

2. The preparatory phase

A typical situation in the beginning

- different social actors are concerned about a territory, area or set of natural resources; these actors may include local communities (including traditional authorities, elders, user groups for a particular resource, men and women, the youth), government representatives at different levels, NGOs, associations, individuals with special interests, local, national and trans-national businesses, and so on. The number of concerned actors is increasing as a result of recent historical processes such as the decentralisation of government authority, the privatisation of previously state-controlled economies, the emergence of new democratic institutions, the proliferation of businesses, NGOs, associations, etc.
- there are different points of view on that territory, area or set of natural resources, as well as different interests and concerns and different assigned values
- there is some (perhaps minimal) form of management for that territory, area or set of natural resources, even when it may hardly be discernable by non-local people
- some or all social actors perceive environmental and/or social problems in need of solution.

What can be done to promote co-management?

- the first task is a realistic assessment of the need for co-management and of the feasibility of the process.
- if co-management is deemed to be needed and feasible, the next task is to identify the human and financial resources necessary to support it.
- once such resources have been identified and secured, a Start-up Team should be established and assigned the role of promoting and facilitating the process through which stakeholders will negotiate a pluralistic and flexible management system (over time, such a system will need to respond to the changing needs of both the concerned ecosystem and society).
- in real life the above tasks are not always undertaken, or not in the order mentioned above. For instance, the co-management process may be initiated to take advantage of a specific financial opportunity, to attempt to resolve a conflict or because of political expediency. Sooner or later, however, the specific needs, feasibility and resources available should be analysed in all CM processes.
- the initial phases of the process may sometimes be long, difficult, costly and even arduous. Yet, the participants can look forward to a positive outcome that, in addition to the judicious management of natural resources, will bear upon some of the most important aspects of social life – such as equity, participation, culture and development.

2.1 Assessing the need for co-management and the process feasibility

Is co-management needed in the context at stake? The analysis may begin with a realistic evaluation of the existing NRM situation, including what is *de jure* (i.e. in accordance with existing laws and norms), and what is *de facto* (i.e. what actually happens on the ground). In other words, the analysis should cover the existing power system and entitlements to manage (for instance, who plans?, who advises?, who takes decisions?, who has access to the resources?, who benefits from the resources?, who evaluates whether NRM activities need to change?) but also the unrecognised claims.

‘entitlement’ to manage natural resources — a socially recognised claim to participate in one or several management activities, such as planning, advising, taking decision, implementing plans, sharing benefits, assuming responsibilities, monitoring and evaluating results, etc.

Some form of consultation and the seeking of consensus among the main stakeholders in a given territory, area or set of resources can be recommended in all situations. Yet, depending on the particular context, initiating and devoting energy to a negotiation process may be more or less appropriate depending on the perspective of the particular institutional actors.

From the point of view of government agencies possessing legal jurisdiction over a territory, area or resources at stake, it may be more appropriate to pursue partnership agreements with other stakeholders (and prevent wasteful conflicts) when one or more of the following conditions apply:

- the active commitment and collaboration of several stakeholders are essential to manage the territory, area or resources at stake;
- the access to such territory, area or resources is essential for securing the livelihood and cultural survival of one or more stakeholders;
- local actors have historically enjoyed customary/ legal rights over the territory or resources;
- local interests are strongly affected by NRM decisions;
- the decisions to be taken are complex and controversial (e.g., different values need to be harmonized or there is disagreement over the distribution of entitlements to land or resources);
- the current NRM system has failed to produce the desired results and meet the needs of the local actors;
- stakeholders are ready to collaborate and request to do so;
- there is ample time to negotiate.

On the contrary, it may be inappropriate (or not yet appropriate) to embark on a CM process when decisions have to be taken extremely rapidly (emergency situation).

From the point of view of local communities who have customarily enjoyed full access to the relevant territory, area or resources, it may be appropriate to pursue a NRM partnership when:

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- powerful non-local actors are forcing their way into the territory or extracting resources with no respect to traditional customs and rules (in this case a partnership agreement with the national government or some NGO or research organisation may help assure some protection and respect of customary practices);
- customary practices are falling into disarray and an open-access status has ensued with resources being extracted in an unsustainable manner.

It may instead not be advisable to enter into a NRM partnership when:

- as a result, the local communities would be renouncing a customary status of unique rights with no expectable comparable advantage in exchange;
- the political environment does not secure the safety of all negotiating parties.

Even when certain individuals or groups have determined that, for them, co-management is needed and desirable, they may wonder whether it is feasible in the particular context at stake. In this case, it may be expedient to ask the following questions:

Is co-management legally feasible?

Who has the mandate to control the land and resources? Can a pluralist approach be accommodated within the existing customary/ legal frameworks? Examine traditional and modern laws, regulations, permits...

Is co-management politically feasible?

What is the history of land management and resource use in the territory or area at stake? Examine current political will and stability, the capacity to enforce decisions, the confidence in the participatory process, the presence of phenomena such as corruption and intimidation...

Is co-management institutionally feasible?

Is there a chance of building a pluralistic management institution for the territory, area or natural resources? Examine inter-institutional relations and their possible conflicts, existing examples of multi-party resource management organisations and rules, the capacity of stakeholders to organise themselves and express their choice of representatives to convey their interests and concerns...

Is co-management economically feasible?

Are there economic opportunities and alternatives to the direct exploitation of natural resources? Examine local opportunities to reconcile the conservation of nature with the satisfaction of economic needs, examine the extent of poverty in the region, the availability of capital for local investments...

Is co-management socio-culturally feasible?

Are or were there traditional systems of natural resource management in the context at stake? What are (or were) their main features and strengths? Are those still valid today? Are the traditional NRM systems still in use? Regardless of whether the answer is yes or no, why? Who

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is keeping them alive? What is specifically sustaining or demeaning them? If they are not being used any more, does anyone have a living memory of the systems (for instance, are there elders who practiced them and still remember clearly “how it was done”)?

Examine the current population status, population dynamics and structure, the main socio-cultural changes under way

Examine social and cultural diversity amongst the institutional actors and the history of group relations among them

Examine factors affecting opportunities for social communication, including:

- language diversity
- varying degrees of access to information
- different attitudes, for example with regard to speaking in public or defending personal advantages
- traditional and modern media currently used in the particular context

Feasibility conditions do not need to be absolutely ideal to decide to embark on a co-management process, but thinking about feasibility factors gives a good idea of the obstacles and hot spots to expect along the way.

