Participation in Conservation

Advice Document Addendum to the General Guidelines for Climate Smart Snow Leopard Landscape Management Planning

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1. Background

In this Advice Document, we hope to highlight the importance of using participatory approaches for snow leopard conservation, particularly for landscape level management planning. We introduce some of the principles and tools for enabling such planning, steps for stakeholder engagement, and provide suitable links and resources for exploring these approaches. This document is not prepared as a manual for participatory conservation, for which some suitable references are provided at the end.

Participation is the act of taking part in an activity of event (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary 2000). A participatory approach to conservation, is thus '…a process through which stakeholders influence and share control over … initiatives and the decisions and resources which affect them" (The World Bank 1996)', Until a few decades ago, the conservation movement followed highly protectionist and top-down models of conservation based on exclusionary Protected Areas (PA). While these models did work in some places, they often served to further marginalize low-income communities that depend on natural resources in developing countries. Thus, conservation and development agencies took initiatives in the late 1980s to understand stakeholder dependencies and promote sustainable development models with local participation in conservation and development (Chambers 2007). This model has also received substantial momentum with developmental agencies often insisting on participation when funding projects.

Photo 1. A snow leopard looks into a camera trap in China's Sanjiangyuan National Nature Reserve in Qinghai province. Photo Credit: Shan Shui / Panthera / Snow Leopard Trust

Recognizing the importance of participatory approaches the 'Bishkek Declaration' [http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/eca/Bishkek-Declaration-on-the-Conservation-of-Snow-Leopards.pdf] signed by the leaders of the twelve snow leopard range countries under the Global Snow Leopard Ecosystem Protection program states that all countries:

"Understand that the conservation of the snow leopard must be achieved by securing the involvement, livelihoods, and balanced development of human communities who share the habitat, striving to reconcile the conflict between economic growth and environmental sustainability"

It further resolves to work together to:

"*Enhance the role of local communities in snow leopard conservation efforts by adopting and implementing policies and laws that favour the involvement of such communities as stewards of biodiversity and champions of conservation.*

and,

Ensure that industry, mining, infrastructure, and rural development programs and projects are fully sensitive to the conservation needs of snow leopards and their ecosystems, do not adversely affect or fragment key populations or critical habitats, and employ wildlife-friendly design, offsets, and other mitigation tools…."

The snow leopard is a species that is spread over large landscapes, often occurring far beyond PAs, in areas managed by communities, companies or Government agencies. There are, thus, numerous stakeholders in any snow leopard landscape with traditional or legal rights. With different stakeholders, the perceptions, interests, needs and expectations towards conservation and development can differ substantially.

Example: A valley adjacent to a protected area, has good snow leopard and prey population, and has high values for ecosystem services. It may have a few villages with agriculture, some pastures and areas for fuel collection. A village from an adjacent valley claims most of the pastures. Further, there is the animal husbandry department that comes with a mandate for tripling sheep production in a few years; a horticulture department that wants to convert a large patch of moist meadow by the stream into an apple plantation; a tourism department that wishes to create a large camping site near the pastures, and so on.

Photo 2. The Ukok Plateau natural park, Republic of Altai, provides critical habitat for the snow leopard and many other endangered species. © Denis Bogomolov / WWF-Russia

It may be clear that with all these activities or some such as intense tourism the valley's, value for snow leopard may diminish. Conservation, livelihood and human welfare concerns are often intertwined closely. Therefore, conservation and management initiatives will need to include all perspectives and plans that are sensitive to other concerns, yet are managed to secure wildlife in the area. This will require sustained dialogue with stakeholders with disparate interests in order to come up with solutions.

Participatory conservation is, thus, a means of using local insights and inputs and developing consensus to take up activities with local people and agencies to sustain conservation interventions over time.

