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Title

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Journal

Parks Stewardship Forum, 40(3)

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Publication Date

2024-09-15

DOI

10.5070/P5.35444

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A summary framework for effective engagement of IPLCs and rangers

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ABSTRACT

In this paper we focus on the pressing need to effectively engage with Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs) and the need to strengthen the capacity of rangers originating from these communities. Opportunities for full participation and leadership by IPLCs are improved by enhancing the role of Indigenous and local rangers in fostering relationships while integrating cultural knowledge into the work on the ground. This also strengthens local benefits. We emphasize the invaluable contribution of IPLCs to conservation, often honed over generations, and explore current models of partnership and engagement. Particularly, we spotlight the vital role of IPLC rangers, who leverage unique skills, local knowledge, and cultural practices in their conservation work. The roles of both IPLCs and local Indigenous rangers are essential if we are to meet our goals for conserving 30% of the earth's lands and waters by 2030 as promoted at the COP15 meeting of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), achieve the objectives for development of IPLC rangers as stated of Chitwan Declaration of 2019 (CD), or meet the related targets set by the Universal Ranger Support Alliance (URSA). We advocate for a partnership model with IPLCs that applies the principles of Collective Impact to improve outcomes and secure enduring benefits at all levels. To aid stakeholders in conservation projects involving IPLCs (including governments, businesses, and non-governmental organizations), we propose a straightforward summary framework that outlines stages for the development of relationships and projects. It integrates the work of others, including foundation principles, management systems for partnerships, and good practices, and stresses the need for pre-project training, learning and other forms of preparation. Altogether, these principles and accompanying recommendations help lay the groundwork for effective intergenerational projects involving IPLCs with long-term benefits.

[Ed. note: This paper originated as one of the white papers prepared for the 2019 World Ranger Congress. The other white papers were published in vol. 37, no. 1 of *Parks Stewardship Forum* (2021) as a set titled "Implementing the Chitwan Declaration of the 9th World Ranger Congress: Next Steps for the Global Ranger Community," guest edited by Rohit Singh.]

INTRODUCTION

The vital role of IPLCs in conservation and sustainable natural resource management

Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs) are pivotal in the global endeavor to comprehend, safeguard, and rejuvenate the earth's natural capital. Occupying lands that are repositories of rich biocultural diversity,

IPLCs have been instrumental in fostering conservation outcomes that are resilient to climate change and support various other societal values (Singh et al. 2021).

In this paper, we have adopted the definitions for "Indigenous Peoples," "local communities," and "rangers" as

presented by Stolton et al. (2022a) along with the summary of the many challenges and advantages of working effectively with Indigenous and local communities.

IPLCs possess ancestral knowledge and expertise vital for managing, adapting to, and mitigating the risks posed by climate change and other environmental disasters. Their Traditional Knowledge systems and practices, preserved across generations, reflect their accumulated experience and observations of environmental change and are invaluable in planning for and responding to current environmental crises (Garnett et al. 2018). Appropriate integration of this Indigenous wisdom with Western scientific knowledge and technology enables us to understand and manage natural systems without compromising the integrity of either knowledge system (Austin et al. 2019; Ogar et al. 2020).

According to the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations and the World Bank (2022), Indigenous people constitute about 6% of the global population and occupy less than one-third of the global land surface, yet they safeguard up to 80% of the remaining biodiversity. IPLC-managed territories, encompassing 32% of global land, are predominantly in good ecological condition, and include critical Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) (WWF et al. 2021; UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations and the World Bank 2022). We would likely find similar results in assessing the contribution of IPLCs to the condition of seascapes and freshwater systems and the sustainable use of these resources.

Locals stand to reap both direct and indirect benefits of healthy natural systems and through trade in natural services, and they are essential co-investors providing money, services, knowledge and practices, access to key areas, and commitment to intergenerational stewardship. In addition to nature-based livelihoods and services, Indigenous custodians have other deep and profound connections that drive their motivation to protect the environment. They have a much at risk if they don't. Perhaps it is time that these long-standing socioecological connections and motivation to conserve an area or resource receive wider recognition and greater support including funding (Wright et al. 2012; WWF et al. 2021).