An important question is also: “For all main stakeholders, what are the best alternatives to a negotiated agreement?” If some stakeholders are better served by the *absence* rather than the presence of co-management plans and agreements (e.g. if they currently enjoy undue benefits and/or have others bear some substantial management costs) they will have no incentive to enter into the process of negotiation. In such cases the feasibility of co-management is severely reduced and outright opposition to the CM process can be expected. Some special incentives, cajoling or even law enforcement and coercive measures may be needed to get all the stakeholders around the negotiation table (outsiders, however, should be very careful before assuming that a group is blocking negotiations to its unfair advantage. A local community, for instance, could rightly feel better protected by a firm and uncompromising stand than by entering into a negotiation as the weakest of all parties).

2.2 Assessing the human and financial resources available

People engaged in promoting and supporting the CM process need knowledge and skills in the ecological, social and economic disciplines. They also need the capacity to communicate with all the stakeholders concerned and to obtain and maintain their confidence and trust. And they need energy, passion, willingness, creativity, dedication and continuity. Their work is certainly not routine work... In other words, the co-management process needs “champions”!

Are such human resources locally available? Are there individuals willing to become part of a Start-up Team to prepare and launch the co-management process (see Sections 2.3-2.10)? Are there financial resources to support the co-management preparatory phase (including visits by the Start-up Team to the potential institutional actors, participatory assessment exercises and social communication initiatives)? Are there financial resources to support the negotiation phase (including meetings, independent facilitation and the technical support that may be required along the way)?

The initiators of a CM process – which may be local individuals (e.g. an enlightened politician), local associations and NGOs, government agencies (e.g. the agency managing a protected area) or conservation and development projects supported by donors – need to dedicate time and care to the process of assembling the necessary human and financial resources before embarking on the initiative.

2.3 Establishing a Start-up Team

A Start-up Team (or Initiation Committee, Launching Committee, etc.) is a small group of people (perhaps 4 or 5 individuals) who agree to be in charge of the CM preparatory phase. The group is usually selected by the initiators of the CM process—which may be an external project, a community leader, an enlightened government professional, an NGO, etc.— and/ or is self-selected on the basis of strong personal motivation. When the initiator is a donor-supported project, one or more project staff may become members of the Start-up Team (at times this helps assure the public perception of impartiality) but, as a rule, they should not be the majority.

Most importantly, **all institutional actors should trust and feel capable of communicating with at least one person in the Start-up Team**, even if they do not feel represented by him/her.

Some key characteristics of appropriate Team members are: diversity, credibility, personal motivation, and excellent communication skills.

Some key qualities of a good Team are: being active, efficient, fair, multi-disciplinary, and transparent in decision-making; acting on the basis of consensus and collaboration; being determined to launch but not to lead or dominate the CM process.

The tasks of the Start-up Team

The Start-up Team is entirely responsible for one phase of the process only: the one in which the partnership is prepared and rooted in the local context. After that, the stakeholders themselves need to take control.

During the preparatory phase, the main tasks of the Team consist in:

2.4 Gathering information and tools (such as maps) on the main ecological and social issues

The Start-up Team may wish to begin its work by gathering existing information and tools to describe the main ecological and social issues (problems, opportunities, history, conflicts, power relations, etc.) as well as descriptions and delimitations of the territory, area or natural resources of interest. Maps (including old maps) are particularly valuable tools in this sense.

Example Box 1

A Start-up Team centred on a key individual

The Nta-ali Forest Reserve is located in the South-West Province of Cameroon. Its initial vocation was the protection of forest ecosystems. Over the years its status was modified into a productive reserve, but a zone of integral protection was maintained. In early 1998, the Korup Project, with GTZ financing, initiated a co-management process for the Reserve. After an initial assessment of process feasibility, the project set up a Start-up Team. The main task of the Team was to help the stakeholders get ready for their involvement in the negotiation phase. To do so, the members of the Team had to possess certain capacities. In other words, the project identified a number of criteria to guide the choice, from acceptance by all stakeholders to personal motivation and sincere appreciation of the co-management approach. The project then went on to identify and contact a number of individuals who appeared to meet the chosen criteria.

It soon became evident that the Divisional Delegate of the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MINEF) for Mamfe possessed all the qualities to effectively play the role of Team Leader. The project thus requested his assistance to animate the Start-up Team, which, besides him, was to comprise two other members. The choice of the MINEF Divisional Delegate may appear inappropriate in view of its professional role. Yet, several points appeared in favour of the choice:

- His dual “nature” as both belonging to the local community (as native of the region surrounding the reserve) and to the government (as local responsible officer for the Ministry of Environment and Forests)
- His social status as local “elite” recognised by both the local communities and the other stakeholders. By virtue of this position that he consolidated through the activities of his association (Nchang Youths Development Association), he often plays the role of mediator between the local population and the forestry administration. In this way, he relates two distinct worlds (and actually “embodies” both of them).
- His capacity to mediate between the culture of the governmental agencies in charge of conservation and the local indigenous culture. He has a mastery of the two systems and can translate the preoccupations expressed by one side to the other.
- The confidence he had already won from the local communities, the timber companies operating in the area and the environment and forestry administration.
- His willingness and readiness to engage the local communities in a co-management process.

The two other members of the team were staff of the Korup project, chosen in view of their capacity to set up social communication initiatives, master the phases of the co-management process and provide logistics and technical support to the Team Leader.

The Start-up Team remained operational for about 6 months. During this period its main functions were to facilitate the circulation of information among the stakeholders, spark up dialogue and provoke a social discussion on the phenomena and trends affecting natural resources and the measures needed to avoid their depletion. Through such initiatives, the Start-up Team succeeded in uniting all the conditions favourable for the holding of a first meeting among all major stakeholders. The meeting was organised on 1-2 December 1998. The 48 participants represented the local communities (26 individuals), the local government (4 individuals), the forests administration at local and national level (9 individuals), other local administrative departments (3 individuals) and the Korup and WCS project (6 individuals). The meeting was facilitated by the Korup project, and the debates developed in an open and candid spirit. In particular, the representatives of the local communities freely expressed their views and contributed to the definition of problems, issues and solutions.

As a result of this first meeting, a “declaration of principles” was issued and a Core Team of the co-management process, including five members representing the various stakeholders, was set in charge of facilitating the negotiation of the Nta-ali co-management plan. As of August 2000, the process is ongoing. Information generated in a participatory fashion has been utilised to prepare a zoning plan of the area. Meetings to discuss the zoning and other issues are regularly held among local residents and forest administrators.