2. Principles of Participation

Some key principles for this process (excerpted and modified from Pretty et al. (1995) and TMI (2000)) are:

- *Multiple perspectives*: Like mentioned above, a typical landscape has stakeholders such as local communities, government departments, NGOs, community based organizations for profit companies, all of whom are likely to see the land and its resources with differing views and expectations. Further, the community, too, is not a monolith, but may have differing ways of using the landscape. This principle recognizes the fact that different stakeholder groups make different assessments of situations leading to different expectations and actions regarding conservation and development.
- *A defined set of methods and systematic learning process*: The focus is on cumulative learning by all participants, including facilitators, trainees and local people. All participants have something to offer and learn based on their own knowledge, beliefs and perceptions. Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) tools often help in these assessments (see below).
- *Facilitator attitudes and skill*: This is critical, as the facilitator should try to maintain an unbiased and appreciative sense of enquiry. The facilitator should ideally ensure equity, fairness and transparency in the discussions and agreed actions. The facilitator should help people carry out their own learning to achieve goals and objectives.
- *Consensus on issues and actions*: Actionable points need to emerge from discussion and debate that help in resolving the conservation issue(s) under consideration. Action plans need to be prepared that help clarify the issue, the activity to address it, who will do what and when. How partners will pool the resources is an important step. Incorporate co-financing in cash or kind by partners for implementation of the plans. This can often enhance sense of ownership and helps in making the implementation of works more cost effective.
- *Local institution building and capacity building*: Activities should be taken up that lead to leadership, enhanced local capacity and structures to sustain these activities (see Addendum 4. Integrated Management and Governance).

Further, it should be noted that when sustainable management of the landscape is the primary goal, facilitators should be aware of that from the onset of the process. Community development can be addressed, but ensure that conservation and ecosystem management linkages are closely integrated and maintained for a holistic, sustainable approach. In some cases, strategic interventions in the areas of health, education, livelihoods and local infrastructure may need to be made initially to address urgent needs of communities, as well as build trust engagement. These are sometimes referred to as 'entry point activities' that can, at a later stage, even continue along with conservation activities. For example, if a community is seasonally cut off for want of a small bridge, it is difficult to engage with them straight

away on a conservation issue. It may be good to consider a participatory process, to first jointly build this bridge and then begin engagement on the conservation issue.

3. Stakeholder Analysis

Before determining how the various stakeholders in a snow leopard landscape will participate in conservation and the landscape management planning efforts, they must first be identified, and an initial analysis should take place to determine areas of convergence and divergence with snow leopard conservation goals. A stakeholder is an individual, group or institution that has an interest in or is impacted by a project. Stakeholders, particularly influential ones such as government departments or industries, can play a decisive role in how a landscape is managed. Most of these agencies are active in the landscape due to long-standing and legitimate mandates. Their role may complement conservation (e.g. protected areas, fulfilling sustainable livelihood requirements), or conflict with it (e.g. large infrastructure or unsustainable resource extraction projects), but in either case can be seen as crucial for local or national interest by local people and/or policymakers. For the landscape management planning process to be successful, it is crucial not only to work closely in a participative manner with local communities, but also to identify and engage with the other stakeholders in the landscape. Detailed information on how to conduct a Stakeholder Analysis can be found in Addendum 3: Stakeholder Analysis.

4. Types of Participation

There are various ways of looking at participation. Pretty and Smith (2004) provide a useful description of the typology of participation. Simple examples using people-wildlife conflict mitigation are provided for some types of participation:

4.1 Passive Participation

People participate by being told what has been decided or has already happened, and project implementers proceed without seeking their inputs or taking their needs into consideration. This approach may often not lead to desirable action based on the real needs of both management and people.

Example: Livestock is lost to snow leopards in a village with just five households, but these are spread out widely on a mountain slope. Damage primarily occurs in the age-old corrals placed near the houses and fields based on some seasonal criteria of using them. A conservation agency with funds for corral improvement decides to help in constructing one single large corral near the center of the village to help reduce losses and goes ahead with the implementation using hired labor and discussions with just the village head. Unfortunately, people refuse to use this centralized corral, as it is inefficient for feeding, milking, taking animals out for herding every morning and returning them back to the corral in the evening. The corral, thus, remains unused and, in due course, the villagers dismantle usable parts like mesh fence and iron rods for other uses.

