

Report on the Community Engagement in Conservation Summit

11 to 14 February 2020 Nanyuki, Kenya

Executive Summary

Jointly sponsored by the Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association (KWCA) and Chemonics International, and held 11-14 February 2020 at the Mt. Kenya Safari Lodge, Nanyuki, Kenya, the summit was designed to provide a forum for dialogue on the central role of communities to conservation success, their current challenges and impact, and to generate new ideas for the future of communities in driving sustainable conservation outcomes in East Africa and beyond.

Over these four packed days, participants representing communities and conservation/development organizations presented, questioned, and debated key questions such as *“what is community-led conservation?”*, *“who does wildlife belong to?”*, and *“how are community voices heard in the larger conservation conversation?”*. Participants also visited four different community conservation sites in the Mt. Kenya area to speak with communities, learn from their challenges and successes, and to share ideas from the summit to support community efforts.

While there was a focus on Kenya conservancies – to support the site visits and host country – the summit compared and contrasted models from Tanzania, Uganda, Namibia, and South Africa to draw out the commonalities and differences among them. In Kenya, the largely successful models examined were formed “organically” by communities and conservation organizations taking action to enhance local ownership and benefits. These conservancies are relatively new, however, and face many challenges having grown in the absence of a clear regulatory framework. In Tanzania, community Wildlife Protection Areas are decreed by central government and – while there are successes – have generally struggled to provide benefits to people in the community due to systemic and structural challenges around money flows. These approaches were contrasted with models in Namibia – widely considered a global standard – which have strong community legal rights and a regulatory framework, and South Africa where community conservation is increasingly political and part of a national level dialogue.

The summit also presented the Conservation Solutions Lab (see box at right) and looked at ways to further engage the wider conservation community and support community conservation best practices. UNEP was also represented at the summit and presented on the larger global environment/conservation agenda and how communities could better engage in those processes. Participants challenged the lab to work with communities to provide greater leverage in the national and international conservation dialogues, push for greater integration between conservancies and government/policy, to help communities to share challenges and experiences to increase their effectiveness and move their agenda forward. Similarly, participants urged UNEP to help communities communicate the value of conservation/biodiversity (evidence and communication/advocacy), advocate on behalf of the environment and communities, and support increasing community voices in the global dialogue.

Conservation Solutions Lab

The Conservation Solutions Lab is a joint initiative of Chemonics and Arizona State University's Center for Biodiversity Outcomes. The lab brings together multidisciplinary scientists, conservationists, and development practitioners to bring evidence-based practice to designing, implementing and evaluating the impact of community engagement approaches in conservation.

The summit provided an opportunity to share lessons and perspectives with one another on the meaning of community conservation and the challenges communities face while engaging in community conservation processes. The perspectives below summarize key themes discussed at the summit:

Community conservation and community engagement mean different things to different people.
– **Dickson Kaelo** (Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association)

Communities need to take part in decision making...as they suffer the hardship of living with wildlife. As a result they need to be there, they need to partake in all decisions that concern them in regards to community conservation. – **Annastasia Naiteta** (NACSO)

The feeling is that in Tanzania, communities have given a lot to conservation...but the benefits going to the household level is very small. We need to go from community benefits to individual benefits to help communities to conserve. – **Florentina Julius** (Tanzania Natural Resource Forum)

Workshop Activities

Day 1 – After a welcome, introductions, and review of the agenda, representatives of the **Conservation Solutions Lab** led a discussion on the idea of “community engagement,” seeking the perspectives of participants as to what it means (see box at right). The panel then led a discussion on the work of the lab and how they could support communities and conservation. As the lab’s focus is in enhancing “evidence-based practice” in conservation, the discussion centered on the state of evidence in the sector with a general understanding that it is lacking – especially in the academic sense.

In one word, what does community engagement mean to you?

