

Rural Development and Conservation: The Future Lies with Multi-Stakeholder Collective Action



KADLACC members with landcare colleagues from Uganda and Australia

Multi-stakeholder collective action represents a new way to support rural development and conservation through the exploration of "win-win" solutions balancing livelihood and conservation goals.

Conventional approaches to livelihoods (agricultural research & development) and conservation in eastern Africa and indeed worldwide have been reductionist in nature. Institutions specialize in either production or conservation, research or development, livelihoods or governance, with minimal collaboration among institutions with complementary mandates. At the District level, rural development and natural resource management initiatives have not lived up to their potential as a result of lost opportunities for joint planning and resource sharing. Poor structural and functional linkages among different organizations and poorly coordinated planning have led to inefficient utilization of resources and opportunities lost in fostering synergies in resources and mandates. These constraints have clearly hindered innovation, undermined impact, and reduced opportunities for fostering more integrated, "win-win" solutions.

Toward a Collective Approach to Development and Conservation

There is a need for a holistic approach that facilitates decision-making at landscape and District levels as a substitute for isolated efforts. To achieve this goal, the spirit of collective action endemic in many societies in eastern Africa needs to be drawn upon in development and conservation activities. At the District level, partnerships among research, development and conservation agencies can play a crucial role in ensuring more inclusive decision-making at all levels and to link livelihood goals with conservation objectives. Whereas most exogenous development and conservation initiatives establish independent structures to work through, this approach advises collaboration with local government structures at various administrative levels.

Case Study: Kapchorwa District Landcare Chapter

In Kapchorwa District, an alliance of institutions has formed with a shared vision for integrated natural resource management—the Kapchorwa District Landcare Chapter (KADLACC). The alliance serves as a multi-stakeholder platform for organizations with shared values of sustainability, stewardship, local ownership and involvement, profitability, adaptability and volunteerism. Members include NGOs, CBOs, farmer groups, local government, research and conservation organizations and individual community members. It is an innovation platform for linking livelihoods and conservation through strategies for increased access, control and stewardship of the elements of production among community members, including the vulnerable, poor and disadvantaged. It provides a platform for negotiation and decision making in the implementation of INRM interventions. The platform is guided by four primary objectives:

- To create a forum for civil society organizations, research institutions and other stakeholders involved in landcare and natural resource management to collaborate
- To build the capacity of member organizations in planning, influencing policy and resource mobilization to enhance performance at District level
- To advocate for democratic processes for NRM and land use policies
- To conduct action research on ways to support land use and livelihoods

KADLACC's activities are focused on areas where a multi-stakeholder support system is necessary. These include the following:

1. *Protected Area Collaborative Management*
 - Facilitating negotiations between community and the protected area management

Table 1. Added Value of KADLACC

| BEFORE | AFTER |
|---|---|
| 1. NRM not mainstreamed in development initiatives but mainly carried out through lone ranger approaches | Integrated development and NRM planning from village to subcounty levels, with the involvement and support of district government |
| 2. Limited access to development and extension services for a large number of households | Linking of farmer learning cycles to trained facilitators from various member institutions has improved widespread access to services |
| 3. An aid and problem-focused attitude towards community level development needs | An appreciative intervention process building on local level assets and a spirit of volunteerism |
| 4. Development efforts delinked from natural resource conservation and equity | A defined process for linking livelihood goals to conservation objectives and enhancing equitable benefits capture advocated for by community-based organizations and farmer groups |
| 5. Role of local government in pro-poor, ecologically-friendly policy support process undefined, or unclear | Strengthened role of local government structures in integrated NRM planning; involvement of community members in policy reform |
| 6. No clear direction for market development; livelihood needs seen as contradictory to conservation objectives | Strategies under development for enhancing linkages to markets in the context of environmental conservation |

• Lobbying for resources and support from the Ugandan Wildlife Authority (UWA) and other development agencies for displaced communities

2. Watershed Management

- Filling knowledge gaps through training, cross-site visits and action research
- Linking farmers to technologies and innovations
- Negotiation support for socially-optimal solutions
- Documentation and dissemination of success stories for scaling up

3. Farmer Innovations and Technologies

- Facilitating identification of technologies matching farmers' needs
- Supporting implementation through training and resource mobilization
- Awareness creation on farmer innovations and scaling up/out

4. Farmer Learning and Institutional Development

- Conducting farmers' skill needs assessments
- Capacity building through training and study tours

5. Marketing and Enterprise Development

- Developing a market niche and opportunities for income generation and improved ecosystem health through market development and product branding

6. Partnerships and Networking

- Establishing supportive affiliations with the national Landcare Steering Committee, the African Landcare Network (ALN) and the International Landcare Alliance

Outcomes of greater collective action and integration at District level are summarized in Table 1.

How Can We Get Started?

Synthesis of steps followed in KADLACC's evolution can assist other Districts wishing to forge collective strategies for integrated NRM:

1. Individual consultations (person to person and organization to organization) to explore possibilities for improved synergy and performance at District level.
2. Consultation of individuals, farmers and farmer groups concerned about trends of natural resource degradation and increasing poverty at household level.
3. Workshops to develop understanding of underlying factors and steps to be undertaken in INRM interventions; action planning using appreciative inquiry approach.
4. More detailed planning processes beginning at the farmer group level, and moving to parish, subcounty and district levels.
5. Implement and monitor action plans, with support from KADLACC and volunteer facilitators at different levels.
6. Through feedback monitoring, a capacity building process for facilitators was initiated in response to demand.
7. Formulation and enactment of constitutional and strategic plans to guide operations of the platform.
8. Stakeholder workshop to ratify the constitution and launch the platform.
9. Establish a Secretariat to guide operationalization of the business plan.

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Key partners in this work include Action AID Uganda; the Benet Lobby Group; local government (LC1 through LC5) in Kapchorwa; National Environmental Management Authority; the Ugandan Wildlife Authority; Uganda Farmers' Association; MERECEP; Kapchorwa Civil Society Organization and CBOs (TUBAN, Tuikat, Chesower, Bukwo, Kaseko, Kapchorwa Bee Keepers Association).

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