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GUIDELINES FOR ASSESSING THE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF NATURAL RESOURCE GOVERNANCE IN LANDSCAPES AND SEASCAPES

June 2013

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Cover: Highland source of vital ecosystem services in Madidi, Bolivia. Photo: WCS

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FOREWORD

During the last decade, the conservation community has made significant progress developing robust methods for monitoring conservation targets (camera trapping, line transects, etc.), threats (ranger patrol/law enforcement monitoring), and livelihoods (modified basic necessities surveys). However, the conservation community has not made as much progress in developing tools for regularly and credibly monitoring and reporting progress on governance systems that ensure sustainable resource use. Effective conservation is founded on effective governance systems that are able to establish and enforce compliance with policies, rules, and regulations that support sustainable use and conservation of natural resources.

To-date there is a lack of simple, low-cost, and replicable ways to measure and understand the strengths and weaknesses of groups with legitimate jurisdiction over the management of natural resources within a given landscape or seascape.[1] Without access to a suitable governance assessment tool, conservation and development practitioners may have no clear sense of the factors most likely to facilitate good governance, and no clear process for identifying how to remediate factors that militate against good governance.

This guide, which has been tested in four landscapes, provides one approach to identifying the most important groups with rights to manage natural resources within a landscape or seascape, characterizing a small set of factors believed to be essential elements of good natural resource governance, and assessing the governance strengths and weaknesses of each group. The guide describes an approach and a data collection tool that together constitute a relatively simple, low-cost, expert opinion-based, method for assessing governance strengths and weaknesses and how these change over time.

This guide is offered as a practical approach that is, admittedly, not perfect. User feedback on what works and what does not will help refine the approach.

The creation of this guide would not have been possible without the close collaboration and support of multiple organizations and individuals. The USAID Forestry and Biodiversity Office provided financial and technical support for the creation of the guide as part of the SCAPES program. DAI's CK2C program provided invaluable technical and management support that kept the ball rolling. Dr. Adam Behrendt provided inputs early on in the process that set the stage

[1] See for example Mercy Corps http://www.mercycorps.org/sites/default/files/mcgoodgovernanceguide.pdf and The World Bank Program on Forests http://www.profor.info/knowledge/defining-forest-governance-indicators

for the guide's evolution to where it is today. Finally, the nuts and bolts of pulling the guide together, piloting it and presenting it to an international audience was accomplished through a close collaboration between WCS, Pact Inc. and AWF with additional inputs from WWF and FFI. Principal authors include Dr. David Wilkie (WCS) and Paul Cowles (Pact).

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Accountability: is the belief or understanding that a governance group and each individual within the group is a) required to fulfill certain responsibilities and b) is seen to fulfill those responsibilities. Most importantly the governance group must be seen to be downwardly accountable for their actions and responsive to the interests of natural resource users and rights holders.

Authority: the perception of natural resource users and rights holders that a governance group genuinely represents their interests and has legal or customary jurisdiction to govern "their" natural resources.

Capacity: the knowledge and skills to decide what to do and the resources to implement those decisions.

Effectiveness (of natural resource governance): when a natural resource governance group makes decisions and enforces rules that ensure the sustainability (i.e., long-term ecological and economic productivity) of the natural resources under their control. Effective long-term sustainable management of natural resources is predicated on governance that is representative and democratic.

Fairness: the belief by natural resource users and rights holders about the degree to which they feel that rules regulating access to and use of natural resources are equitable in terms of who benefits and who incurs the costs, and that the enforcement of these rules is applied equally across all individuals and groups

Institutions: the formal or customary norms, policies, rules, and regulations that are available to a governance group to define access to and meter use of natural resources within their jurisdiction.

Knowledge and skills: the basic understanding of a) the biological, economic, historical, sociopolitical, and managerial factors that put in jeopardy the long-term sustainability of natural resource use; b) the policies and practices that would need to be put in place to remedy the situation so that valued resources are conserved and used sustainably; and c) the ways to monitor the effectiveness of conservation actions.

Legitimacy: the governance group is recognized formally (i.e., legal—de jure) or informally (i.e., traditional—de facto) as having jurisdiction over determining what resource or land use practices are permissible, defining who can access certain resources or implement certain land use practices, and establishing what sanctions can and will be imposed for infractions of these rules.

Motivation: the level of willingness of individuals within a group to do their jobs, commit time, struggle with adversity, and advocate for their group's interests in an effort to implement their group's plans and achieve their group's objectives and goals.

Natural resource governance: is about who makes decisions (the governance group) about access to and use of natural resources, and the process by which a governance group decides and defines what is,

and what is not acceptable behavior in terms of natural resource use in a given area, and how the group ensures that people comply with the policies, rules, and regulations for acceptable behavior.

Natural resource management: the implementation of rules and regulations defined by a governance body or group. Natural resource "governors" are those individuals or groups that establish, and are accountable for, the implementation of natural resource access and use policies and norms (institutions). And "managers" are those individuals or groups that are responsible for executing the policies, rules, and regulations (institutions) established by the "governors."

Participation: the extent different natural resource users and rights holders are able to take part and have their voices heard in establishing policies that restrict access to and use of resources, and in adjudicating sanctions against those that fail to comply with accepted norms.

Power: the ability of a governance group to exert their authority and to do so without being regularly or repeatedly undermined by other more powerful groups

Resources: the physical (office space, cars, boats, camera traps, GPS, computers phones, tents, fuel, etc.), financial, and staffing assets needed for a governance group to be able to put its plans into action within their jurisdiction and monitor and report the outcomes and impacts of their efforts.

Transparency: the openness with which a governance group carries out its work.

INTRODUCTION

This guide has been developed to provide Sustainable Conservation Approaches in Priority Ecosystems (SCAPES[2]) partners and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) with a set of basic concepts and tools for better understanding, assessing and impacting the governance of natural resources (NRs) in landscapes and seascapes. The current target audience for the guide is field staff of SCAPES partners who wish to conduct a governance mapping and strengths and weaknesses assessment in their respective landscapes. The concepts and tools in the guide can serve as a starting point for applying NR governance assessments in different regions. It is anticipated that these initial applications will then be used to refine this guide, providing a tested and robust methodology and set of tools.

The overall purpose of this guide is to:

- Identify key groups governing access to and use of NRs in a given landscape or seascape
- Assess the key groups' governance strengths and weaknesses that can then help direct investments to improve governance of natural resources within the landscape or seascape

The Ustyurt Plateau is a temperate desert lying between the Caspian and Aral Sea that is shared between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Its sheer vastness presents a major challenge to law enforcement. Photo: Maria Karlstetter, Pact/FFI

[2] SCAPES is a partnership between USAID and four nongovernmental organizations (AWF, Pact [leader of a consortium that includes FFI, ACDI-VOCA, and BirdLife International], WCS, and WWF) that aims to conserve globally important biodiversity and provide leadership in developing, documenting, and sharing state-of-the-art conservation practices.

