

LESSONS FROM THE FIELD

LINKING THEORY AND PRACTICE IN BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION

IF I ONLY KNEW THEN WHAT I KNOW NOW: An Honest Conversation About a Difficult Conservation and Development Project

About BCN

A commonly held idea in biodiversity conservation circles is that if local people can benefit from using their forests and reefs, then they will take action to conserve them. This idea sounds good in theory, but will it actually work in practice?

The Biodiversity Conservation Network (BCN) is testing this enterprise-based approach to conservation by doing it. Local communities set up businesses like ecotourism or forest product harvesting that directly depend on biodiversity. By funding and working with 20 such projects across Asia and the Pacific, we are trying to see under what conditions this approach works – and under what conditions it doesn't.

Lessons from the Field shares what we are learning along the way – both our successes and our failures. We hope this series will serve conservation practitioners as a catalyst for further discussion, learning, and action so that more biodiversity is conserved.

Preface

Nick Salafsky, BCN

Many of the Biodiversity Conservation Network (BCN) funded projects have been successful in getting enterprises to work, organizing community members, establishing monitoring regimes, and generally doing the work of conservation. Others have not. This type of work is not easy. If BCN can claim one unqualified success, however, it is the learning and growth that has been sparked in all of us who have participated in this venture. We may not have gotten it completely right the first time, but we all have stories to tell and lessons to share.

This paper is based on a discussion that BCN staff members held with a team of conservation and development practitioners involved with a truly difficult project. In trying to establish a community-based ecotourism business in Papua New Guinea, they've faced lots of challenges and dealt with lots of problems. Although the team members have shown great tenacity and perseverance, by all accounts, this project has not been a success. In fact, in terms of its stated goals and objectives, it hasn't worked at all. The real success here, however, has been the learning that the project staff has accumulated.

In the discussion, these remarkable individuals talk with a great deal of candor about the challenges they have faced and the lessons they have learned. We hope that you find the advice that they would give younger versions of themselves will spark your thinking about your own project and your own experiences.



PART I – The Field Perspective

The Lakekamu Basin is located in Papua New Guinea (PNG).



An integrated conservation and development project, as the name implies, seeks to achieve both biodiversity conservation and community development goals. These projects are sometimes abbreviated as ICDPs or ICADs.

Buai is the Pidgin English term for betel nut. It is a mild stimulant that is chewed. Sharing buai is an important social ritual over which much traditional business is conducted.

We didn't check first to see if the community was ready for conservation and development.

We ended up raising their expectations way too high.

The first part of our conversation is with John Sengo (JS). Sengo has been the field-based manager for the project since its start in 1994.

If I Only Knew Then What I Know Now

BCN: Okay....let's say that while we are sitting here, we suddenly hit a time warp. The lights dim and we go traveling back in time. It's now four years ago and we are in the Lakekamu Basin. You see a younger version of yourself – let's call him Johnny – getting off the plane coming into the Basin for the first time. If you only knew then what you know now, what would you tell this earlier you? If you could whisper in his ear, what advice would you have for Johnny?

The Importance of Planning

JS: When Johnny first came to the Basin, he thought everything was going to be easy. He thought there would be no problem getting things to work. But I think Johnny was green. I would have told him to do a lot more upfront planning. He should have done research in the library. He should have spent more time talking to people. He should have learned from the experiences of others and really figured out what this integrated conservation and development project thing is about.

Once he had a good understanding of how conservation and development projects work, then he should have flown into the Basin and done a real on-the-ground assessment of the conditions in the Lakekamu Basin. This should have taken weeks or months. It took Johnny eight months to even start to understand what was going on with the community. When he first showed up, he only spoke with the talkative people who were responsive to him. He didn't know that they weren't the only undisputed stakeholders. He didn't know that most people will not tell you things directly. He didn't know that you have to sit down with them and chew buai and story for months before they will open up to you. It took him three years to really know the community.

BCN: Can you explain why this planning is important?

JS: Up until now, we've spent a lot of money without any real tangible impacts. We initiated the project and pushed it on the community and then found it hard to pull out owing to the investment that we had made. We didn't check first to see if the community was ready for conservation and development. Johnny ended up being caught in the middle between the project and the community – he didn't realize the forces coming into play. We need the planning in order to develop clear goals and objectives for the project and the duties of different partners.

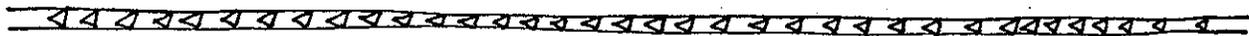


Setting Expectations

BCN: So how would you recommend that Johnny arrive for the first time at the project site in the Basin?

JS: Johnny should have gone in as a volunteer – as a researcher, not as a field officer representing a project. When you go in as a field officer, people assume that you are only there to help them. They don't realize that you may have your own agenda. We ended up raising their expectations way too high. We should have gone in and done realistic planning and held discussions with the people before getting the grant funds. As it is, the people were not involved in the project. They still don't understand what the project is or what it is supposed to do.

