

Conservation conversations: a typology of barriers to conservation success

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SUPPLEMENTARY TABLE 1 Typology of barriers to conservation success. The themes and examples given within each category aim to provide an illustration of respondents' statements. To protect participants' anonymity, the full list of issues/comments is not presented here.

Categories & themes

External, further divided into behaviour (B), local context (LC) & wider issues (W)

- B Different cultural/ethical norms
 - a. Cultural norms can be very different in different countries
 - b. Conservationists may employ/suggest methodologies that are culturally inappropriate or unlikely to work locally
 - c. Education systems & levels are not the same everywhere
 - d. Pace of life is slower in some countries
 - e. Misguided beliefs that all conservationists are driven by passion, but for many it is merely a well paid job
- B Inability to change people's behaviour
 - a. Conservationists can find it hard to show the good they do, instead often focusing on doom & gloom
 - b. Communities can be resilient to change
 - c. Local community champions can play an important role
 - d. Need to invest in changing our thinking, but behaviour change takes time
 - e. Youth can play a role in behaviour change
- LC Lack of capacity & infrastructure in the local environment
 - a. Poor local infrastructure or facilities
 - b. It can be really hard to find good people
 - c. General lack of skills & capacity in the local environment
 - d. Communities do not always have the skills/knowledge about what to do
 - e. There is a need to build capacity of local conservation organizations
 - f. Knowledge exchange can be a useful capacity building tool
 - g. Lack of funding for capacity building
 - h. Lack of training & training facilities
 - i. Cultural & educational differences can translate into capacity issues
 - j. Many people in the conservation sector are overworked & under strain
 - k. Reliance on volunteers can be problematic
 - l. High levels of employee turnover in the sector

- LC Lack of political will/priorities/mainstreaming
 - a. Lack of political will to protect biodiversity
 - b. Conservation is not the main priority for many governments
 - c. Governments can be pro-conservation in speech, but not in action
 - d. More lobbying of government is needed
 - e. It is essential to get conservation on the government agenda, & mainstream the issue
- LC Weak or absent enforcement of laws & regulations
 - a. Poorly devised policies, laws & regulations
 - b. Poorly implemented policies, laws & regulations
 - c. Policies, laws & regulations are poorly enforced
 - d. Laws & regulations may be disregarded
 - e. Some laws & regulations can end up being counter-productive
- LC Poor understanding of local context when planning/implementing/funding conservation
 - a. Application of inaccurate assumptions about local context prior to devising interventions
 - b. Insufficient or incorrect information about local communities
- LC Weak or ineffective government institutions
 - a. Existing government structures can be difficult to work with or under
 - b. Government institutions are not always as effective as they could be
 - c. Lack of capacity & appropriate skills & experience in governments
 - d. Governments not delivering on work or issues that should sit within their remit
 - e. Decisions may be politically motivated
 - f. Governments may not have the information they need to make better decisions
 - g. There is a need for champions &/or mainstreaming of change-makers
- LC Corruption
 - a. Bribery can influence decisions
 - b. People of power may intimidate others
 - c. Funds can be misappropriated or misallocated
 - d. People may operate with impunity
- LC Heterogeneous, complex & dynamic community structures
 - a. A 'local community' can be very heterogeneous
 - b. Heterogeneous communities will have complex & dynamic structures & interrelations
 - c. Benefits from conservation can be captured by a small, powerful elite
 - d. Conservation can have unintended consequence of bringing new people to an area
- LC Human-wildlife connection
 - a. Human-wildlife conflict
 - b. Resource extraction, including poaching & charcoal burning
 - c. Poisoning of animals