4.2 Consultative Participation

People participate by answering questions, with no share in decision-making, but their views may be incorporated. The variety of questions asked by the official team during the consultation can raise expectations, but can be disappointing if subsequent actions are not based on the responses.

Example: A conservation agency arrives in a village and holds a large meeting to help reduce conflicts. After the interaction, however, they implement a central corral based on their donor funding, something that was clearly not the preferred solution in the meeting. In addition, they use outside labor for more efficient and cheaper construction. The expectations were raised due to the size of the meeting and the potential investment, but the conservation benefit in the end was negligible or even negative.

4.3 Bought Participation

People participate in return for food, cash or other material incentives, but without their decisions. This is equivalent to paid labor and wouldn't qualify as participation. This should be distinguished from any case where a community is paid based on its role in decision-making and a work-plan where they were involved along with other stakeholders (see below).

Example: In the above example for 'consultative participation', if the conservation agency pays community members for building the centralized corral, it can be called 'bought participation'. Here, the community still don't have any decision making role or conservation benefits but can earn some money.

4.4 Functional Participation

Participation is seen by external agencies as a means to achieve their goals, and people may form groups to meet predetermined objectives.

Example: An agency arrives in a village with the intention of setting up an insurance program for high value horses. However, on arrival they realize that the recent losses are more in corrals and that since the past two years, the villagers have moved more towards stall-fed cattle than horses. The agency is, however, bound by their funding to set up an insurance program and they somehow manage to set one up with a few villagers. The program isn't sustained since it was not viable with only few participants and a problem that wasn't significant.

4.5 Interactive Participation

People participate in joint analysis, development of action plans and form or strengthen local groups and institutions.

Example: Agency knows that there is an issue with snow leopard depredation in a village. They arrive with an open mind and a few options for managing the conflicts. They use their prior interactions with key informants and multiple discussions on recent patterns of conflicts to work on the solutions with the community. It emerges that since the importance of horses has reduced due to road access, the threat is limited to cattle and a small stock is kept in unprotected corrals with a few horses and yaks lost during two months of spring in a certain pasture. The team and local community identify the two priority corrals to be improved and work on clear responsibilities and timelines for the work to be done. The community also takes on the role of deputing two herders to take care of the yaks and horses during the two vulnerable months of spring based on an equal contribution from all households. The conservation agency, too, contributes 5% of the total cost of hiring the herders for the first three years. This program

sustains over a long period. The community has also developed the capacity for adapting the program and rules with changing herding patterns.

Photo 3. Wire fencing is used to improve a corral and prevent human-wildlife contact in India. Photo Credit: Nature Conservation Foundation / Snow Leopard Trust

4.6 Self-Mobilization

People participate by taking initiative independently and retain control over how resources are used.

Example: Based on the above example (Interactive Participation) – on their own, the community identifies another two corrals up in the pastures with increased depredation. They realize that instead of losing tens of livestock, the entire cost of external goods needed for the corral improvement was equivalent to the cost of 5 sheep. They decide to pool this cash, along with their labor and complete improving the corral on their own, a task that is ultimately useful for their livelihood.

Positive outcomes are associated primarily with the last three types, i.e., Functional, Interactive and Self-Mobilized participation so it is best to use these methods in the development of landscape management plans. It is important to note that the Passive, Consultative or Bought participation doesn't get into the GSLEP management planning process as this can be damaging to the cause of conservation as well as relationships with the community.

Photo 4. Stakeholder meeting in Pakistan. Photo: Snow Leopard Trust/SLF-Pakistan.