Overview and History of the Lakekamu Basin Project



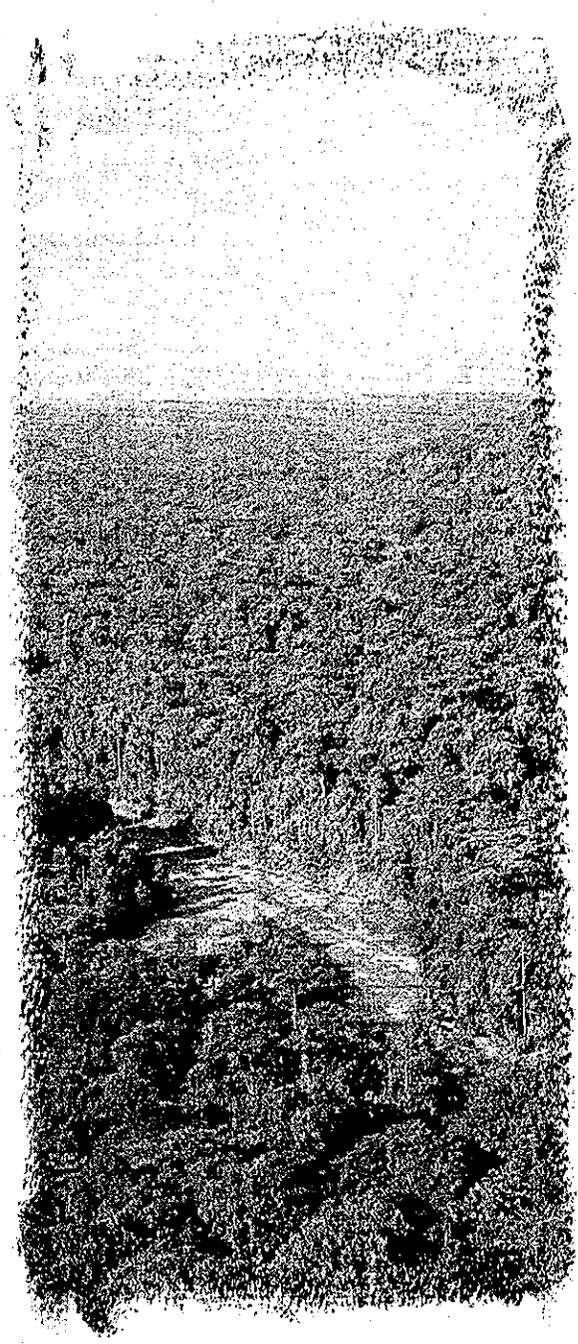
The 2500 square kilometer Lakekamu Basin contains the largest expanse of unbroken humid forest in the southern watershed of peninsular PNG (BCN 1997). The Lakekamu Basin project was established as a joint effort of Conservation International (CI), the Foundation for the Peoples of the South Pacific (FSP-PNG) which is now known as the Foundation for the People and Community Development (FPCD), and Wau Ecology Institute (WEI).

The roots of the project date back to 1978 with the first visits of biological researchers to the Basin (CI 1994). The project began in earnest in the early 1990s with the development of an initial research camp in Lakekamu Basin. Researchers working at the camp began exploring the possibilities of using research and tourism as a way of achieving conservation in the Basin.

The project team put together a complete project proposal to BCN for three years of funds (CI 1994). This initial proposal called for establishing both research and adventure tourism businesses. The planned research business involved having scientists come and live and work at a permanent ecological research station that was built in 1994 and 1995 on the banks of the Korr River. Community members were supposed to receive land-use fees from the scientists as well as money for research and logistical assistance services. The planned ecotourism business involved having tourists come visit the Basin. Community members were supposed to receive money for providing food and lodging as well as guiding and portering services. The project also planned to construct a series of huts along a bushwalking trail.

Each of the ethnic groups in the Basin was to be involved in different aspects of the businesses – one group providing meals to tourists, another guiding services, and so on. The proposal was the single highest ranked proposal out of over 35 that were evaluated by BCN's panel of distinguished experts from the conservation and development field. These 35 proposals had been in turn selected from a pool of over 400 concept papers and initial proposals.

In early 1994, problems arose with disputes between the members of the different landowner groups in the Basin over the Korr River research station which was located on land whose ownership was disputed. As a result, in December 1994, the project team abandoned the Korr station and decided to establish the current Ivimka research station on land that was thought to be clearly owned by one group of people. Construction of the station was begun in March 1996 and completed in December 1996. Since its completion, the station hosted visits from about 25 scientists including the 18 member CI sponsored Rapid Assessment Program (RAP) team. As of June 1998, project records indicate that the station has grossed 1,963 Kina (~ US\$ 785 at current exchange rates) in fees from researchers. The adventure tourism business has for the most part not yet been implemented. However, in 1996 one family in Kakoro established a guest house. As of June 1998, the guest house has grossed 884 Kina (~US \$ 353) in fees from visitors.



Johnny should not have arrived on the plane with his boxes and piles of supplies. People saw our bags and boxes of store bought food and assumed that we were rich and had lots of money. We should have brought in one box of high protein snacks and gotten the rest of our food from the village. My colleague and I only started doing this a couple of years later.

BCN: Did this work?