Investments in IPLC-managed lands have demonstrated substantial social, ecological, and economic returns, emphasizing the value of Indigenous stewardship in conservation efforts (Woodside et al. 2023). Furthermore, the evolving markets for environmental services and nature-based solutions to climate change present new opportunities for IPLCs to leverage their knowledge and practices for broader environmental and economic

benefits. Studies conducted in both Australia and Canada showed returns on investment ranging from 200 to 400% compared with conventional investment techniques (SVA 2016a, 2016b)

Role of rangers

Rangers are at the forefront of conservation efforts, operating in every conceivable environment—from national parks and community conservation areas to cultural landmarks, urban green spaces, tourism ventures, freshwater ecosystems, and expansive marine regions (Woodside et al. 2021; Stolton et al. 2023).

The 9th World Ranger Congress of the International Ranger Federation (IRF), held in 2019, and the resulting “Chitwan Declaration” focused on the need to strengthen the recognition and support for rangers, including Indigenous rangers. After the Congress, a coalition led by conservation bodies formed the Universal Ranger Support Alliance (URSA) and then developed the URSA Action Plan (2021). This initiative aims to bolster the global objectives of IRF by fostering a professional ranger cadre rooted in comprehensive knowledge, skills, ethical practices, and personal dedication. The recent formulation of a global Code of Conduct and corresponding adoption of guidelines (IRF 2022) is a significant step forward.

Because IPLC rangers can potentially play vital roles as intermediaries between their employer and their own local communities, it is important to encourage greater participation of these rangers at a local level, and, more broadly, support all IPLC programs. This helps to ensure two-way learning and foster trust among community members with managers of the surrounding conservation estates (Woodside et al. 2021). At a global level there is relatively low participation of IPLC rangers compared to others given the scale of the estate they manage (Rizzolo et al. 2021; Parker et al. 2022). As highlighted by Stolton et al. (2023), there is a need to ensure a diversity of rangers (across gender, ethnicity, age, and religion) to help engage across all aspects of local communities. There are signs of improvement, with an increase in women rangers on the ground and in leadership roles in Australia and elsewhere (Allam 2021; WWF 2021).

SHAPING A SUMMARY FRAMEWORK FOR ENGAGING IPLCs AND RANGERS

Biodiversity conservation programs around the world stand to benefit by engaging the skills, knowledge, and commitment of traditional custodians at all levels and sharing opportunities or social, cultural, and economic gain. While some engagement is at a local level to achieve area-based conservation, other programs seek to engage at a landscape level, involving many communities and

stakeholders. What they have in common is the potential to be transformative for participants if the foundation is built on respect for different values, rights, knowledge systems, and aspirations, and is both just and fair.

This goal has put a spotlight on concepts such as inclusive conservation, renewed the focus on a Collective Impact (CI) approach (see below), and highlighted the need to collect case studies that illustrate best practices in different societies. It has also led to the development of many valuable protocols for working with Indigenous people.

We have reviewed and collated some of the most recent information around IPLC engagement and the practices for doing this well. Using this information, we have assembled a simple summary framework that captures the key themes and adds practical value for conservation managers, rangers, and other participating stakeholders. We have explored recent published principles and guidelines at the international level, summaries of good practices at local levels, and tools that can be used on the ground. There are significant overlaps in the material about foundational principles for working with IPLCs and some useful processes and checklists of practices that provide guidance for various parties.

Below, we have highlighted some of the key resources we have relied on in our summary framework, stressing their similarities and significant differences. The reason for including these descriptions is to build our case for combining them while also encouraging users of our summary framework to return to these sources and adapt or refine our framework further.

In general, we have focused on foundational principles developed at an international level around justice, equity, and inclusion; aspirational propositions, such as inclusive conservation and Indigenous-led conservation; practical management systems for driving vital social and environmental change, such as CI; and good practices (GPs) that can be used to guide workers and managers on the ground. Combined, these different approaches help ensure that trust is developed among parties and provide a central process for change, agreed-upon conservation outcomes on the ground, a range of shared benefits, and a focus on future opportunities for IPLCs and other stakeholders.

