identifying the correct logic for results chains.

ANNEX. CASE STUDIES
Holistic Approaches in action

From: Rooted! The Richness of Land and Culture, opened in December of 2015 at the Pembroke Public Library. The exhibit was a collaboration between Field Museum staff and a group of community co-curators and tells the story of Pembroke's rich natural and cultural heritage.

These brief case studies provide examples of holistic approaches to ensure the health and resilience of social-ecological systems. Beyond giving an overview of holistic approaches in action, each case highlights a handful of key lessons to support the effective design and implementation of holistic approaches in other contexts.

The cases each were informed by short presentations delivered by the project executants to the Holistic Approaches Working group, several key informant interviews, and review of relevant documentation.

Given the tight timeline of the CMP-Moore learning initiative, only a couple of days could be dedicated to the preparation of each case, so they are in no way exhaustive representations of the full history, complexity, or learning from these ambitious and inspiring projects. Nonetheless, they provide important and valuable lessons that informed the Holistic Approach definition, theory of change, and thinking around identifying and overcoming barriers and challenges.

Holistic Approach Case Study

Lessons From the Tuungane Project, Tanzania

Pathfinder INTERNATIONAL
Sexual and reproductive health without fear or boundary

The Nature Conservancy

Meeting of a women's community conservation-based savings and loan group in one of the communities in Tuungane. Image credit: Cheryl Margoluis

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Local village fisherman work to catch enough fish to make a living to sell to the local market in the village of Katumbi on Lake Tanganyika in Tanzania. Photo © Ami Vitale. From: https://blog.nature.org/science/2016/01/07/climate-change-health-population-dynamics-tanzania-women-contraception-environment-family-planning/

Case Study: The Tuungane Project
OVERVIEW

Project Name: The Tuungane Project

Broad Scope: Lake Tanganyika and the Greater Mahale Ecosystem

Focused Scope: Villages in the southern portion of the overall scope, near and to the east of Mahale Mountains National Park

The Challenge: "The health of this diverse natural environment and the well-being of its people are threatened by extreme poverty compounded by a rapidly growing human population."[1]

Project Duration: 2011 to present

Lead Nongovernmental Organizations: The project is led through a fully integrated partnership between The Nature Conservancy and Pathfinder International

Key Collaborators: Local communities, local government agencies, the Government of Tanzania, and other NGOs including Frankfurt Zoological Society, Carbon Tanzania, Tanzania National Parks (TANAPA), and Tongwe Trust.

Case Study: The Tuungane Project
COMMUNITY-LEVEL THEORY OF CHANGE

Tuungane advances an integrated, interdependent set of activities to improve the health and resilience of **families**, **forests**, and **fisheries**.

It does this through **policy** and **district-level** work as well as community-level work. Community activities come together around the concept of **"model households"** (TOC at right) which advances the adoption of practices at the household level that support environmental health hand-in-hand with human well-being and, more broadly, seeks to increase understanding and protection of the interdependence of these.

Main Activities — Intermediate Results — Ultimate outcomes

Families
- Family planning communications
- IEC for PHE plus drama group
- Improved sanitation for schools and clinics
- Train Community Champions
- Train groups in family planning & HIV/AIDS
- Train vol. community health workers
- Refurbish village clinics
- Supply & staff village clinics adequately
- Train village council members
- Identify model households
- Advocacy to government for support

Fisheries
- BMUs operational
- Establish BMU COCOBAs
- Establish fish regeneration areas
- National and regional fisheries coordination

Forests
- Conservation agriculture training
- Village land-use plans
- Establish village forest reserves
- Promote energy efficient stoves
- Establish alternative enterprises
- Draft village PHE bylaws
- Village natural resources committees
- Pilot carbon initiative
- Establish district-level forest reserve
- Forest scouts protect reserve
- Chimp follow up survey

Model households demonstrate desirable behaviors and act as peer educators

Intermediate Results:
- Improved sexual, reproductive and primary health
- Unmet demand for contraception close to zero
- BMUs are regulating fishers locally
- Near-shore fish spawning and nursery areas protected
- National and regional cooperation reduces illegal fishing
- Village forest reserves provide a sustainable supply of forest products
- GME chimp population stable or growing

Ultimate outcomes:
- Healthier families
- Healthier fisheries
- Healthier forests

Case Study: The Tuungane Project
THEORY OF CHANGE

> "At the heart of our interventions are the model households, where changes in behavior and resilience are measured."

In this way, the ultimate outcomes of the project are as much about changes in mindset that will influence decisions, behavior, and resilience over the long term, as they are about more proximate results regarding threat mitigation or particular aspects of human well being improvement. This focus on the long- as well as near-term is a key characteristic of more holistic and integrated approaches.