- LC Difficult issues with land tenure
 - a. Lack of clarity over land ownership & access
 - b. Local people with no land tenure may lose the desire to conserve/protect
 - c. Land rightfully belonging to communities can be usurped by governments or corrupt elites
 - d. Local people can be evicted from their lands
- LC Threats to action from security issues, conflict & war
 - a. Danger to practitioners
 - b. Increased costs of action as a result
 - c. Loss of trust from local communities if practitioners need to withdraw
- W Increased demand for resources & land
 - a. Growing population
 - b. Conservation cannot compete with industry, agriculture, leisure & development
 - c. Different sectors present challenges to biodiversity & conservation, e.g., extractive industry, leisure, etc.
 - d. Increased demand for resources
 - e. Large-scale land-use change
 - f. Unsustainable or destructive land use
 - g. Poor or absent land use planning
- W Disconnection of people from nature
 - a. People in power do not understand or accept the importance of nature
 - b. People living away from nature do not understand the importance or value of it to them or wider society
 - c. Local people are increasingly disconnected from nature
 - d. Users of natural resources do not understand the impacts of acquiring those products
 - e. Global need to promote the value that nature & ecosystems add
- W Many variables interact in our complex world
 - a. Many variables interact with each other
 - b. Conservation is an example of a wicked problem

Operational, comprising funding (FU), coordination (C), continuous improvement (CI), local involvement & impact (LII) & reputation (R)

- CI Poor learning & knowledge sharing within the sector
 - a. Insufficient reflection within the sector
 - b. Little learning from the information that is generated
 - c. Practitioners are not always good at sharing information
 - d. Practitioners are not always up to date with developments in the field
 - e. Knowledge & information are often unavailable to conservation practitioners
 - f. Conservation practitioners do not always input into & benefit from scientific research

- CI Unwillingness to discuss failure
 - a. People generally don't want to discuss failures, even though it is a useful & essential thing to do
 - b. Difficulties & failures can be covered up
 - c. Lack of transparency over what funds are spent on
- C Conservation does not employ an integrated approach
 - a. Conservation is operating at the wrong scale
 - b. Important to have a trans-disciplinary approach to conservation
 - c. Conservation success requires input from a wide range of stakeholders, but they are not all/always involved
 - d. Issues with communication & collaboration between various stakeholders, including government, conservation & development practitioners, business & civil society organizations
 - e. There is a shortage of funds for interdisciplinary work
- C Lack of collaboration among & between NGOs & donors
 - a. Though the need for collaboration & partnerships is clear, there is not enough of it
 - b. True collaboration can be difficult to achieve
 - c. Many collaborations don't work particularly well
- C Poor co-ordination of effort & funding
 - a. Coordination of effort is often poor or non-existent, despite many advantages to coordinated approaches
 - b. Lack of, but a need for, coordination among donors
 - c. Much duplication of work & replication of effort
 - d. Some issues/organizations/areas get too much money whereas others get none
 - e. Many barriers to using integrated approaches, despite clear advantages thereof
- C Unintended consequences of conservation
 - a. The need for conservation may create dilemmas, such as downplaying of development
 - b. There can be impacts of intervention other than conservation gains
 - c. Displacement of issues
- FU Lack of funding available for conservation
 - a. Insufficient funding available to meet conservation needs
 - b. Insufficient funding to obtain resources that are needed to do the job
 - c. Insufficient funding to enable knowledge sharing & learning
 - d. Lack of funds makes it hard to attract & retain the right people
 - e. Conservation practitioners spend a lot of time looking for funding
 - f. There is a need to look beyond traditional sources of funding to obtain more funds
- FU Long-term conservation is usually managed & funded in the short-term
 - a. Funding cycles too short
 - b. Project financing can be a barrier to success
 - c. It takes time to build relationships & develop capacity
 - d. Changes in people, politicians, decision-makers, etc. makes it difficult to implement long-term strategies
 - e. Long-term change requires long-term investment