Interesting
Rewarding
Humbling
Dynamic
Critical
Complex
Fulfilling
Unavoidable
Challenging

Samantha Cheng from the American Museum of Natural History presented on the state of knowledge of successful models of community conservation. Based on a literature review of peer reviewed research, she reported scant academic evidence on the subject and that a comparison of available studies was complicated by a lack of defined/consistent terms – e.g. what does community mean? – as used in the paper. While there is much documentation of approaches and successes (but little on failures) from practitioners, the inconsistency of approaches to monitoring and evaluation, and the purpose of reporting (e.g. reporting to donors) makes it difficult to draw objective lessons and analyze findings in aggregate.

There was consensus that research findings are not getting implemented on the ground and even when research results are available, there is a lack of a feedback loop for learning. This lack of a feedback loop prevents academic researchers from getting information in the application of their research, but perhaps more importantly, thwarts feedback to communities and protected area managers who support the research. In response to a request for examples of research influencing community conservation (i.e. would stronger academic research even matter?), the panel cited the work of Elinor Ostrom and collective action as having had a real influence on conservation and development work. Further, in response to a request for a good example of community led-research used by the communities, participants noted the case of the event book system in Namibia where communities gather the data on pre-determined incidents (e.g. spotting a lion), analyze it for management, and use it to secure permits and funding towards community benefits.

For research to be useful, we need to close the loop, so that the information is used and those who need it in the long-run have access to it – Q&A of CLA Session

Doreen Robinson, UNEP's Chief for Wildlife, next presented on the global conservation dialogue and the 2020 “**Super Year for Nature**” where multiple dialogues and decision making processes of importance to environment and wildlife are taking place (see graphic at right – *acknowledging that much has changed post-summit with the COVID 19 pandemic*), such as the World

Conservation Congress, UN Heads of State Summit, and the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) COP 15. These conventions are not written by donors or conservation practitioners, but by countries and what they are willing to commit to in conservation. Unsurprisingly, many of the indicators and goals do not address key factors important to communities such as community values in the CBD, and fisheries and the blue economy in the climate convention. These are generally top-down approaches and siloed to their specific area of focus.

Context: Key Influence Opportunities to push the Action Agenda



We need to think differently about how we effectively measure qualitative indicators. Global frameworks are all about things that can be counted but not everything that counts can be counted. How can we use science to look at qualitative measures of success? – Super Year for Nature Presentation

The focus of the presentation then moved closer to the issue at the heart of the summit– *How to get community voices to be a major force in these global frameworks?* As these are processes are country driven, the better question may be, *How can communities best affect the hearts and minds of politicians?* Without a voice at the forums and/or the attention of politicians, communities cannot influence the processes to use a rights-based approach or to increase the prominence of land access and use rights in the conventions

and protocols. It was recommended and widely agreed that conservation practitioners and communities must become fluent in discussing power dynamics and political economy (Get savvy!) and not just continue talking to one another (e.g. summits such as this one). While evidence is critical to convincing politicians, it needs to be accessible and communicated in the proper channels.

Questions in this session focused on some of the practical approaches to increasing community voices in international forums. Recommendations and issues included:

- *Support to community groups to attend global fora.* When community members are on delegations and tell their stories (with coaching and training on how to target stories to their audience) – it resonates and impacts the frameworks and conventions.
- *Bring a cohesive and joint message.* At the national level only a few countries, such as Namibia, have an organized message. Most African delegations generally disagree amongst themselves leaving openings for power players to make decisions.
- *Use the big donors.* The big donors, such as USAID, will be present and can help communities and conservation groups to craft their messages and include the measures of importance to governments. If an organized community structure stood up with a clear message to a donor, the donor will want to help.
- *Advocacy and youth.* Before anyone shows up to an event, the decision makers should understand what the people want to see. Africa has a young population and youth are using social media to communicate around the globe. Many of the delegates at these conventions, however, are older and not as savvy with these tools.