A preliminary outline of the issues at stake can be summarised in a short report, in writing if appropriate, to be offered to the institutional actors at the beginning of the negotiation process. The report may summarise the particular NRM context from various perspectives (historical, social, legal, political, institutional, etc.). Such reports benefit from inputs by various social actors, which can be gathered during the preparatory phase (see later). Yet, the members of the Start-up team should refrain from stating or rephrasing the positions of various parties and give only a matter-of-fact account. If there are controversies, the report may mention them, and say what they are about. Preparing such a preliminary report, however, is not always appropriate. It should definitely be avoided when there is only the slightest hint that the social actors may be intimidated or upset by it.

Not only the report, but also the maps and other relevant data and information must be made available to all stakeholders, particularly to local communities who may otherwise be deprived of the information they contain. In fact, the Start-up Team may wish to set up a small reference library at the disposal of all institutional actors during the negotiation phase.

2.5 Identifying in a preliminary way the natural resource management unit(s)

On the basis of the preliminary ecological analysis, the Start-up Team can identify some possible natural resource management units (e.g. a water catchment area, a forest patch, a range-land, a lake, a fishery area). Ideally, such “units” would make ecological sense (for instance they would comprise the essential elements of an ecosystem), but also social sense (for instance they would fall within a given administrative unit or community). When this coincidence of ecological and social units is not possible, the number of relevant social actors increases and the negotiation process becomes more complex. It is also possible to envisage a series of “nested” NRM units (for instance a micro-catchment nested within a river basin watershed, itself part of a larger island ecosystem).

When the NRM units are fairly small, the actors who negotiate the co-management plans and agreements are likely to be the same ones who will implement the related activities. This is often conducive to good management. In fact, many professionals would maintain that the best management level is the lowest possible one with the authority and capacity to take decisions (a criterion that often goes under the name of “subsidiarity”).

“At what ‘level’ should negotiations be held?”
In general, it is best to negotiate at the local level, among the communities, agencies, organisations and people directly involved in NRM activities—all the while maintaining links with other levels (e.g. larger ecosystem, administrative units, region, country, etc.)

It may be useful to recall that traditional societies are often characterised by a remarkable coincidence between a distinct body of natural resources and the social unit (local community) related to those resources. In more than one way, in fact, the territories, areas and natural resources under the care of a local community naturally “identify” an NRM unit.

2.6 Identifying in a preliminary way the institutional actors to participate in natural resource management

Usually, several communities, organisations, social groups and individuals possess a direct, significant and specific stake in the identified NRM unit(s). In other words, there are many “potential institutional actors” in natural resource management. Among them, only some will be willing and capable of investing time and resources, organising themselves, taking action to get their interests and concerns socially recognised and will be ready to take on some NRM responsibility. These are the true “institutional actors” in co-management plans and agreements, the ones that the Start-up

‘institutional actor’ (stakeholder) —
a community, a public entity, a group or an individual who organises itself, takes action to gain social recognition of its own interests and concerns and is willing to assume some task and responsibility for a given NRM unit

Team needs to identify, contact and involve in the process. And, in case of nested NRM units, such true actors need to be identified at each level (e.g., in our prior example, for the micro-catchment as well as for the river watershed and for the island as a whole).

How can the Start-up Team identify the potential institutional actors in a specific context? There is no recipe for that, but a checklist may help.

Identifying potential institutional actors: a checklist

- √ Are there communities, groups or individuals actually or potentially *affected* by the management decisions? Are there historic occupants (e.g., indigenous communities or regular transients) and traditional resource users with customary rights of ownership or usufruct? Are there recent migrants? Non-resident users of resources? Absentee landlords? Major secondary users of local resources (e.g., buyers of products, tourists)? Are there local associations or NGOs concerned with natural resources? Are there businesses and industries potentially impinged upon by the NRM decisions? Are there research, development or conservation projects in the area? How many employees (national and international) live in the area because of such projects? Are these people active in natural resource management?
- √ Who are the main traditional *authorities* in the area at stake? Are there government agencies officially responsible for the management units or resources at stake? Are there respected institutions, to which people have recourse in connection with a variety of needs and circumstances?
- √ Who has *access* to the land, area or resources at stake? Who is using the natural resources at present? In what ways? Has this changed over time?
- √ Which communities, groups and individuals are most *dependent* on the resources at stake? Is this a matter of livelihood or economic advantage? Are these resources replaceable by others, possibly in less ecologically valuable or fragile areas?
- √ Who upholds *claims*, including customary rights and legal jurisdiction over the territory, area or resources at stake? Are there communities with ancestral and/or other types of ac-

quired rights? Are various government sectors and ministerial departments involved? Are there national and/or international bodies involved because of specific laws or treaties?

- √ Which communities, groups or individuals are most *knowledgeable* about, and capable of dealing with, the territories or resources at stake? So far, who has a direct experience in managing them?
- √ What are the seasonal/ geographical variations in resource use patterns and user interests? Are these interests geographically and seasonally stable (e.g., are there seasonal migration patterns)? Are there major events or trends currently affecting local communities and other social actors (e.g., development initiatives, land reforms, migration, important phenomena of population mobility or natural growth or decline)?
- √ Are there other co-management initiatives in the region? If so, to what extent are they succeeding? Who are their main partners?

At times, the “potential institutional actors” are not clear about their own interests and concerns in an NRM unit. Even more often, they are not organised to communicate and promote them and/or are not willing to take on NRM responsibilities. For their preliminary stakeholder analysis, the members of the Start-up Team may begin with a list of social actors obviously possessing *major* interests, concerns, capacities and / or comparative advantages in natural resource management. Through contacts and meetings with them, that list will be modified. It is likely that not all the ones initially identified may be willing to organise and invest time and resources in management, but new and possibly less obvious social actors might be.

A fairly usual dilemma in stakeholder analysis presents itself when the Start-up Team discovers a variety of different interests, concerns and capacities vis-à-vis natural resources within one and the same potential institutional actor (let us say a community in the vicinity of a forest). Should one or several institutional actors be invited to participate in the negotiation process? There is no simple answer to this question. The Start-up Team may wish to explore the pros and cons of the dilemma with the most directly concerned people and groups as part of their own process of self-organisation (see below). For instance, a united community has more weight at the discussion table than several people who cannot agree on a common position. ***And yet, the community may be willing to speak as one voice on certain occasions and as many on others...*** In other words, the people who find themselves united as “one stakeholder” for some decisions may need to split and regroup on another one. This phenomenon, at times referred to as “multi-culturality” of stakeholders (see Otchet, 2000), should be acknowledged and recognised as normal.