Engagement Approach 1: Indigenous rights to be included and a focus on justice and equity

The International Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures (TNFD 2023) provides a suite of practical guidelines on engagement with IPLCs and other stakeholders. These guidelines align with the United Nations

Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN 2007). TNFD provides a summary of essential international standards that businesses, governments, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) should apply when working with IPLCs. These include a deep respect for IPLCs and their custodial role and knowledge of nature; adoption of standards for ensuring justice and equity; the need to ensure Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC); strong governance systems; and, ultimately, the sharing of benefits. Importantly, it addresses the need for all parties to prepare for engagement and to monitor the outcomes.

While the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) Code of Ethics (2020) was intended to provide guidance for research projects with Australian Indigenous Peoples, it is also applicable to IPLCs in conservation projects more generally. The code emphasizes core principles around the rights of Indigenous communities to be involved in any program that affects them or the areas of which they are the enduring custodians. It provides guidelines for supporting Indigenous self-determination in this context, local leadership, informed consent, cultural understanding, and data sovereignty. Similarly, consideration should be given to the levels at which IPLCs can and should be engaged when conservation projects are being developed in Indigenous lands or waters.

The spectrum of public participation as defined by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) is used as an international standard for defining levels of engagement and reflecting the increasing impact the public will have in decision-making and the goal of managers. It refers to the levels of agency exercised by various participants and the amount of organizational support required, and the need for the managing organization to keep its promise around effective participation.

IAP2's levels of participation include: *Inform* (provide balanced and objective information to understand the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions), *Consult* (solicit public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions), *Involve* (work directly and continually with the community to ensure concerns and aspirations are understood and considered), *Collaborate* (partner around each aspect of decision-making and identify alternative and preferred solutions), and *Empower* (place final decision-making in the hands of the community).

A useful “roadmap” for building wider engagement with Indigenous communities was prepared by WWF-Australia (Janke et al 2021) to support the organization's strategic planning and ensure that staff and programs

were grounded in appropriate protocols, knowledge, and skills. The key principles expressed in this roadmap are potentially transferable to other NGOs and protected area managers where IPLC partnerships are a priority.

The significant issues addressed in the roadmap included respect for Indigenous values and rights and perspectives on the environment, Indigenous leadership and the concept of cultural authority, custodianship of cultural knowledge and materials, and intellectual property rights. It also considered ways to share values and traditional practices that build trust and emphasized the need for cultural competency training across the staff of partnering organizations as a precondition for a project. It describes the value of socializing and “mainstreaming” these new skills while also developing flagship projects with IPLCs that are transformative for all partners and the environment.

Engagement Approach 2: Inclusive conservation

Raymond et al. (2020) argue that inclusive conservation is essential for achieving the goals of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. Such conservation not only improves biodiversity outcomes but also promotes equity, justice, and sustainability. It requires that there are well-governed partnerships, and that inclusive, multi-stakeholder engagement processes are designed to achieve an intricate balance between competing visions and values, integrate knowledge systems, and manage the inevitable power imbalance.

Raymond and co-authors offer key principles that form the basis of inclusive conservation:

- *Equity and Justice Outcomes*—respecting the rights and participation of local communities, Indigenous Peoples, women, and other marginalized groups.
- *Inclusivity in Stakeholder Engagement*—engaging with diverse stakeholders, including IPLCs, in management and policy decisions.
- *Recognition of Multiple Values and Visions*—acknowledging and integrating a variety of values and visions regarding nature, beyond the intrinsic value of biodiversity.
- *Integration of Knowledge Systems*—incorporating local, experiential, and Indigenous knowledge systems alongside dominant Western scientific knowledge in planning and decision-making.
- *Management of Power Dynamics Highlights*—addressing the need to navigate power asymmetries in conservation governance, enabling a more democratic and participatory approach to decision-making.
- Importantly, the authors identify several tensions that are inherent in more inclusive and equitable

conservation practices and provide insights on how to navigate these tensions:

- *Area-based Conservation vs. Cross-boundary Landscape Management*—balancing focus on protected areas with the need for broader landscape and seascape management reflecting the scale of ecological and social dynamics.
- *Recognizing vs. Reducing Diversity in Visions and Values*—finding common ground among the disparate visions for and values of nature held by different stakeholders.
- *Integrating Diverse Knowledge Systems*—incorporating local and Indigenous knowledge into the dominant Western scientific frameworks for conservation.
- *Navigating Power Relations*—seeking consensus and embracing dissent while recognizing that power dynamics influence whose voices are heard in governance.