Communities have a right and responsibility to put their voices into this conservation - at the international level, national level, and here.
– Q&A Session to Super Year for Nature

The final session of day one was led by Keynote Speaker Charles Oluchina, Regional Program Coordinator, IUCN, who gave a presentation titled “**Who’s Wildlife is it Anyway?**” The presentation began with a timeline (“a random rush to extinction”) which showed the general progression of power and conservation in Africa, from the first tribes and traditional hunting methods, to the modern states and the commodification of natural resources and militarization of wildlife poaching.

Focusing on the case of community conservation in Kenya, the presentation illustrated the various and largely failed (“Three decades of trying hard”) attempts to organize community conservation in Kenya prior to the development of the KWCA. Potential design flaws were discussed to understand why the earlier models needed to be rethought including the following:

- A lack of common vision
- Limited incentives
- Supply driven without business models
- Standalone and non-systematic initiatives
- Limited capacity
- Insufficient institutional arrangements
- Elite capture in the community, NGOs, and government
- Lack of champions and those with authority
- Scale too small
- Policy and enabling environment lacking

Moving to the more current situation and the development of KWCA (founded in 2013) the presentation looked at the transition to a more inclusive conservation model (luck meets preparedness). While the current model in Kenya is in many ways still young, there have been significant successes and promising trends. Driving factors in this new and improved community and conservation model include:

Any agenda that doesn't look at the building the governance capacity at the grassroots will not achieve the outcome that is intended – Who's Wildlife is it Anyway? Presentation

- *More Inclusive.* Acknowledging that 60-70% of wildlife is found on private or communal land – conservation has been more inclusive and better incorporates wildlife, people, and livestock living together.
- *Market failure corrections.* New models are more market led and better incorporate package tourism as the dominant factor in the industry. New models also looked more broadly at multi-faceted economic solutions for community empowerment and which sustainable market solutions would work in the community.
- *Leading policy* – People decided that policy reform was overdue and led with the models that made sense for them – Kenya had the conservancies before it had the policy. While there was no prototype there was room for creativity and experimentation. Once the conservancies were working – parliament took notice.

Who's wildlife is it anyway? This is a land tenure issue - it needs to be owned by all of us!

While there remains a missing middle between national level policy and on the ground implementation, KWCA is bringing together the parties to enhance governance processes, to bridge the gap and to help define conservation as not only wildlife, but as a holistic package with incentives for conservation. Conservation efforts alone, however, will not end resource degradation and with growing populations we will see increasing need for infrastructure. We therefore need to make conservation messages “more punchy” and borrow approaches from other professions such as econometrics, to make the larger case for conservation more compelling by leveraging data.

Day 2 – The day started with reflections on Day 1, which highlighted the shift in conservation towards communities in the region. Related to this shift of focus on communities in conservation, however, there needs to be a transfer of power, and intermediaries (NGOs, government agencies) may need to change how they do business.

If communities are changing, how are intermediaries adjusting to provide tools, and build capacity to support community empowerment? – Day 1 Reflections

The focus of the day was on building an understanding of the community conservation models taking place in the region especially those in Kenya. The morning centered on posters/case-studies from Kenya, with additional cases from Uganda, Tanzania, and Southern Africa to provide a more in-depth look at community conservation in East and Southern Africa. The afternoon focused on the specific conservancies that participants would visit on Day 3 (*Ngare Ndare, Ol Pejeta, and Il Ngwesi*) and discussing their challenges and

potential actions to address them. Summaries on the conservancies visited are presented in the Day 4 overview, with summaries of the Tanzania and southern Africa cases presented below.