KAYA YA MFANO *(Model Household)*

Afya Bora Mazingira Bora *(Better Health, Better Environment)*
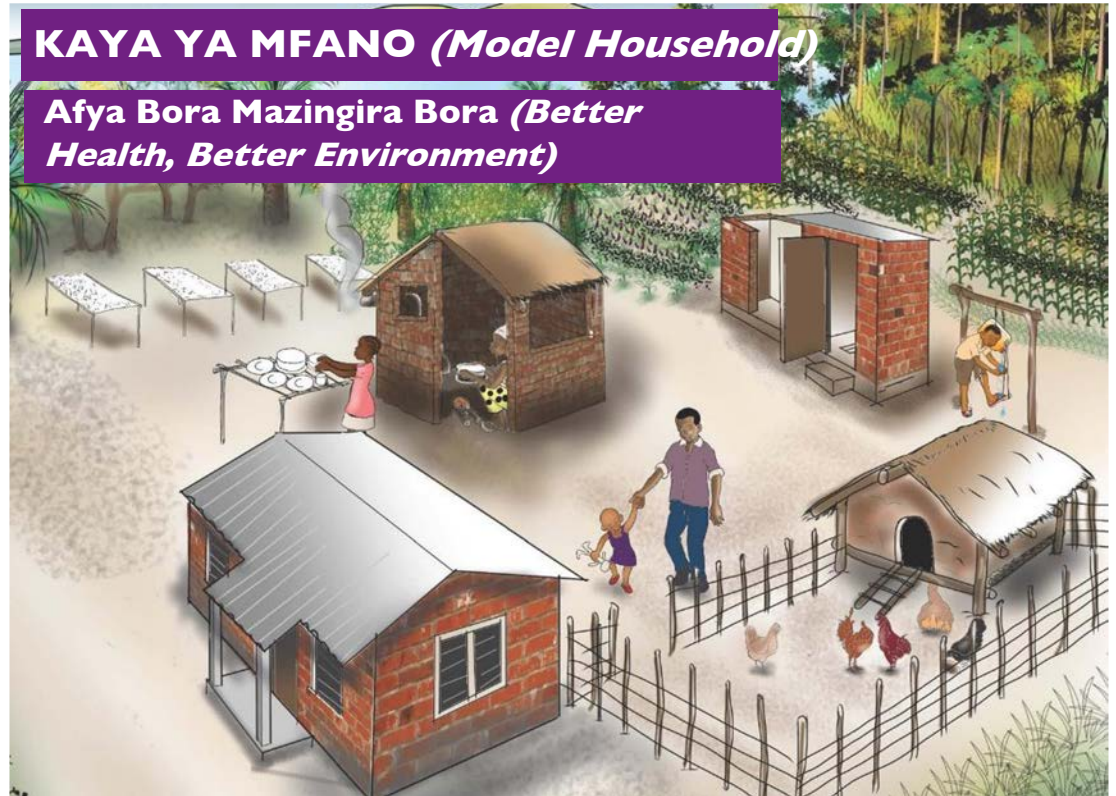
Case Study: The Tuungane Project
WHY A HOLISTIC APPROACH?

"People more readily make the connections [between their well-being and environmental health] via integrated approaches. If you say demarcating a fish breeding area is just for conservation, you won't have uptake, but if you speak in terms of well-being, people get it."

"While we could make effort to improve fisheries management and forest management (our organization's targets), we could see we'd fail because of the major driver of rapid population growth."

"We now define ultimate success as local community institutions able to manage their natural resources sustainably in support of and alongside their health and well being. We are working with people to adopt integrated thinking: individual behavior change plus structural behavior change that leads to institution change."

Why are you pursuing a holistic approach and how are you defining ultimate success?

"TNC's vision is people and nature thriving together. It's not just something we say, it's what we believe because of the high interdependence between people and nature. 80% of people here rely on nature for medicine, forest products, energy (fuelwood), food (~40% of food need is met by fish)."

"Education, health, development, climate change, environment, poverty...these are really complex and interlinked issues. We don't take them piece by piece because if you advance one, you may go backwards in another. In order to attain realistic, sustainable results -- like mindset and willingness -- we need to address things in a holistic way. We believe in synergy -- 1+1 = 3. There is additionality."

Case Study: The Tuungane Project
LESSONS FROM A HOLISTIC APPROACH

LESSON 1: BALANCING OBJECTIVES. Advancing a holistic set of objectives requires regular review and rebalancing to ensure all priorities are advancing as hoped, and in an integrated manner.

The project has made significant progress on many fronts, including:

Forest loss has been halted in chimpanzee habitat areas and chimpanzee numbers are stable.

Food security increased substantially in the project's first 5 years.

Change in mindsets and attitudes, including Increased local support for the National park and of conservation and a general sense among local people that life is better

Improvements in various human health indices, including reduced maternal and neonatal deaths.

Nearly 6,000 families are volunteering as "Model Households" to model healthy, sustainable behaviors (e.g., farming away from the lake, family planning, energy saving stoves).

23 coastal villages have established Beach Management Units (BMUs) to enact and enforce their own sustainable fishing regulations.

Villages have established 51 community conservation banks to help people start small businesses and diversify their incomes.

More than 1,100 farmers have adopted climate smart agricultural practices, reducing run-off and generating an average 50% increase in crop yields.

Throughout, the program has had to continually address tensions and trade-offs, however, such as:

Ensuring both immediate needs for food, income, and health care are being addressed in tandem with mitigating systemic challenges and advancing institutional changes as needed for long-term health, resilience, and sustainability.

Balancing growing demands for land for agriculture and wood for fuel with the aim to conserve chimpanzee habitat.

Both Pathfinder and The Nature Conservancy have widened their approaches, recognizing the need to look at the complex skills and capacities that communities, particularly women, need in order to fully engage in managing their natural resources. This includes supporting girls to go to school longer and ensuring that women have diversified livelihood options.

Promoting legal rights to lands and resources while advancing practices and solutions that help to ensure those rights are used for sustainability and resilience versus conversion for near term gain.

"In an integrated approach, it can feel like you're running well, but you can have some things moving along and other things are getting left behind. We have to balance the wheel every so often, and remain focused. So regular review against intended outcomes is needed and have to continually work to maintain integration and ensure objectives are serving one another."

Case Study: The Tuungane Project
LESSONS FROM A HOLISTIC APPROACH

LESSON 2: FUNDING. Raising funds for specific program components is similar to single sector programs, but finding funds to support integration activities remains very difficult.

In fundraising for a holistic program of work, the Tuungane Project has determined that:

Integration requires its own basket of funding and getting to long-term health and resilience outcomes consistent, long-term, flexible funding.

Advancement of holistic programming is stymied by the the availability of sources of large, long-term, and flexible funding that can effectively support holistic programs. A founding organization of the Tuungane project had to significantly shift its role due to funding challenges.

Many funders are unwilling to take the leap to support a multi-faceted program, desiring instead to fund more narrowly defined efforts with specific near-term results.

In other cases, funders' strategies are structured such that they cannot fund integrated programming.

Some bilateral, multilateral, and private funders have more flexibility in this regard, but private philanthropies, in particular, are more reticent or unable to fund integration activities or holistic programming overall.

