
## Pillar 2

# Strong Leadership, Governance, and Management Capacity

## Knowledge, Evidence, and Practice

**KEY POINTS**

- Strong capacity is foundational to a community's ability to act collectively, effectively govern, and sustainably manage natural resources, as well as their ability to advocate for their rights to territory and resources, assert decision making authority, negotiate with other stakeholders and/or rightsholders, access and manage funds and external support, and pursue self-determined, culturally aligned economic opportunities.

- Capacity-building strategies employ a wide range of activities that target different types of capital—including human, social, institutional, systemic, natural, and economic—which need to be tailored to the current levels of capacity and needs of the community.

- It is important to work with a community's chosen leaders as well as within their existing knowledge systems and institutions where possible, while making special provisions for the meaningful engagement of vulnerable or underrepresented social identities (e.g., women, youth, economically disadvantaged or oppressed, ethnic minorities, etc.) in defining the rules and regulations that govern them.

- Communities can be very successful at governing common pool resources and these communities and the resources themselves often have several shared characteristics (for more on these characteristics, read on).

**KEY TERMS**

**Capacity**—multi-faceted concept generally described as "having the ability to act," and various types of capital including human, social, institutional, natural, and economic must be used to do so.[12-13]

**Collective Action**—an action taken by a group to achieve a common objective.[41-44]

**Common Pool Resource**—any material good diminished in quantity or quality through use (i.e., subtractable) and costly or difficult to exclude others from using.[45]

**Governance**—in the context of natural resource management, refers to the norms, institutions, and processes that determine how power and responsibilities over natural resources are exercised, how decisions are made, and how people participate in and benefit from the management of natural resources.

**Indigenous Knowledge**—a cumulative body of knowledge, practices, and beliefs, evolving and governed by adaptive processes and handed down and across (through) generations by cultural transmission, about the relationship of living beings (including humans) with one another and with their environment.[46] This concept is sometimes referred to as "local knowledge" by those that do not self-identify as Indigenous Peoples.

**Institutions**—the rules and/or organizations that structure political, economic, and social interaction. They consist of both informal rules (e.g., sanctions, taboos, customs, traditions, and codes of conduct), and formal rules (e.g., constitutions, laws, property rights).[47]

**Social Cohesion**—a form of social capital that influences collective action; a property of a group that describes the level of connectedness and solidarity experienced by its members, which when strong can foster a sense of belonging and shared experience providing an important basis for cooperation.

## Types of Capacity, Capacity-building, and Environmental Outcomes

Community-led natural resource management is a complex social process that requires collective action and effective governance of common pool resources, and is supported by investments in different types of capital (i.e., assets—both monetary and non-monetary; see Table 3). The need for strong and capable community members, leaders, and institutions makes capacity-building one of the most broadly applicable and foundational strategies of the VCA Framework. There is mounting evidence that investments in capacity-building strategies are important to environmental outcomes.[48-49] Capacity is a multi-faceted concept generally described as "having the ability to act," and various types of capital including human, social, institutional, natural, and economic must be used to do so.[12-13] Capacity-building activities typically seek to enhance one or more of these forms of capital, specifically where needs are identified by a situation analysis or priorities are expressed by Indigenous and local community partners (Table 3). Though community-led natural resource management is highly context dependent,[50] capacity is foundational and investments in strengthening one or more of these types of capital are almost always needed.

**Table 3:** *Types of capital, targets of capacity-building, and some example activities. Note that it is important to consider each type of capital in any community capacity assessment (for examples on how to assess, see Hartanto et al., 2014).*[51]