JS: Yes, it helped. The first year of the project, we did nothing. It was only in the second year that we started getting any interest from the community. For example, a few of the Biaru people in Kakoro said they were interested in building a guesthouse.

If You Build It, Will They Come?

BCN: Where did the inspiration for the guesthouse come from?

JS: After the first year in 1994, we had a training session about ecotourism. One of the guys got all inspired and wanted to build a guesthouse. He organized his family and built the place. This was really hard. I was glad that he was showing interest, but I was worried about not having any guests come. They built the house and then they started asking when the tourists would come. I didn't know what to tell them.

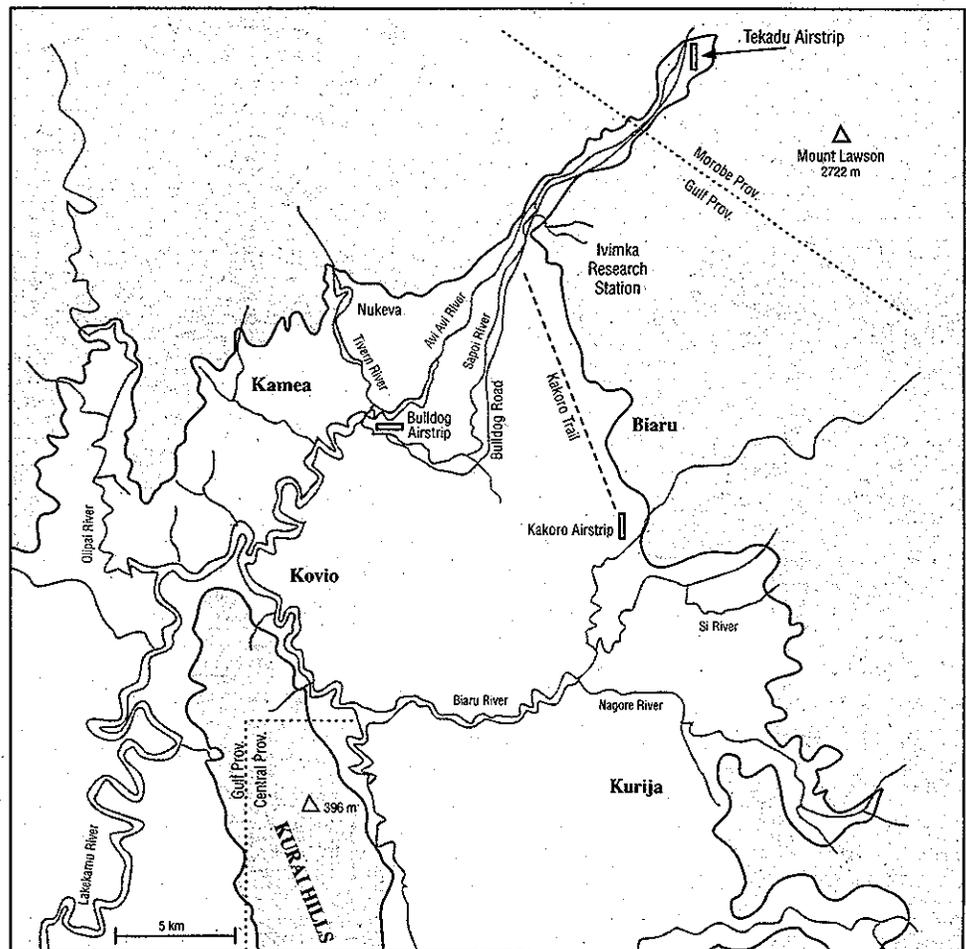
BCN: How did you feel about this?

JS: At the start I had real reservations. I was pleased that they were showing interest in the project's ideas, but I was worried about where the visitors would come from. And this has turned out to be a problem. Only a few people have come and already the guesthouse is starting to fall apart. I feel responsible for what has happened and that I let them down. Even now, when I go back to the Basin, they ask me, "When will they come? Is there any news of tourists coming?"

They built the house and then they started asking when the tourists would come. I didn't know what to tell them.

As shown in the map at right, the land in the Lakekamu Basin is divided between four different language groups: Biaru, Kamea, Kurija, and Kovio (Kirsch 1997 & 1998). Each group is further subdivided into clan.

Although traditionally people lived on their own land, in the past few decades, villages have developed around the airstrips in the Basin where there are also schools, stores, limited government services, and limited access to markets. The village of Kakoro is at the intersection of land controlled by three of the clans. The village of Tekadu is primarily in Kamea clan lands.



Map adapted from Mack (1998).

AN HONEST CONVERSATION ABOUT A DIFFICULT PROJECT

BCN: BCN calls this the "If you build it, they will come" assumption. It seems to be a common trap in ecotourism projects. How can you avoid this?

JS: I think Johnny should have told them more about marketing. How they would have to do their own marketing. He should have made sure they were adequately prepared for the potential results and that they had realistic expectations. And yet it's hard to stand by. We had problems with the logging companies and felt we couldn't discourage the people's interest. We knew that representatives of the companies were coming to talk to the people and we knew that we had to offer some source of income to the communities.