"Neither we nor Pathfinder have been able to raise funding for integrated programming and lack of funders for integration activities is definitely a problem. Government funding by nature is set up in silos and private foundations tend to focus and prioritize on specific thematic areas."

To encourage funders to support Tuungane, project team members have found that:

It is important to ensure donors and other key audiences have realistic expectations that look across outcomes and to both near-term and long-term gains. Relative to a dedicated health program focused on vaccination, for example, a multi-objective program will not have the same reach or value for money, but is more likely to have more comprehensive and sustainable results in the end.

Continual efforts are needed to educate the funding community, to expand their understanding of and buy-in to integrated, holistic thinking and approaches, and in particular in the role they have in advancing greater impact, sustainability, and resilience over the long term.

Demonstrating meaningful and evidence-based results helps to maintain existing funding sources and attract new funders.

Being part of a holistic program with effective collaboration and integration among partners may lead some funders to support at least certain aspects of the overall program of work.

"In one sense, our value for money is low. It's a remote site and operating costs are high. But value for money also is high; because it's so remote, there is a massive unmet need and but for us, how many deaths would have happened? How much biodiversity degradation?"

LESSON 3: ENSURING AN EFFECTIVE COLLABORATION. Success hinges not on having all possible partners involved, but on having a few key, dedicated partners able to work together effectively with one another and with local stakeholders.

Project partners were initially TNC, Pathfinder, and Frankfurt Zoological Society (FZS). Key informants attribute success of the project to the continued intensive and long-term commitment of TNC and Pathfinder in particular.

Fundamental to successful collaboration has been integrating Pathfinder and TNC into a single project team and investing in maintaining constructive and complementary coordination, integration, and execution.

Effectiveness of the integrated team also hinges on specialists in one area being proficient in the others, such that the interdepence is clear in the minds of staff and in a manner that project staff can convey to others.

Patient, honest, and attentive partnership with local communities also has been fundamental (more on this under Lesson 4). The project partners already had a number of local relationships that were helpful in launching the integrated program.

Since inception, FZS's role has shifted somewhat, and other organizations have gotten involved in some capacity, including local NGOs, local funding entities like the Tongwe Trust, and government agencies such as Government of Tanzania units and Tanzania National Parks.

Frequent outreach to government units from local to national also has been critical, with an entire position dedicated to this role. This has included building capacity and keeping them current on plans and progress.

Involvement of this broader array of stakeholders if fundamental to both near-term impact as well as long-term ownership, sustainability, and resilience.

"If you wanted to do something like this in a similar context, a designated government liaison should be the first hire."

"Building cross sectoral literacy is fundamental. We transform a good doctor to being a good conservationist. And we ensure good conservation staff are proficient in family planning. But proficiency isn't fluency or expertise -- it's important for staff to know their limits and to know when to bring in the right expertise for new lines of work."

Case Study: The Tuungane Project
PARTNERSHIP LESSONS

"Local people are the owners of the natural resources, first and foremost. We want to empower them and build on and leverage their local knowledge. When it comes to conservation, they are partners. But in terms of benefits, the are the owners and we are helping them to expand the benefits they derive through their own management and activities. We NGOs are the newcomers and we are only there for a certain number of years. Ultimate success is transforming their mindset. When we end, they still need to be there, perpetuating, doing what we have shared with them (not what we have told them)."

LESSON 4: WORKING WITH LOCAL PEOPLE. Project success depends on effectively engaging local people in an array of roles, including as land- and resource-holders, as owners and partners, and as leaders and beneficiaries.

From the start of the project, the partners have taken intentional action to work in close consultation and collaboration with local people, to understand, listen to, and ensure responsiveness to their needs. This strategy, including adherence to FPIC principles, has been central to success to date. Initial community engagements included a series of meetings to ask about needs, interactions with the national park, resource challenges, and willingness to partner.

Work has proceeded with local communities cognizant of the fact that they are local leaders, owners, decision-makers, beneficiaries, knowledge- holders, executants, managers, and partners. Rather than a "one size fits all" approach, the project tailors its work with local community members to this array of roles.

While many said they wanted to participate, when it came to action, some demonstrated more motivation than others, and still others have gotten involved as time has passed and the project has demonstrated positive results.

In this context of remoteness, widespread poverty, and historic lack of government attention, the desire for support of any kind was significant, while at the same time, some wanted to guard against disruption of illegal activities.The project has had to stay cognizant of the power and resource imbalance that exists between the NGO partners themselves and the local people.

Ensuring effective structures for local community and other stakeholder engagement has been fundamental to ensuring appropriate consultation and broad ownership, full partnership, attainment of proximate results, and advancement toward long term institution building and sustainability.

Strengthening and establishing local institutions is viewed as fundamental to long-term sustainability and resilience and the project is increasing its efforts in this regard.

"The 45ish communities are so diverse, with 5,000-10,000 people in each one. Each is very different in terms of ethnic makeup, geography, age of the community, etc. You can't talk about the communities as a whole or even internally as homogeneous; within each one, some people will be interested in fisheries, while others in agriculture or health or education."

"We have a lot of different mechanisms to interact with the community -- individual, community-based, district level, regional. A major strength of the program is that multi-level engagement."

"Local people are definitely partners. We're not there to fix them; we're there to work alongside them to get to what is possible. I don't see them as "leaders" because they're not the ones coming up with the model household, doing the fundraising. But they are willing partners and for this to be successful, we need them to be 100% bought in. Our team maintains great relationships with local leaders and community members, supported by transparency and trust. Ultimately, it feels like a partnership."

"We have created a steering committee at the whole landscape level, including representation from the region, the highest administrative entity, down to the villages and NGOs. We try to bring the big strategic questions there to ensure ownership and full partnership. And we have replicated that model elsewhere."