| Type of capital | Targets of capacity-building | Example Activities |
|---|---|---|
| Human | • Awareness<br>• Knowledge<br>• Skills<br>• Experience | • Supporting assessment, revitalization, and adoption of stewardship-aligned Indigenous or local knowledge practices (e.g., traditional burning, grazing, fishing practices)<br>• Conducting education and outreach/ awareness-raising campaigns<br>• Introducing citizen science, monitoring for adaptive management, and assessment of project outcomes (e.g., invasive species reporting, species monitoring)<br>• Providing training and technical assistance (e.g., improved natural resource management, soil conservation practices, improved equipment use)<br>• Convening knowledge exchange<br>• Facilitating peer-to-peer learning opportunities |
| Social | • Knowledge/ Understanding<br>• Familiarity<br>• Identity<br>• Trust<br>• Social cohesion/ collective action<br>• Connection to place | • Conducting education and outreach/ awareness-raising campaigns<br>• Providing opportunities for interaction<br>• Mobilizing around shared goals/purpose<br>• Engaging in network-building<br>• Facilitating trust-building within or with community<br>• Supporting programs to foster shared identity, purpose, and intergenerational transfer of knowledge (e.g., youth, Elder, and women's groups)<br>• Supporting healing and racial equity<br>• Creating safe spaces for oral histories, customary and natural laws to surface and inform project planning, governance mechanisms and implementation<br>• Creating and supporting access to and ownership of traditional territories if displacement has occurred / is occurring |

*(Table 3 continued)*

| Type of capital | Targets of capacity-building | Example Activities |
|---|---|---|
| Institutional | • Leadership<br>• Leadership effectiveness<br>• Institutions/ governance bodies/ structures<br>• Governance effectiveness | • Conducting leadership and governance mapping assessments to understand traditional and contemporary governance systems<br>• Supporting community leaders in strengthening existing governance structures (e.g., leadership workshops, community-based organizations, guardians, monitors, etc.)<br>• Supporting and applying community visioning and land use planning<br>• Supporting development and/or documentation of community rules and regulations governing natural resource use<br>• Providing support for monitoring and enforcement<br>• Introducing non-colonial mechanisms and platforms for resolving disputes and conflicts<br>• Training community leaders in conflict resolution/mediation<br>• Support, seek, and encourage restoring and resurfacing traditional or localized peacemaking processes |
| Natural | • Resources<br>• Ecosystem services | • Assisting in restoration projects<br>• Supporting revitalization of traditional management practices and providing training in improved management practices<br>• Championing Indigenous or community-managed protected areas |
| Economic | • Infrastructure<br>• Financial resources<br>• Administration | • Supporting sustainable livelihoods opportunities<br>• Connecting to infrastructure improvement opportunities (e.g., roads, irrigation canals, refrigeration, broadband)<br>• Supplying improved equipment (e.g., fishing gear, agricultural equipment)<br>• Providing or connecting to credit, micro-loans, and start-up funds to purchase essentials (e.g., community mill and processing equipment, boats/vehicles, monitoring equipment, etc.)<br>• Training on budgeting, accounting, and project management<br>• Monitoring that helps identify the economic value of natural resources<br>• Sponsoring resilient community-led economy concepts |

The results of recent reviews of community-based conservation back the importance of various capacity-building investments to environmental outcomes.[16,48]Many have identified which types of capital and commonly employed activities are most strongly associated with generating human well-being and environmental benefits. Of note are those that strengthen human capital via education, training, and technical assistance;[48,52] those that strengthen social capital via efforts to build trust and increase social cohesion;[16,53-54] those that strengthen institutional capital via investments in community leaders and institutions for natural resource governance;[16,48,55-58] those that strengthen economic capital via investments in infrastructure, business, administration, and financial management;[16] and those that build combinations of capital (e.g., human, social, and institutional) via the creation of networks for learning and knowledge exchange.[16,59]

## Community Leadership and Institutions

See "Tool 4: Community Leaders and Institutions" for a checklist with key criteria in support of effective community leaders and institutions.