5. Tools for Assessments

The methods to understand local dependencies in space and time, understanding their concerns, livelihood threats, etc. can often be learnt through the Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) tools, which can be broadly classed in these four categories (see resources given below under Tools and Techniques for more details regarding the methods):

1. *Interviews and Discussions*: e.g. Semi structured interviews, key-informant discussions, brainstorming sessions
2. *Mapping and Diagrammatic representation*: e.g. Resource mapping, trend lines, Venn diagrams, mobility maps
3. *Direct observations*: e.g. Transect walks, participant observations
4. *Ranking and classification*: e.g. Matrix ranking, pair-wise ranking

These tools are very handy and often lead to information usable for landscape level planning. While the need for more accurate and academic studies on aspects of ecology and human society are useful for planning, often, these are not available, especially over vast areas. Well-designed PLA tools are, thus, helpful for data and information that may not be totally robust, but is usually considered enough for planning purposes. Literature refers to it with terms such as 'optimal ignorance' and 'appropriate imprecision' (Chambers 1981).

6. Steps in Participatory Engagement

As stated above, and in the Addendum XXX (Strategic Planning), we propose addressing community level threats together with the community to understand the threat, work on possible solutions through planning and then implement the action. The four phases of participatory engagement for the facilitators often are 1) pre-planning, 2) strategic planning, 3) action-planning and 4) implementation. Further details on these three phases are provided below:

6.1 Pre-planning

This is for the facilitators to understand the broad context of the area and develop their own team.

1. *Preparation*: Collate and review available literature, statistic and maps. Try to understand threats to wildlife, as well as local livelihoods.
2. *Vision*: Based on the available information, the facilitators develop their tentative vision of change for the community and other stakeholders.
3. *Approach and process determination*: Composition of the team, given the nature of the community, expectations of level of participation, timing of workshops, duration of involvement of the agency (short or long term). Identify one or two well-informed local persons who can complement the team. Will be useful to include a local lady who can bring in women's views more effectively.
4. *Stakeholder Sensitization*: Sensitize the stakeholders about the participatory meeting and the general thrust of the meeting (natural resource management issues in our case) so that discussions can be kept more focused.

Informal discussions and time spent socializing with the community (as well as other stakeholders) is a strong means to develop a more nuanced understanding of their issues and concerns. However, such time is most often not available for the management planning team. It is, thus, valuable to include any facilitators with long-term insights from the area. It is important to invest in the capacity of the facilitators so that they get professional and on the job training for more effective assessments and engagement.

A useful comment by Chambers made early on in 1997 warns of the importance of facilitator attitudes. Quoting from his book: "*As PRA approaches and methods spread, the prime importance of facilitators' behaviour and attitudes became clear. Again and again, outsiders wagged their fingers, criticized, lectured, interrupted, suggested what should be done, put forward their own ideas, and contradicted and put down local people. All these were inhibiting. All made local people appear, to outsiders and themselves, incapable. So the new imperatives became to establish rapport, to sit down, listen and learn, to be patient, to respect, to facilitate, to be nice to people, to learn not to interview, to know when not to speak and when not to be present. The task for outsiders became to hand over the stick, to empower local people, to enhance their confidence, to enable them to define, express and analyse their reality, and not to reflect that of the outsider*."

6.2 Strategic planning

This is for the facilitators to revise their understanding if needed, through structured engagements with the stakeholders.

1. *Stakeholders' Vision*: Understanding and documenting the community's vision of change. A separate 'institutional analysis' will help in understanding the mandates of the other stakeholders (see Addendum 3. Stakeholder Analysis). This engagement will also try to inform them about the management planning process and understand their expectations from the process.
2. *Situation analysis*: Gain an overview of socio-ecological state of the community using various tools, for example:
    a. Mapping of space and time (resource mapping, trend lines), oral histories, calendars
    b. Diagrammatic representation of relationships (Venn diagrams, flow charts)
    c. Representation of preferences (ranking exercises) and relative problems (Pairwise ranking is a useful tool here)
3. *Problem identification*: The situation analysis leads to identification of problems. This can include a list of issues and their linkages. A 'Problem Tree' is useful in looking at the problems, their causes and consequences to conservation (see Sutherland 2000).
4. *Prioritize problems*: Prioritize problems in terms of the need to tackle them, and define the objectives of the plan (Considering the internal heterogeneity of communities, different segments may have different priorities.). The Problem Tree can be used to prepare an 'Objective Tree'. The objectives within the scope of the management planning exercise can be selected for the next steps.
5. *Solutions*:
    a. Community provides its own solutions and may need assistance in implementation. Alternatively, facilitators may suggest solutions based on know-how not present in the community or based on their experiences from other similar situations.
    b. Identify activities from all possible options.
6. *Prioritize activities*: Prioritize the activities identified for solving problem. Differences regarding ranking of activities may arise within the community and will require resolution.
7. *Spatial plan*: Location of each of the activities are put on a resource map or GIS map, if available.