REFERENCES

Interviews

- **Matt Brown**, Africa Conservation Director, The Nature Conservancy
- **Lukindo Hiza**, Tuungane Program Director, The Nature Conservancy
- **Craig Leisher**, Director of Monitoring and Evaluation, Africa Region, The Nature Conservancy
- **Cheryl Margoluis**, Senior Technical Advisor, Women-Led Climate Resilience, Pathfinder International

Documents

- TNC Tuungane project pages:
  - https://www.nature.org/en-us/about-us/where-we-work/africa/stories-in-africa/tuungane-project/
  - Community Voices: https://www.nature.org/en-us/about-us/where-we-work/africa/stories-in-africa/tuungane-community-voices/
- Pathfinder Tuungane project pages:
  - https://www.pathfinder.org/projects/tuungane/
  - Spring 2020 OpEd: https://www.onebyone2030.org/tuungane-op-ed
- Family planning and resilience: Associations found in a Population, Health, and Environment (PHE) project in Western Tanzania: https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11111-018-0310-x
  - Fact sheet about the above journal article: https://www.prb.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/fp-resilience-journal-article-fact-sheet.pdf
- Long report: Changes in Household Well-Being and Resilience 2011-2016 (Tuungane Project,Tanzania) http://evidenceproject.popcouncil.org/resource/changes-in-household-well-being-and-resilience-2011-2016-tuungane-project-tanzania/
  - Summarized from long report: The Role of Population, Family Planning, and Reproductive Health in the Tuungane Project https://www.prb.org/changes-in-household-well-being-and-resilience/
- Case study on how Tuungane could better incorporate family planning High Impact Practices (HIPs) into its work: https://thepaceproject.org/fp-HIPS-PHE/case-study-tuungane.php (and included in the accompanying policy brief: https://thepaceproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/PRB-PolicyBrief-PHE-HIPs.pdf)
- TNC Conservation Gateway - Tuungane 2011 baseline socioeconomic and freshwater ecological surveys
  - http://www.conservationgateway.org/ConservationByGeography/Africa/tanzania/Pages/default.aspx
- 2016 K. Patterson Cool Green Science blog post: https://blog.nature.org/science/profiles/kristen-patterson/

Holistic Approach Case Study

An Assets-based Approach to Conservation and Well-being in Two Landscapes

Prepared in partnership with
the The Field Museum

From: Biodiversity Fair in the Native Community of Poyentimari. Photo credit: SERNANP

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Native Community Poyentimari near the Machiguenga Communal Reserve in Cuzco, Peru

Comunidad Nativa
POYENTIMARI
1974
Plan de Vida, 2018 - 2028

Pembroke-Hopkins Park in Illinois, USA

PEMBROKE-HOPKINS PARK
QUALITY OF LIFE PROCESS REPORT
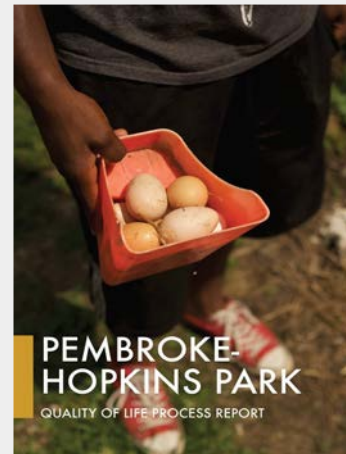
Implementing an Assets-based Approach To Conservation and Well-being
BACKGROUND
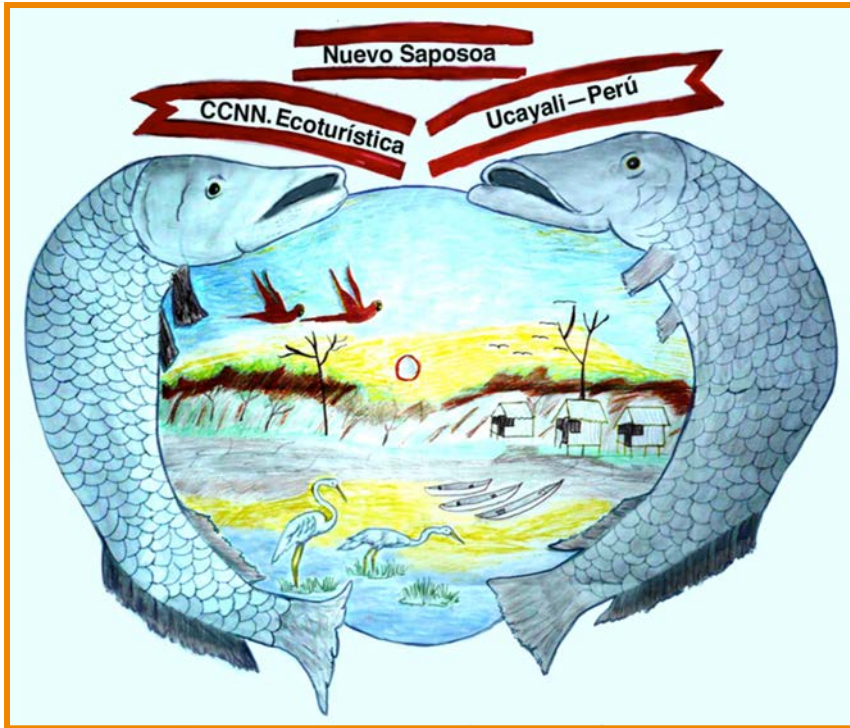
The Field Museum's approach to linking environmental conservation with human well-being has emerged from many years of experience working both in the Chicago region and in the Andes-Amazon region of South America. The Field Museum's approach was originally developed by urban planners who applied it to community development issues in urban contexts of the developed world.

As Alaka Wali and her team were refining this approach in Chicago, they identified an opportunity to integrate a socio-cultural component in the rapid biological inventories the Field Museum was conducting in the Andes Amazon region. Although the asset mapping methods were first used in Calumet region south of Chicago, the Quality of Life methods were first developed for Cordillera Azul National Park buffer zone communities. It was there that the Field Museum team realized that asset mapping wasn't going to be sufficient to effective engagement with communities for conservation, and took the additional step of developing these plans.

In subsequent years, methods such as working with local people to create crests representing core values, mapping key community assets, assessing quality of life indicators, and ultimately developing recommendations for land use decision makers have become central features of Field Museum works across these geographies.