Effective community leaders and institutions[g] are critical to community-led stewardship, and investments in strengthening the capacity of both have been associated with positive environmental outcomes.[16,48,55-58] Leaders are essentially any individual with influence, and leadership originates from many places and can take on many forms. Community leaders can be secular or spiritual, elected or appointed, male or female, individual or collective, and can embody many qualities with bearing on environmental outcomes.[60-62] In order for both community leaders and institutions to be effective at governance and have the trust and confidence of the community, they must generally be perceived as legitimate, transparent, accountable, inclusive, fair, connected, and resilient, as well as have the ability to influence peoples' attitudes and behavior.[63-64] When these key criteria are present, community leaders and institutions can be powerful advocates and motivators of collective action,[65] in addition to supporting effective governance of natural resources through improved coordination, enforcement, compliance, and conflict resolution.[66] Beyond this, community leaders and institutions can facilitate social learning, and the diffusion of innovations within the community and beyond.[67-68] Experience has shown that when community leaders and institutions are ineffective, subject to corruption or capture of benefits by community elites, or exhibit poor coordination with others, communities often fail to uphold stewardship activities.[56] Therefore, when partnering with communities to support capacity-building for community leaders and institutions, it is important to work closely with the community to identify which individuals and institutions to engage, determine what kind of training would be most welcome and helpful to complement localized knowledge and skill sets, and whether this training is likely to support stewardship goals. Working with the community's chosen leaders and through its existing institutions is important and more likely to result in lasting positive impacts. Expect the learning to occur both ways with local leaders also having much to teach conservation organizations, in addition to what they can learn from us and others in the conservation sector.

g. Here, the use of the term "community institution" refers to the various entities (e.g., leaders, committees, community-based organizations, etc.) that enforce the norms, rules, regulations, and policies communities establish to govern natural resources.

## Collective Action and Social Cohesion

> See **"Tool 5: Collective Action and Social Cohesion"** for checklists with key resource and user group characteristics that support collective action and social cohesion.

Collective action is generally defined as an action taken by a group to achieve a common objective[41-44] and is an important enabler of effective governance of common pool resources and successful community-led stewardship.[69] There is a substantial body of literature that discusses the importance of social cohesion to collective action, which in turn is influenced by several resource and community characteristics, such as familiarity, frequent interaction, shared identity and purpose, reciprocity, and trust.[44,70,71] These conditions are less likely to exist in communities that are large, diverse, rapidly growing or changing, involved in conflict, have pronounced inequality or legacies of oppression, marginalization, and dispossession,[16,59,72-73] which are common results of colonization and subsequent intergenerational trauma. A recent analysis found community-led conservation projects that acknowledged and addressed existing trust issues (an important enabler for social cohesion) were more successful at generating human well-being and environmental benefits than those that did not.[54] Other studies have made related observations of the importance of shared identity and purpose to social cohesion and the collective action required for successful environmental outcomes.[54] These findings argue for more awareness of the importance of social cohesion, collective action, acknowledging hard truths and lived experiences as part of trust building, and shared purpose, as well as increased investment in activities that help repair and build these fundamental conditions.

## Common Pool Resources, Governance, and Sustainable Natural Resource Management

> See **"Tool 6: Common Pool Resource Governance"** for a checklist with key conditions favoring effective common pool resource governance.

> See **"Tool 7: The Natural Resource Governance Tool"** for step-by-step guidance on creating a context-specific governance index to assess and track governance at the community or community institution scale.

Common pool resources are any material good diminished in quantity or quality through use, and which are difficult and/or costly to exclude others from using.[45] Such qualities are typical for resources that are large, heterogenous, unpredictable in space or time, and/or migratory or fugitive (i.e., moves freely between locations). Many of these resources are critical to Indigenous Peoples and local communities' livelihoods and identities.[74] Common property is a specific way of relating to common pool resources, where governance of the resource is achieved communally by a group of users with acknowledged (formal or informal; de jure or de facto) rights of access and use (see previous section for more information on property rights).[75] These forms of property and natural resource governance are particularly prevalent among Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

Many researchers have suggested that common property and communal resource governance is not only the optimal governance structure for common pool resources, but quite often results in more sustainable natural resource management,[76-79] with studies confirming that lands and waters with long histories of governance by Indigenous Peoples and local communities (most often communal) have been well protected and sustainably managed over time.[80-82] Indigenous and local community governed lands and waters see less loss of intact forest,[83] more carbon storage potential,[84-85] and greater provision of essential ecosystem services[86] than government-run protected areas. It is important to note that while communal resource governance can result in sustainable natural resource management, this result is not guaranteed—particularly when faced with an increasing size and pace of external demand for resources. Certain conditions favor effective communal resource governance, and where these conditions are not met, failures notoriously dubbed "tragedies of the commons" can occur.[87] Some of these favorable conditions include:[69-70]

- Resource boundaries are clearly defined,
- Rules exist for resource use that are tailored to the local context, and the benefits individuals derive from the resource are proportional to the costs,
- Those affected by the rules can participate in modifying the rules,
- Monitoring of resource use occurs and those that monitor are held accountable by resource users,
- Punishment for rule breakers is proportional to the severity of the offense, and
- There are quick, low cost means of resolving conflict.