The authors suggest using methodologies such as participatory scenario planning and alternative outcomes, deliberate reframing of core problems, and focusing on building trust that ensures all voices and perspectives are heard in the partnership and benefits are shared.

Engagement Approach 3:

Indigenous-led conservation and culturally significant entities

To meet international biodiversity obligations Goolmeer et al. (2022) suggest that it is critically important to incorporate both the knowledge and traditional practices and holistic approach of IPLCs and that culturally significant entities (CSEs) bring a focus on key places and ecological communities. Traditional management systems use different markers of success that contrast with many current biodiversity conservation instruments commonly used.

The authors stress the need for a collaborative process with Indigenous communities to develop legislation, policy, and metrics for the protection and management of CSEs, while ensuring the protection of culturally sensitive information and supporting cultural practices.

The main principles and improvements suggested by Goolmeer et al. (2022) include:

- *Indigenous Participation and Knowledge Transfer*—emphasizing the need for a holistic, integrated approach to safeguard CSEs and ecological communities.
- *Recognition of CSEs*—recognizing plants, animals, and ecological communities of spiritual, cultural, and/or symbolic value to Indigenous Peoples, which are fundamental to maintaining their culture and knowledge.

- *Development of Biocultural Indicators*—emphasizing measures of place-based cultural values and recognizing the relationship between ecological state and Indigenous well-being, to monitor outcomes.
- *Co-management Empowerment of Indigenous Governance*—enabling Indigenous knowledge and practices to form the foundation of management, supported by formal resource-sharing and decision-making.
- *Empowering Indigenous-Led Governance*—empowering Indigenous Peoples and their governance structures to implement enduring changes through CSEs.
- *Policy Redesign*—enacting amendments to biodiversity legislation and policies in line with international obligations to support traditional management of CSEs.

Engagement Approach 4: Collective Impact approach to complex social and environmental issues

Collective Impact (CI) was introduced by Kania and Kramer (2011) as a structured approach to tackling complex and large-scale social and environmental issues through coordinated and collaborative efforts among various organizations and stakeholders. It emphasizes the importance of cross-sector coordination rather than isolated or uncoordinated action by individual entities.

The CI framework has since developed into a strong strategic approach to address multifaceted social and environmental challenges. It has the capacity to assist collaboration across various sectors, aiming to reconcile environmental conservation, land rights, and cultural preservation within Indigenous communities.

By applying the CI framework within the context of IPLCs and Indigenous rangers, there is a significant opportunity to address environmental and social challenges more holistically and in line with the community’s traditional view of environment and its cultural values. This approach not only enhances conservation efforts but also ensures the preservation of cultural identities and practices and measures of impact. Success hinges on genuine collaboration, where mutual respect, equity, and inclusion are paramount.

The original concept of CI (Kania and Kramer 2011) offered five conditions for effective initiatives:

1. *A Common Agenda* where all participants have a shared vision for change, including a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving it through agreed-upon actions.
2. *Shared Measurement Systems* so that collecting data and measuring results are consistent across all

participants, ensuring that efforts remain aligned and accountable.

3. *Mutually Reinforcing Activities* that enable participant activities to be differentiated while still being coordinated through a plan of action.
4. *Regular and Open Communication* that leads to greater trust, mutual objectives, and shared motivation.
5. *Backbone Support*, in which a separate organization or structure, having staff with key skills, can provide essential support, accountability, and coordination across participants.

The original concept was updated (Kania and Kramer 2015; Wolff et al. 2016) to emphasize the critical role of equity in achieving effective and sustainable outcomes in multi-stakeholder initiatives. The changes highlighted the need, from the outset, for effective preparation by all participants, sharing of foundational knowledge, continual learning, and a strong process for listening to all voices.