Implementing an Assets-based Approach To Conservation and Well-being
THEORY OF CHANGE

Field Museum' vision of conservation is one in which environmental health is intimately linked with local people's' wellbeing. Field Museum has developed one methodology for engaging communities in conservation decisions and practices known as Quality of Life (QoL) Planning—a form of rapid assessment and consensus building that draws on an assets-based approach and facilitates community priority-setting, particularly as it relates to community-environment relationships.

Field Museum team and collaborators in different geographies deliberately build a consensus vision for conservation and quality of life across a wide cross-section of stakeholders, while acknowledging and respecting the differences among the actors involved. They put local people at the forefront to ensure that conservation actions are just, equitable, and sustainable. The process helps in-country government agencies and other actors to better understand the sociocultural, political, and biological contexts in the areas they are tasked with protecting and ensures more effective protection by incorporating the knowledge and needs of local people into conservation plans. The consensus-based approach also increases the likelihood that decision-makers will recognize the legitimacy of the shared vision that emerges.

| When there is	Then
When there is Empowerment	Then • There is long term sustainability • Local knowledge systems are the foundation for improving well-being
When there is commitment to obligations and responsibilities	Then • All stakeholders are held accountable • Progress can be measured effectively
When there is participatory decision making	Then • Conservation compatible priorities are established • Informed decision are based on local value systems
When there is inclusion and respect of differences	Then • Participants are open to new ideas • There is flexibility in organizational schemes
When there is constant reflection	Then • the 5 dimensions of well-being are integrated • Stakeholders take advantage of creative opportunities

Machiguenga Communal Reserve
LANDSCAPE OVERVIEW

Comunidad Nativa **Poyentimari**

Since 2009, Field Museum's team of ecologists and social scientists have been developing Quality of Life (QoL) plans with local organizations in the Peruvian Amazon. This has been an iterative process, and throughout the last 20 years the museum has tweaked and improved these tools and methodologies with the input of local collaborators. The present case study focuses on the QoL plan developed with the Native Community of Poyenitmari, that neighbors the Machiguenga Communal Reserve, in 2019.

Objectives:

- To develop QoL plans based on community-expressed desires for conservation as a way to strengthen or maintain a subsistence-oriented lifestyle that is largely compatible with conservation.
- To help communities delineate timely, measurable activities that improve quality of life, defined with respect to locally specific values and practices.
- To link these plans to local and regional plans and revenue streams to enable achievement of community objectives and sustainable resource management.

Key Collaborators: Community leaders, community facilitators and strategic allies/organisations: Consejo Machiguenga del Río Urubamba (COMARU), ECA-Maeni, SERNANP Perú, Machiguenga Communal Reserve, Field Museum, Echarati District Municipality.


Comunidad Nativa **POYENTIMARI**

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Plan de Vida, 2018 - 2028
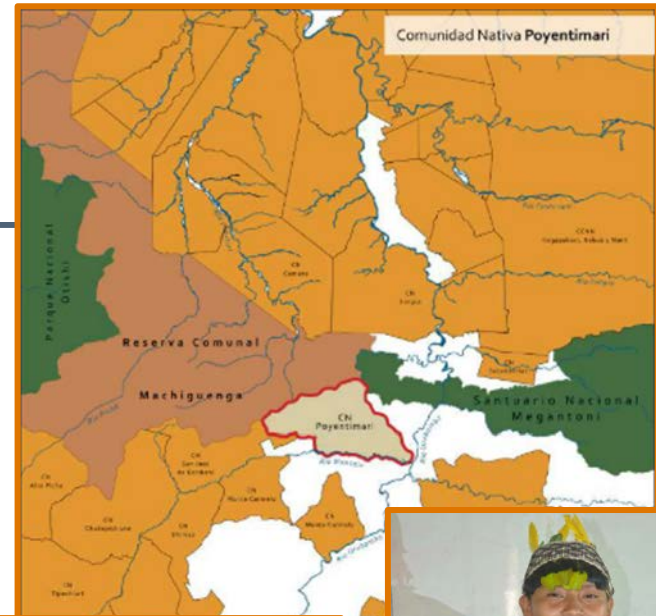
Pembroke-Hopkins Park
LANDSCAPE OVERVIEW

In Spring 2016, Field Museum staff and a team of local facilitators led residents of Pembroke-Hopkins Park (PHP) through a structured process in which participants discussed priorities and concerns, reflected on trade-offs between different land use options and development scenarios, and drafted planning recommendations based on their core values and principles. Residents mapped their community assets and assessed key indicators of their quality of life.

Objectives:

- To facilitate regional Quality of Life (QoL) planning meetings in the Pembroke Township Hopkins Park (PHP) community in Spring/Summer 2016 with PHP residents and concerned stakeholders.
- To stimulate and guide meaningful conversations around QoL matters important to individuals, families and overall community of PHP.
- To encourage residents to become active planners, change agents and owners of their community outcome by identifying absolute necessities, available and sustainable resources, as well as determine attainable short and long term goals for the benefit of the overall PHP community.

Key Collaborators: Primary partners: Resident co-facilitators of the Township of Pembroke, Illinois, and the Field Museum. Secondary Partners: U.S Fish & Wildlife Service, and The Nature Conservancy.