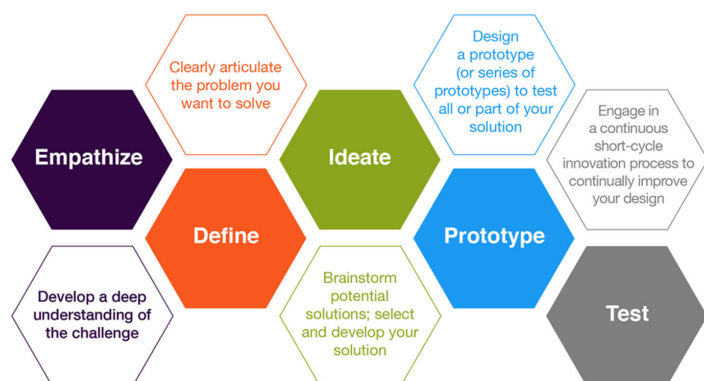
George Wambura, the CEO of the Community Wildlife Management Area Consortium, presented on community conservation and the Wildlife Management Areas (WMA) in **Tanzania**. While a community conservation model, it was initiated by the government as part of a process to devolve authority from government run protected areas. Currently, there are 38 WMAs designated in the country, with 22 deemed fully operational. The legal framework was drafted in 2003 and has been revised several times including in 2020 to help address emerging issues. While some WMAs have been successful, major challenges persist for many, including the “one size fits all” approach of the legal framework which discourages innovation, creativity, and investment. Government involvement remains significant which can undercut the authority of local managers and buy-in by the community. Elite capture has also been a major constraint where the benefits that reach the communities are a fraction of those officially allocated and insufficient to incentivize communities to engage in conservation.

Transfer of power is often seen as a zero-sum game, and strings attached may hamper true authority – Q&A Discussion on Tanzanian WMAs

For the case of **Southern Africa**, Steve Collins, CEO of the African Safari Foundation, presented on the case of trans-frontier conservation areas and the bottom-up approach with good community engagement. As most countries in southern Africa became independent later than East Africa, conservation themes and community rights were included in the legislature and founding governance principles to a greater degree. Models of community conservation have been partnerships between communities, the private sector, and conservation agencies, but challenges remain. In general, community-based organizations have poor governance structures in place, and when there are issues conservation agencies can try to take the power from the communities. While engagement with the private sector can drive benefits from conservation, there are dishonest actors who can take advantage of communities in negotiations. To meet these challenges, NGOs often serve as the middlemen and provide support to enhance governance structures and monitoring capacity, build critical negotiation and management skills, and advise communities on appropriate models and approaches that meet their needs.

The final sessions used a human centered design approach, wherein participants brainstormed innovative concepts to address challenges conservancies reported on throughout the day. Participant groups began their thinking with ‘*what is desirable*’ from a human perspective, layering in ‘*what is feasible from a technological*

perspective’ and ‘*what is viable from a business model perspective*’. Participants used a prototyping process (see graphic above) to better define potential approaches to share with



conservancies and serve as starting points for substantive conversations with the conservancies visited.

Day 3 – Using the human-centered design activities from day two to develop prototypes to share with communities, participants split into groups to visit one of three Mt. Kenya area conservancies. The conservancies highlighted different approaches to conservation which evolved in Kenya in the absence of an overarching framework. **Ngare Ndare** highlighted co-management, where the conservancy leased land in the forest reserve working with Kenyan forestry officials. **Oi Pejeta** highlighted a private sector partnership approach to revenue generation, with major receipts and expenditures. **Il Ngwesi** highlighted a true community-led approach. An overview for each site visit is provided in the Day 4 summary below.

Day 4 – Teams presented their experiences, findings, and lessons from Day 3 site visits. Participant groups took different approaches, with some presenting their prototypes to communities to start discussions, and others choosing to hear directly from communities to start conversations.



Visit to the Ngare Ndare Forest – Reviewing gate entry logs (L) and Canopy walk meeting (R)

The **Ngare Ndare** group reported a situation where things were by and large quite successful. While there were challenges faced by the conservancy and the communities it represented, potential recommendations begged the question if good enough should be (largely) left alone. Case in point was the issue of goats, which were meant to be excluded by government regulation but were entering the forest under the category of “shoats” in the entry log (sheep are permitted). This bit of strategic ambiguity allowed the status quo management to continue which, with a seemingly healthy forest and lack of studies demonstrating their goats being more destructive than sheep, appeared to participants to aligned with conservation goals (despite contradicting the management plan on the point of goats). Prototypes designed to address the issue of “illegal goats” were therefore dropped by the team as inappropriate.