Cabaj and Weaver (2016) presented a suite of principles in their updated framework called “Collective Impact 3.0.” These are particularly useful in design of conservation programs where IPLCs are involved:

1. Shift from a strictly managerial approach to a *movement-building paradigm*.
2. Ensure *authentic community engagement*, including community members affected by issues such as poverty, poor education, marginalization, or loss of homelands.
3. Develop *shared aspirations especially for central issues regardless of other differences* and focus on ambitious, value-based outcomes that transcend business-as-usual.
4. Shift from single-focus measurement systems to *strategic learning* to ensure participants are adaptive, reflective, and using relevant measures of success.
5. Seek *high-leverage activities* with high visibility and high impact, and which are unifying.
6. Encourage both *“loose and tight working relationships,”* recognizing the diverse pathways to achieving shared goals.
7. Create a *“container for change”* that is a supportive environment for personal and collective growth, trust-building, and sustained engagement among participants.

In a review of CI initiatives on the ground, both Ennis and Tofa (2020) and Mackay et al. (2020) identified significant benefits from this approach, including enhanced long-term collaboration culture, better resource utilization, and greater community outcomes. They emphasized the importance of maintaining flexibility, strong leadership,

and governance structures and the need to listen to all community voices.

Mackay et al. (2020) also developed a simple tool which is visual roadmap with practical steps for formulating and evaluating collective impact in complex social and institutional environments. This tool may be particularly useful for rangers in general and specifically for IPLC rangers, as it provides a checklist of key issues to address in community engagement to save time and encourage collective planning. This tool could also be used during training of rangers working with communities or wherever there is a diversity of needs and perspectives to be considered.

Engagement Approach 5:

Collaborative Open Standards process for conservation planning

Conservation Measures Partnership (CMP 2020) developed the “Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation Version 4.0” and tested them globally in programs with Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. The standards aim to facilitate learning and provide a comprehensive guide to improve the effectiveness of conservation efforts at all levels. The guide centers on a set of best practices with an iterative five-step adaptive management cycle: *Assess, Plan, Implement, Analyze & Adapt, and Share*.

The process assists collaboration among stakeholders by stepping them through an evidence-based approach to defining conservation targets, identifying threats, developing strategies for intervention, and ensuring projects adapt based on evolving knowledge. It emphasizes objective decision-making and the integration of social and environmental safeguards, especially in relation to climate change and relevant response strategies.

Engagement Approach 6:

Good practices for engaging with IPLCs and building trust

Lack of trust has become a central issue in collaborative conservation efforts, especially when working with IPLCs. In many parts of the world, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities have little trust in the systems that are designed to protect nature or to secure or trade on natural services; instead, these systems are often considered to violate the rights and custodial obligations and practices of the communities. Local communities might also suffer directly from conflicts with wildlife and certain tourism activities, or because of rules that change their access to essential natural assets such as food, fiber, and medicine. As pointed out by Stolton et al. (2022a), rangers, including those originating from local communities, are often seen as an extension of the problem. Managers and rangers need to build trust

and create new partnerships in social and economic environments that are often complex.

To provide some guidance on these issues, Stolton et al. (2022a, 2022b) conducted an extensive study of 75 conservation projects globally to identify what features they had in common for building trust, achieving good conservation outcomes, and creating enduring partnerships with the communities in and around protected areas. The authors identified 91 “good practices” (GPs) clustered around seven themes with some important cross-cutting principles. Some of these practices were undertaken by managers and others by rangers. While the practices identified were not intended as a comprehensive to-do list, they provide guidance for rangers and managers and help build the skills of a professional ranger workforce.

Of the 91 GPs, 23 were identified as key to building a professional and diverse ranger workforce and others were more broadly clustered around other themes that could be used to guide capacity building and performance of rangers, managers, and partners more generally. These included:

- Listening and learning,
- Having a love of nature,
- Finding common ground,
- Working and playing together,
- Presenting the right image,
- Being a good neighbor, and
- Respecting neighbors and colleagues.

A SUMMARY FRAMEWORK FOR EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT OF IPLCs AND RANGERS

We propose a “summary framework” with four key elements that be used as phases in a conservation project involving IPLCs or a program targeting better engagement of them in and around protected areas. These four phases build on each other and are also somewhat overlapping, phased for developing a respectful and growing partnership among key players such as IPLCs, rangers, central-office and site managers, and other stakeholders and supporters.

