Collaborating for Resilience

Dialogue to address the roots of resource competition: Lessons for policy and practice

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DIALOGUE TO ADDRESS THE ROOTS OF RESOURCE COMPETITION: LESSONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

How can multistakeholder dialogue be used to assess and address the roots of environmental resource competition and conflict? This paper summarizes the outcomes and lessons from a three-year initiative focused on this question.

The Strengthening Aquatic Resource Governance project supported institutional innovations aiming to build resilient livelihoods among poor, rural producers who depend on wetland and freshwater resources; generate gains in nutrition, income, welfare and human security; and reduce the likelihood of broader social conflict. The STARGO project focused on three ecoregions: Lake Victoria, with a focus on Uganda; Lake Kariba, with a focus on Zambia; and Tonle Sap Lake in Cambodia. These ecoregions are characterized by persistent poverty, high dependence on aquatic resources for food security and livelihoods, intense resource competition, limited ability of local stakeholders to effectively influence decision-making processes and policies, and significant new pressures that could lead to broader social conflict if not effectively addressed.

Working in partnership with government, community and civil society actors, the initiative applied a common approach to stakeholder engagement and action research that we call "Collaborating for Resilience." In each ecoregion, collaborators used the CORE approach to assist local stakeholders in developing a shared understanding of risks and opportunities, weighing alternative actions, developing action plans, and evaluating and learning from the outcomes.

Institutional innovations supported under this initiative included attempts to increase community voices in private sector investment decisions and efforts to secure access rights for marginalized households in the face of competition. Innovations also sought to strengthen community-based co-management, resource protection and public health. Significant outcomes include improved attitudes toward collaboration and heightened dialogue among community groups, nongovernmental organizations and government agencies. Multistakeholder dialogues have also produced agreements with private investors and influenced government priorities in ways that respond to the needs of fishing communities. Finally, partners in the initiative are finding new sources of support to scale out innovations.

Cross-regional comparisons signal a range of emerging lessons. A first set of lessons is oriented toward policy officials and development agencies. This includes guidance on building stakeholder commitment, understanding the institutional and governance context, involving local groups in the policy reform process, and embracing adaptability in program implementation.

A second set of lessons is geared toward field-level practitioners in government and civil society. This includes guidance on designing multistakeholder dialogue processes, addressing gender equity, building accountability across scales, and encouraging learning and innovation over time.

These experiences of multistakeholder engagement demonstrate that investing in capacities for conflict management is practical and can contribute to broader improvements in resource governance. Systematic efforts are needed to compare and analyze the results of future experience in this domain across multiple resource systems to deepen our understanding of the factors that contribute to lasting transformation.

INTRODUCTION

The links between natural resources and conflict have received increasing attention over the last two decades. Research has shown that natural resources played a role in 40 percent of all intrastate conflicts in the last 60 years, and that the affected countries are twice as likely to relapse into conflict in the first five years following a settlement.[1] Much of this research has focused on the role of high-value resources such as oil, minerals, timber and diamonds in creating and sustaining conflict, especially large-scale conflict. At the same time, competition over scarcer renewable resources such as land and water has demonstrated significant conflict potential, especially at the local level. These local conflicts are frequent and impact the daily lives of many communities around the world.[2]

Research has also shown that natural resources have great potential to foster cooperation, transform or prevent conflicts, and build peace. The sustainable and equitable management of natural resources can prevent conflict, for example, by reducing grievances and building resilient livelihoods.[3] However, as the global population increases, economies develop and cities grow, the demand for natural resources is increasing — as are the negative impacts on the environment. At the same time, environmental change such as global warming is predicted to bring potentially large-scale impacts on water, land and ecosystems. These issues bring new urgency to the quest for approaches that transform the conflict potential of natural resources and harness their capacity to catalyze cooperation.

Photo Credit: Sree Kumar/Foundation for Ecological Security

In a meeting facilitated by the Foundation for Ecological Security, local leaders meet to identify opportunities for collaboration to rehabilitate shared waterways and halt soil erosion in Mahasagar District, Gujarat, India.

Lessons for policy

A first set of lessons is geared toward policy officials and program officers planning initiatives to address resource competition and invest in capacity for conflict management:

- **A dialogue approach requires time and stakeholder commitment.** For a dialogue to begin, competing groups must be willing to meet and explore solutions. Outside investments may deliver few results if not matched by local actors' belief in the value of collaboration. Participants will only see collaborative processes as valuable if the outcomes bring direct benefits as defined by the communities concerned.

- **Understanding the institutional and governance context is key to identifying appropriate areas for support.** Sometimes there is space for innovation in the absence of policy change, but reforms can provide a particularly opportune moment for local innovation if national agencies can engage effectively with local communities, adapt, and respond to their priorities.

- **Policy changes can aggravate conflicts when instituted without adequate stakeholder involvement.** National policy initiatives that are implemented from the top down, such as promotion of Nile perch exports in Uganda or maize production in Zambia, can leave fishing communities marginalized from decision-making, contributing to local tensions and conflict. A rapid attempt to introduce new rules, such as the post-reform fishing regulations in Cambodia, can also shortcut local input and build resentment. Achieving effective stakeholder involvement in reform decisions depends on robust civil society organizations.

- **Investing in collaboration and innovation requires a tolerance for uncertainty and risk.** Supporting local innovations means reorienting many of the conventional practices of project management. Blueprint plans, fixed timelines of activities and centralized decision-making must give way to adaptability, joint problem assessment and planning in mixed stakeholder groups. These dialogue processes can open up the possibility of more fundamental advances in conflict management.

While new tools have been developed to assess the linkages between environmental resources and conflict, as well as to identify opportunities for peacebuilding through collaborative resource management,[4] these tools have not previously been adapted or widely applied to aquatic resources. Such tools also remain largely confined to use by external agencies. Much remains to be learned about undertaking collaborative assessments with local stakeholders and building on the insights gained to support institutional innovation and learning, including approaches that draw on and enhance existing, traditional conflict resolution processes.

Taking these challenges and observations as a starting point, the Strengthening Aquatic Resource Governance project developed guidance and tools to support multistakeholder dialogue[5] and adapted these through application in three freshwater ecoregions. The STARGO project used the dialogue approach to develop institutional innovations aiming to build resilient livelihoods among poor, rural producers who depend on wetland and freshwater resources; generate gains in nutrition, income, welfare and human security; and reduce the likelihood of broader social conflict.

This action research focused on building such innovations in three ecoregions: Lake Victoria, with a focus on Uganda; Lake Kariba, with a focus on Zambia; and the Tonle Sap Lake in Cambodia. These ecoregions are characterized by persistent poverty, high dependence on aquatic resources for food security and livelihoods, intense resource competition, limited ability of local stakeholders to effectively influence decision-making processes and policies, and significant new pressures that could lead to broader social conflict if not effectively addressed.

This report summarizes and compares experiences and lessons from the three cases.[6] Partners in all three regions used a common approach to stakeholder engagement and action research that we call "Collaborating for Resilience." In each ecoregion, partners assisted local stakeholders in developing a shared understanding of risks and opportunities, weighing alternative actions, developing action plans, and evaluating and learning from the outcomes.

The next section compares the governance challenges and sources of resource conflict in each ecoregion, followed by an overview of the process for stakeholder engagement and action research. Subsequent sections then describe case studies of institutional innovations that resulted in each ecoregion, as well as a synthesis of policy lessons for governments, development agencies, and practitioners working on resource governance, rural livelihoods and conflict prevention.