The principle concern that the community expressed was the scale of the benefits they were receiving (paid by receipts from tourist activities such as the canopy walk and horseback riding). While community representatives acknowledged the benefits the conservancy was providing – the household biogas systems were a notable example – but they wanted to see those benefits have a wider reach. The community expressed a strong interest in establishing a tourism lodge to increase revenues and benefits. While the summit team felt this approach is indeed worth exploring, they discussed the challenges and the information that would be needed to take the next steps in pursuing the idea. The Summit team recommended the community establish a joint platform for government and community forest associations in response to the community's struggle with the high lease fees (1.2 million shillings annually) despite the valuable services the community provides to the government in protecting the watershed and rhino population. Such a platform could better represent and advocate for the conservancies situation and push for reduction of fees, increasing the revenues and benefits to the community.

While the **Ol Pejeta** private sector model takes in major revenues (largely due to the draw of the last two known northern white rhinos), it also has major expenses. The conservancies livestock program provides great benefit to the community by offering to house and care for community cattle for two months for fattening – approximately doubling their value – before selling them to return the profit to community. Ol Pejeta will also take in community cattle during times of drought. Combined with tourism revenue shares, the conservancy provides several benefits to the community including conservation education programs, agriculture and health extension services, a scholarship program, and investments in communications and outreach.

The three overarching challenges facing the conservancy were the scalability of the model, managing the costs, and broadening community engagement. The programs are challenges in scaling up positive impacts and benefits, however, by a reliance on donor funding and the ebbs and flows of the tourism market. For managing the costs, the upkeep and protection of the large rhino population (more than 100 individuals) is a huge expense and needs to be balanced with the benefits to the community – though in some cases there can be overlap (224 of the 700 staff members are from a local community). In engaging the communities, specific challenges included the balance between programs benefitting pastoralists versus those benefitting the larger community, and the lack of an engagement/communications strategy, leading to a greater focus on older generations and insufficient engagement with youth. As the mixed



Visit to Ol Pejeta – Cattle (T) and
Najin – northern white rhinos (B)

wildlife and livestock economy seems to be working reasonably well in Ol Pejeta, summit participants thought that KWCA and the CSL could potentially play a role in promoting this model and providing evidence to support how this model may be a good form of rangeland management.

The *Il Ngwesi* visitors focused on the lodge, which is fully owned and operated by the community. The summit group met 30 community members, more than half of whom were women. The community representatives were excited to engage with participants and share their work and challenges. The two principle issues they identified were difficulty in connecting with the local government for support and the lack of diversified income in the conservancy. These challenges echo those of *Ngare Ndare* and indeed are a common thread in community conservation. To help raise the profile of the conservancy, and thereby address the identified challenges, the summit visitors suggested using the Grévy's zebra – which is the largest and most endangered of the three Zebra species, and which has a narrow range which includes the conservancy – as a marketing focus for tourism and related products. Specific recommendations included looking into hosting a fashion show (with prominent Grévy stripes, a music festival and/or producing or licensing clothing and consumables (e.g. gin) under the *Il Ngwesi*/Grevy banner.



Visit to the Il Ngwesi – The Eco Lodge (L) from Il Ngwesi website <http://ilngwesi.com/content/visit/> and community representatives outside of Il Ngwesi's newly constructed clinic (R)

While the community was quite receptive to the ideas, they raised some challenges, including the need for support to organize events and products, Grévy zebras are not unique to the conservancy, and the increased potential for poaching if the status of the Grévy zebras' was amplified. Community representatives were interested in working with Kip Ole Polos, Chairman of the Il Ngwesi board, and other interested organizations on next steps. It should also be noted that in response to the direction to be creative, and perhaps in supporting the idea of a music festival, the summit group delivered a portion of their report in the form of a blues song to the plenary group. Additionally, a point for discussion coming out of the Q&A was the relationship of the community with the pastoralists coming in across central/northern landscapes. While there seems to be much openness between the groups to using each other's lands (community

members may move cattle externally in conditions of poor local grazing), participants recommended developing grazing plans to better manage the resource and to act as a communications platform to avoid potential conflicts in the future (which may be more likely with climate change).