The framework should apply to a conservation initiative or challenge at any scale. The range for application might include local problem-solving (such as wildlife conflict, tourism concerns or opportunities, or local resource access), developing a new conservation initiative (such as saving a key species, cultural-burning of forests and grasslands for habitat recovery, or sustainable use or trade of key natural assets and services), or a wider collaboration effort (such as collaborative stewardship of a landscape, managing river health or sea country, or establishing new protected areas).

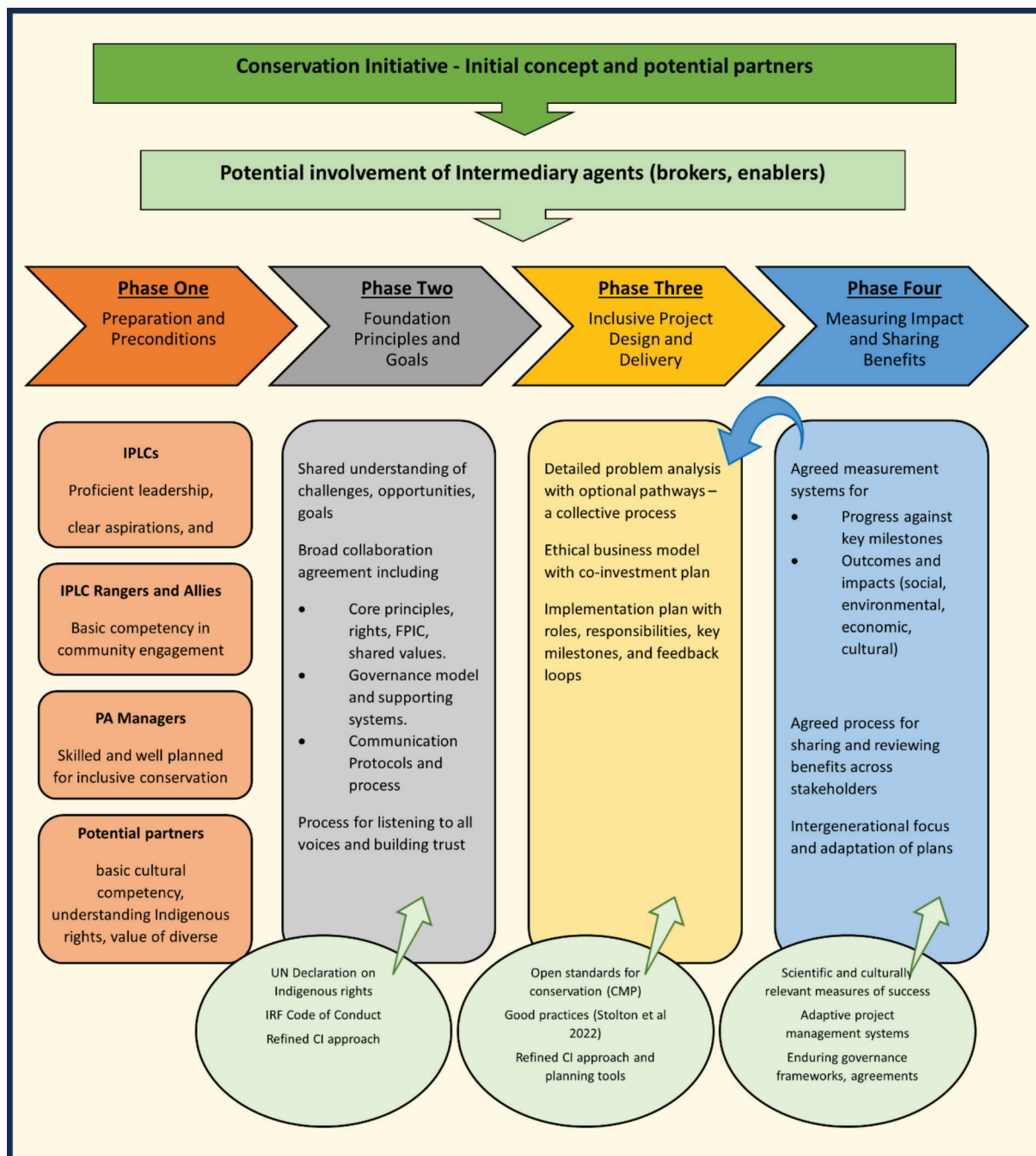
We have tried to include the principles, management systems, and good practices of working with IPLCs and IPLC rangers as described by many authors and summarized above. Together these provide a structure that could be used for training programs and general capacity building of rangers, managers, and allies. Armed with skills and knowledge as rangers and supported through appropriate cultural authority and processes, IPLC rangers can play pivotal role in engagement of local communities. They may serve as intermediaries with their communities, helping to build trust, facilitate knowledge

transfer, and develop integrated practices on the ground.