The guide is meant to be straightforward, practical, and easy to apply. The following text attempts to define key governance terms and concepts and provides step-by-step, specific guidance on how to apply the approach in a given landscape.

With testing and revision, the aim is that this guide will be appropriate for, and utilized by, a wide range of conservation practitioners and organizations. The guide should be useful as either a start-up tool to help frame governance issues and identify actions at the onset of a project, or as a tool to enhance implementation in a landscape or seascape where a conservation program is already established.

KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS

What Is Natural Resource Governance and How Is It Measured at the Landscape or Seascape Scale?

Improving management, reducing threats, and meeting conservation objectives over the long term requires good governance. At a landscape or seascape scale, governance of NRs is typically not the responsibility of a single agency or group, but rather is carried out through the actions of more than one group or organization from the public, private, and civil society sectors, with formal or informal authority to govern, and often with overlapping and competing jurisdictions.

Unsustainable resource and land use practices often occur in poorly regulated spaces, when the interests of some individuals and groups trump the interests of broader society. Conserving biodiversity and ensuring sustainable NR use within a landscape is impossible, therefore, in the absence of effective governance. And long-term sustainable management of natural resources is predicated on governance that is representative and democratic. To enhance governance effectiveness at a landscape scale it is necessary to:

1) Identify all governance groups in the landscape
2) Map their jurisdictions
3) Rank-order "governance champions"
4) Assess their strengths
5) Invest in overcoming their weaknesses

This guide is not designed to evaluate whether or not a governance group has or has not achieved the NR management (NRM) objectives explicit or implicit within its area of responsibility. Rather, the guide is designed to assess whether or not a group has the attributes requisite for effective governance of NRs. Therefore, this guide focuses on a small set of attributes that are strong predictors of the likely "effectiveness" of the different groups to govern access to and meter use of NRs within a landscape or seascape.

Definition of Governance Effectiveness

When a natural resource governance group makes decisions and enforces rules that ensure the sustainability (i.e., long-term ecological and economic productivity) of the natural resources under their control. Effective long-term sustainable management of natural resources is predicated on governance that is representative and democratic.

What Is a Governance Group?

In this governance guide the focus is not on the "institutions" (i.e., norms, rules, and regulations) that define who has access to NRs within a landscape, and how these NRs can be used. Rather it focuses on the groups, often called authorities, that have jurisdiction over different spaces and NRs within a landscape or seascape, and assesses if they have the key attributes necessary to establish and enforce or

perhaps influence institutions (i.e., rules and regulations) designed to ensure sustainable NR use. These groups can be government agencies, civil society or nongovernmental organizations, cooperatives, associations, communities, or private companies. These groups often both define what NR uses are and are not desirable and permissible, and carry out management actions to ensure that local residents and outsiders comply with desired NR rules and regulations. Their ability to govern effectively lies at the core of biodiversity conservation and sustainable NR use within any landscape or seascape. It is likely that effective governance of natural resources at a landscape or seascape scale will require a mix of governance groups interacting and reinforcing or influencing each other's decisions around NRM.

Institutions Versus Organizations

The term **institution** is often misunderstood. In this guide, **institution** is used in its legal sense (i.e., the institution of marriage) to mean the norms, rules, regulations, and policies that guide our individual and social behavior and practices. In contrast, governance is manifest by public sector, private sector, and civil society **entities**, **groups**, **organizations**, or **agencies** that establish and enforce NR rules, norms, and regulations (i.e., institutions). Simply put, **institutions** are the laws, and **organizations** are the groups that create the institutions and enforce them.

How Does NR Governance Differ from NRM?

Natural resource governance can be defined as the process by which groups of rights holders decide and define, through a transparent and democratic process that represents the interests of citizens, what is and what is not acceptable behavior in terms of NR use in a given area, and how the group ensures that people comply with the policies, rules, and regulations for acceptable behavior.

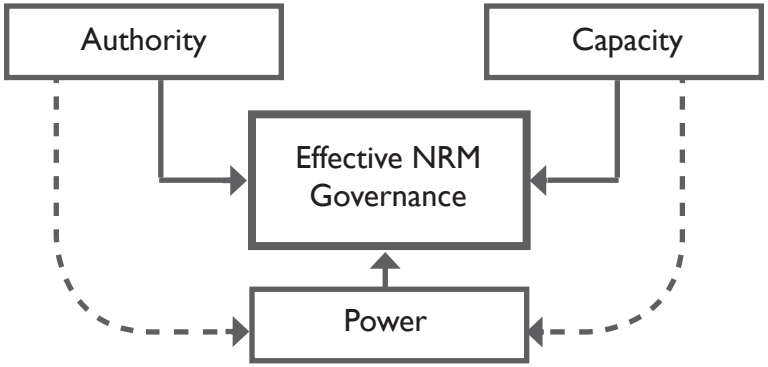
Governance differs from management in that the latter is the implementation of rules and regulations defined by a governance body or group. NR "governors" are those individuals or groups that establish, and are accountable for, the implementation of NR access and use policies and norms (institutions). And "managers" are those individuals or groups that are responsible for executing the policies, rules, and regulations (institutions) established by the "governors."

Three Core Attributes for Effective Governance

What determines if a group will be able to govern access and use of NRs sustainably, and thus effectively, is much debated. Many factors can play a role in whether or not a governance group is able to govern effectively, and a review of the literature and governance guidelines would generate a huge list of attributes believed to be necessary for good governance. To help identify where investments in strengthening governance should be targeted, and to track and report governance strengths and weaknesses over time, a governance assessment tool needs to focus on the smallest set of attributes that are believed to be most predictive of effectiveness and that can be assessed repeatedly over time at relatively low cost.

Given this, the focus of this guide is on three attributes: **authority**, **capacity**, and **power**. If a governance group lacks **authority** to govern (i.e., people do not trust them to represent and protect their interests), it will fail to be effective over the long term. If a governance group has insufficient **capacity** to govern (i.e., decide what to do and implement those decisions), then, even if it is perceived to be legitimate in the eyes of key resource users and rights holders, it is unlikely to be able to govern access to and use of NRs. Lastly, even when a governance group is perceived as being the legitimate authority, and even when it has the capacity to plan and to act, if it does not have the political, economic, or policing **power** to exert its authority, it will be unable to govern effectively. Our model for effective governance (Figure 1) recognizes that aspects of authority (i.e., legitimacy) and capacity (i.e., financial resources or technical capacity) may influence how much power a group possesses.