Lessons for practice

A second set of lessons addresses field-level practitioners in government and civil society who are working with diverse stakeholders to better manage resource competition and increase local livelihood resilience:

- **A structured process of multistakeholder dialogue can open new opportunities for collaboration.** Understanding stakeholders' prior experiences with conflict and collaboration can help shape the approach, and a wide range of possible methods and techniques are potentially useful in creating a quality dialogue process. Effective dialogue can resolve disputes before they escalate, and may be welcomed by new players, including outside investors.

- **Attention to women's voices and decision-making roles can open new pathways to institutional change.** Observing gender inequities and other power imbalances can lead to creative adaptations to include all voices in the dialogue process, such as using informal consultations prior to or on the sidelines of a multistakeholder workshop. Supporting individual change agents in government, civil society and the private sector who are prepared to advocate for women's voices and concerns can help shift institutional priorities.

- **Building cross-scale linkages and accountability can help sustain local initiative.** Questioning assumptions about stakeholder roles, such as what may be blocking effective communication between communities and government agencies, is the first step toward reinforcing effective linkages. Addressing local disputes often requires support from higher levels of administration, and successful examples of this type of collaboration can help strengthen mechanisms of accountability over time.

- **Effective stakeholder engagement can build a culture of learning and innovation.** Structured reflection is critical during implementation of institutional innovations. Addressing open-ended questions such as "What changes have we seen?" and "What are the obstacles remaining?" may be more meaningful for participants than quantitative metrics. Participatory monitoring and evaluation efforts that focus first on the needs of local stakeholders can also build capacity for improved collaboration among local change agents, government agencies and external funders.

This section summarizes the context for the work in each ecoregion, taking into account governance challenges, sources of resource conflict and opportunities for addressing these. Each case study considers interactions across scales with regard to ecosystem services, livelihood opportunities, and institutions of government, civil society and the private sector.

Putting conflict in context

Conflicts are a normal part of societies and not inherently negative. In essence, conflict is "a relationship among two or more parties, whether marked by violence or not, based on actual or perceived differences in needs, interests and goals."[7] This means that conflict can often be an important force for social change. At the same time, if not handled well, conflict can escalate and develop into a negative force, destroying human life, the environment and social relations.[8]

Managing allocation of and access to resources inevitably means addressing diverging interests that can lead to conflict. Conflicts also arise around negative environmental impacts, such as the pollution of water resources or destruction of ecosystems. Local or community-based resource conflicts refer to conflicts that take place on a subnational level; for example, when different communities or private sector players fight over the allocation of forest resources. However, while these conflicts take place at local levels, they often involve regional, national and even global actors.[9] From an environment and livelihoods perspective, these conflicts can undermine existing institutions for resource governance. This leads to unsustainable exploitation, environmental degradation, economic decline and deteriorating livelihoods. From a conflict perspective, these disputes can feed into or interact with other grievances and conflict structures. If they turn violent, they can rip apart the fabric of society.[10]

Local resource conflicts are complex and highly context-specific. This means that there is no simple causal link between natural resources and conflict. Environmental and resource-related factors, among multiple other causes, interact with the broader social, political, cultural and economic context.[11] One important factor is governance: If governance institutions are legitimate, inclusive, representative and transparent, conflicts can often be solved or managed in a peaceful manner.[12] On the other side, conflicts are more likely to develop and escalate when certain groups are marginalized or excluded. These dynamics can be exacerbated by strong group identities, which can be used to mobilize participants and escalate a conflict, especially when it turns violent.[13]

Resource competition and conflict in three ecoregions

Each of the three ecoregions targeted in the STARGO project concerns a large lake ecosystem of international significance. The two African lake systems are bordered by multiple states (Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania in the case of Lake Victoria; Zambia and Zimbabwe in the case of Lake Kariba), while Tonle Sap Lake in Cambodia is directly affected by decisions of upstream and downstream users of the Mekong River system (China, Myanmar, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam).

In all three lake systems, fisheries resources are of central importance for food security, rural livelihoods and national economies. For this reason, conflict potential can increase if the resources and ecosystems are allowed to degrade to the point where they cannot sustain rural livelihoods.[14] Sustainable management is thus critical to reducing the vulnerabilities that poor families face and to maintaining social stability.

Photo Credit: Ryder Hauke/People's Television, Inc.

Cage aquaculture on Lake Kariba, Zambia

Amid increasing competition over natural resources, national governments in all three of the focal countries (Uganda, Zambia and Cambodia) have launched significant policy initiatives aimed at decentralization of rural development planning, including natural resource management. This reflects a broader global trend toward devolution of authority from central to local levels. This transfer is intended to support community livelihoods,[15] as well as increase participation of local communities in development planning.[16] In the fisheries sector, decentralization includes efforts in all three countries to institutionalize co-management. However, limited support services, weak organizational capacity of community organizations, and marginalization of poor fishing households from influence in policy formulation and implementation have posed significant obstacles in each of the countries.

Conflicts in the three lake systems have evolved differently as a result of region-specific histories and institutional dynamics. In Lake Victoria, many small conflicts persist at the communal level that have the potential to escalate quickly and immobilize fisheries management processes. Recent conflict behaviors in Lake Victoria include verbal confrontations and mutual threats between fishers and higher-level authorities, shaming and fines by local authorities, acts of civil disorder by groups within fishing communities, and property destruction and use of violence by both community members and government authorities. For example, taxes for landing fish at one landing site were increased by the subcounty leaders without proper consultation with local stakeholders. This resulted in further interpersonal and institutional conflicts that were angrily aired during meetings between the STARGO team, the fishing community, and leaders from higher levels of public administration. Theft of fishing gear is also a frequent source of local conflict.

In Zambia, conflicts among natural resource users are unfolding in the particularly sensitive context of ethnic marginalization and change in the racial makeup of the commercial fishing industry. When the Zambezi River was dammed in 1959 to create Lake Kariba, 35,000 households were relocated, sometimes under duress from the state.[17] These communities, mainly of the Gwembe Tonga ethnic group, remain marginalized politically, socially and economically. In recent years, the number of black Zambians in the historically white-dominated commercial fishing industry has increased.

However, there are frequent conflicts between the established white commercial fishers, new "small scale" semi-commercial fishers from urban areas of Zambia, and artisanal players.[18] Recent commercial aquaculture and tourism investments on the lake have spawned new tensions over access to the shoreline and fishing grounds. Conflict behaviors included destruction of gill nets by commercial "kapenta" fishing vessels, confiscation of nets by hotel owners, complaints of noise pollution from engines by hotel and lodge owners, fishing in prohibited zones, and trespassing by villagers on private property.

In Cambodia, fisheries conflicts have been violent in the past, and have included large-scale protests, which helped motivate a series of reforms. Cambodia's freshwater fishery sector reform is a regionally significant example of a policy shift toward decentralized natural resource management. The reform was implemented in two main waves. The first took place in 2000–2001, when 56 percent of the area covered by fishing lots in Tonle Sap Lake was released for community access. In early 2012, the second wave of reform culminated in the complete removal of all inland commercial fishing lots. This was part of a broader campaign to address poor management, widespread illegal fishing and ongoing fisheries conflicts around Tonle Sap Lake.[19] Many lakeshore fishing communities also face disputes over conversion of seasonally flooded forest lands for dry-season rice cultivation, which is often backed by powerful investors from outside the local area.[20]

Comparisons, challenges and opportunities

Despite variation among the three regions in conflict behaviors and conflict intensities, there are many similarities. In all three ecoregions, most conflicts stem from attempts to control or limit community access to fisheries resources; for example, through licensing, prohibitions on use of certain fishing gears, fishing in prescribed zones, and by taxation or other fees on fishing activities. When describing conflict causes, fishers in Lake Kariba, Lake Victoria and Tonle Sap all point to a "shrinking commons," with increasing pressure on the fisheries resources due to greater fishing effort. Fishing yields per unit effort are reported to be decreasing, pushing fishers toward illegal practices and theft. Conflicts between large-scale and small-scale fishers are also common.