The framework is illustrated in Figure 1 and includes:

- Phase One: Preconditions and preparation for effective engagement
- Phase Two: Foundation principles, goals, and general alignment
- Phase Three: Inclusive project design and delivery
- Phase Four: Measuring impact and sharing benefits

FIGURE 1. Summary framework for effective engagement of IPLCs and rangers.



We refer to this as a “summary framework” because it aims to bring together the key principles, management concepts and practices proposed by others. It aligns with other frameworks such as CI and Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation (described above) but is less procedural. We note that both systems are compelling and well-tested models for engaging diverse communities and suggest that our framework is complementary and sets the stage for applying other systems and tools.

All project and engagement programs begin with an idea or need or general concept that is crystallized translated into a proposition and a collection of potential partners. To attract participation of IPLCs or other stakeholders, the proposition must appeal to the values, needs, and aspirations of that community. If the project is led by IPLCs, they face the same challenge of appealing to other potential partners. Following that, the stakeholders need to have some motivation to contribute and to bear responsibility for success. As a result, any framework for progressing engagement must be seated in purpose and appeal.

Phase One

The preparation phase on the project includes the broader conceptualization as described above and relates to the state of readiness of a given stakeholder to participate in opportunities or challenges. Participating stakeholders need to build their capacity to collaborate and listen to other views and build their cultural competency; this may be gradual process or related to a key project. In this phase, training of staff and stakeholders should lead to great respect for diversity of views and culture, greater listening skills, and some skills in collaborative processes. At this stage, or earlier, some of more complex projects may benefit from intervention by intermediary agents, often non-governmental organizations (NGOs), who can broker new relationships and host preliminary conversations.

In Phase One, all participants should become familiar with concepts and principles of equity and justice, indigenous rights, cultural knowledge and knowledge transfer, Indigenous IP and different concepts of environment. There are basic issues around human rights, Indigenous rights, UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and local community needs that should be articulated and socialized within partner organizations. It is important that all potential partners gain an understanding of many of the other broader principles of collective action and inclusive conservation discussed earlier in this paper, as these will become part of the foundational agreements for the project and underpin the governance system. They will be matters for regular reflection and adaptation across the life of the project.

A good preparation in Phase One will lead to longer-term success. Critical to this is establishment of regular and culturally appropriate communication supported by protocols. For IPLCs, this early stage may also be important for consolidating their positions and propositions for the project. This might include articulation of the communities’ aspirations and needs, clarifying their unique contributions to a partnership, and leadership roles. Building confidence to join a new partnership can be daunting. This formative stage may require resources and guidance and it is worth noting that some NGOs provide support as enablers and general project catalysts (e.g., The Nature Conservancy, World Wildlife Fund, Pew Charitable Trusts).

Phase Two

The second stage of the framework involves reaching agreement around basic principles, rights, core values, and shared purpose. Trust building is essential among participants and to the collaborative process. To assist, we recommend using many of the “good practices” suggested by Stolton et al. (2022a, 2022b).

In this second stage, it is also important to agree on a basic project governance model, management system, and supporting resources. The ideal situation is to have an independent management system that everyone can rely on, but this is not always possible from the outset. We suggest using CI as the fundamental and adaptable system for collaboration and suggest some refinements to its basic tenets to make it more suitable for IPLC engagement and partnerships (Box 1). This approach not only enhances conservation efforts and land management, but also ensures the preservation of cultural identities and practices and provides a significant opportunity to address environmental and social challenges more holistically.