FIGURE 1: A SIMPLE MODEL OF EFFECTIVE NRM GOVERNANCE



Attribute 1: Authority

Authority is a loaded term that means many things to many people. The term was chosen as a core attribute of effective governance because evidence from years of field experience in a large range of contexts suggests that if a governance group is not perceived by resource users as having the authority to make natural resources decisions and enforce compliance, then their ability to manage natural resources access and use is undermined immediately or over the long term.

Within the context of this guide, authority is defined as the *perception of natural resource users and rights holders that a governance group genuinely represents their interests and has legal or customary jurisdiction to govern "their" natural resources*. Authority, not surprisingly is a composite attribute that is built on a foundation of core concerns of resource users and rights holders. Exactly what constitutes authority for a given landscape will depend on a mix of complex factors including social and political histories, and level of exposure to democratic conceptions of governance. Below are examples of components of authority that may be important. The first (legitimacy) is intrinsic to the governance group, whereas the remaining four (accountability, transparency, participation and fairness) are results of the actions of the governance group (i.e., does the group conduct its work accountably, transparently, and fairly, with the meaningful participation of resource users and rights holders). We offer these not as a definitive list but as an example of factors that may be important in understanding the source of a governance group's authority.

Community members prepare map of landscape hazards in Lelep, Nepal. Photo: WWF

- **Legitimacy** is the stakeholder-recognized formal (i.e., legal—*de jure*) or informal (i.e., traditional—*de facto*) right to determine what resource or land use practices are permissible, who can access certain resources or implement certain land use practices, and what sanctions can and will be imposed for infractions of these rules. For example, the national park agency may be perceived by local people to have the legitimate right under the law to decide what is permissible within national protected areas and to impose these rules. And a local community may have legitimate customary rights to determine how their land and resources are used and to enforce these rules through social pressure. In many landscapes and seascapes more than one group may have the legitimate right to manage natural resources in the same place (for example, in Yasuni National Park, the National Park Service of Ecuador, the Ecuador Ministry of Energy and Mining, and the Waorani indigenous people all have the legitimate, legal or customary, right to decide who has access to natural resources within the park).
- **Accountability** is the belief or understanding that a governance group and each individual within the group is a) required to fulfill certain responsibilities and b) is seen to fulfill those responsibilities. Most importantly the governance group must be seen to be downwardly accountable for their actions and responsive to the interests of natural resource users and rights holders.
- **Transparency** generally refers to the openness with which a governance group carries out its work.
- **Participation** refers to the extent different natural resource users and rights holders are able to take part and have their voices heard in establishing policies that restrict access to and use of resources, and in adjudicating sanctions against those that fail to comply with accepted norms. Whether or not key natural resource users and rights holders perceive that their participation is sought and valued often determines whether or not they feel that the group has the authority to make decisions for them about access and use of "their" resources.

- **Fairness** refers to whether or not natural resource users and rights holders feel that rules regulating access to and use of NRs are equitable in terms of who benefits and who incurs the costs, and that the enforcement of these rules is applied equally across all individuals and groups. Broadly speaking, fairness revolves around concerns over equitable distribution of costs and benefits, equal rights under the law, and equal application of the law.

Attribute 2: Capacity

For governance groups to be effective they will generally have a number of skills, abilities, or resources that allow them to plan and implement conservation and sustainable NR plans and actions. Things like technical knowledge and skills and human and financial resources are often important aspects of capacity. An enabling institutional framework (i.e., norms, rules, and regulations that support, rather than undermine, sustainable NRM) is also a critical component of governance capacity. As with legitimacy, there may be important components of capacity that are more locally defined. For example, motivation may be an important component of capacity in many landscapes but it may not be the case everywhere.

Below we have included some examples of what might be critical components of a group's governance capacity:

- **Knowledge and skills** together are the basic understanding of a) the factors—biological, economic, historical, sociopolitical, and managerial—that can jeopardize the long-term sustainability of NR use; b) the policies and practices that would be needed to remedy the situation so that valued resources are conserved and used sustainably; and c) ways a group might monitor the effectiveness of the implementation of their conservation plans.
- **Resources** are the physical (office space, cars, boats, camera traps, GPS, computers phones, tents, fuel, etc.), financial, and staffing assets needed for a governance group to be able to put its plans into action at the appropriate spatial scale and monitor and report the outcomes and impacts of their efforts.
- **Institutional framework** is the set of norms, rules, regulations, and policies that either enable or militate against a governance group's ability to sustainably manage NRs. Even if a governance body has the skills, resources, and motivation to take action, if their actions are not founded on a supportive set of rules and regulations

State rangers of Okhotzooprom and the Territorial Inspection of Kazakhstan discuss their training and resource needs to guide future support. Photo: Alisher Sakhabutdinov, Pact/FFI

that make explicit informal or customary law on who has access to what resources and how these resources may be used, then their actions are unlikely to be effective in the long term.

- **Motivation** refers to the level of willingness of individuals within a group to do their jobs, commit time, struggle with adversity, and advocate for their group's interests in an effort to implement their group's plans and achieve their group's objectives and goals. Motivation is that ineffable essence that encourages work for reasons beyond remuneration, and what makes the seemingly impossible actually happen. Motivation is an abiding personal commitment to doing all that is necessary to get the job done.

Attribute 3: Power

Power is manifest in two ways: 1) the power of a governance group to enact its decisions, and 2) the power of resources users and rights holders to bring a governance group to account.

The first depends in part on a governance groups capacity (attribute 2), but more importantly depends on whether others, outside of the group, have the ability to countermand the groups decisions. The first manifestation of power is therefore a governance spoiler that can, and often does, undermine a governance group's ability to dictate their policies, enforce their rules, and secure redress for infringement of their legitimate authority. Power is the one governance attribute that is not solely held by a single governance group; it is an attribute that is measured against other groups, agencies, actors, and organizations. Understanding the power of a particular governance group is necessary, but not sufficient. For this attribute, there needs to be an understanding of how power is held and used by different groups and individuals in the context of governance of NRs.

For example, though the Ministry of Environment and the National Parks Agency has jurisdiction over governance of the National Park, it is the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum and a private sector oil company, that actually determines who has access to The National Park. So, in this case, even though the National Parks Agency has formal authority over governance of the National Park, a private sector company has the de facto authority over access to the park and repeatedly countermands the Park Service's ability to do their job.