In the context of broader decentralization reforms, the governments of each of the three focal countries are working to address the intensifying claims on fisheries resources through varying forms of co-management. In Uganda, fisheries growth continues to be export-driven.[21] Policy therefore strongly supports industrial fishers, who are predominantly foreigners. This situation leaves villagers in many local beach management units feeling overlooked. In Zambia, the government has tried to create a space for indigenous Zambians to take part in commercial fishing under a newly revised fisheries law.[22] However, the institutions to support co-management are still incomplete. In Cambodia, government policy has recently shifted to prioritize the livelihoods of small-scale fishers over commercial interests in freshwater fisheries, with renewed emphasis on strengthening a broad network of community fisheries.[23]

Decentralizing natural resource management brings a host of challenges. These challenges often include an increase in competition as local actors maneuver to access new rights, influence resource allocation decisions, capture positions of power at the local level, or take advantage of gaps in enforcement.[24] At the same time, decentralization reforms can contribute to local dispute resolution while helping build institutional capacities and relationships for improved resource governance. To pursue such gains, practitioners and policymakers need to pay attention to power differences among actors; support mediation between stakeholders; transparently specify benefit and cost sharing between communities, the private sector and governments; safeguard against manipulation of community representative bodies by individuals or interest groups; and build measures for gender equity into resource management planning.[25]

PROCESS OF STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND ACTION RESEARCH

Noting the differences in the context for resource conflict and collaboration in each of the ecoregions, the STARGO project set out to develop and apply a common approach to stakeholder engagement and action research. This section compares the process of participatory dialogue, action and learning aimed at building capacity to manage and transform local resource conflict in each of the sites.

Principles of CORE

Collaborating for Resilience, or CORE, provides a framework for understanding stakeholder interactions and organizing for social and institutional change. This framework is distinguished by its emphasis on whole systems, by an open search for solutions and by its explicit treatment of power. These characteristics make the approach especially well suited to catalyzing collective action to address shared challenges of natural resource management. It is not meant as an approach to intervene in active, violent conflicts, nor to mediate between opposing groups who are unwilling to meet in dialogue and explore options for the future.[26]

The approach aims to transform stakeholder relationships in ways that promote collaboration, learning and resilience. In a nutshell, the principles can be understood in terms of purpose, people and process:

1. The CORE approach is **purpose-driven**. Collaborating for resilience requires transforming social relationships. The most fundamental condition for transformation is clarity of purpose. There is a tension in finding a purpose that is broad enough to bring all the key players to the table, yet specific enough to address real needs and motivate action.

2. **People** make the CORE approach work. In preparing for an initiative, organizers actively seek out the participation of key people from a wide range of stakeholder groups. In conditions of natural resource competition, this means going beyond a particular sector to address the root causes of the problem, potentially bridging several geographic and institutional scales.

3. The CORE **process** aims at continuous development of institutional capacity to address the roots of resource competition and build resilience. While the principles of the approach can be used in small planning meetings or large, multiday dialogue events, the premise is that complex challenges require multifaceted responses over time. This means that action, reflection and learning from experience are embedded in the process.

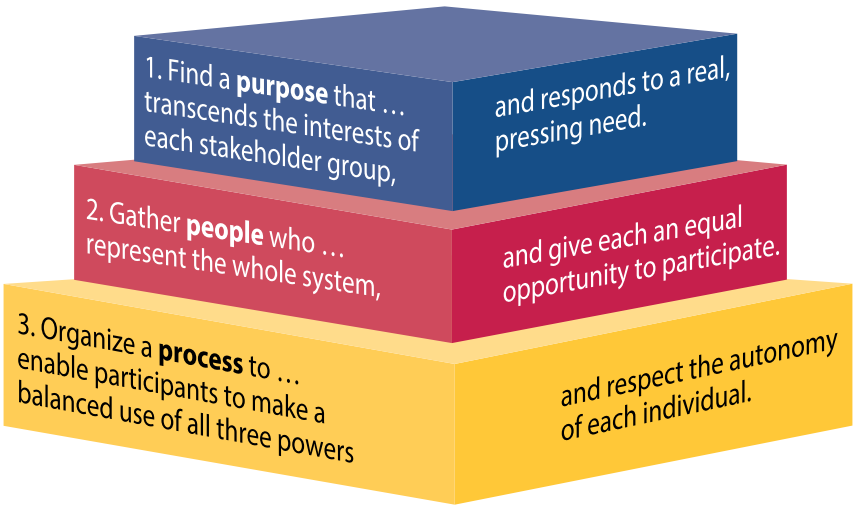


Figure 1. Principles of the CORE approach

The CORE approach provides a set of orienting concepts, principles and practices that different groups — including civil society organizations, development agencies and governments — can adapt to the socio-cultural context and particular challenges at hand.[27] For the STARGO project, the process included several months of scoping in preparation for a sequence of multistakeholder workshops. These workshops, while adopting different tools, followed a common format broken into three phases, roughly equal in time:

1. Building a shared awareness of the issues, the possibilities for the future, and the constraints and opportunities of the current situation (the **listening** phase).

2. Debate over different possible courses of action to pursue a common purpose, including an assessment of the groups that may support and oppose such actions (the **dialogue** phase).

3. Deciding on an action plan comprised of commitments by individuals and multistakeholder teams, including a reflection on the degree to which these actions will achieve the common purpose (the **choice** phase).

Guidance on the CORE approach,[28] as well as a suite of tools for use in assessment, planning, monitoring and evaluation,[29] were developed in advance of initiating the multistakeholder dialogue processes in each case study site, then adapted on the basis of learning from these cases. The following summaries give an overview of how the process was adapted to each local setting.

Applications in each ecoregion

Stakeholders in Lake Victoria were familiar with participatory mobilization meetings, but were not acquainted with multilevel dialogue processes, especially around fisheries governance. Therefore, the STARGO team spent time explaining the broad concepts of dialogue, ownership and agency behind the CORE approach. To address power imbalances among stakeholders, the team organized a preparatory workshop to give community participants the opportunity to make their voices heard and to enhance their capacity to engage other stakeholders. This was followed by a multistakeholder workshop bringing together government representatives from various levels alongside representatives of three lakeshore and island communities, and later, smaller meetings to review progress.

Figure 2. Three phases of the CORE approach

In the Lake Kariba region, reviews during scoping showed that previous initiatives were limited in large part because of biases toward sectoral interests. STARGO's first workshop mobilized all the key stakeholders involved in the use and management of the lake to envision a desired future against the current realities. This was followed by a smaller workshop that focused on actions that artisanal fishers, on the lowest rungs of the social hierarchy, and other stakeholders like the Department of Fisheries could pursue to promote dialogue. The organizing team opted for a learning-by-doing strategy to foster a locally owned and locally driven approach to developing the capacity for co-management, including linkages with private investors.

In the Tonle Sap region, civil society groups have long contested the fairness of commercial fishing lots that skewed access to the fisheries in favor of a few powerful groups. Recently, state reforms suspended and then permanently cancelled commercial lots and required agencies to plan and implement changes to increase community-based management. However, civil society networks and a range of relevant agencies were poorly prepared to coordinate their efforts in response to the changing policy context. STARGO supported a lake basin-wide dialogue workshop, followed by local and provincial-level workshops focused on facilitating institutional innovations among communities in Kampong Thom Province.