Lessons Learned and Recommendations

The summit ended with reflections on the lessons learned over the four days and recommendations and next-steps, specifically for the CSL and UNEP participants. The **Conservation Solutions Lab** was challenged to put their solutions and research to work for on-the-ground efforts such as the northern Kenya conservancies to support them in engaging with the government and policy makers. CSL representatives agreed that the Lab could provide a platform for collective action where parties can share issues, collaborate on potential solutions, and use linkages to move the needle on the ground.

Related to the call for community participation in global convenings from the **United Nations Environment Program**, summit participants felt that UNEP was well placed to communicate the value of conservation/biodiversity and advocate on behalf of the environment, and importantly, support community voices in global forums. More specifically, UNEP could assist the Government of Kenya in developing a national wildlife economy strategy which can address critical issues such as the trade in live animals. They can also help to coordinate other donors, such as Switzerland and Norway who are hosting a special consultation on sustainable use and the role of the communities in 2020 and specifically find out who Kenya is sending and make sure they represent conservancy interests.

Key Survey Metrics

- I would recommend similar workshops to colleagues – 83%
- The summit was the right length – 92%
- The summit had the right mix of content – 67%
- The summit had the right mix of people – 58%

Learning by seeing is very crucial and the participants had a chance to visit various sites and learn from communities. What I learned personally is that communities are really playing a big role in conserving biodiversity, but that they are not sharing in the benefits from the same. – Participant feedback on what was most appreciated

Survey results

Based on the results of the post-summit survey, participants generally felt that the objective of the summit – to provide a forum for dialogue on the roles of communities in conservation – was met. As seen, especially in the open-ended questions and responses (e.g. see box above), people appreciated the interactions and the opportunity for dialogue presented by the summit. Improvements to the summit were cited as increased time for participants to prepare for community presentations and increased community representation. Similarly, greater representation from experts outside of the field of conservation, for example in social behavior change, governance, or finance, would have been welcome additions to move the needle on

challenges and opportunities discussed.

Next Steps – The follow-up from the conference will consist of three buckets of actions:

Dissemination of this report and related materials – The report and related materials include:

- Summit report
- The CSL literature review presented on Day 1
- Other presentations as provided to the workshop
- COAIT materials

Development of further communications and sharing platforms. While these topics should be included in the forthcoming survey (see below) participants should feel free to reach out to organizers if they have initial reactions on these or other recommendations.

- Send a survey on communications and involvement in the CSL. This will be sent separately at the more general CSL level, but will include questions on the topics below as they relate to the summit.
- Create a WhatsApp channel to survey and disseminate lessons/best practices (a low bandwidth platform. WhatsApp groups could be formed per country, region or even by 'model' of conservancy
- Use SLACK, WhatsApp or email to disseminate a quarterly update of new research available on community engagement, both from within the conservation field but also outside of it.

Potential topics for further research and discussion. Based in the discussions at the summit the following are suggested as potential subjects for further research and discussion:

- How can econometrics be employed/better-employed in conservation?
- Examine the political economy of community, government, and private sector to identify successful, balanced engagement mechanisms.
- What are the COVID impacts on communities and how travel shut-downs are impacted community benefit flows, tourism, etc. (potentially summarizing and discussing the various initiatives that we have been involved in around this topic).
- The need to commonly define key terms and concepts in community engagement
- How can behavior change expertise be employed/better-employed in conservation?