The second manifestation of power relates to whether natural resource users and rights holders whose natural resources are being governed by a group who supposedly represent their interest, have the power to bring the group to account for their decisions and actions—i.e., hold them accountable. This requires that there is a legal or customary framework in place that ensures public access to information about the workings of a governance group, requires that a governance group respond to requests for information, and specifies mechanism of redress should a group fail to meet its obligations. It also requires that those who wish to bring a group to account have the knowledge, time and financial resources to do so. This aspect of power, though critically important, is largely captured within this governance tool by consideration of accountability, transparency, and the enabling institutional framework that are all elements of the authority attribute (please refer to the sections above).

STEPS FOR ASSESSING NR GOVERNANCE

Following is a brief description and a more detailed guide to the five key steps for assessing NR governance. The purpose of this exercise is to: a) help identify where targeted investments might help strengthen the ability of different groups with formal or informal jurisdiction to govern the use of natural resources sustainably, and b) assess over time whether these investments are having the desired impact and are demonstrably strengthening sustainable natural resource governance abilities of targeted groups.

The tool asks less about whether a governance group is making good decisions and enforcing them, and more about whether they able to sustainably govern natural resources, and if not, why are they unable or unwilling to do so. To ensure that the assessment is credible, useful, and inexpensive to undertake, we advise bringing together a small number of experts, who are very familiar with natural resource management within the landscape or seascape, and conducting the assessment as a focus group.

Summary

Step 1: Identifying and mapping key governance groups within a landscape or seascape. Identify and map NR governance groups that either actively exert or potentially could exert their authority over NRs in the given landscape or seascape. Information may be gathered using existing documents, input from experienced staff and key informants, or using a wider participatory process. Once the main NR governance groups have been identified, their specific territorial (e.g., international, regional, national, or local) and natural resource (e.g., land, water, wildlife, minerals, etc.) influence should be noted. Simply said, as each governance group is discussed, one should attempt to map their geographic influence and to list the range of natural resources over which they have formal or customary jurisdiction.

Step 2: Ranking the most influential governance groups. If a large number of governance groups (>5) were identified in Step 1 it is most efficient to conduct the governance assessment discussion (Step 3) starting with those groups that have the greatest influence over the most extensive geography within the landscape, or over the widest range of natural resources within the landscape. Influence can be thought of as a mixture of spatial coverage, the range of resources governed, and whether absence of a particular governance group would seriously undermine conservation effectiveness within the landscape or seascape. A simple way to rank-order the list is to ask each expert to vote for their top three most influential natural resource governance groups with jurisdiction over the use of natural resources within the landscape or seascape. Influence can be thought of as a mixture of spatial coverage, the range of resources governed, and whether absence of a particular governance group would seriously undermine conservation effectiveness within the landscape or seascape.

Village Fisheries Management Committees receive training in good fishing practice, importance of fisher organizations and monitoring of fishing activities on the Zambezi River, Zambia. Photo: AWF

Step 3: Assessing good governance from a local perspective. What constitutes effective governance by different groups within a given landscape is highly context specific. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that the focus group experts should be asked to characterize, for each group, what seems to be working and what is not working in terms of their ability to achieve their environmental obligations and promote sustainable resource use within their jurisdiction. In other words, what helps them govern and what hinders them from governing well. Accurate note taking is critical during this step as it often elicits the most nuanced information about how well different groups are or are not managing natural resources within a landscape or seascape.

Step 4: Standardizing the strengths and weaknesses of governance groups. After local experts have characterized what they believe are the governance strengths and weaknesses of the most influential governance groups in a landscape or seascape, it is now possible to take this information and frame it within the three core attributes of good governance—authority, capacity and power. The first step is to tell the experts why, based on field experience, good governance is primarily an outcome of authority, capacity, and power. The next step is to talk about authority and its sub-elements—linking back as often as possible to language used by the experts as they described the strengths and weaknesses of the governance groups in their landscape or seascape. Repeat this process with capacity, which is typically the easiest construct for experts to accept. Lastly, note that authority and capacity are attributes internal to each governance group, whereas power is a relative attribute dependent on the power of other groups or actors. Talking about who would trump (countermand) whose authority under what circumstances—keep detailed records of the discussion. After discussing the power relationships of each group relative to the other group, ask if there are any other actors that regularly or on occasion exert undue influence (i.e., trump the legitimate authority of groups with jurisdiction over NRM within the landscape or seascape). These groups or individuals may or may not have the legal authority to make resource management decisions (e.g., the minister of education, a powerful land owner, or an agri-business lobbyist).

Step 5: Analyzing and presenting results. The assessment results are best presented as a narrative on each of the governance groups that describes their NR management strengths and weaknesses. In addition, the assessment team should consider generating a numeric

legitimacy, capacity, and power ranking (score) for each of the most influential governance group. Generating scores helps keep track of governance strengths and weaknesses over time, and allows for evaluation of the impact of targeted investments in governance strengthening. Reporting authority, capacity, and power scores using spider or radar diagrams helps to visualize and interpret the results and draw conclusions concerning needed strategies or interventions. An important part of the analysis should be an evaluation of opportunities for strengthening the ability of specific groups to govern the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources within the landscape or seascape, and drawing up an action plan to implement specific governance strengthening activities.

Step-by-Step Guide: A User's Manual for Deploying the Governance Assessment Tool

Step 1: Identifying and mapping key governance groups within a landscape or seascape

To better assess and understand NR governance and its relationship to improving conservation in landscapes and seascapes, it is necessary to begin by identifying the key governance groups that play a role in deciding how natural resources are managed within the physical landscape or seascape.

Participants: *To develop a map of the NR governance groups, a team consisting of at least five to six representatives of local organizations, or key actors that might best be able to contribute should come together. Brief instructions might be sent out beforehand to ensure that participants are able to come to the focus group prepared.*

Suggested duration: 1–3 hours.

Facilitator checklist of steps to follow for the NR governance group mapping process:

- ✓ *Begin by using or drawing a map that depicts the full territory of the landscape or seascape.*
- ✓ *Briefly discuss the principal types of NRs within the territory.*
- ✓ *Briefly discuss the main conservation threats in the landscape or seascape.*
- ✓ *Identify, via a brainstorming session, the NR governance groups in the landscape or seascape, thinking first of those groups that are actually present physically within the territory; map their jurisdictions (i.e., the spatial extent and geographic configuration of the land or water over which they have jurisdiction to establish and enforce NR access and use instituions).*
- ✓ *Consider the following questions:*
  - *What groups are actually governing NRs at this moment?*
  - *Which State or government agencies are most visible and engaged?*
  - *Have we considered different kinds of organizations such as: local government, local communities, indigenous organizations, producer groups, private sector companies?*
- ✓ *During the process, it will be helpful to distinguish between community, local, regional, national, and international groups that actually conduct activities or have influence within the landscape or seascape.*
- ✓ *Different colors can be used to differentiate between local or other levels. Or additional maps can be made up to clarify where there* are overlapping jurisdictions.