Monitoring and evaluation

The monitoring and evaluation approach was based on clearly defining the theory of change that underlay and guided each of the community-led actions and institutional innovations in the three regions. The theories of change and associated output, outcome and impact indicators focused mainly on the personal and relational dimensions of conflict and cooperation. The personal dimension includes individual attitudes toward members of another group, while the relational dimension covers the relationships and patterns of interaction between individuals and groups.

The goal was not only to report on outcomes but foremost to foster learning among local stakeholders (see Figure 3). Therefore, the monitoring and evaluation systems were designed in a participatory manner, taking into account that most of the actors involved had little or no experience in the use of such tools. The theories of change, indicators and monitoring activities were defined and implemented by the local partners, including communities, nongovernmental organizations, and government institutions. These activities included structured approaches such as questionnaires, focus group discussions and individual interviews, and narrative descriptions of personal experience such as participant diaries. Research team members convened local stakeholders periodically to discuss and review findings as a means of validation and collective learning.

Figure 3. Monitoring and evaluation in the CORE approach to participatory learning and action

INSTITUTIONAL INNOVATIONS AND OUTCOMES

Institutional innovations supported under this initiative included attempts to increase community voices in private sector investment decisions and efforts to secure access rights for marginalized households in the face of competition. Other innovations sought to strengthen community-based co-management, resource protection and public health. Although in each case the STARGO team focused on communities that depend significantly on fishing for income and livelihood, the priorities that emerged from the participatory dialogue processes were not restricted to fisheries or natural resource management, as the dialogue processes provided space for consideration of multiple dimensions of livelihood resilience and vulnerability. The following subsections summarize the institutional innovations and outcomes in each case study, as measured through evaluations led by local actors.

Lake Victoria

Figure 4. Map of Lake Victoria

In the Lake Victoria ecoregion, stakeholders chose actions they felt would directly reduce poverty and indirectly reduce resource competition in their communities. In the main site of Kachanga, community members sought to reduce fecal contamination to water resources, fisheries and agricultural lands as a way to improve water quality, human health and productivity, and fish health. There, community members, beach management units, the Department of Fisheries Resources, and local and district administrations have worked together successfully to build a new sanitation facility. The collaboration strengthened linkages with relevant supportive institutions at community, subcounty, district, regional and national levels, and has drawn interest from other communities. In the nearby island community of Kasekulo, locals have taken steps to improve income through value-added fish processing and reducing rates of post-harvest loss, which is reported at up to 80 percent.

Significant outcomes include the following:

Improved attitudes toward collaboration. During the initial multistakeholder workshop, there were clear signs of tension and frequent verbal disputes between fishers, members of beach management units, and Department of Fisheries Resources officers. Fishers described the "government" (represented by higher-level administrative officers and extension workers) as corrupt and as having abandoned the communities to live without basic services. Some community members refused to contribute to the sanitation project until the construction began. Once the work started, coordination meetings attracted more participants, and by the end of the process the attitudes of community members interviewed had shifted from skepticism to conviction about their central role in setting priorities. Villagers who took on leadership roles as champions of the latrine and biogas facility also earned a new level of legitimacy and trust from community members. They have since mobilized community contributions to construct a public kitchen fueled by the biogas, providing a safe and affordable way for villagers to boil water and cook.

Strengthened basis for co-management. The planning, procurement and construction of the sanitation facility increased opportunities for dialogue, networking and communication among the community-level institutions, with higher administrative bodies, and among community members. The subcounty and district authorities gave political support and recognition to the construction during several visits to Kachanga. The traditional leader of the subcounty also visited Kachanga to observe progress in the construction. Following completion of the biogas facility and having put in place a system to


Photo Credit: Ryder Tasker, People's Television, Inc.

Kachanga landing site, Lake Victoria, Uganda

manage its upkeep, the same collection of leaders is now pursuing support from government and outside agencies to address the lack of clean water for drinking and domestic use. This includes members of the beach management unit responsible for planning and implementing fisheries co-management activities, indicating a more active role and improved prospects for future engagement in management efforts beyond the local scale.

Influence on local government. At the beginning of the process, it was very difficult to engage the subcounty and district administration. There was a marked change during the monitoring and evaluation phase. Officials from Masaka District and technical extension staff cite the practical relevance of the activities carried out in Kachanga for planning further developments in the water, sanitation and health sectors in Masaka District. The Ministry of Water and Environment has committed to complementing the sanitation facilities with water and waste disposal systems, providing complete water, sanitation and hygiene service. This will, if implemented, go well beyond the scope of initial community-led actions to meet the wider community vision of "a peaceful, clean landing site with modern infrastructure, and healthier, more prosperous community members." Support from Department of Fisheries Resources officers also signals a new level of responsiveness to community priorities.

New linkages for scaling out. UNICEF and the German Society for International Cooperation have asked the research team to share lessons learned about community engagement in operations and maintenance of communal facilities. The Ugandan Ministry of Water and Environment is seeking to analyze lessons from the Kachanga experience to see how it can extend and complement such community-led activities. The U.N. Human Settlements Program, known as UN-HABITAT, has also agreed to further develop the community management model used at the Kachanga site. This includes incorporating community-driven user fees in future local infrastructure projects planned for construction by the government of Uganda with funding from the African Development Bank. Also, Makerere University views its partnership with the Kachanga community and local government as an important part of its long-term research on ecohealth and diseases in emerging livestock systems.

Lake Kariba

Figure 5. Map of Lake Kariba

In the Lake Kariba ecoregion, the focal site was a set of villages around Kamimbi in Siavonga District. Actions identified included activities focused on managing current and potential conflict arising from the use of the fishery, collaboration to resolve tension over use of the land on the lakeshore, and development of local capacity to engage and leverage a "win-win" relationship with current and future private sector investors in the region. Project activities included facilitating meetings among the communities affected by the privatization of previously common-property land, between communities and the traditional leaders responsible for allocating land to investors, and between communities and investors. The meetings were intended to support a shift from confrontation to collaboration.

Significant outcomes include the following:

Community access to legal rights. The initial dialogue workshop revealed that community members lacked a voice in decisions over the allocation of shoreline and fishing areas to investors. By law, large-scale investments are subject to environmental impact assessment procedures, which include requirements for community participation. The Zambian Environmental Management Agency was therefore invited to train fishing communities and Department of Fisheries staff on environmental impact assessment provisions. The aim was to encourage the use of environmental impact assessment as a platform to promote dialogue between investors on the lakeshore and fishing communities.

New agreements from dialogue with private investors. The fishing village of Kamimbi subsequently convened a meeting, mediated by the regional chief, that resulted in a negotiated agreement with one of the investors to address how to maintain access routes villagers and their children use that the investor had blocked. Multiple stakeholders cited the ongoing dialogue with investors as an empowering and transformative process. The village management committee also found that the dialogue approach brought it a new legitimacy, enabling it to address other community concerns in discussions with the regional chief. Regarding land allocation to investors, for example, the chief has shifted toward a much more inclusive mode of consultation with village leaders.

