

DEFINING THE 'CONSERVATION'
IN COMMUNITY CONSERVATION:
STRATEGIC PLANNING IN
TANZANIA NATIONAL PARKS

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DEFINING THE 'CONSERVATION' IN COMMUNITY CONSERVATION: STRATEGIC PLANNING IN TANZANIA NATIONAL PARKS¹

INTRODUCTION

The Community Conservation Service (CCS) is a program of national park outreach in Tanzania (see Reading University Rural Extension Bulletin No. 5, 1994). At the field level, CCS activities are integrated into the day-to-day management of each of Tanzania's twelve parks. At Tanzania National Parks (TANAPA) Headquarters, a CCS unit provides back stopping, tracking and facilitation services to the individual park programmes.

The activities conducted by the CCS can be categorized under two major headings: extension and benefit sharing. Extension activities include visits to villages and rural communities by park staff, establishing channels of communication, problem-solving, negotiation, conservation education, park visits by local people and coordination of planning exercises. Benefit sharing activities are centred around TANAPA's community development fund called SCIP (Support for Community-Initiated Projects), but also include the loan of park equipment, provision of social services and transport and negotiation of employment and supply contracts with tourist facilities.

During the first phase of the CCS (1988-1991) emphasis was placed on orientation, establishing channels of communication and learning lessons while building up trust between the park management and community. During this period, it was deemed sufficient to interact with neighbouring communities without a clearly defined set of objectives. However in 1992, the CCS began to develop a more focused and strategic methodology in response to three major problems. The first problem was that of limited resources. The CCS receives more than three-quarters of its funding from TANAPA itself and has to compete with many other organizational objectives for resources. The largest single constraint has been that of manpower. TANAPA has been subject to a public sector hiring freeze and many of the department's 'Community Conservation Wardens' (CCWs) also perform other functions. Given the limited availability of human resources, transportation and operations funds, the CCS needed to ensure that it was focusing effort on the most promising activities.

A second problem concerned the need for daily work plans for CCWs. The department experimented with several formats to assist CCWs to prepare work plans, however none of these seemed to work well. CCWs were not comfortable laying out a course of action isolated from broader management objectives. The Park Warden In-charge and other park staff frequently did not recognize the importance of supporting CCS activities. No rationale existed for deciding which communities should be approached, or what level of contact and activity was appropriate.

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A third set of pressures related to the need to demonstrate a linkage between the activities of the CCS and the conservation of the national park concerned. Valid questions were raised about the mandate and role of TANAPA outside park boundaries. Community conservation initiatives may successfully conduct development activities or improve access to social services without demonstrating any resulting conservation benefit (Wells et al 1992). National park trustees were sympathetic to the idea that community conservation may take time to show results, but also insisted that some baseline must be in place against which future results could be measured. Thus the CCS required a process to ensure that activities undertaken were appropriate to TANAPA's mandate and linked to park conservation objectives.

In September, 1992, a workshop was conducted to set out an action plan for the next phase of the department's evolution. It was agreed that the headquarters unit would work with each park to develop a strategic action plan based on the specific conditions and management priorities of that park. The application of a strategic planning process to the choosing specific community conservation activities will be briefly discussed in the remainder of this article. It is not possible to provide here details on the procedures used for various exercises, however various points are illustrated with examples from the Tarangire NP CCS Action Plan.

THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The TANAPA Community Conservation Service has been developing park-specific strategic action plans that are designed to take a park's community program from its present position to the state it wishes to achieve. The department defines strategic planning as 'choosing our actions based on a clear understanding of the objectives which we want achieve, and based on what is likely to be most effective given the conditions under which we operate.' The plans are developed by a team in a two-day workshop format. The team includes the Park Warden In-charge and all heads of departments. Other participants are strategically chosen depending on their knowledge of the park and community, interest and planning skills. These may include members of the private sector, researchers, district officials and non-governmental organizations and donor representatives. The headquarters unit facilitates the workshop and produces a draft document.

While a number of comparable approaches to 'strategic', 'logical framework' or 'objectives-based' planning exist, the CCS prefers to use a fairly simple model comprising five basic steps. Even this model is applied with considerable flexibility and adaptation depending on the circumstances of the park, how much information is available, and the need to coordinate planning with donor inputs in the area. A relatively simple process is desirable so that understanding and ownership of the plan is more likely to remain at the local level, and because, by their very nature, plans for community programmes are likely to have to adapt frequently to changing conditions.