But, are interests and a willingness to participate sufficient to take on a management role? Shouldn't the Start-up Team also ask: “Who are the social actors *entitled* to manage the unit(s) at stake?” It certainly should. And yet, the understanding of what constitutes a legitimate entitlement is an evolving socio-political phenomenon, best approached in a participatory way. The Start-up Team could begin by asking the potential institutional actors whether they consider they have a fair claim to participate in the management of natural resources and, if so, on what grounds. In this way, the Start-up Team will obtain a list of factors and characteristics that at least *some* people recognise as legitimate “roots of entitlements” in the local context. Some examples of such factors and characteristics are listed in a box in the following page.

The roots of entitlements: examples of grounds on which to claim a role in natural resource management

- existing legal rights to land or resources, whether by customary law or modern legislation (e.g., traditional tenure and access rights, ownership, right of use);
- mandate by the state (e.g. statutory obligation of a given agency or governmental body);
- direct dependency on the natural resources in question for subsistence and survival (e.g. for food, medicine, communication);
- dependency for gaining basic economic resources;
- historical, cultural and spiritual relationships with the concerned territory, area or natural resources;
- unique knowledge of and ability to manage the concerned NRM unit(s);
- on-going relationship with the territory, area or natural resources (e.g. local communities and long-time resource users vis-à-vis recently arrived immigrants, tourists, hunters);
- loss and damage suffered as a result of NRM decisions and activities;
- level of interest and effort invested in natural resource management;
- present or potential impact of the social actor's activities on the land or the natural resources;
- opportunity to share in a more equitable way the benefits of natural resources;
- number of individuals or groups sharing the same interests or concerns;
- general, social recognition of the value of a given point of view or value (e.g., based on traditional knowledge; based on scientific knowledge; aiming at "sustainable use"; aiming at "conserving natural and cultural heritage"; following the "precautionary principle", etc.);
- compatibility with national policies;
- compatibility with international conventions and agreements.

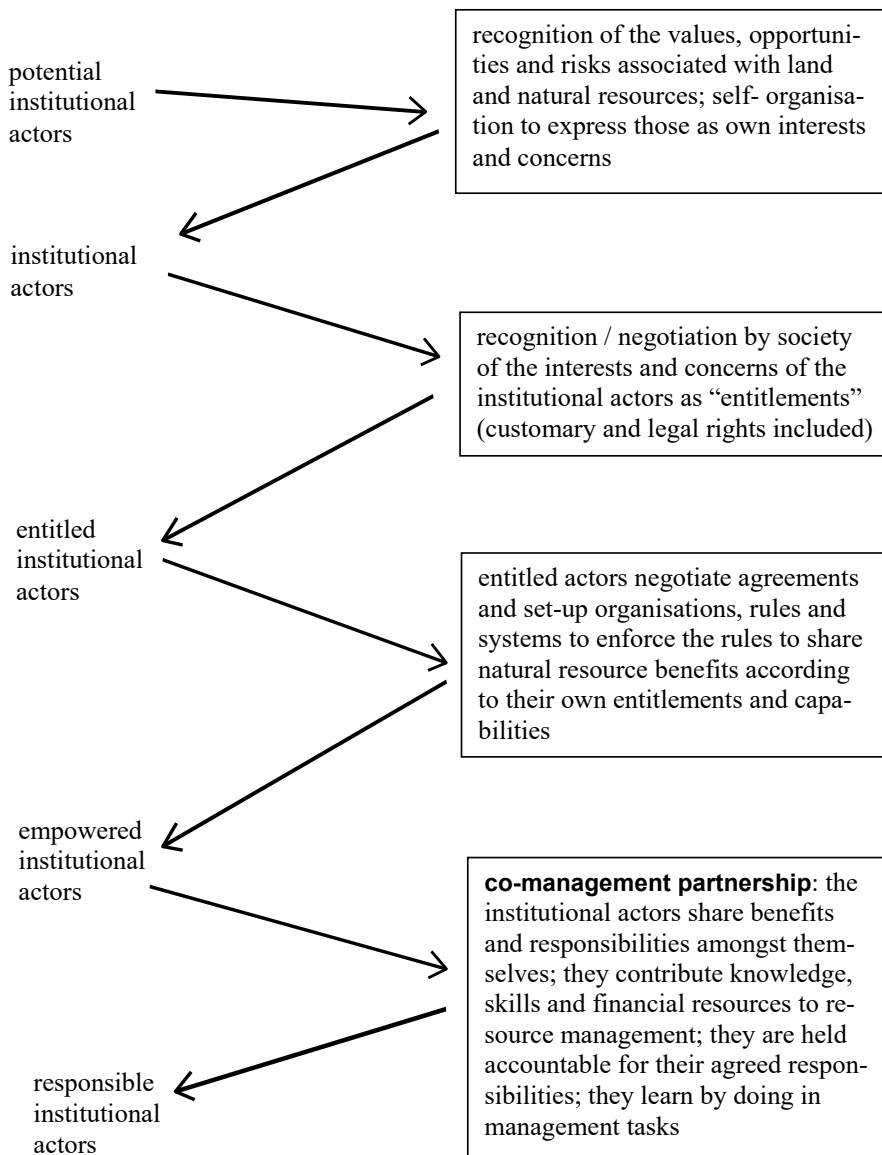
Not all societies or groups within a society recognise *all* NR management claims from *all* social actors. They may recognise some but not others. They may recognise claims only in combination with others (e.g. dependency for survival + long-term relationship with the resources + uses based on traditional technology and practices). Some social actors may recognise their respective claims, but other actors may deny them.

Given such a multiplicity of possible views, how can resource management claims be assessed vis-à-vis one another? Who can determine their respective value and "weight"?

Towards empowered and responsible institutional actors: a schematic view

communities, groups, organisations and individuals

key steps



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Ideally, this would be done via a *socially endogenous process*, i.e. a socio-historical development in which groups and individuals organise themselves to express their interests and concerns (and thus define themselves as “institutional actors”), prompt society to recognise their claims as “entitlements”, participate in negotiating an equitable division of benefits and responsibilities, and learn-by-doing in natural resource management (see the following schematic view). In this process, the institutional actors with socially recognised entitlements may also be subdivided between “primary” and “secondary”, and thus accorded different roles in natural resource management.

“Who are the ‘primary’ and ‘secondary institutional actors?’”

This question cannot be answered outside of a specific context. Yet, some social actors are in the frontline of needs, knowledge and comparative NRM advantages pretty much everywhere. Such actors can also claim a unique historical relationship as users, managers, protectors and “producers” of the natural resources at stake. Such actors are the local communities.

In many contexts, such a process will evolve with great difficulty, if at all. It may be blocked by individuals with vested interests, or by too strong a power imbalance among the social actors involved (e.g. big business and national and local administrations versus a traditional community). It may lack the human or financial resources it needs to take off. It may be impeded by a history of violence and bitter fights among relevant groups and factions. Or it may just be foreign to the local context because of a weak tradition of participatory democracy in the country.