Improved collaboration between artisanal and commercial fishers. A second priority addressed a history of local conflict, where larger-scale fishing rigs targeting "kapenta" (the prime, wild-caught commercial fish in the lake) have destroyed artisanal fishers' gear. The district commissioner of Siavonga had already been looking into this issue, and called for a meeting between the Kapenta Fishers Association and artisanal fishers, where each group raised complaints against the other. Stakeholders agreed to a follow-up meeting, and the Department of Fisheries officer at Siavonga engaged in helping to mediate the dispute as part of a broader effort at implementing community-based co-management. As a result, villagers report a marked reduction in complaints between the small-scale and commercial "kapenta" fishers.

New linkages for transboundary collaboration on trade and gender equity. In early scoping exercises, women villagers identified transboundary fish trade with Zimbabwe as a significant concern and source of vulnerability. Responding to this concern, a team at the University of Zimbabwe led a dialogue workshop in Kariba to probe opportunities for improving transboundary collaboration. At a follow-up meeting in Siavonga, women traders, Department of Fisheries officials and Zimbabwe national parks staff discussed the challenges with current fish trade arrangements, including the burdensome administrative procedures at the border that often lead to significant spoilage and losses for traders, predominately women. The action research has prompted follow-up actions by the Department of Fisheries and Smart Fish, an NGO focused on fish trade, to address these concerns.

Interest in lessons for national policy implementation. Impressed by the use of environmental impact assessment procedures as a trigger for effective dialogue between investors and communities, Zambian Environmental Management Agency staff are making plans to incorporate the dialogue principles into their support for environmental impact assessment implementation in other areas. Similarly, the director of the Department of Fisheries has identified the STARGO collaboration as a key source of learning in the development of a renewed national policy on fisheries co-management.

Tonle Sap Lake

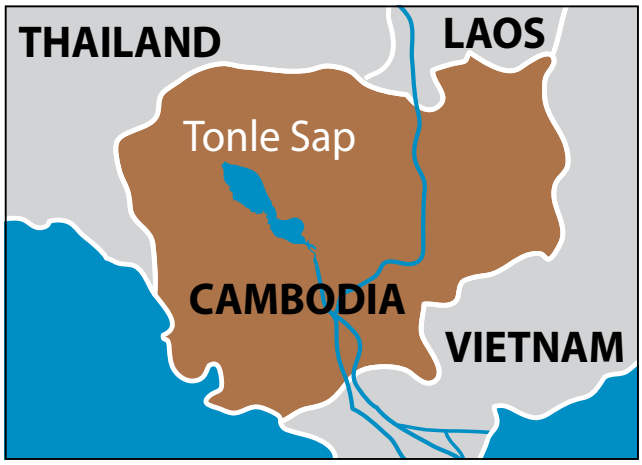


Figure 6. Map of Tonle Sap Lake

The first step in identifying local institutional innovations in the Tonle Sap Lake ecoregion was to support multistakeholder dialogue sessions in each of the focal communities in Kampong Thom Province. These sessions helped local actors to assess their own issues, identify actions within their own capabilities, and make commitments as part of community action plans. As it became clear that the area of public access and community fisheries would be significantly expanded, local priorities shifted from advocacy for increasing access to fishing grounds to making the community fisheries more effective. At the provincial level, the action research team brought together government officials, community representatives and local authorities from Phat Sanday, Peam Bang and Kampong Kor communes. The group discussed issues of common concern, developed action plans, and identified new opportunities for cooperation to aid in implementing the community-level action plans.

Significant outcomes include the following:

Implementation of joint patrolling to improve resource protection. Community fishery organizations in all three communities have completed restructuring of their management and strengthened their patrolling. An innovation was the use of joint patrols combining community fishery organization members and fishery officers, which both cite as a sign of improved collaboration. Community fishery organization committees are meeting more regularly and cite improved collaboration across different local management areas. This includes collaboration with village and commune authorities and local police across the three sites in cracking down on illegal fishing, as well as raising awareness about fisheries regulations.

Reduced conflict between fishers and dry-season rice farmers. A local dialogue in Kampong Kor Commune resulted in a negotiated agreement on water allocation between dry-season rice farming and maintaining water for fisheries. The community fishery organization and dry-season rice farmers association reached a verbal agreement in the presence of provincial line departments and other stakeholders. Fisheries Administration officials subsequently followed up to formalize the agreement. Enforcing it has remained a challenge, however, particularly as it was being implemented in an especially dry year. As a result of the dialogue process, community fishery organization members have also become more aware and articulate regarding how flooded forest clearing affects habitat for fish spawning, sedimentation, and the availability of water for irrigation in the dry season.

Piloting of community-based commercial production. At a national dialogue workshop, the Director General of the Fisheries Administration confirmed his readiness to support piloting of a new form of community-based management. The pilot model would permit commercial capture fisheries under community management, with safeguards to ensure adequate resource protection and benefit sharing. The model has not yet been implemented on the Tonle Sap Lake, as it would require a change in or exemption from current regulation, but civil society groups continue to organize for approval of the details of a pilot effort. The Fisheries Administration is similarly motivated to draw on the lessons of such local innovations to inform future policy implementation.

Sustaining learning across scales. At the national policy dialogue, the Fisheries Administration director responded to the exchange of lessons on local innovations by affirming a need for further participatory, multistakeholder monitoring and evaluation processes to assist in implementation of the ongoing fisheries reforms. These processes require the involvement of the Fisheries Administration, local authorities, community fishery committees and others. The focal communities in Kampong Thom are preparing to share their experiences with 10 other communities around the Tonle Sap Lake as part of the larger CGIAR Research Program on Aquatic Agricultural Systems. And in the mountainous region of northeast Cambodia, the Analysing Development Issues Centre has applied its experience with the CORE approach in the Tonle Sap ecoregion to its work on indigenous people's land rights and community forestry.

STARGO project experience in the three ecoregions has confirmed the need for and the value of a collaborative, stakeholder-driven approach to addressing the roots of resource conflict. Cross-regional comparison has also highlighted a range of emerging lessons. The lessons in this section are oriented toward policy officials and development agencies planning initiatives to build capacity for conflict management and collaboration in natural resource management.

A dialogue approach requires appropriate conditions, time and stakeholder commitment

For a dialogue to begin, competing groups must be willing to meet and explore solutions. However, as the experiences in all three regions have shown, not everybody must be involved and show the same commitment from the beginning. Often actors that did not take the process seriously at first changed their attitude as they saw the process being successful and showing first results. Accepting the reality of varying levels of commitment requires significant patience and trust in the process by the organizers and agencies who fund these activities. The longer timeframe and depth of participation needed also require considerable resources and commitment.

The approach is best suited to the initial stages of conflict, before disputes become entrenched. In particular, it is not intended for application in the context of large-scale violence such as civil war or in countries that have just emerged out of large-scale violent conflict. Participative approaches in these contexts are often faced with more obstacles and risks — including the personal safety of the actors involved. In circumstances of ongoing, severe conflict or post-conflict situations, professional mediation capacities may be needed.[30] This was not the case in any of the three regions where this initiative focused.

Past experiences with collective action influence people's readiness to collaborate. Frequent migration that changes the mix of residents at landing sites, as witnessed in the case of Lake Victoria, can impede a sense of community cohesion.[31] Disappointing past experiences with collective action or failed attempts to gain the support of state agencies can similarly sap people's interest in attempting new joint efforts. At the Kachanga landing site, residents had previously formed small savings circles to fund individual self-help projects, but there were few prior examples of the whole community working together to reach an overarching community goal. Indeed, the attempt to facilitate dialogue and plan multistakeholder actions incorporating a high level of individual agency and collaboration was initially met with some puzzlement. By contrast, in the floating village of Phat Sanday in Cambodia, memories of working together to advocate for fisheries reform were still quite fresh. This motivated people to work toward more complex efforts such as joint patrolling and community-based commercial production.