✓ Discuss to ensure that no key groups have been left out.

Each member of the assessment team should have expert, in-depth knowledge of some or all governance groups within the landscape or seascape. It will be up to the facilitator to determine who should be on this assessment team and if it is necessary to have multiple teams to avoid conflict or difficult situations during the focus groups exercises.

For example, when assessing a government NRM agency, it may not be wise to rely only on employees of the agency to provide assessment feedback. One may want to include community members or civil society organizations in the assessment. It may not be possible either logistically or in terms of process (too much conflict between actors) to put representatives from different groups together in one panel. In that case, separate panels can be set up or a key informant interview can be set up to get information from individuals. Key informant interviews can be carried out simply by running the informant through the focus group process while recording his or her responses. It may also be unwise to include representatives of individual governance groups when assessing their strengths and weaknesses.

The facilitator needs to explain to the team that "governance groups" may have jurisdiction over different spaces and NRs within a landscape or seascape, and that these groups can be government agencies, civil society or nongovernmental organizations, cooperatives, associations, communities, or private companies. These groups often both define what NR uses are and are not desirable and permissible, and carry out management actions to ensure that local residents and outsiders comply with NR rules and regulations. Their ability to govern effectively lies at the core of biodiversity conservation and sustainable NR use within any landscape or seascape.

Step 2: Ranking the most influential governance groups

If a large number of governance groups (>5) were identified in Step 1 it is most efficient to conduct the governance assessment discussion (Step 3) starting with those groups that have the greatest influence over the most extensive geography within the landscape, or over the widest range of natural resources within the landscape. Influence can be thought of as a mixture of spatial coverage, the range of resources governed, and whether absence of a particular governance group would seriously undermine conservation effectiveness within the landscape or seascape.

Participants: *If possible, the same group that carried out Step 1.*

Suggested duration: *0.5–1 hour.*

Facilitator checklist of steps to follow for prioritization of NR governance groups:

✓ *Facilitator should review the groups identified and mapped in the previous exercise and then move to a discussion of the criteria to help select the most influential groups.*

✓ *One option for identifying the most influential groups is to give each team member three votes and ask them to cast one vote for each of their top three candidates.*

After discussing what criteria might best characterize those governance groups that have the most and least influence over natural resource access and use within the landscape or seascape, the simplest way to rank-order the groups is to vote. By ordering the groups according to their level of evidence if time is limited for Step 3 then at least the strengths and weaknesses of those groups that have the most influence over natural resource use within the landscape and seascape can be assessed within the available time.

Step 3: Assessing good governance from a local perspective

Once the governance groups are rank-ordered according to their perceived level of influence over natural resource management within the landscape or seascape, the next step is for the team to discuss what helps each individual group to govern and what hinders them from governing well. Though this guide offers some basic concepts, definitions, and framework for assessing governance, it is important that each assessment team talk about the strengths and weaknesses of each group using their own terms and language. Careful note taking of the discussions is critical, as this step typically generates the most locally relevant and nuanced information on why some groups are governing well and others are not.

Participants: *If possible, the same group that carried out Step 1.*

Suggested duration: *1–3 hours.*

Facilitator checklist of steps to follow:

- ✓ *Select a note taker for this session or ask a team member to volunteer to take notes.*
- ✓ *Clarify objectives for this session and discuss what constitutes* good NR governance.
- ✓ *Walk the team through a discussion of the governance strengths and weaknesses of each group.*
- ✓ *After discussing the governance strengths and weaknesses of each group, the facilitator should revisit what was said to identify those factors that seem to determine whether a group is able to govern well or not.*

The facilitator should start this step by introducing the objectives of the discussion (Box 1 below), and allowing team members to ask questions about and discuss the objectives.

Box 1: Focus group objectives:

- To better understand the governance-related skills and knowledge of NR governance entities in the _____ landscape.
- Assess landscape NR governance entities in three key areas: legitimacy, capacity, and power.
- Identify governance areas that may need improvement if NRM effectiveness is to be improved or maintained.

The facilitator then needs to help the team arrive at a common understanding of what is meant by NR governance. If the team is struggling with defining NR governance, one approach is to use the example definition below (Box 2) as a way to prompt a discussion. The facilitator should, however, not allow the team to stray too far from the basic meaning of governance as a system of making and enforcing rules.

Box 2: Example definition of natural resource governance

Natural resource governance is about who makes decisions, and how these groups of people decide what is and what is not acceptable behavior in terms of natural resource use in an area, and how these groups ensure that people comply with their rules.

The facilitator then needs to lead a discussion on what good governance means from the team's perspective. This will get them thinking about the quality of governance in the landscape. One approach is to ask the team to respond to the following questions, capturing their responses on flip charts.

- *Who are the most effective governance groups in the region?* These groups do not necessarily have to be NR related. The point is to get the participants thinking about effective governance groups. List the groups on a flip chart.
- *What is it that makes these groups effective?* List some of the characteristics that the group can identify that make these groups more effective governors. If the group is having trouble, ask questions about the groups that might lead to the characteristics. For example: Is the group very transparent? Does the group have strong traditional authority? If the group is very powerful, where does that power come from?

Again, if the team is struggling with its own definition of what constitutes good NR governance, one option is for the facilitator to present an example (Box 3, below) and use this to prompt a discussion of good governance within the local context.

Box 3: Definition of good or effective NR governance

…when a natural resource governance group makes decisions and enforces rules that ensure the sustainability (i.e., long-term ecological and economic productivity) of the natural resources under their control. Effective long-term sustainable management of natural resources is predicated on governance that is representative and democratic.

Once the team seems comfortable with the concept of NR governance and what constitutes good governance, the facilitator should then walk the team through a discussion of the governance strengths and weaknesses of each group starting with the most influential.

End this step with a review of the factors identified by the team that appear to either strengthen or weaken a group's ability to govern natural resources sustainably.

Step 4: Standardizing the strengths and weaknesses of governance groups

Explain to the group that that the key components of effective governance can be divided into three major categories: authority, capacity, and power. Take a few moments to define each of these terms and relate the characteristics of effective governance groups identified by the group earlier to these categories. Most of the characteristics identified should fall under one of these categories.