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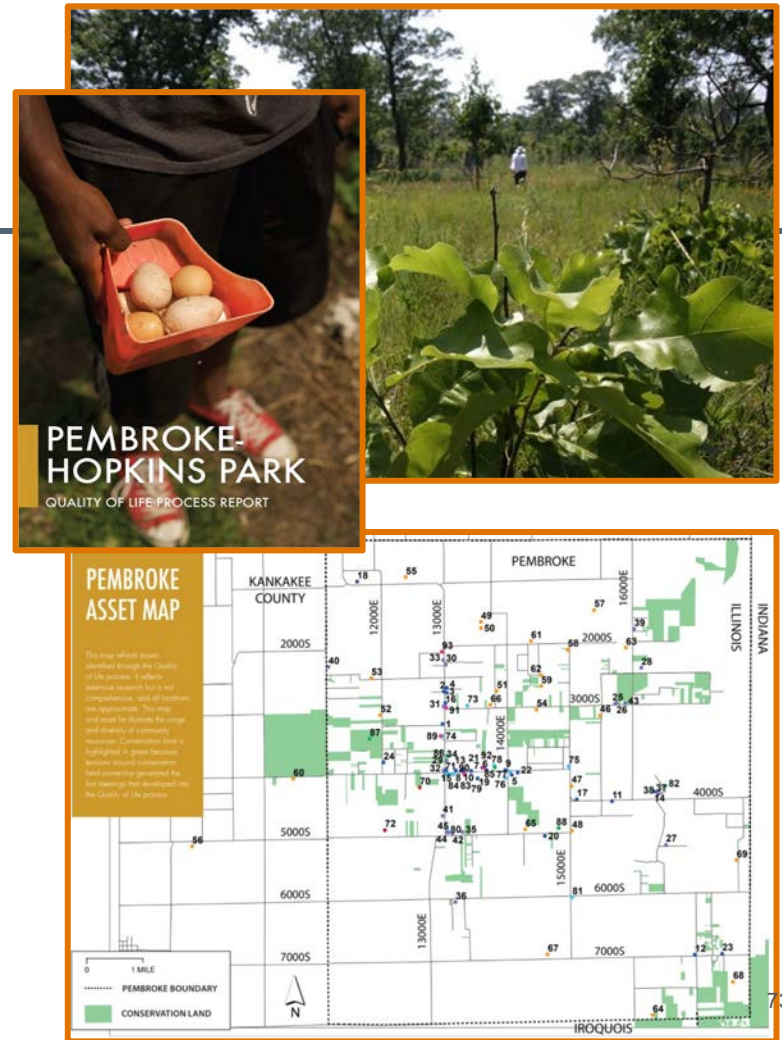
Implementing An Assets-based Approach To Conservation and Well-being
WHY A HOLISTIC APPROACH?

"Healthy forests depend on the care and commitment of local people, just as people depend on healthy nature for their well being and conserved landscapes depend on people for their continued health."

Why are you pursuing a holistic approach and how are you defining success?

"In general, the quality of life planning process resulted in local priorities shifting to align more explicitly with conservation objectives. Ultimately, community residents gained confidence that their way of life, which is heavily dependent on maintaining intact forest resources, could be sustained if protected areas were established and maintained."

"In much of the Amazon, people depend on traditional agriculture, hunting, and gathering, which require healthy forests and ecosystems. In Peru, the Museum's Keller Science Action Center staff has worked with indigenous and non-indigenous communities living near protected natural areas to agree upon key principles, identify social and environmental assets, and determine priorities for the future. This process helps people draw upon their core values and community strengths to develop plans to improve quality of life and to protect natural resources."

"In Pembroke well-being is about more than monetary income for these communities in the Amazon: it involves quality natural resources, strong cultural traditions, healthy social relationships, the ability to meet basic needs, and a fair political system."

Implementing an Assets-based Approach To Conservation and Well-being
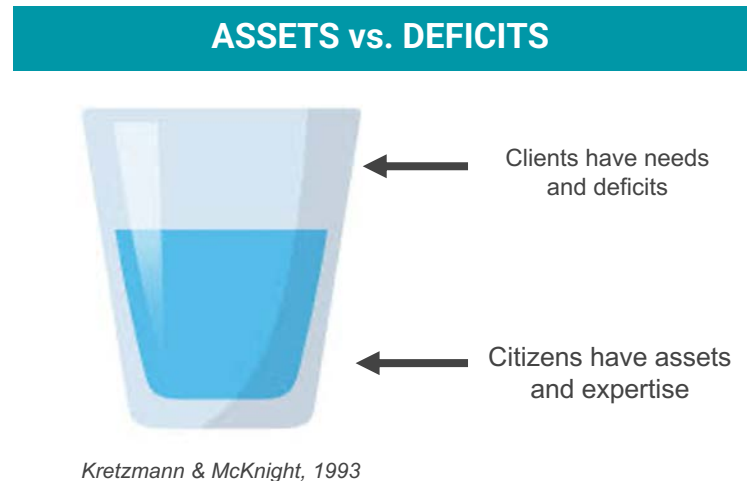## LEARNINGS FROM A HOLISTIC APPROACH

LESSON 1: FOCUS ON ASSETS INSTEAD OF NEEDS. Projects should draw on community strengths, rather than starting with problems or deficiencies. If made visible, forms of social organization, cultural practices, values, and environmental knowledge provide insights into how mutually beneficial collaboration can proceed.

Cultural strengths hold the key to empowerment for sustainable livelihoods.

An asset-based approach uses as its starting off point that people have gifts and capacities. In a deficit-model, the negative is emphasized — what they are lacking and what they perceive as existing in community areas: crime, disease, poor infrastructure– and they are "clients", people in need of help from outside.

"Assets" can be the local history and culture of the community, skills of local residents (local knowledge), the way people are organized locally, or the physical infrastructure and space in a community. An assets-based approach is used to ascertain these perspectives.

Quality of life plans that are based on community assets tend to produce priorities that are more consistent with environmental conservation. Research and participatory methods are used to create ways for local people to discuss their resource management priorities collectively, reflect on impacts between different ways to use land and resources, and make their decisions based on their own cultural values and priorities.

ASSETS vs. DEFICITS

Clients have needs and deficits

Citizens have assets and expertise

Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993

Implementing an Assets-based Approach To Conservation and Well-being
LEARNINGS FROM A HOLISTIC APPROACH

LESSON 1: FOCUS ON ASSETS INSTEAD OF NEEDS. Projects should draw on community strengths, rather than starting with problems or deficiencies. If made visible, forms of social organization, cultural practices, values, and environmental knowledge provide insights into how mutually beneficial collaboration can proceed.