Sustaining new collaborations requires long-term funding and commitment built over time. Participants will only see collaborative processes as valuable if the outcomes bring direct benefits as defined by the communities concerned. Outside investments may deliver few results if not matched by local actors' belief in the value of collaboration, which takes time to build. In the case of the moderately violent conflicts over fisheries revenue collection and fisheries enforcement in Lake Victoria, trust had been eroded to such a degree that long-term investments needed to be made in capacity building for conflict management at the community level. This is why supporting actions in Kachanga responding to an immediate expressed need — improved sanitation — were appropriate to build experience and improve the prospects for subsequent collaboration on resource management challenges at larger ecosystem scales.

Photo Credit: Blake Ratner/WorldFish

Community representatives, civil society leaders and government officials examine the context for strengthening community fisheries around the Tonle Sap Lake; Siem Reap, Cambodia

Understanding the institutional and governance context is key to identifying appropriate areas for support

Sometimes there is space for innovation in the absence of policy change. Earlier initiatives toward co-management in both Lake Kariba and Tonle Sap Lake were implemented despite the lack of an enabling policy or law. In the case of Tonle Sap, early experimentation provided a positive example and gave legitimacy to subsequent legal reforms and a national rollout of community-based management. In Lake Kariba, on the other hand, earlier efforts left few examples of active village-level organizations a decade later. According to some observers, co-management projects in Zambia were historically largely donor-driven, failing to build local institutional capacity and commitment.[32] A policy mandate cannot substitute for careful attention to stakeholder roles, relationships and motivations in initiatives to promote collaborative resource management.

Reform can also provide an opening for local innovation. In the case of Tonle Sap, the recent fisheries policy reform opened up new opportunities for collaboration and experimentation. Communities like Peam Bang and Phat Sanday are testing out joint patrols, which have helped reduce tensions between small-scale fishers and local authorities, though they lack an ongoing source of funding. Similarly, by removing an old system of management based on commercial concessions, the reform has created an opportunity to explore new models, such as community-based commercial fisheries production. Communities see this as an opportunity to boost local incomes and generate funds for resource protection — goals that align with national policy for the sector.

Promoting collaboration requires national agencies responsive to local priorities. In Lake Kariba, the decentralization policy provided a rationale for co-management, but the flow of resources to the local level was very slight and there was very little actual support from central agencies. Recognizing this history, the partners found it critical to demonstrate alternative approaches locally and to engage higher-level agencies along the way. In Cambodia, locals often find it difficult to distinguish among the roles of agencies such as the Tonle Sap Authority, the Fisheries Administration, and environment departments at the provincial level. Better distinguishing the roles of different agencies and their responsibilities toward the success of community fisheries is an important step toward making them more accessible and responsive, as well as strengthening inter-agency collaboration.

Policy changes can aggravate conflicts when instituted without adequate stakeholder involvement

Disconnects between national policy initiatives and local needs contribute to local tension and conflict. Dialogue participants in all three regions identified important instances in which they felt national policy was at odds with local needs. For example, participants argued that Ugandan fisheries management policy is premised on the assumption of national economic growth benefiting all. The main focus is sustaining Nile perch production to protect export revenue. Local communities may benefit little directly but are nevertheless asked to carry the burden of protection. In Zambia, agricultural policy favors maize production, with fishers expressing a sense of feeling overlooked and left to fend for themselves amid new developments like aquaculture investment or increases in cross-border fishing.

Rules changed without community participation can prompt new disputes. In Cambodia, the recent wave of fisheries reform explicitly recognized the need for more equitable resource access and called for a study of management options. Yet, in an effort to introduce new rules quickly, decisions on allocation of fishing grounds and gear regulation were instituted with little consultation. Rules formulated without community consultation have been viewed as unsuited to local needs, building tension between the communities and enforcement entities. Poorer households reportedly remain particularly disadvantaged, as they are unprepared to invest in the gear required to benefit from increased access to fishing grounds. The reforms have also raised new ecological risks as more people are drawn to fish, particularly in the flood plain, increasing pressure on sensitive fish habitats and creating the potential for more conflict over limited resources. Reflecting on these experiences, national policy forum participants emphasized the importance of local participation in formulating rules and policies that affect fishing communities.

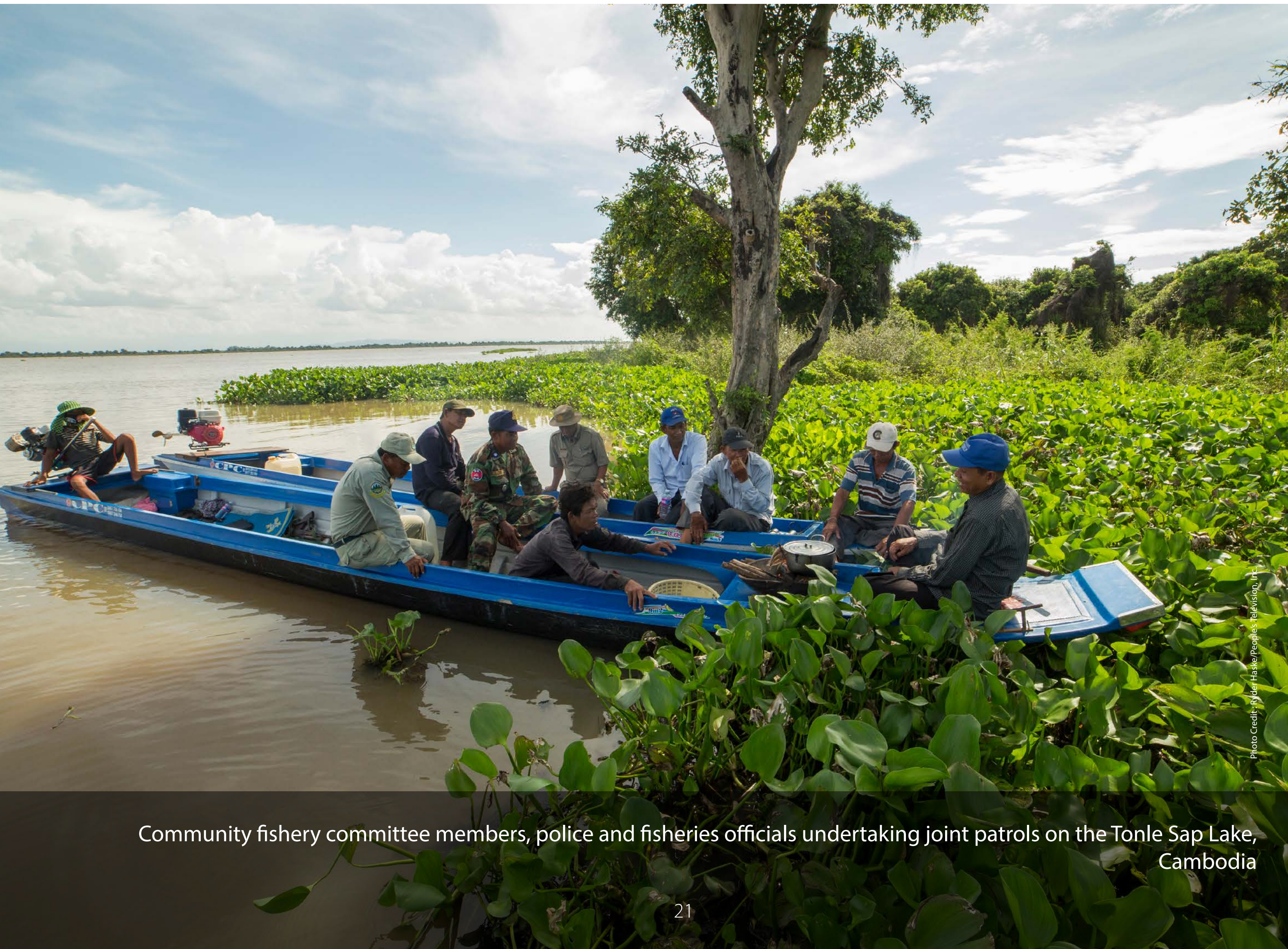
Achieving effective stakeholder involvement in reform decisions depends on robust civil society organizations. In Cambodia, where freshwater fisheries policy is a high priority compared to many countries, civil society networks have achieved notable success as advocates of reform on the Tonle Sap Lake.[33] By contrast, in Uganda, the relatively low policy priority on small-scale fisheries means fishing communities have found it much more difficult to advocate for the sector and their priorities in local development planning processes. In Zambia, the renewed policy focus on fisheries co-management has prompted recent efforts by the Zambian Environmental Management Agency and the Department of Fisheries to increase their capacity for outreach to local communities. However, a shortage of civil society networks linking fishing communities and representing their interests remains an obstacle to effective implementation.