For transboundary systems at larger scales, such as coasts, aquifers, rivers, or large lakes, coordination of communities and community members beyond the household or community levels becomes important for governing common pool resources. Because of interconnections among the multiple users of resources that function at larger scales, cooperation and compromises are required to ensure equitable distribution of resources and impacts. Historically, a diverse range of community-based institutions have developed, monitored, and enforced their own rules for extracting, managing, and developing such resources. Local communities can and have governed their own resources—within the limits of larger upstream/downstream or cross-boundary interlinkages—even if customary rights are not formally recognized by the government.


# Case Studies

## Community Leadership and Institutional Capacity-Building in the Emerald Edge

At 100 million acres (40 million hectares), the Emerald Edge is the largest intact coastal temperate rainforest system remaining in the world. This band of vibrant forest and ocean stretches northward from the Olympic Peninsula of Washington State, through Canada's coastal British Columbia and the Great Bear Rainforest, to the panhandle of remote Southeast Alaska. Indigenous custodians have recognized rights and authority to these resources—thus the focus of the Emerald Edge Program has been on strengthening the capacity of Indigenous Peoples and local communities for continued good stewardship. TNC works to support community leadership and governance, as well as promote economic opportunities that improve local livelihoods, providing incentives and additional capacity for sustainable natural resource management.

To this end, TNC has implemented several specific programs meant to build a "ladder of opportunity" for Indigenous communities. The Supporting Emerging Aboriginal Stewards (SEAS) program—or "youth on the land programming"—aims to engage, develop, prepare, and empower Indigenous youth to become the next generation of place-based stewards. Young people take excursions onto their traditional territories to reconnect to the natural world, engage in customary activities, and learn from Elders. Another initiative, the Indigenous Guardians program, supports Indigenous rangers to take control of monitoring their territories and continue the work of their ancestors to manage and respect their natural and cultural resources through traditional institutions and governance structures. These rangers monitor the health of important food, social, and ceremonial species, taking account of various resource uses throughout their territory and contributing to the successful implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of community land and marine use plans. TNC and partners co-developed an Indigenous Guardians Toolkit to facilitate the expansion of the program within and beyond British Columbia. Building on the work in Canada, the Seacoast Trust project is establishing Guardian programs in Alaska and using both the toolkit and conservation financing endowment model to secure their vision for the future.