6.3 Action planning

1. *Allocation of activities*: Activities are assigned to different stakeholders. There is clarity on the roles, responsibilities and privileges.
2. *Time line*: Time lines for each activity is determined and agreed
3. *Resources/ Budget*: availability of resources (skilled human resource, labor, raw material. etc.) and funds are determined and allocated. It is ideal that all involved stakeholders co-finance in cash or kind as that builds greater ownership
4. *Evaluate suitability for marginal groups*: The effect of the plan on marginal groups and weaker sections are determined and if necessary, steps are modified
5. *Monitoring and evaluation*: A system of monitoring and evaluation is put in place

6.4 Implementation

Implement and evaluate the activity(s) as per the action plan. This is a key step where the delivery of the process takes place. Proper and transparent implementation and evaluation helps generate goodwill and better trust. If planning is not followed by action at the agreed time, it can lead to mistrust towards the process.

7. Limitations of Participatory Engagement

In 1996, the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), London, issued a list of potential problems facing the increased use of participatory tools at huge scales. They welcomed the efforts to mainstream participation in donor agencies such as the World Bank, and the increasing stress on participation by Governments and Government departments but pointed to the fact that the quality of participatory work was impeded by the sheer scale, poor capacity of facilitators, donor driven programs and short time for assessments (From PLA Notes 27 [http://pubs.iied.org/G01664/], from a workshop in Bangalore in 1996). It is stressed here that like any other idea and tool, participation has its merits but needs to be carried out by motivated facilitators with good understanding of the processes, and with enough time and resources. The aim of this document is to provide some helpful guidance.

8. Key Resources

There are numerous credible resources available online (see for example https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Participatory_action_research), on the philosophy, approaches and tools for ensuring good participation of stakeholders. Most development funders, too, often propagate a certain type of well-researched and used participatory approach. Users of this document are advised to search for these resources. Here, a very brief selection has been provided, which is by no means comprehensive.

8.1 Participatory approaches and philosophy

- Chambers, R. (1997). Whose Reality Counts? Putting the First Last. Intermediate Technology Publications, Bradford, UK.
- Chambers, R. (1981). Rapid rural appraisal: rationale and repertoire. Public Administration and Development. Vol. 1 (95-106).
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- Chambers, R. (2006). Participatory mapping and geographic information systems: whose map? Who is empowered and who disempowered? Who gains and who loses? The Electronic Journal on Information Systems in Developing Countries 25:1–11.
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- Sutherland, W. (2000). Conservation Handbook: Research, Management and Policy. Blackwell Publishing. Oxford, UK. (see Chapter 7: Conservation Planning and Chapter 14: Integrating Conservation and Development)
- Pretty, J. N., Gujit, I., Scoones, I., Thompson, J., (1995). A Trainer's Guide for Participatory Learning and Action. Sustainable Agriculture Programme. International Institute for Environment and Development, 3 Endsleigh Street. London WCIH ODD, UK

8.2 Tools and techniques

- Anonymous (2009). Participatory Tools Handbook, HKKH Partnership for Ecosystem Management, CESVI, Project Activity Code (s): A.1.5.4, June 2009, EvK2CNR, ICIMOD, CESVI, IUCN.

- The Mountain Institute (2000) Community-Based Tourism for Conservation and Development: A Resource Kit, The Mountain Institute
  [http://mountain.org/sites/default/files/attachments/community_based_tourism_for_conservation_and_development.pdf]
- Participatory Methods, Institute of Developmental Studies, University of Sussex, UK
  [http://www.participatorymethods.org]