"Need for changing the chip and convince professionals/ practitioners who are used to implementing development-style projects to try a different approach such as assets-based approach, and to create spaces for reflection and action, instead of coming with solutions from the outside"

"You will need to make clear links between challenges, threats and how to overcome those with community assets. That's where the rubber hits the road. And this usually takes longer than expected. It has to do with factors such as individual personalities, but also with structural challenges we are not trying to glass over or ignore by using an assets approach."

Key learnings:

- Start the design process from a consideration of strengths (assets) rather than deficits, so that community members chose to prioritize a more balanced mix of actions that emphasized protecting natural resources and reinforcing cultural identity instead of conventional income-generating activities.
- Encourage constant spaces for dialogue and reflection.
- Change the chip together with organizations who genuinely want to work with local people.
- Build on (pre) established relationships with conservation and non-conservation NGOs and other collaborators to ensure the initial buy-in for the approach.

"Your partner has to be sincere and actually invested in improving the quality of life of people in the community, and not just be looking for a shortcut to achieve their goals. And they have to be frustrated, they have to have already exhausted some of the popular methods. So they are ready to try something different. In some of these places we are talking about years if not decades of not being able to engage the communities."

Implementing an Assets-based Approach To Conservation and Well-being
LEARNINGS FROM A HOLISTIC APPROACH

LESSON 2: HOLISM. A multi-dimensional approach to well-being is central to the process and vision, based on the understanding that healthy ecosystems and thriving biodiversity underlie quality of life.

Align conservation and wellbeing visions by focusing on interdependence versus win-lose "trade-offs".

QoL Planning have the potential to address a common problem in conservation -- when people and conservation are assumed to be at odds, both long-term biodiversity conservation and local quality of life often suffer as a result. Instead, the QoL process creates space to identify where conservation and community visions for improving quality of life overlap (see details in the next slide).

Ultimately, communities can choose to shift toward more conservation-friendly priorities. For example, near Cordillera Azul National Park in Peru, reflections during QoL planning led a group of individuals in one community (Yamino) to lobby the rest of the community to stop timber extraction and to create a reserve area where they collect seeds and mahogany bark for making handicrafts.

Key learnings:

- To ensure effective implementation, it is important for communities to come to consensus and agree on a few realistic, high-priority, conservation-compatible priorities that achieve community visions and draw on assets.

"Misalignment of priorities (conservation and well-being) was more common between local people and their political representatives (how to resist conventional development?...), than between the needs of biodiversity and of local people, although the latter was also present at times."

"Although not a common challenge, when priorities do not readily align the best way to find accord is through ongoing commitment to build on the trust that exists and having debates with local people in their own language."

Alignment of conservation and wellbeing visions: The QoL process creates space to identify where conservation and community visions for improving quality of life overlap.
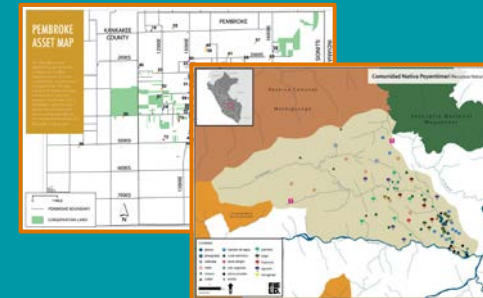
Interactive group exercises in which local residents quantify their perceptions of their quality of life in five different dimensions: (1) the state of natural resources, (2) cultural practices and beliefs, (3) social relationships, (4) political life, and (5) the economic situation. After all the dimensions are ranked, the facilitator leads a conversation on the interrelationship between the dimensions and how strengths in one area could help overcome weaknesses in another. These reflections explicitly address how healthy natural resources are necessary for their quality of life, and often voiced support for creating protected areas near their territories.

Community members create a community shield/crest with symbols that represent the values of the community members and their local identity. Through this activity, people articulate are most proud of, and identify core local principles that are central to their identities. Serves to benchmark to assess the degree to which different land use and development options are compatible with who they are and what they want to conserve.

Community members produce maps of natural and cultural resources on the landscape surrounding their communities. Opportunity to assess and value the depth of ecological knowledge and the interrelationship of people's world views and natural resource management.

Implementing an Assets-based Approach To Conservation and Well-being
LEARNINGS FROM A HOLISTIC APPROACH

LESSON 3: PLURALISM AND RELATIONSHIP BUILDING. It is essential to bring in many partners, voices, and perspectives to get the best results.

"In order to build trust you have to be there, connect with leaders, connect with individuals, and start building trust in those relationships across the board."

The principle of pluralism inscribes a commitment to take seriously the cultural knowledge of an environment and traditional stewardship practices that are often surfaced through the process.

Conservation biologists and park rangers engaged in QoL Planning are encouraged to build upon the complementarity identified among these different epistemologies. Likewise, community participants in the cases outlined above benefited in various ways from knowledge and resources shared by vested conservation stakeholders.

The Field Museum team has found that conservation organisations and government agencies often cite an inability to secure local input in formats that can be effectively utilized for official policy making. Quality of Life Planning addresses this directly by facilitating the development of working relationships between communities and other partners.

Communities adjacent to the Ampiyacu-Apayacu Regional Conservation Area, for instance, expanded a voluntary community monitoring regimen in collaboration with the protected area personnel after participating in QoL planning.

Key learnings:

- Understand who the different stakeholders in the landscape are.
- Understand that the process goes beyond a social inventory and/or QoL plan development. It involves relationship building prior to the fieldwork ("generating conditions"), as well as extensive follow-up.
- Trust is foundational to success and the process starts with building trust and relationships among all participants, which continues across all phases of the process.
- Identify key individuals who are very engaged in the process and have decision making power and engaged them as champions for the approach at their different levels of influence.
- Flexibility is key in the timeline for the QoL process and in the diversity of conservation mechanisms considered legitimate.
- Patient, honest, and attentive partnership with local communities also has been fundamental (more on this under Lesson 4). The project partners already had a number of local relationships that were helpful in launching the QoL plans and process.
- Frequent outreach to government officers has been critical to ensure re-alignment and ongoing support for the QoL plans and process. This is particularly important every time new stakeholders come in, e.g. when leaders or governors are replaced.