**ICON LEGEND**
VCA Framework Biomes

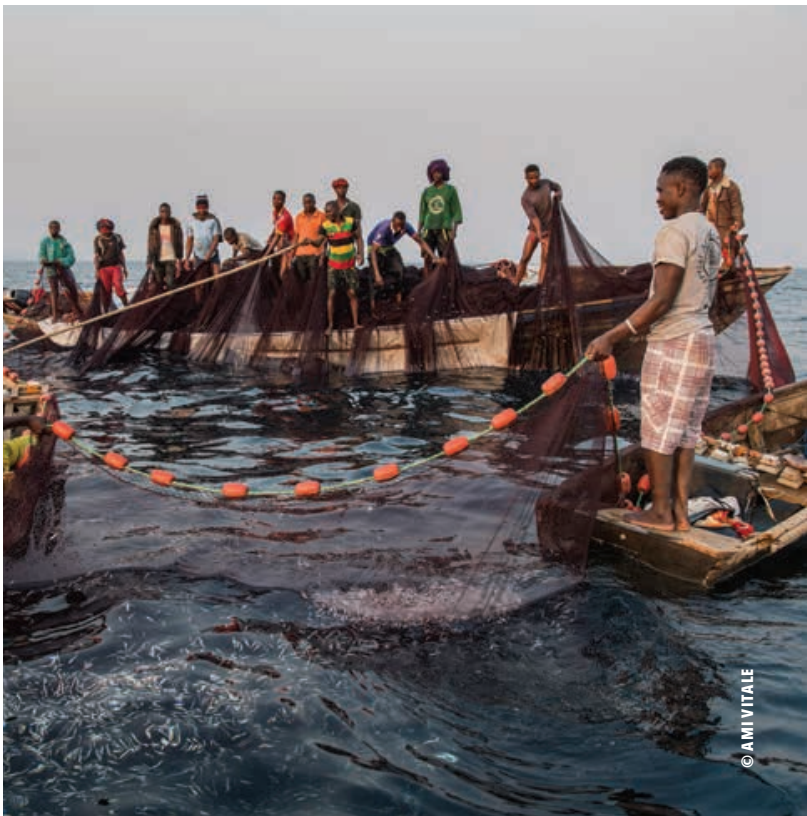
TERRESTRIAL FRESHWATER COASTAL

Expansion of this capacity-building program has continued across the Emerald Edge through the provision of critical technical and financial capacity in support of community visioning and land use planning for the Ahousaht Nation in British Columbia. A subsequent leadership exchange coordinated between the Ahousaht and Haida Nations helped Ahousaht leadership strengthen their negotiations with the Provincial Government and achieve more effective governance authority. The Ahousaht Nation also established a Coastal Guardian program, which resulted in a mapping effort in partnership with TNC (who provided technical mapping support) to delineate their territories and resources, including the integration of areas of cultural significance. All of this has served to bolster collective action, effective governance, and the Ahousahts' negotiations with external stakeholders. For example, most recently, the Ahousaht Nation signed a new agreement with British Columbia to provide a joint set of recommendations to the Cabinet for implementation of their land use vision which will result in new conservation, forestry, and economic development areas and a governance agreement.

## Freshwater Fisheries Management in Lake Tanganyika

For over a decade, TNC has been involved in community-based conservation initiatives and sustainable fisheries management in East Africa's Lake Tanganyika Basin. Lake Tanganyika is the second largest lake on Earth by volume, containing 17 percent of the planet's surface freshwater. The basin hosts some of Africa's most iconic aquatic and terrestrial organisms and is best known for its 250+ species of cichlids, 98 percent of which are endemic. A complex web of interactions between the lake's topography, biogeochemistry, upwelling regime, and pelagic and nearshore ecosystems has produced a productive inland fishery that supports 12 million people as a source of protein and income. Fish contributes 40 percent of animal protein in local diets, and there are an estimated 95,000 active fishers on the lake. The countries that share Lake Tanganyika—Tanzania, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Zambia, and Burundi—have varying capacity to support fisheries management, and the lake remains primarily an artisanal and subsistence open-access fishery. Additionally, the region has high population growth and high levels of poverty, exerting pressure on an already overused natural resource.

In 2012, TNC and partners established the Tuungane Project (Kiswahili for "Let's Unite") in Tanzania to introduce solutions that promote healthier families, fisheries, and forests, using an integrated approach that addresses both health and environmental issues simultaneously. These holistic solutions promise more durable results than the more traditional siloed approach because the conservation practices are designed to also improve people's lives. Fisheries management under this project has focused on establishing community Beach Management Units (BMUs) to manage fisheries resources, providing BMUs with training and tools to strengthen community leadership and capacities, developing community-based monitoring systems, and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creating finance mechanisms that cover the full costs of fisheries management. TNC is also seeking to actively scale impacts across Lake Tanganyika. Partnering with The Lake Tanganyika Authority (LTA)—a Lake Tanganyika regional governing body with a mandate to promote sustainable development and management of the region's natural resources—as well as the United Nations Environment Programme, International Union for Conservation of Nature, and Global Environment Facility, TNC aims to promote fishery co-management institutions and the establishment of community-based fish reserves (protected breeding sites) across the lake.