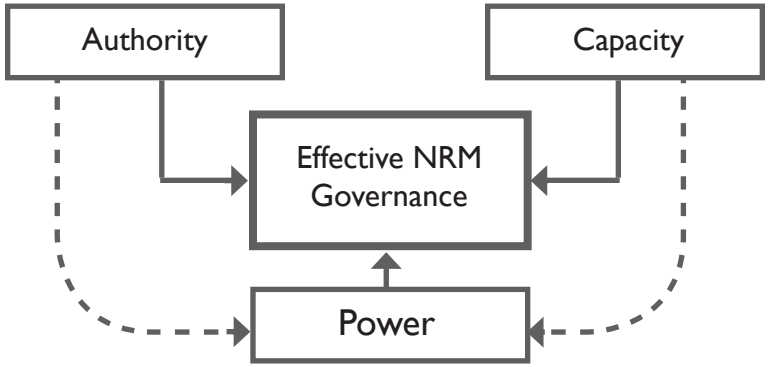
Participants: *If possible, the same group that carried out Step 1.*

Suggested duration: *1–2 hours*

Facilitator checklist of steps to follow

- ✓ *Introduce the "Effective NR governance model"*
- ✓ *Review the definitions of legitimacy, capacity, and power*
- ✓ *Attempt to adapt local definitions of good governance to the three standard definitions*

In this step the facilitator should introduce the effective NR governance model and review what is meant by the terms: authority, capacity, and power (Box 4).



Box 4: Definitions for the three key attributes of effective governance

Authority *the perception of natural resource users and rights holders that a governance group genuinely represents their interests and has legal or customary jurisdiction to govern "their" natural resources.*

Capacity *refers to the skills, abilities, or other resources that allow a group to govern natural resources effectively.*

Power *is the ability to influence behaviors or decisions. Aspects of authority (like legitimacy) and capacity (financial resources) can enhance a group's power (note the dotted lines in our model).*

Subsequently, the facilitator should explain to the team that, building on a shared understanding of what constitutes good NR governance and the governance strengths and weakness of key governance groups within the landscape or seascape, we now want to characterize each group using three standard attributes that are believed to be predictive of, and requisites for effective governance—authority, capacity, and power.

Assessing a group's authority

To begin the process of assessing the authority of each targeted governance group, ask the group to brainstorm what they believe are the key attributes of a NR governance group that gives to them the "authority" to manage natural resources. What does a group do to gain the confidence of NRM users and rights holders? What gives a group the "right" to govern natural resources? If the team is unable to come up with viable attributes you may want to prompt them with some of the examples mentioned above (accountability, transparency, participation, etc.). Capture these attributes on a flip chart along with any explanations needed to understand them.

Once the team has discussed what attributes seem likely to contribute to the authority of a governance group, ask them to characterize, starting with the most influential groups, what their authority strengths are, then characterize what their authority weaknesses are. Capture the discussion on a flip chart making sure to note how the team thinks that identified weaknesses might be strengthened.

Assessing a group's capacity

Once you have talked about authority, move on to capacity by asking the team to brainstorm what they believe are the key capacities needed to be an effective NRM governance group. Are there specific skills that are needed? What types of resources are needed to ensure the group is effective? If the group is having trouble coming up with attributes of capacity, prompt them using some of the examples mentioned above (skills and abilities, resources, regulatory framework, or motivation). Capture the discussion on a flip chart, making sure to note how the team thinks that identified weaknesses might be strengthened.

Assessing a group's power

Once you have talked about capacity, move on to power by asking the team to discuss how different governance groups in the landscape influence decisions around NRs. Are there some groups that seem to be all powerful? Are there groups whose authority is constantly undermined, or decisions countermanded by other groups or individuals? What characteristics are likely to be shared by powerful groups, and by weaker groups? Be sure to identify any non-NRM actors or groups that may be able to influence or trump NR governance decisions made by other groups. Capture the discussion on a flip chart, making sure to note how the team thinks that identified weaknesses might be strengthened.

Step 5: Analyzing and presenting results

By this stage of the process, the team will have amassed governance information from several sources (i.e., focus groups, key informants, and personal experience) and is now ready to write up the results that include: a) a list of all governance groups with jurisdiction over natural resources within the landscape or seascape; b) a narrative documenting the governance strengths and weaknesses starting with the most influential governance groups within the landscape or seascape; and c) a brief action plan describing opportunities for investing in specific governance strengthening activities within the landscape or seascape.

The team might also decide to use the information generated during the expert focus group assessment (i.e., Steps 1–4) to rank the relative strength and weakness of each governance groups by provide to each of them a numeric score for legitimacy, capacity, and power ranging from -2 (weak) to +2 (strong). Numeric ratings of governance groups and changes in these ratings over time are easily visualized using radar or spider diagrams (see Figure 2), which are very easy to create in most spreadsheet programs. Using radar diagrams we can show how the multiple dimensions of authority and capacity change over time for a given governance group. As these ratings are based on the subjective but knowledgeable assessment of the team grounded on information accrued during the focus groups, etc., it is extremely important that the scores are supported by the narrative that helps explain each rating for each governance group assessed during the exercise.

For example, if the experts rated the community conservancy as having very limited motivation (-1) to implement or enforce sustainable natural resource use practices and policies, they might

An isolated community in the highlands of Bolivia in the Madidi-Tambopata Landscape. Photo: Humberto Gomez, WCS

Community members participate in a mapping exercise in the Daurian Stepppe, Mongolia, as a first step to community governance of natural resources. Photo: WCS

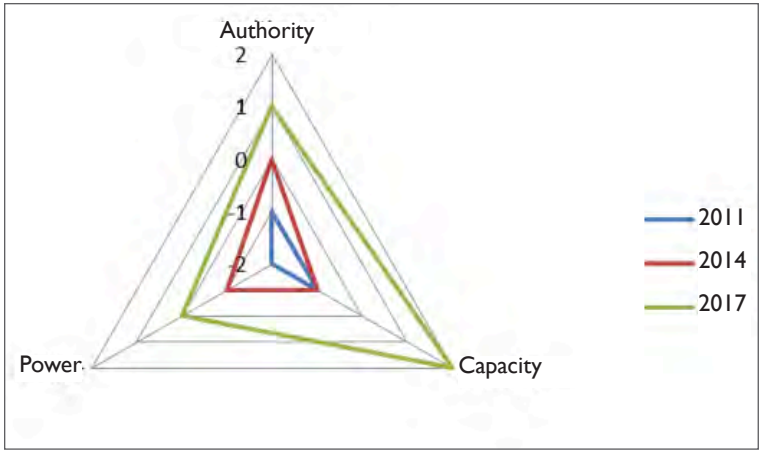
explain their rating by noting that, although the group has the skills and resources and a decent regulatory framework to worth within, ministry of environment staff repeatedly countermand their authority by increasing hunting quotas and voiding concession agreements with outfitters favored by the community. By recording the reasons for a particular rating, the experts help identify remedial actions and lay the foundation for evaluating whether such actions result in strengthened governance.