Management Issues

BCN: Were you able to talk to your project partners to get support in dealing with these types of difficult issues?

JS: In the early years, we had no in-country partner support. Our international partner was managing the project by remote control from Washington. Our organization in Port Moresby was not fully committed to the project at that time. As a result, there were no links between the field, Port Moresby, and DC. We didn't know what the hell was going on. I wrote a letter to the project director in Washington and he sent a fax saying we should follow the activity plan. But the assumptions in the plan were wrong in several instances. There were no clear goals and objectives. There was no listing of the duties and tasks that each group should accomplish. These problems go back to the lack of understanding that we had about the conditions in the Basin, the lack of planning we did, and problems with management.

BCN: Why didn't you change the plan?

JS: Because we didn't feel that we were in a position to make these changes. Now I would be more confident. I would tell Johnny to just bloody change the plan. I would report on the on the ground situation. I'd tell him to push for his opinion to be taken more seriously. Now, I know they will listen to me. Back then, I wasn't so sure.

BCN: What would have made this better? When we talked about this project in the field, we said that instead of having you field guys report to the Moresby office which would report to the other Moresby office which would report to the Washington office which would report to BCN (Diagram 1), that it might be better to turn things on their head and think about having all those levels "serving the needs" of the people closest to the field (Diagram 2).

JS: Yes, that's exactly it. It's like we talked about before.

One of the major threats to the forests in the Basin are large scale logging companies. These foreign owned companies set up deals with local communities to harvest their timber, typically paying the communities less than 2% of the value of the wood that is harvested. In the Basin, these logging schemes are also often coupled with proposals for the development of oil palm plantations.

Diagram 1: How Johnny Viewed the World at the Start of the Project

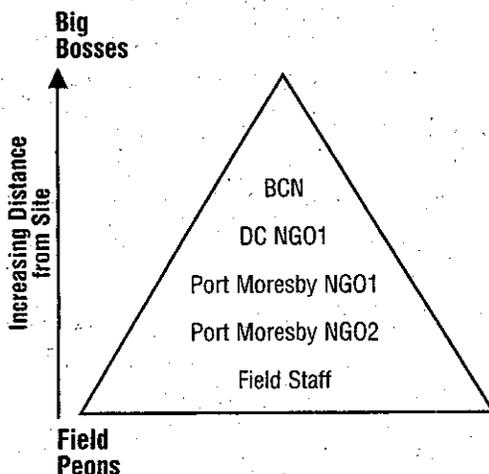
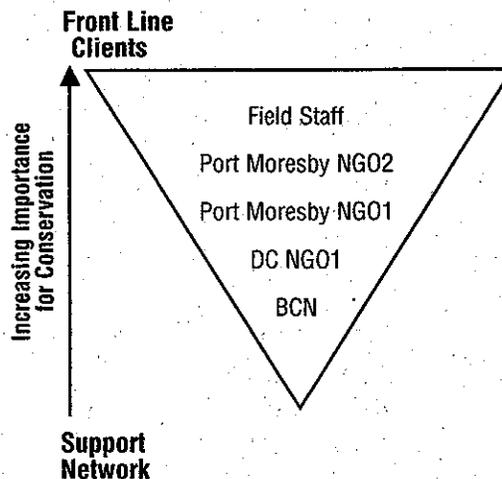


Diagram 2: How Johnny Should Have Viewed the World



Now I would be more confident. I would tell Johnny to just bloody change the plan.



Community Relations

BCN: The site where this project was taking place is inhabited by people from four different language groups. The original project proposal tried to work with all four of these groups. It seemed like the project designers had an ingenious plan to work with all of them. This was the highest ranked proposal in our funding process. But you seemed to run into trouble dealing with the jealousies and rivalries between the different groups. What advice would you have for Johnny in this regard?

JS: In the first days, there were only two of the community groups interested in the project. We should have picked those two and worked only with them. It's no good trying to work with groups that aren't interested in the project. Again, if we had done a preliminary survey, then maybe we would have focused on activities like awareness raising that would have been more helpful.

BCN: If you are working with several groups or even within one group, how do you handle the need to balance the needs of different groups or clans? Do you take sides? Or do you try to stay in the middle?

JS: I think you need to stay out of the politics. But you also need to be firm with the communities. Before we built the research station, the project director in Washington told me that I should sign an agreement with the community giving us long-term use rights for the land that the station is on. I didn't do it. I guess at the time I thought that it would be fairer to wait – that the community wouldn't really understand what they were signing. They wouldn't know what research is and would be signing without full knowledge. It was my idealism on behalf of the community.

Now, I would tell Johnny that we should have signed the agreement. It would have justified the dollars that we spent. There is nothing binding between us now and they can burn the station down if they want.

BCN: It sounds like you are saying that you need to treat people like adults from the outset. That you need to establish a clear and common understanding of mutual expectations. Does this make sense? I think we tend to not treat community members like equals. That they shouldn't be accountable when they break their side of a bargain. But some of the best projects that I've seen seem to take the reverse approach. They treat people like equals and expect them to hold up their end of the deal. If they don't keep the bargain, then the project team walks away.