Strong leadership and capacity are important for establishing robust institutions and coordinating action to manage common pool resources. In Tanzania, for example, village leaders are elected every 5 years. These leaders manage the community alongside an executive committee. The BMU leaders, who manage fishing resources and bylaws, are elected every three years. Leadership terms of office requires TNC to continually build relationships with new leaders and provide ongoing training to improve BMU effectiveness, income generation, and buy-in of the communities without BMUs. Terms of leadership are designed to be staggered so senior leaders will bear partial responsibility for introducing successors to the governance practices. TNC focuses on supporting more consistent and gender-equitable leadership dedicated to effectively carrying out conservation actions at the BMU level and improving BMU finance capacity. While there is a national policy in place that mandates 30% of leadership positions must be held by women (also reinforced in BMU bylaws), women in leadership positions can still be limited in their contribution and involvement due to cultural and religious norms. To address the challenges, the project facilitates purposeful nominations of female leaders, organizes tailored trainings to increase motivation and confidence, and actively engages nominated women's partners as part of the process.

Having strong leadership in place at the village level, clear bylaws and institutional structure, the backing of the government for difficult enforcement issues, and incentives to avoid free-riders (i.e., those who benefit without paying/putting in work) have all proved critical in those BMUs that have been successful on Lake Tanganyika. Additionally, Collaborative Fisheries Management Areas (CFMAs), consisting of a confederation of BMU networks, have been created following the Tanzania guideline. CFMAs have been successful in cases where these networks can support and work with individual BMUs through wider patrols to protect relatively large areas designated as fish reserves.

However, to make the BMU financially sustainable will require a change in policy and practice that can only be made by the Government of Tanzania. TNC, in collaboration with the government and LTA, is piloting a fisheries-based business enterprises framework, the success of which will be adaptively replicated in other parts of Lake Tanganyika to enhance durable conservation of the fisheries resources. Although the Tuungane Project has had notable successes, the community-based freshwater conservation work is only starting its journey towards financial sustainability. TNC is working with partners to use value-chain analysis and harness market incentives to ensure that fishers in well-managed BMUs receive an individual and/or common financial benefit over the longer term. The first step is to advocate to the government for the return of some percentage (10-15 percent) of the government revenues (including costs for transportation of fisheries products) which is being managed by BMUs on behalf of the District Government Authority. Project success depends on effectively engaging Indigenous Peoples and local communities in an array of roles, including as land- and resource-holders, as owners and partners, and as leaders and beneficiaries. Strengthening and establishing local institutions is viewed as fundamental to long-term sustainability and resilience, and the project is increasing its efforts in this regard.

# Tools and Resources

## TOOL 4: DIAGNOSTIC—COMMUNITY LEADERS AND INSTITUTIONS

Strong community leaders and institutions are foundational to community-led conservation. The key criteria in this tool can be used to assess the effectiveness of both, which in turn influences the trust and confidence individuals are likely to place in them. This information should be discussed with the community, or its representative institutions, during situation analysis using key informant interviews and focus group discussions. You may use the checklist to log your response to each of the questions to determine potential growth areas and opportunities to support appropriate capacity-building activities in partnership with Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

## TOOL 5: DIAGNOSTIC—COLLECTIVE ACTION AND SOCIAL COHESION

Collective action is a prerequisite for effective governance and is influenced by certain resource and community characteristics. This information should be discussed with the community, or its representative institutions, during situation analysis using key informant interviews and focus group discussions. You may use the checklist to log your response to each of the questions to determine potential growth areas and opportunities to support appropriate capacity-building activities in partnership with Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

## TOOL 6: DIAGNOSTIC—COMMON POOL RESOURCE GOVERNANCE

Common pool resource governance is widely found within Indigenous and local community territories. When considering how we might support communities in sustainable natural resource management, it is important to assess eight conditions that influence the effectiveness of these property regimes.[69-70] This information should be discussed with the community, or its representative institutions, during situation analysis using key informant interviews and focus group discussions. You may use the checklist to log your response to each of the questions to determine potential growth areas and opportunities to support appropriate capacity-building activities in partnership with Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

## TOOL 7: STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE—NATURAL RESOURCE GOVERNANCE TOOL

This guide is designed to offer conservation practitioners a set of basic concepts and tools to better understand, assess, and support effective governance of natural resources in landscapes and seascapes. The guide is designed to aid in understanding of key criteria for effective governance of natural resources and serve as a diagnostic.