Investing in collaboration and innovation requires a tolerance for uncertainty and risk

Supporting local innovations means reorienting many of the conventional practices of project management. In the STARGO experience, it was critical for teams in each ecoregion to seek out ways to support collaborative actions by local and national stakeholders in line with the agreed purpose, yet with a sense of real flexibility about the specific objectives that would emerge. Blueprint plans, fixed timelines of activities and centralized decision-making had to give way to adaptability and joint planning in mixed stakeholder groups. In each of the cases, the scoping and dialogue processes helped to identify local champions of change who proved critical in catalyzing collective action. Not necessarily in formal positions of leadership, these change agents drew their influence from first-hand knowledge of the issues at hand, an ability to relate to multiple stakeholders, and — most critically — trust earned from their interactions with others over time.

Authorities need to demonstrate openness to solutions that build on local insight and initiative. Small "early wins" can help build local commitment and demonstrate that the space for innovation is authentic. In Lake Kariba, initiating multistakeholder dialogue events and facilitating joint action planning was sufficient for local groups to build a sense of shared purpose. In subsequent negotiations with investors, they felt empowered by a sense that national authorities and the traditional chief would hear their concerns. In Lake Victoria, constructive communication between community members and subcounty and district-level authorities intensified after the initial multistakeholder dialogue. Bolstered by the commitment expressed by a local government leader in a joint meeting, Kachanga community members took initiative to raise their own funds for the common sanitation project.

Embracing uncertainty and a measure of risk opens the possibility of more fundamental advances in conflict management. In Tonle Sap, the reforms announced by the prime minister soon after the start of project implementation shifted the realm of the possible. The Fisheries Administration is the lead agency responsible for ensuring sustainability of the sector. Recognizing its limited capacity and the suddenly expanded area of fishing grounds released from the commercial lots, it became the key proponent of more ambitious plans to support community fisheries. The deputy director general in charge of community fisheries, in particular, took the lead in proposing aggressive milestones for negotiating and piloting efforts in joint patrolling and community-based commercial production. This illustrates how the realm of influence for an initiative can change quickly, and how efforts to invest in capacity for conflict management can accelerate when these openings are identified and plans shifted accordingly.



Community fishery committee members, police and fisheries officials undertaking joint patrols on the Tonle Sap Lake, Cambodia

LESSONS FOR PRACTICE: WORKING WITH STAKEHOLDERS TO BUILD COLLABORATION FOR RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The CORE guidance on multistakeholder dialogue helped foster collaboration under difficult circumstances in a range of socio-political and ecological settings, demonstrating the value of the underlying principles.[34] The following lessons are oriented toward field-level practitioners in government and civil society working with diverse stakeholders to build collaboration in order to better manage resource competition and increase local livelihood resilience. The lessons emphasize the importance of adapting the general approach to specific local conditions, taking into account new obstacles and opportunities as they emerge.

A structured process of multistakeholder dialogue can open new opportunities for collaboration

Understanding stakeholders' prior experiences with conflict and collaboration can help shape the approach. In Lake Victoria, the team responsible for designing the dialogue process recognized that multiple pre-existing conflicts had led to strongly negative attitudes on the part of community members toward government officials, including Department of Fisheries officers. Expecting that community members might be hesitant to participate openly and confidently, the team organized a separate preparation workshop with community members prior to the main workshop. This preparation helped them become some of the most active participants during the larger dialogue workshop. In Lake Kariba, the research team noticed that participants repeatedly praised the effectiveness of this dialogue forum and subsequent action planning compared to other platforms for presenting their interests. Since community judgments of effectiveness are constantly reassessed and can change quickly based on perceptions of progress, the team focused on early achievements to build confidence.

A quality dialogue process requires flexibility to build stakeholder engagement. One measure of a quality process is the authentic ownership that participants develop in their action planning and implementation. Simple decisions such as conducting the workshops in the local language helped encourage active participation, even if it meant outsiders had to adapt. In Lake Victoria, when community representatives returned to their villages after the main workshop, two of the three sites ended up changing their plans. Bringing together three communities encouraged people to reflect, to compare their experiences and to rethink their priorities. In an unusual show of local commitment, villagers in Kachanga raised money from within the community for building materials, got district council approval for building the latrine and biogas facility, and secured a commitment from the leader of the district government to provide trucks to transport the building materials. The sense of shared purpose brought in additional supporters.

Effective dialogue can settle disputes before they escalate. In Lake Kariba, investors in cage aquaculture and lakeshore tourism development proved much more willing to cooperate than community members and organizers expected. Local villagers realized that competition among investors meant they were eager to show good will to communities, resulting in spoken agreements to ensure routes of travel on water and land, and to safeguard local employment. This showed it was possible for local communities to engage with investors and build some measure of accountability without resorting to adversarial legal processes. Investors also commented that they would be more likely to request this sort of dialogue in the future as a way of avoiding deteriorating relationships.

Community leaders in discussion with the local fisheries officer, Kachanga village, Uganda

Attention to women's voices and decision-making roles can open new pathways to institutional change

Observing gender inequities and other power imbalances can lead to creative adaptations to include all voices. In Uganda, a system of quotas is in place to make sure that less powerful stakeholders, such as women, boat crew and other fish workers, are included in decision-making bodies such as beach management units. However, during initial community consultations it took several tries and some creative childcare arrangements to find a small number of women to participate in the stakeholder workshop. During the workshops, women and boat crew members rarely spoke or suggested actions unless they were specifically asked. By contrast, male boat owners were very outspoken. Women were also in the minority of those nominated to participate in capacity-building actions. Recognizing the gap between an official policy of inclusion and typical processes of decision-making biased toward men and economically privileged groups propelled the research team to seek out ways to address these imbalances.

A range of informal consultations can help reveal unspoken concerns. Having observed the gender dynamics in the workshop setting, the research team in Lake Victoria held additional side meetings where the more reserved participants could express their concerns. These concerns were subsequently validated in the full dialogue, shifting the focus of planning toward community sanitation. Likewise, in Lake Kariba, the team found that even when women were less vocal in the workshop, facilitators were able to actively seek out their concerns, making sure they were heard by all participants. In the Tonle Sap region, where workshop organizers lacked long prior experience in the selected communities, team members undertook several days of informal consultations, including meetings with small groups of women and men separately, before convening a more structured dialogue event.