JS: Exactly. But we didn't seem to do this. In one case, we organized a land owner forum. It was supposed to be a big meeting where we were going to develop an agreement between the project and the landowners. But the meeting was very poorly planned and facilitated. Our facilitator, who was from the outside, brought policemen to the meeting and kept pushing for conservation in a very open way. This ended up getting the people pissed off at us. They were saying "this is our land – who are you to tell us how to run it?" This kind of forum needs much better planning so that you can work out a deal that benefits both sides, including provisions for what happens if the deal is not upheld by either side.

It's no good trying to work with groups that aren't interested in the project.

Bad Deals

BCN: Do you have other examples of how you might interact better with community members?

JS: I would tell Johnny to avoid trying to make everybody happy. When you try to be the nice guy, people just keep coming with requests that they want help with. You create a dependency situation.

BCN: Would you tell Johnny to be outright mean to them?

JS: No, you need to help them, but you also need to get them to chip in as part of the bargain and not be too nice.

BCN: Do you have a specific example of when you were too nice?

JS: They came to me and said that they wanted a lawn mower to keep the airstrip trimmed. We talked about it for a while and made a deal that in exchange, they would help us build a house for the Peace Corps volunteers who were already on the site. But they conned me. I got the lawn mower and then they did not build the house. They just didn't give a damn. Eventually, we had to pay those guys. I had to hire some local men to help build the house because the Peace Corps were coming and we had to have a house.

They'll come to you for everything. They'll tell you that their auntie is sick and they need to have money. And then they don't pay you back. I gave away more than 1000 Kina to those guys. Now I say no way.

BCN: So now you don't give loans?

JS: Well, now I make sure that they are going to pay me back. I ask them how they will get the money – if they will go to the goldfields and pan gold.

Smart Moves and Dumb Moves

BCN: What's the smartest thing that Johnny did?

JS: I told the community members to "go to hell." It was pretty recent – in May 1998. We were having a big meeting at Tekadu. And they all came with their complaints. They said that after three years, Cosmas and I had done nothing. We worked hard, we got them the Bank money to fund their projects and they had no appreciation. Finally Peter, the landowner of the site where the station is said that we should pack up and leave.

I didn't try to justify myself. I just said, well I was the first person to come here with the project. In line with your wish, I'm going. If you want help, ask your children. I'm from the Sepik and I don't need to be around here. So I got my bag and left.

TP: Immediately after he left, the people started discussing things and tapping Peter on the back. Later that evening, Peter's son came down to the station and said that Peter wanted to talk it over. It was obvious that he had been bluffing and testing us and now we had called his bluff.

JS: Yeah, I wish Johnny had done that years ago. I would tell him to draw lines and be more forceful toward his own goals.



The Kina is the PNG unit of money, named for a traditional shell that was traded in the highlands. In the first couple years of the project, one Kina equaled about US\$1. Over the past few years, the Kina dropped in value and is currently trading at about US\$ 0.4. Whatever rate is used, 1000 Kina is a substantial sum of money in terms of the rural PNG economy.

I would tell Johnny to avoid trying to make everybody happy.

A landowner in this context is the elder person of the clan who has rights to use a specific area of forest. This tenure is recognized by both local communities as well as the national government – the PNG constitution assigns surface rights to the traditional landowners.

The Sepik is another province in PNG.

TP is Thomas Paka (see next section)

I told the community members to "go to hell."

Another smart thing that I did during my time in the Basin was to stay out of the local women.

A conceptual model is a diagram that illustrates the conditions at the site where a project is working and how the project activities will influence the desired outcome (see Margoluis and Salafsky 1998).

The real world is not like school. Things are not easy.

BCN: Are there any other smart things that Johnny did?

JS: Another smart thing that I did during my time in the Basin was to stay out of the local women. This won me a lot of respect from the local community. The community saw Cosmas and me as very different from those other government and company officers in this regard. I feel it is the easiest way to lose the respect and cooperation of the community. In my assessment, the relationship between me and the community was very important. Building that respect and understanding was probably one of the best accomplishments I have to show for my time.

BCN: What's the dumbest thing that Johnny did?

JS: Not getting the community to sign an agreement about the station like I explained before. We built this research station and now they are just going to burn it. We should have just said no. We built the thing and then we got tied down. We couldn't walk away any more. I heard that the community burned down another station in Central America. That's what could happen here.

BCN: Are you now prepared to carry on?

JS: Yes. I can do better now. This conceptual model that we are working makes more sense. It's more realistic now. Our understanding can make a difference.

And the Answer Is.....

BCN: So what have you learned about this enterprise based approach? Do you think it can work?