Promoting and supporting co-management in a specific context means helping the aforementioned process (organising, negotiating and learning-by-doing) to start, and to develop in a fair way. In particular, it means helping local communities to identify and overcome obstacles such as the ones just listed above.

2.7 Launching and maintaining social communication initiatives

Social communication initiatives generate an on-going flow of information and dialogue between the Start-up Team and the institutional actors, and among the institutional actors themselves. They can be organised by the Start-up Team beginning with some specific event (a fair, a public party, a community meeting, a travelling theatre piece, etc.), but they should also include an on-going component, to take care of communication needs that emerge in the course of time. In the CM preparatory phase, social communication promotes an open debate and critical understanding of questions such as: “What is co-management? Is it needed here? If so, how do we develop it?”

No one in the world would be interested in co-management if it could not bring solutions to the environment and development problems besetting many people and groups in society. Thus, social communication initiatives can begin by promoting social discussion on existing environment and development problems, existing capacities to do something about them, existing entitlements to take decisions on the issues. Information should also be made available on who has initiated the CM initiative (a project, a community leader, a governmental agency), and why; on the Start-up Team and what it is doing to set the process in motion; and on what steps the process is likely to comprise and how people can participate.

Example Box 2

The “visiting card” of a Start-up Team

The project for the conservation of natural forests in the Southwest of Cameroon (PROFORNAT) is operated by the GTZ in a region inhabited by peoples of Bantu and Baka (“pygmy”) origins comprising three protected areas (Lobéké, Mboumba-Bek and Nki), several forest concessions, game hunting territories, etc. The management of the forest ecosystem is characterised by a multiplicity of stakeholders with diverging interests, referring themselves to a plurality of norms regulating access to natural resources.

In this context, the PROFORNAT project opted for a position of facilitator of the co-management process. A Start-up Team revolving around the project staff with experience in the socio-economic field was created. The Team first dedicated itself to gathering information on the ecological and human environment, but also to introducing the project to the different stakeholders, and in particular to explaining its own potential role as process facilitator. To this end, a “visiting card” in various formats corresponding to the various stakeholders was prepared to diffuse information on the co-management process and on what it entails.

The visiting card for the local communities was created following the GRAAP method (GRAAP means Groupe de Recherche et d'Appui pour l'Autopromotion des Populations – group to Research and Support People’s Self-promotion). The main tool of the method is a large canvas of paper of about 2.5 meters width, with a series of drawings in a specific sequence. The images are drawn to help the people reflect on their environment, discuss on the relevant trends together, identify possible solutions, identify the need for a facilitated co-management process among various stakeholders, and accept that the GTZ project may play the facilitator role. The discussion also touches on the process objectives, expected results, human resources, etc.

Four animators settled on various locations along the main road crossing the project territory were set in charge of organising village meetings, showing the synthesis table and discussing it in the local languages. These meetings have allowed a better local comprehension of what the PROFORNAT project is about, in particular, to distinguish it from other local actors such as the agents of the Forests administration, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and the World Conservation Service (WCS). Several local communities expressed their willingness to get involved in the co-management process.

One objective of social communication initiatives could be to inform the public at large about the relevance of CM concepts and practices for the local context. Even more importantly, however, they may help people to own and transform whatever CM is all about. In other words, social communication initiatives are very different from conventional information or education initiatives. They do not merely aim at “passing on a message about an issue” but at promoting its critical understanding and appropriation in society. After all, the most important result sought by a genuine co-management initiative is not for people to “behave” in tune with what some experts believe it is right for them, but for people to think, find agreements and act together on their own accord.

A Start-up Team interested in developing social communication initiatives would begin by understanding the system of local media, including where and how local people discuss and take care of NRM issues. Whenever possible, the local media employed to convey this kind of information— from word of mouth to songs and story-telling, from informal meetings at market places to elders’ ceremonial gatherings— should be identified and possibly utilised (often within a spectrum of other media). The Start-up Team might have to abandon some

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favourite conventional tools (e.g., pamphlets or microphone speeches) for more creative and effective ones (e.g., an environment-awareness game or lottery on local market days). Importantly, a mix of different media should be used, tailored to reaching and stimulating different groups and sectors in society. The Team should, most of all, avoid adopting a “teaching” or “preaching” attitude and instead always promote dialogue and the open discussion of different points of view (see also Section 1.2).

Although dialogue and discussions will end up establishing an “accepted common language”, an important first step in social communication initiatives is to decide on an entry-point description (words, images, definition of problems, etc.) of the ecological and social issues to be tackled and the co-management process being promoted. For the latter, a culturally meaningful name or phrase in the local language, which would be perceived as appealing and inspiring (e.g., “Let’s manage the forest together!”, “Our community in the 21st Century”, “Solidarity and wise use of our wetlands” etc.) should be tested and adopted. The terms and phrases should not be trite or resemble party slogans; on the contrary, they should convey the spirit of non-partisan collaboration, solidarity, working together for the common good. The local name of the CM process is usually crucial to local acceptance and success. It is important to avoid picking a “good name” from a few devised on the spur of the moment by outside professionals. Instead, the name should evolve in conversations with members of local communities and various potential institutional actors. Possible problems and inadequacies with the translation of the names and descriptions in the local languages should also be given careful consideration.

2.8 Engaging the institutional actors

The main task of the Start-up Team is to contact the potential institutional actors identified so far and to inform them about the upcoming process of co-management and the opportunities it offers to all parties concerned regarding the NRM unit(s) at stake. A member of the Team (usually the closest and best trusted by the relevant people) meets with individuals belonging to a community, an agency or a group identified as a “potential institutional actor” and asks to be accompanied to visit the NRM unit(s) at stake. Once there, issues and problems naturally come up and can be discussed. Participatory appraisal exercises such as land-use mapping, historical mapping, transect walks, interviews with spontaneous groups or focus groups and key informants, etc. can be very useful in prompting discussion. The next step is to organise meetings with more people who broadly share the same interests and concerns as the ones initially contacted (i.e., part of the same “institutional actor” camp). In such larger meetings the NRM issues and problems identified are re-introduced and discussed, and thereby validated or modified.

The goal of these meetings is for the potential institutional actors to identify and clarify their own NRM interests, concerns and capacities, as well as to decide for themselves if and on what grounds they wish to claim any entitlement to manage. In addition, they may also clarify what *type* of entitlement they claim. Do they wish to take an advisory, executive or decision-making role? Do they simply wish to have a share in the benefits deriving from the natural resources? In this way, the Start-up Team deepens and refines its own preliminary situation and stakeholder analyses with the help of the stakeholders, while they prepare themselves for the phase of negotiation.