Phase Three

Phase Three centers on design and delivery and relies on initial agreements reached in Phase Two on guiding principles and management systems for the initiative. Fundamental to this phase is a shared understanding of the problem, challenge, and any opportunities. There are many elegant tools for guiding these conversations, one being Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation, which helps participants unpack the current situation, future opportunities, and pathways for action. There is also a CI tool developed for community programs, reported by Mackay et al. (2020); it provides a basic checklist that supports the design and implementation process. In addition, as mentioned earlier there is a suite of good practices described by Stolton et al. (2022a, 2022b) for both managers and rangers that is central to building and maintaining trusting relationships.

BOX 1. Collective Impact approach adapted for collaboration with IPLCs (after Kania and Kramer 2011).

With some refinement, CI stands as a compelling model for fostering sustainable outcomes that honor the rights, wisdom, and leadership of Indigenous Peoples. Success hinges on genuine collaboration, where mutual respect, equity, and inclusion are paramount. We have adapted the five key principles as follows:

Common Agenda: Establish a shared goal or vision involving all parties—ranging from Indigenous communities to external partners—aligned on goals such as biodiversity conservation or enterprise, resolving wildlife conflicts, land rights advocacy, and the safeguarding of cultural heritage. The shared vision must be anchored in the community's values and be culturally informed.

Shared Measurement Systems: Gauge success and direction of initiatives using measurement systems that are culturally resonant and reflective of Traditional Knowledge and values, alongside contemporary conservation targets. Measurement systems should lead to accountability and facilitate mutual learning and adaptation, enabling stakeholders to refine strategies.

Mutually Reinforcing Activities: Leverage diverse strengths of all partners, ensuring that every action taken aligns with the overarching agenda. Strengthen synergy between Traditional Ecological Knowledge and scientific methods and celebrate outcomes.

Continuous Communication: Ensure consistent, open communication channels that are culturally appropriate and respectful and incorporate the cultural nuances of Indigenous communities and meets the needs of other participants.

Backbone Support: Ensure dedicated and agile organizational support essential for coordination with a strong governance system for building trust, addressing needs of participants, navigating cultural sensitivities, mobilizing resources, and fostering collaboration.

Phase Four

The final phase, Phase Four, focuses on the evaluation of the impact and sharing of benefits. Evaluation of success should be ongoing and centered on key milestones to ensure continued support internally and externally. This phase is also somewhat circular in that it should be ongoing throughout the project, providing useful insights at each phase and aiding adaptation.

The success of the project may be measured in terms of outcomes on the ground (socially, environmentally, and, in some cases, economically) as well as by the effectiveness of the processes of engagement. There may be measures of inclusion across segments of the community (gender, age groups, religion, ethnicity, etc.), and these can be held up against the relevant SDGs. The impact can be measured in terms of gains to the community and local culture, social cohesion or other aspirations, impact on conservation and the wider environment, and improvements in the local economy. Based on the outcomes and the inputs to the project, it is possible to determine the return on investment for all participants and other supporters.

NEXT STEPS

1. For protected area managers and conservation partners, encourage use of our framework to build

basic knowledge around the core principles of working with IPLCs, effective management systems, and good practices.

2. Formalize a suite of good practices relating to IPLC engagement and IPLC ranger roles in the IRF Code of Conduct for Rangers (IRF 2021a, 2021b).
3. Develop and maintain a library of the case studies and projects relating to the implementation of IPLC engagement, including frameworks, principles, and good practices, using relevant IRF websites.
4. For the IPLC Ranger Working Group currently being established by IRF with support from URSA and regional ranger organizations:
 - Encourage IPLC peer-to-peer training, staff exchanges, and collaboration and mutual support through knowledge networks.
 - Articulate the various special roles and contributions of IPLC rangers, including their potential role as intermediaries in IPLC engagement programs and the value of tacit knowledge.
 - Increase IPLC ranger numbers, especially among women and youth, and encourage development of pipelines of IPLC rangers within their communities.
 - Provide training in IPLC engagement principles, practical frameworks, and good practices.
 - Develop additional training and support for

rangers to enhance their current and often understated roles as brokers in local conflict and community engagement, operatives for local knowledge and practices, and contributors to the emerging nature-based trade and regenerative economy.

- Update the IUCN competency register (Appleton 2016) to include special skills relating to IPLCs and ensure transferrable accreditation of the same.

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