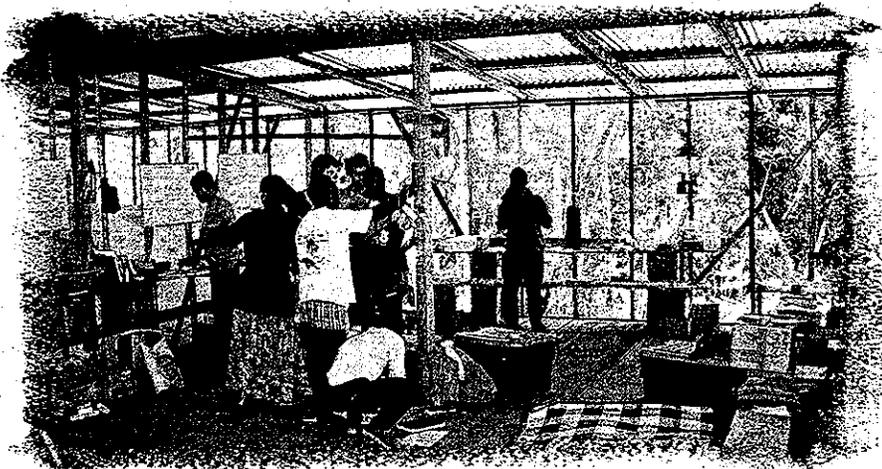
JS: I think it can work in certain situations, even in Lakekamu. It can work if the community is interested. It depends where the initiative starts. It depends on the education level of the community. I visited Kakoda. That community is very different. They are aware of the problems from the oil palm plantations. They want some support so that they can do it themselves.

But we also have to be tougher. We need to streamline things and stick to our plan. But we also need to be able to change our plan. The real world is not like school. Things are not easy.

I Remember it Well

BCN: What will you remember most 20 or 30 years from now when you think about this project?

JS: I will remember for a long long time my first days at our original research station. I will remember its uninhabited freedom and beauty, its crystal clear waters, and its abundant wildlife. I will also, however, have memories of how over-ambitious I was at the start of the project. I will not forget how I dreamed about trying to change the lives of the local people without considering how I would work with them and without being even the slightest bit aware of the frustrating times ahead.



PART II – The Office Perspective

The second part of our conversation is with Thomas Paka (TP) and Katherine Yuave (KY). Paka has been the Port Moresby-based manager for the project since early 1996. Yuave has been with the project in Port Moresby since early 1998.

If I Only Knew Then What I Know Now

BCN: Okay....just like we asked John, let's say that while we are sitting here, we suddenly hit a time warp. The lights dim and we go spinning back in time. It's now a few years ago and you see younger versions of yourselves – let's call them Tommy and Kathy – walking into the office to start your jobs for the first time. If you only knew then what you know now, what would you tell these earlier versions of you? If you could whisper in their ears, what advice would you have for Tommy and Kathy?

The Role of Office Staff

TP: My job was to be the prime contact between the lead organizations and the field officers. But there were things that I didn't do. I kept getting sidetracked on other duties that my bosses were assigning me. Because of this, I was exhausted and did not give full attention to the Lakekamu Basin Project. There was little time to check on what was going on in the bush. If I had focused on this project, maybe I could have done more.

More than anything, I would tell Tommy to raise this problem with his bosses. I would tell him to fight to keep his obligations to the project and to the people in the field.

KY: When I came to work here, I was not used to working in an office. I came directly from school and was quite new to how things operate in the work world. I saw the clutter and disorganization the office and I thought this might be normal and that maybe I shouldn't say or do anything about it. I didn't realize the importance or need to organize the office and to keep things in order.

BCN: We heard that John said that he didn't get support from the Port Moresby and Washington-based groups involved in the project. What could Tommy or Kathy have done about this?

TP: Tommy could have done a better job supporting the project in the little things like keeping accounts and getting supplies out to the field. But he could have also helped in managing the overall project better. Tommy should have reviewed the proposal more carefully and figured out what was possible and what was not. He should have helped the field staff prioritize their thinking and made things easier for them.

There is a dilemma with conservation and development projects. Project plans are written to please the donors. And then the funds come and the plans aren't always realistic in the project context. The situation in the field is always different from the situation portrayed in the proposal. So the people in the field don't necessarily understand the plans. Tommy should have helped the field staff to change the project. And he should have done a better job of linking field monitoring information to the reports that we were doing.

It's hard for the guys in the field to do good monitoring work when they are so busy with other things. Tommy should have been preparing the monitoring forms. He should have made them easier for the field guys to use them. He should have realized from the information that he received that the project was not viable and that there was not enough community support.

Distance from the Field

BCN: Is it hard to do your job from Port Moresby?

TP: Yes, I think that perhaps that this project should have been managed from Wau. This would have given us better contact with the project on a regular basis. It would have also kept us from being sidetracked on other issues.

If I had focused on this project, maybe I could have done more.

Tommy....should have helped the field staff prioritize their thinking and made things easier for them.

Monitoring refers to the periodic collection and use of information relative to stated goals and objectives. BCN-funded projects use monitoring data to both document project success and to better manage the enterprises and surrounding projects. BCN-funded projects spend up to one-third of their budgets on monitoring activities.

Wau is the nearest town to the Lakekamu Basin. It is an easy 20 minute plane ride from the Basin or a difficult 2-3 day hike through the forest.

In general, communication with rural areas in Papua New Guinea is extremely difficult and unreliable.

Communication is very tough because Moresby is so far away from the field. As one example, we would send cash advances out to the field and no receipts came back. So because of this communication breakdown, we couldn't do our reports. The field guys were scared to post the receipts because they thought they would get lost. But there is no other way to send them. So they just piled up.