Example Box 3

Social communication at the heart of co-management

The Conkouati Game Reserve is situated in the coastal region of Congo Brazzaville and characterised by a diversity of ecosystems (savannah, forest, lake, lagoon, etc). In the early 1990s the Congolese government agreed to develop some management measures for the reserve with the help of a GEF project implemented by the World Conservation Union (IUCN). In view of the multiplicity of existing stakeholders, norms, interests and open conflicts, the participatory approach presented the only, if scant, hope for success. It proved an approach more easily said than done. At the beginning, all attempts at dialogue promoted by expatriate personnel were met by disdain and open hostility. It was only when a local person employed in the public administration took at heart the objectives of the project that a real dialogue began to develop. All the villages in the area were visited and repeated discussions and debates took place over a period of many months. At the same time, meetings were held with all the other stakeholders, such as government officials and forest concessionaires. These proved not less difficult to engage in a positive dialogue than the local communities. Yet, the efforts eventually succeeded and the various stakeholders agreed to form a joint management committee (the COGEREN) and developed their co-management plans, including zoning.

Information on the agreements on the basic elements of the management system (especially the zoning plan) and the setting up of a pluralist management authority (the COGEREN) was extensively diffused in the territory of the reserve. All this was part of the social communication initiatives initiated well ahead of the ceremony to ritualise the common vision and legitimise the agreements. The initiatives made use of a variety of communication avenues, chosen in order to suit the various partners, places, availability of finances, etc.

Two main phases marked the diffusion process of the management agreements. The first corresponds to the preparatory phase of the ceremony to ritualise the common vision and legitimise the management agreements. The main objective was to announce the awaited ceremony to all stakeholders. The means used were borrowed from both the local and modern systems of communication. The members of the local Committee for the Management of Natural Resources (COGEREN), all delegated by stakeholders, had the responsibility of informing the respective groups they represented. Among the tools used in the occasion, the audio cassette occupied an important place. It comprised two songs on the process of co-management which were sang at the rhythm of modern musical instruments in the vernacular language (*Lingala*) and in French by an artist well known in the region. Each member of the COGEREN used the communication channel they mastered. In the villages, the local heralds were often asked to assist. The songs of the cassette became popular in bars and main piers along the borders of the Conkouati lagoon (meeting place for fishermen, hunters, business men, etc). In town, particularly at Pointe-Noire, the songs were diffused several times on the national radio and the local Radio Pointe-Noire.

The second phase was that of feed-back from the key events of the ceremony of legitimisation and of the ritual which went with it. The support that was used here included photos taken during the signing of the charter and the ritual dance, a video cassette that recorded the whole ceremony, a video cassette on the synthesis of the ceremony, a poster on the charter signed and the zoning map, etc. The posters were distributed in all villages, including the neighbouring villages not directly concerned with the signing of the agreements. Projections of the video cassette on the whole ceremony were organised in all the villages, to make sure that everyone, even the ones absent from the ceremony, were informed about it and aware of its meaning. The film on the synthesis was also shown by the regional television of Point-Noire.

Social communication on the management agreements obtained at Conkouati was realised through a variety of avenues and on the basis of a full understanding and utilisation of the local media environment. Information was shared and discussed among all stakeholders with the help of communication channels appropriate to each of them. Because of these initiatives, the local stakeholders decided to engage in the process and are now well informed on all the implication of the reached agreements and on the existence of the COGEREN, the multi-party institution responsible for monitoring the fairness of the process and the respect of agreements.

The preparatory phase

It is particularly important to examine the *grounds* on which various actors base their claims to natural resource management, which we described before as the “roots of entitlements”. These offer an overview of the main NRM stakes in the specific context, and inform the Start-up Team of controversies likely to surface during the negotiation phase.

2.9 Helping the institutional actors to organise

To participate in the negotiation process, the institutional actors need to arrive at an internal consensus on the values, interests and concerns they wish to bring forward. They also need to appoint people to represent them vis-à-vis other actors. For some (e.g., an established government agency) this may require little effort. For others (e.g., a traditional community living in a remote area) it may require major investments, at least in terms of time, and it may even necessitate external facilitation and support.

“What type of assistance should the Start-up Team provide to the institutional actors?”

Assistance is at times necessary for certain individuals or groups to participate in the negotiations. Some types of assistance are usually not problematic (e.g., financing the participation at meetings or facilitating the choice of a representative) while others (e.g., supporting the establishment and legal recognition of an organisation) possibly imply more continuous and onerous financial commitments. They may also take on a clear political connotation.

For instance, a member of the Start-up Team may help a community or user group to select the most appropriate person(s) to represent them. He/she may facilitate a meeting in which the main qualities and characteristics of a good representative are elicited, listed, discussed and agreed upon through brainstorming. On the basis of such a list of criteria (including, for instance, factors such as knowledge of the local NRM situation, personal commitment, honesty, negotiation skills, capacity to represent the interests of the community, etc.) the group can list, discuss and prioritise the names of people who fit the criteria and can effectively represent the group as a whole. In this way, a group can free itself from having to choose the “expected names” (such as the person who usually deals with government officials, the son of the village chief, etc.). It is important that the criteria are genuinely identified by the community or interest group, and not by the Start-up Team, and that the decision on the name of the representative is taken in a congenial atmosphere, free from coercion. On the basis of specific needs and available resources, the Start-up Team may thus provide stimulus as well as technical and/or financial support to the self-organising of the institutional actors. Once this step is completed, they will indeed be ahead in the CM process.

2.10 Preparing for the negotiation meetings: rules, procedures and equity considerations

This task is another of the Start-up Team’s most important duties. On the basis of the preliminary decisions on the institutional actors and the level of agreement to be reached, the Team proposes *how* the negotiation should be held — an advice charged with cultural and political implications.

Example Box 4

Strengthening social actors before the negotiation process: the case of the Baka People

The Dja Game Reserve is situated in the dense humid forest zone of Cameroon. It is part of the world network of Biosphere Reserves and has been declared a World Heritage Site. The management of this reserve affects and concerns several stakeholders: the Bantu and Baka residents, the timber exploiting companies, the Ministry of Environment and Forests, the local administration, and others.

The Baka are pygmies. They are a hunter and gatherer society characterised by nomadic customs. Under the influence of the government settlement policy, some Baka communities have been compelled to settle down in villages located in proximity of Bantu villages. This unprecedented co-existence has perturbed the organisation of the Baka society and modified their relations with the Bantu. In fact, the settled Baka found themselves obliged to abide by the norms regulating the social relations of the Bantu. Thus, the Baka were deprived of their traditional rights to land and natural resources: the Bantu recognised for them only the right of mere subsistence. In fact, they have a prejudicial image of the Baka. For the Bantu, the Baka are an inferior People.