Implementing an Assets-based Approach To Conservation and Well-being
LEARNINGS FROM A HOLISTIC APPROACH

LESSON 4: LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLE AS STEWARDS.
The community is the central actor and driver of the process.

"Put people at the center: demonstrate that people are not the problem or threats, people are the solution, the owners, co-owners, and stewards of the forests and rivers."

Communities can and do identify internal activities and "poquito a poquito" things start happening. It's hard work, of follow-up and accompaniment of the community groups who are leading these initiatives. We usually support with how can they organise their time, and monitor their activities.

QoL plans are designed to be for and by the community. The community itself should lead implementation by identifying how they can implement priorities on their own and where they require external support. A major lesson learned is that implementation of priorities based primarily on outside intervention will not be sustainable.

In both case studies, the Field Museum used ethnographic and participatory methods to catalogue local knowledge, history, and values. Participatory mapping was used to determine where and how natural resources were accessed, used, and managed. Teams also ascertained how communities were organized politically to make decisions—both in terms of their formal organization, and in practice—and to coordinate shared labor through ethnography, surveys, and focus groups. Then results are ultimately returned to the communities in follow-up workshops, and data from the workshops are included in the QoL plan. Finally, teams document the organizational structure of the community, and examine the nature of the communities' relationships with external actors such as government offices, NGOs, private firms, and other communities. Understanding these relationships is crucial for future planning and for identifying potential allies to implement key local priorities.

"All these collaborative efforts began with requests from communities themselves, or their representative federations, to support establishing protected areas or improving their quality of life in coordination with conservation initiatives -- communities were generally committed to participating in the process, and ultimately saw long-term benefits in terms of shoring up their land rights, natural resource base, and cultural traditions by participating in these processes." (1)

Implementing an Assets-based Approach To Conservation and Well-being
LEARNINGS FROM A HOLISTIC APPROACH

LESSON 4: LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLE AS STEWARDS.
The community is the central actor and driver of the process.

Key learnings:

- Training and involving and supporting local facilitators to run the sessions themselves is key to the process. Facilitators best know the communities, and they help recruit and facilitate the people in the room who need to be there.
- Communities are not homogenous groups of people. They have different schedules, priorities and aspirations and can speak different languages. Repeat workshops to accommodate for different time schedules, depend on facilitators to design how these workshops will go and hold convenings at different places.
- Make sure the process is as fun and interactive as possible, easy to follow and to replicate. Combine art, culture and dynamic activities that help in developing the auto diagnostic, analysis of information leading to generate a common vision and prioritization
- Ensure the community takes and maintains "ownership" of process by supporting an empowered group of community leaders/representatives that will follow up on the implementation of different priorities, and maintain relationships with stakeholders outside of the community.
- Develop a comprehensive and user friendly monitoring system to track progress (using both qualitative, quantitative and process indicators).

"It often comes down to Great facilitation. Community facilitators serve multiple roles, it is crucial for us to go through the training together, learn from them and fine tune the process to the needs of their communities."

Pembroke-Hopkins Park's QoL Planning sessions guidelines:

- ❖ *All Facilitators will uphold only the highest standards of conductivity.*
- ❖ *Facilitators must maintain a positive attitude in terms of behavior, respect, patience and willingness to learn and reflect on their roles.*
- ❖ *Facilitators will not allow personal biases, limitations and other negativity cloud or dictate the environment in which these planning sessions take place.*
- ❖ *Facilitators hand over to the participants as much responsibility as possible. Facilitators are listening instead of teaching; guiding the process but not driving it.*

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Implementing an Assets-based Approach To Conservation and Well-being
LEARNINGS FROM A HOLISTIC APPROACH

LESSON 5: WORK AT MULTIPLE SCALES. Working at local, regional, national levels and with different government sectors is challenging but effective for consolidating conservation impact and influence policy.

Quality of life plans initiatives elevate the needs of communities politically to increase their likelihood of finding support through government and non-governmental programs.

QoL plan development has to be part of a broader strategy for integrated territorial management that ensures local people's' aspirations are centered in public policy. Successful integrated territorial management only occurs when local governments, protected areas, and local communities align their visions and priorities. Land management officials, government agencies and NGOs must recognize the legitimacy of QoL Plans for informing conservation and development decisions.

Since 2016 in Peru the Field Museum has worked with SERNANP, the Peruvian national planning agency (CEPLAN), the Ministry of Culture, the National Forest Conservation Program (PNCB), the Ministry of Development and Social Inclusion (MIDIS), and local governments to ensure alignment among local development plans, protected area management plans, and QoL Plans in the Urubamba and Pachitea watersheds of central-southern Peru. Currently, an alliance of organizations including the Museum is working to apply the lessons learned from this work to the Putumayo Province of Peru, where there is a unique opportunity to sustain and enhance connectivity among protected areas, Indigenous territories, and other conservation-friendly territorial regimes.

Echarati District, Peru

Poyentimari QoL plan

MCR management plan

Echarati District Local Development plan

The CMP Moore Learning Initiative
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Working group members who supported the case study:

Diana ("Tita") Alvira, Andes-Amazon Senior Program Manager, Conservation for Wellbeing program manager, Keller Science and Action Center, Field Museum (FM)

Ana Lemos, Senior Community Conservation Coordinator, Keller Science and Action Center, FM

Interviews:

Diana ("Tita") Alvira, see above.
Ana Lemos, see above.
Jacob Campbell, Environmental Social Scientist, Keller Science and Action Center, FM
Lorena Lopez, Community Engagement Specialist, Keller Science and Action Center, FM
Mario Longoni, Urban Anthropology Manager, Keller Science and Action Center, FM
Ana Fernandez, ECA-Maeni, an organization that represents the communities around the Machiguenga Communal Reserve in Peru

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