KY: For Kathy, it was hard to understand what it is like to be in the village. When I went there to visit for the first time, I wasn't used to it. I was scared to be in such a place. Especially in Tekadu, the people there, they don't try to learn about you. The people are very hard to reach. I thought at first that if I had to live in a village like that, I would just pack up and go.

But over time, I realize that it is my job to try to make contact and reach across the distance. I would tell Kathy to be strong. I would tell her to force herself to say hello and to make efforts to make contact. In Kakoro, the women responded to me. Meeting them was a good idea. It helps me to do my job.

Pressures to Show Success and Hide Failures

BCN: It also seems like it was hard to play the role you mentioned of communicating with your partners and BCN in Washington. What kept you from talking to them?

TP: I think that Tommy had difficulties understanding what his bosses and BCN as the donor wanted. He was in a dilemma because we needed to use the BCN funds to support the project. He understood that BCN is doing this hypothesis testing and that there was an emphasis on enterprises. He felt that because of this focus, that BCN would not want to change the project and that he shouldn't mention the problems he saw with the enterprise to the folks in Washington.

BCN: So what could Tommy have done about this?

TP: He should have looked at examples from other countries. He should have talked to BCN. He should have told them that they can't use projects in other parts of PNG or the world as a measure of our success. That they should not judge our success by the successes of other projects. We need to develop our own measuring stick.

BCN held a workshop in the South Pacific and you invited other projects from PNG and you didn't invite us. We thought that was because BCN thought we were doing bad work - because we had no success stories to tell. This discouraged us from working on the project. If talking about failure is not valued or rewarded, this is a problem.

Lessons Learned the Hard Way

BCN: So what should have Tommy have done if he wanted to do his job better?

TP: There are a number of things that I've learned that Tommy could have done. For one thing, like John said, I think I'd tell Tommy about how hard it is to work in ethnically diverse areas like the Basin. It's hard to put diverse groups of people together. I think its better to work with just one group.

Also, like John said, it's important not to be scared to change things, even if it is in the middle of the project. We need to pay attention to the realities in the field and not just sit back and be ignorant. We must speak out on issues that are impractical or hard to achieve.

BCN: What about on the office side of the work? What advice would you have?

TP: I would tell Tommy that he should be briefed in financial work. When I started the job, I had some basic ideas of accounting systems. But it wasn't enough. If I had known more, I could have detected discrepancies. For example, I didn't know that we couldn't include tax payments as an expense in our accounts. This led to all kinds of problems.

I would also tell Tommy that he needed to get the right people for the right job. We were supposed to have sociologists. John and the other field guys are biologists. They tried their own way of talking with the people. But they didn't have the methods or experience to do it in the professional way.

I thought at first that if I had to live in a village like that, I would just pack up and go.

If talking about failure is not valued or rewarded, this is a problem.

It's important not to be scared to change things, even if it is in the middle of the project. We need to pay attention to realities and not just sit back and be ignorant.

Smart Moves and Dumb Moves

BCN: What was the smartest thing you did?

KY: I was able to develop a ecotourism guide book that we could give to the researchers. It's only a start, but the project needs to do marketing to start working. I also was able to develop a registry file that helped make our office work easier.

TP: I always rushed the money to the field to make sure they would have it when they needed it. I also was able to get money for a few things that we needed like a new computer. The old computers were terrible – they were always breaking down. I looked in the budget and found some money we could use to buy new computers.

BCN: What was the dumbest thing you did?

KY: I told the women cooking for the visitors at the guesthouse that they could create a business. It was what I wanted to believe. But like John said, it created expectations that were too high. The guest house owner is now asking me on the radio if the guests are going to be coming. I don't know what to tell him.

TP: Going to too many unnecessary meetings. I was invited to a lot of meetings and I usually went. It was nice to travel and my boss wanted me to go. Tommy needed to learn to say no at times. He needed to prioritize things in the office.

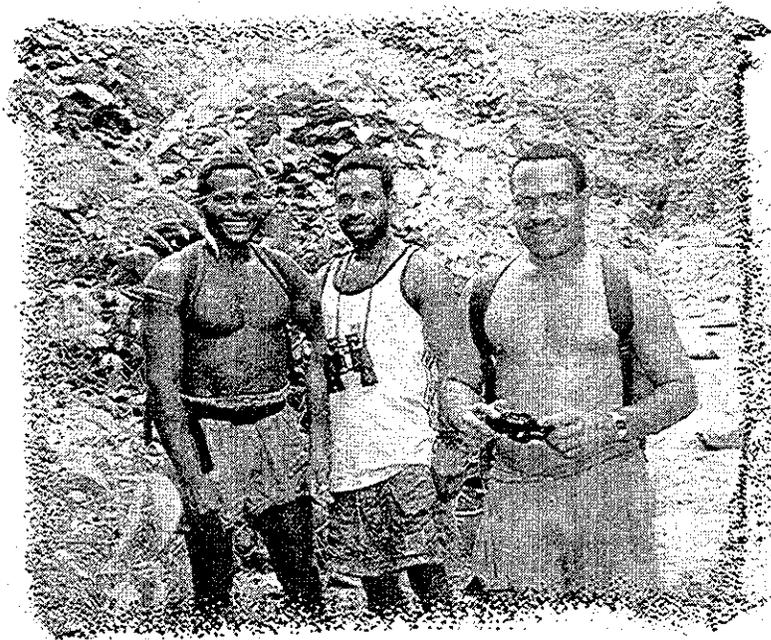
One example was last year when I went to a meeting in Lae. This was when BCN was coming to town. I was having trouble with the reports. But I wanted to go to Lae. So I went, and ended up not meeting with BCN.