There are many ways that the team could generate a numeric ranking for key attributes of governance based on the information generated on the most influential governance groups during the assessment. One option is to use a five-level scale that ranges from -2 (weak) to +2 (strong). For example, the team could score "power" using the following subjective criteria:

Level of Power of the NR Governance Group to Wield Its Authority				
-2	-1	0	1	2
Very little power and often trumped by many groups	Some power but still trumped by some groups on occasion	Some power and only rarely trumped by a few groups	Powerful and seldom trumped by other groups	Very powerful and never trumped by other groups

Examples of how key governance attributes of a governance group might be scored, reported and visualized, and monitored over time are shown below.

Governance group 1			
	2011	2014	2017
Authority	-1	0	1
Capacity	-1	-1	2
Power	-2	-1	0



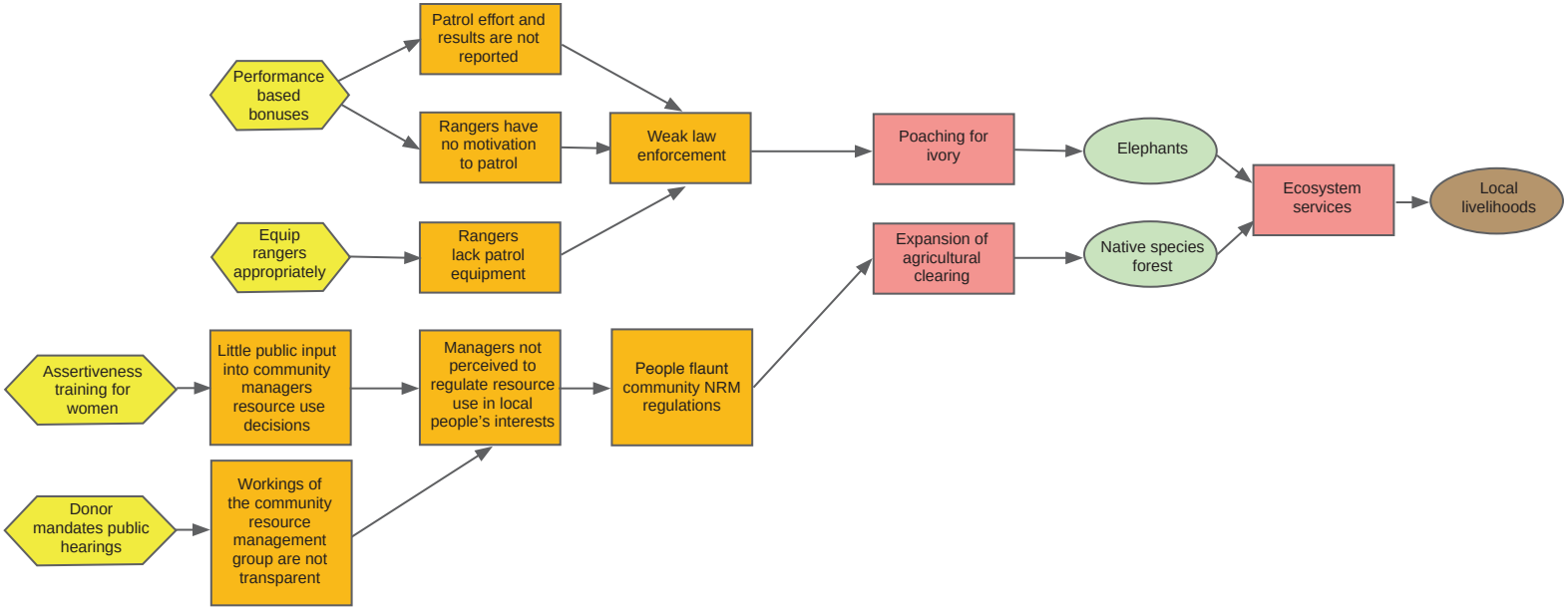
Step 6: Developing and implementing actions to improve governance

Once we have completed our analyses and have a good understanding of the critical NRM governance weaknesses in our landscape we will want to design and carry out activities to address them. The process involves updating your landscape conceptual model, building out results chains that show how we believe our actions will improve governance, and then planning and implementing these actions.

Updating conceptual models

Conceptual models show how we believe the world works, particularly in relation to the conservation of our landscapes. A good conceptual model shows the relationships between *stresses* on biodiversity (habitat loss and degradation, reduced population size, etc.) and the *direct threats* which contribute to those stresses (poaching, illegal logging, slash and burn agriculture, etc.). A Conceptual model is further developed as it lays out the *contributing factors* to those direct threats. These are the ultimate factors which lead to the direct threats, sometimes through several levels of factors.