Supporting individual change agents can lead to more lasting institutional change. In Lake Victoria, the team was able to identify individual women representatives from the beach management units and local councils who were particularly active in the early stages of the initiative. The team then found ways to encourage them in the role of change leaders in supporting the community-led activities and in getting other community members involved. On the Tonle Sap Lake, the team found that the participation of a former commercial fishing concession operator proved pivotal when, after suspension of the commercial lots, she committed to helping the community explore different management regimes.

Building cross-scale linkages and accountability can help sustain local initiative

Be prepared to question assumptions about stakeholder roles. In Lake Kariba, the research team assumed that the government's role in fisheries management would be focused on surveillance and enforcement. The team was surprised, therefore, to find that community members felt the Department of Fisheries needed to be present in addressing other issues, such as discussions with the traditional chief about the approach to engaging investors. Indeed, though the chief was proximate, community members felt the fisheries officers could play a critical brokering role and lend legitimacy to the process. In Cambodia, the research team initially tried to hold to the principle of equal roles among partners in planning the initiative, then recognized that having different leaders for different activities was appropriate. Therefore, in the concluding policy dialogue forum, the Fisheries Administration played the convening role, while research partners facilitated the event.

Addressing local disputes often requires support from higher levels of administration. The village management committees in Zambia, beach management units in Uganda, and community fishery organizations in Cambodia each faced similar challenges in accessing higher-level support to help resolve local disputes. Many prior efforts at building community-based management institutions focused on local-level organizational capacity in relative isolation, presuming higher-level administrative structures would pass down resources and lend assistance as required. In Lake Kariba, the research team found that involving the Department of Fisheries and Environmental Management Agency at each stage in the process lent legitimacy to local actions. This involvement also helped build linkages so that local change agents could have a voice in longer-term policy, institutional and legal reform. Special efforts were also required to bridge communication gaps, including recruiting a trainer on environmental impact assessment procedures who was originally from the Kariba region to explain key concepts in the local language.

Successful examples of collaboration can help strengthen mechanisms of accountability over time. As a result of local actions in the Tonle Sap floating villages of Peam Bang and Phat Sanday, the commune councils became supportive of joint patrolling. This strengthened relationships that are helping community fishery committees seek support for the more difficult task of piloting the community-based commercial production model. In Uganda, local actions to improve community sanitation attracted interest from government actors at different levels. The district council's public

District fisheries officer (in vest) in discussion with Lake Harvest aquaculture enterprise management; Siavonga District, Lake Kariba, Zambia

commitment to assist in maintaining the facility provides community members a point of reference to hold the council accountable in the future. Noting the strong local leadership and commitment, transparency in decision-making and fund management, and timely implementation, the Masaka district head noted that the sanitation improvement project "set new standards of quality … the district would emulate for future projects."

Effective stakeholder engagement can build a culture of learning and innovation

Critically assessing past experience at the start of an initiative can help partners avoid repeating past mistakes. As part of the appreciation stage of the CORE process, establishing a shared understanding of prior and ongoing efforts can help prompt reflections on past experiences. For example, when different communities in Lake Victoria jointly reviewed past development efforts, they identified misuse of funds as a recurrent problem. Alert to this risk, the organizing committee in Kachanga at one point halted payments to the contractors hired to build the sanitation facility and opened the accounts to public review. After investigation, the allegations of corruption proved unfounded, yet the action sent a critical message by demonstrating the commitment of local leaders to transparency and accountability in the use of funds.

Structured reflection during implementation is critical. Reflection activities need to be focused, yet flexible. In all three ecoregions, research teams found it challenging to organize community members to record detailed information about activities, such as the number of meetings held with various government groups, or in the case of Tonle Sap, the number of joint patrolling trips undertaken. Few community members found this information helpful in evaluating progress. In Cambodia, the team therefore shifted to focus on broader questions: "What changes have you seen since the last period? What do you see as the obstacles remaining?" These yielded very rich stories, and helped launch discussion about ways to adapt that would help achieve local goals. Similar reflections in Lake Kariba helped community members and local leaders learn what approaches worked in engaging investors.

Participatory monitoring and evaluation should tap multiple perspectives. In addition to keeping the guiding questions simple and open-ended, research teams found that intentionally bringing in multiple perspectives helped to maximize learning. At times this required skillful facilitation, paying attention to differences in views, and exploring where these differences came from. In Lake Victoria, personal interviews were arranged around the working schedules of fishers (mostly men) and fish processors and sellers (mostly women) in order to access all possible perspectives. In Tonle Sap, researchers found that local residents not directly engaged in the innovations sometimes had the most valuable insights as relatively impartial observers. They also found that, because a number of related activities were ongoing with support from different outside groups, it was important to take the time to clearly distinguish what actions people were evaluating, and what were the sources of changes they described.

Engaging local actors and government planners in joint learning is essential to scaling out innovations. In all three ecoregions, there was evidence that community groups and partners had adopted practices from the dialogue approach and were applying these to access new channels of support or scale out local innovations. In each of the ecoregions, authorities were well aware of the international support behind the dialogue and action planning processes, and researchers agreed this brought additional attention to the outcomes. To sustain such reflective learning over time, particularly in the absence of international support, communication channels that directly link community actors and government officers at higher levels are especially important. While decentralization policies may promote local authority and initiative in principle, these cases show that there is often a need to overcome barriers to effective communication. This includes creating a safe space within dialogue processes for perspectives that are critical of government performance, as well as cultivating a readiness on the part of government agencies to learn from local initiative in revising policy goals or implementation strategies.

CONCLUSION

Conflict management is an intrinsic element of natural resource management, and becomes increasingly important amid growing pressure on natural resources from local uses, as well as from external drivers such as climate change and international investment. If policymakers and practitioners aim to truly improve livelihood resilience and reduce vulnerabilities of poor rural households, issues of resource competition and conflict management cannot be ignored.

As the cases summarized in this paper illustrate, proactive efforts to convene dialogue that addresses the roots of resource competition can help generate new forms of collaboration among civil society, private sector and government stakeholders at multiple levels. Too often, "participation" in the design of development projects or resource management policies means little more than consultation with intended beneficiaries on problems and needs, as opposed to shared decisions on priorities and action plans.[35] In promoting collaborative decision-making, the CORE approach puts the burden on those organizing multistakeholder interactions to develop an appreciation of existing institutions and relationships, including questions of equity, power and voice.

Effective representation of resource users' interests in decision-making, along with strong systems of accountability, can in turn contribute to more equitable decisions on resource allocation, access and management rights. The link between improved collaboration and long-term improvements in governance is, however, neither direct nor assured. Dialogue processes can help make incremental improvements and provide examples of innovation that lay the groundwork for more systemic reforms. As the cases from Lake Victoria, Lake Kariba and Tonle Sap Lake also indicate, however, making progress to strengthen governance requires long-term commitment, engagement of actors at multiple levels, and considerable flexibility to identify and pursue opportunities for policy and institutional reform.

The experiences and lessons reported here indicate the potential for investments that directly target capacity for managing environmental resource competition. Systematic efforts are needed to compare and analyze the results of future experience in this domain across multiple resource systems and social-political environments. This can help develop a more refined understanding of what strategies work under what circumstances and deepen our understanding of the factors that contribute to lasting transformation. While there remains much to learn, this initiative demonstrates that a structured approach to multistakeholder dialogue is feasible in a variety of contexts, can deliver measurable results even in a relatively short time period, and does not require a dramatic policy change or institutional reform to get started.

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