REVIEW OF INFORMATION

During the first session, existing information on the park, community and relevant initiatives and projects are reviewed. This information is summarized in advance and then presented on large wall maps and flip charts so that it becomes part of the background informing the group's consultations and can be readily referred to. At Tarangire, the group briefly reviewed the mandate of National Parks in Tanzania to establish the context, as well as TANAPA's extension and benefit sharing policy. The CCW presented a summary of his work over the preceding period. A map was presented showing target villages, existing SCIP projects, and representing areas where cattle rustling, charcoal burning, and encroachment are serious issues. Additional short presentations were made by private sector companies with an interest in working with communities around the park, and by the African Wildlife Foundation. Due to the limited time and the variable quality of the information available, it is not possible for this session to be exhaustive in presenting all of the information which might assist the group to come to sound conclusions. Instead, the session is intended to summarize, to draw attention to what we do and do not know, and to encourage participants to be aware of the information which they can individually contribute to the collective process.

SWOT ANALYSIS

Having reviewed this information the workshop normally breaks into two smaller groups to conduct a Strengths and Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis of the CCS program in the park to date. After a short period of reflection, each individual 'nominates' a strength/opportunity statement which is later discussed and voted on by the group. The process is then repeated for weaknesses/threats.

Box 1 - Selected Strengths and Weakness of Tarangire NPs CCS

| Strengths | Weaknesses |
|--|--|
| Existing cooperation between park and private sector | Lack of manpower, equipment and inputs into CCS |
| Precedent of several land use 'victories' in which CCS has contributed to reversals of damaging land use proposals near park | Lack of coordination between activities and organizations |
| Existing CCW experienced, capable and motivated | CCW not necessarily investing time in target areas in relation to their importance |
| The CCS is known and accepted by surrounding districts | Insufficient communication with the hunting sector outside park |

The SWOT analysis is useful to the planning process in two major ways. First the separate but parallel consideration of strengths and weaknesses provides a framework for a balanced understanding of what is and is not working. Second, the resulting list gives participants a

specific list of strengths that can be built on, and weaknesses which should be mitigated when actions are eventually developed.

KEY ISSUES

The heart of the strategic planning process is the generation of a list of key issues facing the park which participants feel the CCS program can and must address. Key issues are identified, discussed and prioritized in small groups similar to the SWOT analysis. The final lists presented by each group are then compared by the facilitators and combinations or clarifications made. A second round of voting by the whole workshop is sometimes necessary. This process usually results in a final list of between five and ten issues, or clusters of issues, which the group is prepared to use as the basis of planning and evaluating future actions.

For Tarangire National Park the key issues which could be addressed by community conservation were:

1. Critical land units essential to the integrity of the park, and the migratory routes of wildlife
2. Coordination with the private sector, and ensuring that local people benefit from Tarangire's growing tourism industry
3. Adequate staff, funding and equipment for the CCS
4. Linkages with districts, coordination, and links with district rural development programs
5. Better cooperation, coordination and training on CC issues with the park's own management and staff

Key issues for the CCS program may include issues normally thought of as falling under the ecology, security or tourism sections of management. However in developing these lists, different park management professionals may visualize and acknowledge the linkages between success in their own work and cooperation with local communities, supported by the CCS. Each of the key issues becomes the title of one of the sections of the action plan thus linking the plan directly to park conservation priorities.

OBJECTIVES FOR DESIRED FUTURE

Under each of the key issues, working groups develop desired future statements. For example under key issue No. 2 above, desired future statements could read: "collaboration will be enhanced with hunters to maintain integrity of the park boundary, and to provide benefits to surrounding communities" and "private sector tourism companies operating in the park will assist in the provision of benefits and employment to local people".

ACTIONS

Finally, a list of approximately five to twelve specific actions are proposed which build towards the attainment of each desired future statement. The activity should be stated in way which is specific and measurable. In the format of the action plan, activities are listed and number in one column. Two parallel columns are labelled 'by whom' and 'by when'. These are used to indicate the people primarily responsible for initiating the activity and a target date.

USE AND BENEFITS OF STRATEGIC PLANS

The strategic plans are used to assist the Community Conservation Warden (CCW) to plan and implement his work and be able to coordinate his activities with other sections of park management. They provide a basis for developing a common understanding of the interdependence of the park and local communities by all staff. The actions proposed in the plan for each park provide a baseline for the evaluation of program effectiveness. Strategic planning assists in establishing collaborative efforts with the local non-governmental organizations, other government agencies, the private sector, businessmen, governmental officials and the local governments. Strategic plans are also useful in raising funds for the community related activities undertaken by the park. Perhaps most importantly strategic plans provide a rationale which directly links activities to the conservation, security, and other management priorities of the park.

CONCLUSION

Planning processes like the one described above are sometimes refereed to in a tongue-in-cheek fashion as being 'quick and dirty'. However, from the perspective of managing a community conservation extension program, these plans appear to be affordable and pragmatic. They are designed to make use of the best available information. They build on the knowledge and consensus of people representing various perspectives. They assist in integrating and coordinating community conservation with other valid conservation and development activities.