I Remember It Well

BCN: What will you remember most 20 or 30 years from now when you think about this project?

TP: I'll remember Peter's face – the demands that he was making in that last meeting with John. I'm a peaceful man in the office, but the demands that those people made really made me hot. I think I'll remember the expectations that the local people had and how difficult this situation was.

KY: I'll remember the research station – how beautiful it was and everything that was going on there. If I have children, I'll tell them what a great place it was. But I will also tell them how hard it is to do work in the field. If they want to grow up to be field workers, I'll advise them of the negatives as well.



[The dumbest thing I did was] going to too many unnecessary meetings. I was invited to a lot of meetings and I usually went.... Tommy needed to learn to say no at times.

I'll remember the research station – how beautiful it was and everything that was going on there.

About This Issue

This document is based on a conversation between BCN staff members Nick Salafsky and Chiranjeev Bedi with Lakekamu Basin project team members John Sengo, Thomas Paka, Katherine Yuave, and Banack Gamui. The conversation was held on 4 August 1998 at the FPCD headquarters in Port Moresby. The words are not exact quotes, but are based on extensive notes that were taken during the meeting and subsequent edits added by the participants during reviews of various drafts of this paper.

Comments on various drafts of this paper were also provided by Norma Adams, Ganesan Balachander, Nancy Baron, Chuck Berg, Connie Carrol, Hank Cauley, Bernd Cordes, Chuck Encarnacion, Cheryl Hochman, Cosmas Makamet, Richard Margoluis, John Parks, Larry Rand, Diane Russell, and Kathy Saterson.

About This Series

This article is part of the Biodiversity Support Program's Lessons from the Field series. This series features topics that shed light on the conditions for conservation success, based on what we are learning from our partners in the field. The BCN Issues in this series focus on results from the Biodiversity Conservation Network.

This article was made possible through support provided by the Global Bureau of USAID, under the terms of cooperative agreement number AEP-0015-A-00-2043-00. The opinions expressed herein are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID.

The contents of this publication may be reproduced for educational and other non-commercial uses.

For more information, to give us feedback, or to order copies, we can be reached at:

Biodiversity Conservation Network
c/o World Wildlife Fund
1250 24th Street NW
Washington DC 20037, USA

Phone: 202-861-8348
Fax: 202-861-8324
e-mail: bcn@wwfus.org
Web: www.BCNet.org.

About BCN and BSP

The Biodiversity Conservation Network (BCN) seeks to 1) support site-specific efforts to conserve biodiversity at sites across Asia and the Pacific, and 2) evaluate the effectiveness of enterprise-based approaches to conservation.

BCN is part of the Biodiversity Support Program (BSP), a consortium of World Wildlife Fund, The Nature Conservancy, and World Resources Institute, funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

BSP's mission is to promote conservation of the world's biological diversity and to maximize the impact of U.S. government resources directed toward international biodiversity conservation. We believe that a healthy and secure living resource base is essential to meet the needs and aspirations of present and future generations.

Credits:

Writer:

Nick Salafsky

Photos:

Nick Salafsky

Artist:

Anna Balla

Production:

Connie Carrol

Design:

Design Consultants, Inc.

Printing:

Linemark Printing, Inc.

BCN Series Manager:

Nick Salafsky

BSP Series Manager:

Richard Margoluis

BCN Director:

Ganesan Balachander

BSP Director:

Kathryn Saterson

References:

BCN (1997) *Annual Report: Getting Down to Business*. Biodiversity Conservation Network, Washington, DC, USA.

BCN (1997b) *The Biodiversity Conservation Network: Evaluating Issues of Business, the Environment, and Local Communities*. A web site at www.BCNet.org.

Conservation International (1994) *Landowner-based Conservation Fostered by Science and Adventure Tourism in the Lakekamu Basin, Papua New Guinea*. Proposal submitted to Biodiversity Conservation Network.

Kirsch, Stuart (1997) *Regional dynamics and conservation in Papua New Guinea: The Lakekamu River Basin project*. The Contemporary Pacific 9: 97-120.

Kirsch, Stuart (1998) *Social history of the Lakekamu River Basin*. Pages 71-80 in Andrew Mack (editor) *A Biological Assessment of the Lakekamu Basin, Papua New Guinea*. Conservation International, Washington DC, USA.

Margoluis, Richard and Nick Salafsky (1998) *Measures of Success: Designing, Managing, and Monitoring Conservation and Development Projects*. Island Press, Washington DC, USA.



100% recycled paper,
100% post consumer waste.