It is in such a context that the project Conservation and Sustainable Use of the Biodiversity of the Dja Reserve, financed by The Netherlands and implemented by the IUCN, decided to promote a co-management process. For that, it seemed necessary to make sure that the capacity of the Baka to sit at the negotiation table would be adequate, and that the Bantu would recognize them as a social actor with valid resource entitlements. For this, activities were designed to address both the local Bantu and Baka communities. Regarding the Baka, the project facilitated the recognition of the Baka chiefdom by the government administration, the rightful remuneration for Baka work by the Bantu employers, the government's attribution of community forests to the Baka, the self-reliance of the Baka women in the acquisition of their cooking salt, etc.

At the beginning, the support of the project was geared towards the internal sharing of information and discussion among the Baka themselves about their entitlements and what they recognise to be the entitlements of the Bantu. As a second step, the opportunities for discussion were provided also between the Baka and Bantu communities. It became evident that the two groups were interdependent for a number of reasons, including the practice of barter, which makes the two ethnic groups complementary with respect to several needs, and the custom of blood pacts, which binds some Baka clans and Bantu families.

The project stood on the ground of this interdependence— well recognised by the two groups— to promote a dialogue on issues hitherto considered taboo and to bring the Bantu to accept to lose certain prerogatives by ensuring just remuneration to the Baka and by recognising their chieftaincy and their rights to have access to community forests. In this way the project succeeded in bringing both the Baka and Bantu to agree on the daily wages for the Baka who work in the fields of the Bantu. This agreement has been legitimised in a ceremony in 1988, during which the Baka and Bantu delegates embraced each other— a remarkable feat in the local context!

Unfortunately, the severe scaling down of the operation of the Dja Project in 1999 has nearly interrupted the efforts towards the co-management process in the area.

Traditional societies have arrays of convivial procedures for negotiating agreements, such as a meeting of community elders or a larger gathering on the occasion of a spiritual festivity or a market fair. Many of those are simple, effective and inexpensive. If the Start-up Team is truly in tune with the stakeholders, it will consult them and eventually agree on whether any such culturally specific event is suitable for deciding on the issues at stake. In some cases, however, convivial gatherings may not be sufficient for negotiating a fair and sustainable NRM agreement.

The preparatory phase

For instance, the institutional actors may not share the same cultural backgrounds, values, attitudes and habits. A handshake equivalent to a sacred pact for some may just be a pleasant discussion of possibilities for someone else. Some people may not speak the same language, both literally and metaphorically, in the sense that the meaning of their respective terms and concepts may need a careful “translation”. There may also be large power gaps or unsettled conflicts among the stakeholders, so that people may not feel comfortable, or even safe, to volunteer their views and expose their interests and concerns.

In such cases, the Start-up Team may well take a pro-active role in proposing a schedule of meetings, some rules and procedures for participation, and some support in facilitating negotiations (see also Section 3.1). The institutional actors could well discuss and modify all of these, but it is important that an entity trusted by all parties take the initiative to plan in detail at least the first meeting among the institutional actors. In other words, the Start-up Team should obtain an agreement on the place, date, hour, working language (or languages), participants, agenda, logistics and facilities needed for the meeting that will launch the CM process.

But the Team needs to remember that its tasks are not only of a practical nature. Indeed ***the Start-up Team is also the prime guarantor of fairness and equity in the whole process.*** Thus, it is never too early to start thinking about equity, and on how it can be fostered throughout the entire CM process. The results arrived at should be made explicit, discussed and incorporated into the rules and procedures of the negotiation phase.

“What does ‘equity’ mean in a co-management process?”

Specific answers depend on specific contexts. In general, equity can be sought by helping the less privileged to “develop their own entitlements”. It can be sought by promoting the recognition of entitlements rooted in valid and legitimate grounds (as defined by the relevant society) rather than entitlements rooted in the exercise of one form of power or another. It can also be sought by promoting a fair negotiation of functions, benefits and responsibilities among the entitled actors.

Results of the preparatory phase

The preparatory phase generally has some or all of the following outputs:

- information and tools (e.g., maps) on the main ecological and social issues at stake in the identified NRM unit(s), collected for the use of the parties in the negotiations
- a short report on the NRM context listing, for example, historical, social, cultural, legal, political and institutional issues
- one or more proposed NRM units, identified on the basis of ecological and social considerations
- a preliminary analysis of relevant institutional actors, including entitlements, claims, power differentials and NRM conflicts amongst them, both existing and potential
- a “name” and a description of the co-management process that are culturally valid and broadly understood and accepted in the context at stake