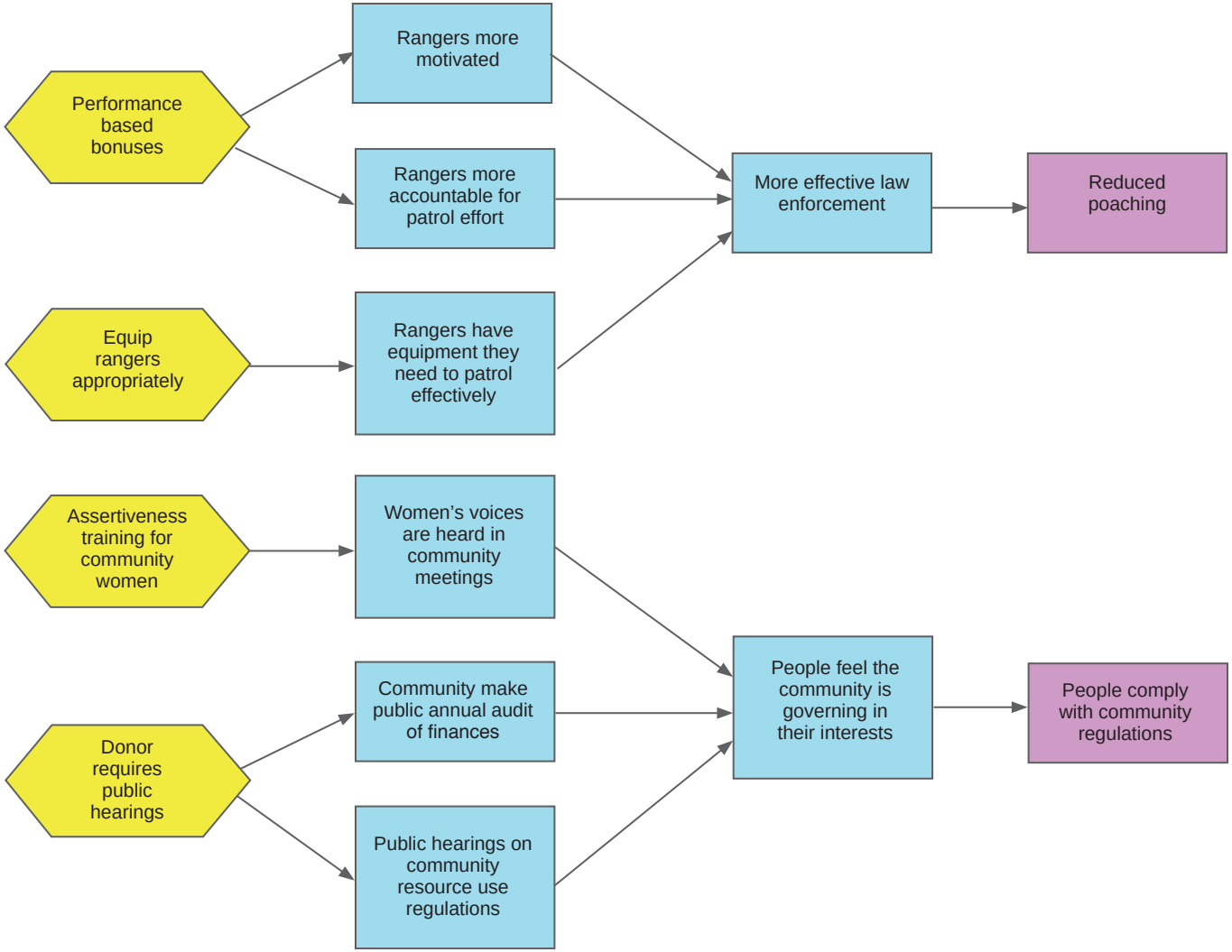
It is important to update your conceptual models based on what you have learned from the governance assessment. How do the weaknesses you identified *contribute* to the direct threats? It is important to make these relationships explicit in your model so that you can confirm them or revise them as you learn from and adapt implementation of the program. In the conceptual model below we have inserted the governance oriented contributing factors (rectangles) and potential actions/strategies (hexagons) on the left side of the model. Note how we have identified these as direct factors contributing to poaching and clearing land for agriculture.



Identify actions and develop governance results chains

Once you have a good hypothesis (conceptual model) for how you think weak governance is related to the direct threats you will need to design actions to improve governance. These actions will form the start of a results chain that shows how your actions will lead to positive changes in the *contributing* factors and a subsequent reduction in *direct threats* on the landscape.

For instance taking the example above our activities will concentrate on four areas: improving ranger pay, equipping rangers appropriately, helping women to learn how to be more assertive in meetings and mandating public hearings. Our results chains for these activities would look like this:


Performance based bonuses
Equip rangers appropriately
Assertiveness training for community women
Donor requires public hearings
Rangers more motivated
Rangers more accountable for patrol effort
Rangers have equipment they need to patrol effectively
Women's voices are heard in community meetings
Community make public annual audit of finances
Public hearings on community resource use regulations
More effective law enforcement
People feel the community is governing in their interests
Reduced poaching
People comply with community regulations

This results chain will allow us to test the validity of our assumptions (i.e. increased pay will increase ranger motivation) and ultimately see if our efforts are having any impact on the level of direct threat. Testing and reviewing our conceptual models and results chains is a basic process of adaptive management which should allow us to learn from our actions.

Planning, implementing, and learning from our actions

Once we have identified the actions we want to carry out we can include them in our annual planning process and begin implementation. We will want to reapply our governance assessment after a time to see if our efforts are improving governance (and conservation) in the way we had hoped. If not then we should reassess our models, actions and results chains to be more realistic.

CONCLUSIONS

The SCAPES team developed and tested this tool to help practitioners better understand how to strengthen resource groups' ability to regulate access to and meter use of natural resources within their jurisdiction so that they can better conserve these resources and the human welfare benefits that are derived from them over the long-term.

This guide should be useful to any government or civil society group interested in the conservation and sustainable management of natural resources. It should help improve their ability to invest their time and money effectively, whether they are contemplating working in a new area with new groups of resource owners and users, or have been working in a landscape or seascape for a long time.

In piloting parts of this guide in the USA (Adirondacks), Kazakhstan (Ustyurt Plateau), Bolivia (Madidi-Tambopata Landscape), and Kenya (Kilimanjaro Landscape) a few key lessons have been noted and to the extent possible adopted into the process. These include:

- To be truly useful anywhere the guide requires flexibility in its use. The ability of local groups to participate in the process depends greatly on their perceptions of what good governance is and our ability to listen and respond based on those perceptions. Talking about the importance of participation to people that have no real experience with or concept of "western" democratic participation is not as useful as asking them to describe and assess actual governance scenarios from their perspective. Once we understand their perspectives we can design interventions to improve not only their governance capacities but also their governance expectations.
- The guide should be viewed as an opportunity to build capacity within a project to better understand and assess NR governance. We see the process as an opportunity to take a "short cut" to being more effective; since, as we mentioned above, most conservation issues are resolved by improving NR governance, this assessment gives us an opportunity to give conservation professionals "hands on" experience in learning and thinking about how resources are governed in the landscape.
- When listing and assessing different governance groups in a landscape it is important to identify all groups that might affect NRM decisions even if they are not involved in NRM. This is particularly important when looking at power and which institutions in a landscape might have unofficial "veto" power over NRM related decisions.
- The tool can be used at multiple scales. Once a landscape level assessment has been completed it might be useful to take the tool to more local levels and allow local actors in local organizations to use it to assess and (hopefully) improve local governance. For example, after the pilot in Kenya, the tool was

taken and used to assess the governance of Massai Conservancies in the Amboseli area. The local groups were able to make concrete improvements in governance processes based on the assessment.

Like any new tool its value will be determined ultimately by whether practitioners find it easy to use and useful in their work. It is expected that the guide will evolve over time as practitioners learn new things about assessing governance strengths and weakness and adopt new strategies for addressing weak governance structures. To help build a community of practice around this approach and to facilitate sharing of experience using the tool we have a created a users' forum on Frameweb (www.frameweb.org/scapesgovtool.htm) that Fiesta Warinwa of the African Wildlife Foundation has kindly offered to moderate.

Though designed initially to meet a need within the natural resource management community we believe this approach would be useful for helping to strengthen governance in any situation where groups of people need to make collective decisions about how to establish and enforce rules that help them to live together and achieve common goals.

We hope after reading this guide that you will be encouraged to use this tool in your work and to share your experiences with others.

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