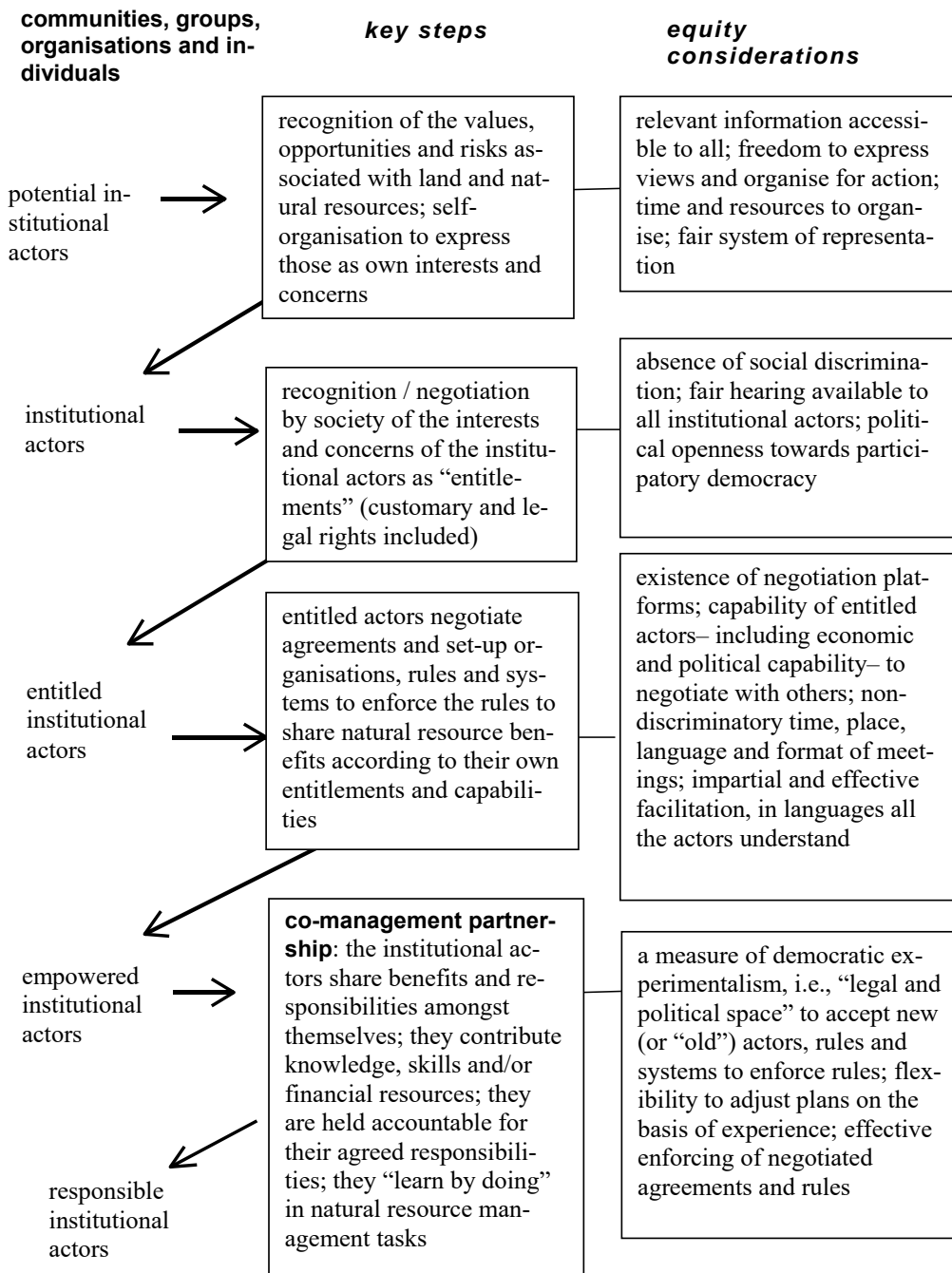
Promoting equity in co-management: some examples and ideas

- disseminating information on environmental values, opportunities and risks of relevance to potential institutional actors
 - disseminating information on various natural resource management options
 - ensuring freedom to express views and organise for action
 - giving a fair hearing to every actor's grounds for entitlements, with no discrimination in favour of some with respect to others (discrimination may be based on ethnicity, gender, age, caste, class, economic power, religion, residence, and so forth)
 - helping the institutional actors to participate in the negotiation process, for instance by supporting them to organise, to develop a fair system of representation and to travel to meetings
 - organising discussion platforms where all the institutional actors can voice their ideas and concerns, selecting the least discriminatory places, times, languages, formats, etc.
 - supporting the negotiation of a fair share of management functions, rights, benefits and responsibilities
 - ensuring effective and unbiased facilitation during negotiations
 - supporting (via training and allocation of resources) the skills and capability of actors to negotiate
 - promoting a tight proportionality between the management entitlements and responsibilities and the benefits and costs assigned to each institutional actor
 - keeping an open door for new institutional actors who may arrive on the scene
 - supporting participatory democracy and multi-party agreements and organisations in all sorts of social decisions
 - ensuring a fair measure of democratic experimentalism, allowing the adjustment of NRM plans, agreements, organisations and rules on the basis of learning by doing
 - ensuring that the negotiated co-management plans, agreements and rules are enforced effectively
-
- social communication initiatives that opened up and maintain two-way communication channels between the Start-up Team and the institutional actors, and foster a broad discussion of NRM issues in society
 - institutional actors who are reasonably well-informed, organised (e.g. having identified their own representatives) and ready to negotiate co-management plans and agreements
 - a set of suggested procedures for the negotiation process, including a first meeting among the institutional actors organised in detail
 - ideas and concrete proposals on ways to promote fairness and equity in the negotiation process

Including equity considerations in the process towards empowered and responsible institutional actors: a schematic view



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Example Box 5

Beyond customs: women engaged in co-management

The zone at the periphery of Waza National Park, in Northern Cameroon, comprises sixteen villages inhabited by three main ethnic groups – the Fulani (Peuls), the Bornois and the Kotoko—devoted to agriculture, cattle raising and fishing. Side by side the sedentary population one finds also transhumant and nomadic peoples, used to take their animals to graze in the periphery of the park. In this complex social context the temptation was strong to exclude from the co-management process the groups less socially powerful and recognised. This was the case for the transhumant and nomadic people, on the one hand, and for the women, on the other. Women, in particular, despite representing more than half of the concerned population, were customarily not at all involved in decision making.

The Waza Logone project, operated by the IUCN and financed by the Dutch Cooperation Agency, integrated the gender approach and some equity considerations in its operations. In this light, it has favoured the involvement of both women and transhumant and nomadic groups in management decisions.

The task has been difficult because of the place traditionally reserved for women in the society of Northern Cameroon. The local administration, the traditional Chiefs and the men in general could not see any interest or reason to involve the women in the co-management process. They did not hesitate to express their disapproval in public. On their part, the women were not keen to take part in decision-making and were sceptical about being able to negotiate with the game guards, who had always repressed their desire to gather natural resources from the park.

Facing this situation, the project Waza Logone started some special activities for the women, to raise their interest in the co-management process. The accent was placed on income-generation activities in relation with the existence of the park, re-enforcing women's capacity to negotiate and encouraging their participation in the management structures. It soon became apparent that women could become enthusiastic participants in the process as soon as they would perceive their chance of affecting the matter of gathering of resources from the park without being repressed by the Conservation Service. In fact, women ended up actively participating in the negotiation of the management plan and the creation of a pluralist management structure – the Advisory/ Management Committee for the Park of Waza and its Periphery.

Some of the interesting results obtained include the direct representation of women in the above Committee – 7 women are among the 15 representatives of the population in the Committee, identified by all the local population – and the negotiation of specific agreements between women's groups and the Committee itself. These negotiations allowed a first agreement on the management of a restaurant at the Visitors Centre in Waza, which has been assigned to a group of local women. The women agreed to respect the park rules and to denounce all individuals who enter the park in an illegal manner or perform illegal activities there. In addition, the women of several villages at the border of the park are negotiating the right to harvest certain quantities of natural resources from the park's territory, such as gum Arabic, dead wood, wild *gombo* and *doum* leaves. As of Spring 2000, the process is on-going: the opinion of the Scientific Committee advising the Park is expected but not yet delivered. On the basis of this opinion the various stakeholders will develop specific agreements with the women of the relevant communities.

The preparatory phase