- FU Problematic methods for awarding or allocating funding
 - a. Too much reliance on external donor funding
 - b. Many donors are unwilling to provide core or flexible funding
 - c. Donors can be very specific about conditions & offer little or no flexibility
 - d. Absorption capacity of organizations is often not considered before funds are awarded
 - e. No follow up to ensure that funds spent have achieved conservation goals
- FU Conservation agendas driven by donors rather than need
 - a. Conservation organizations may change what they do to fit in with funding that is available
 - b. Donors often omit to base their funding decisions on need
 - c. Donor priorities can change quickly, thereby resulting in loss of funding for some issues before they have been dealt with
 - d. Donors can keep changing what they support in a quest for novelty
 - e. Donors can become fatigued when they support the same organizations/causes for long periods of time
- FU Unsustainable conservation interventions
 - a. Much work is being done, but much of it isn't achieving anything
 - b. Funding often runs out before real change is realized
 - c. Conservation organizations do not always leave a legacy from their work
 - d. Conservationists can work to embed themselves in an area, but they should be working to empower local people
 - e. Conservation action often does not deal with the root cause of the problem
- FU High levels of competition within the sector
 - a. Many conservation organizations, all competing for funds, recognition, ownership of issues, etc.
 - b. Smaller organizations find it harder to compete with larger, better known ones
- FU Donors do not always select the best organizations
 - a. Funding is often awarded to the best proposals rather than the best work/people
 - b. Less well-known/less outspoken people can find it harder to get funding
 - c. Some conservation organizations are not honest with donors/potential donors
- FU Weak due diligence processes
 - a. Due diligence is not always done before awarding funding
 - b. Large amounts of money can be awarded before concepts have even been tested
 - c. Due diligence procedures do not always highlight prevalent issues
 - d. Funders are not always aware of what is happening locally

- FU Desire for recognition within the conservation community
 - a. Conservation organizations prize organizational survival, individuality & recognition over success
 - b. Excessive jargon & division prevents the sector from working as a whole
 - c. Organizations & egos can be bigger than what they are trying to achieve
 - d. Donors seeking recognition aim to fund visible things
- FU Poor relationships between funders & the organizations they support
 - a. Despite benefits to stronger relationships between funder & recipient, these are often absent
 - b. Although funds are essential, they are often not the only benefit that donors can give to their recipients
 - c. Conservation organizations may prioritize increased numbers of donors over improved quality of funding relationships
 - d. Donors & the organizations they support can have different perspectives
 - e. Trust may not be developed & nurtured
- FU Dishonesty within the sector
 - a. Many conservation organizations are not credible
 - b. Proposals can contain untruths, with a focus on what donors want to hear rather than on what is reality
 - c. Widespread abuse of donor funds
- FU Onerous application & reporting procedures
 - a. Many application processes are difficult to understand or very time consuming
 - b. Donors are not always clear on what they are funding or why they have/have not selected particular proposals
 - c. Grant writing skills are often lacking among conservation practitioners
 - d. Bureaucratic donor requirements place a burden on organizations
 - e. Most donors require reporting in their own format, making reporting very time consuming
- LII Lack of community buy-in
 - a. May not get buy-in from local people
 - b. Concept of conservation can be abstract to local people, or seen as elitist
 - c. Myths that conservation is bad for people
 - d. Money earmarked for communities is not always given to them
 - e. Conservation may not be a choice for very poor people
 - f. High levels of poverty where biodiversity is highest
 - g. Benefits from conservation need to be clear to those being asked to protect it
 - h. Benefits from conservation need to be shared in an equitable way

- LII No local ownership or empowerment
 - a. External conservation organizations embed themselves into an area rather than build the capacity of local organizations/individuals
 - b. Community involvement from the start is important
 - c. Although communities should own interventions, they may need support in devising/running them
 - d. Western organizations try to create Western institutions, but this doesn't always work locally
 - e. Participatory approaches are often preferable, but badly done
- LII Unavoidable interplay between conservation & development
 - a. Consideration of economics in isolation
 - b. Development is often prioritized over conservation
 - c. Conservation goals should consider development needs, but can end up being pushed by the development agenda
 - d. There is a link between conservation & development, each needing the other
- LII Poor/absent consultation with communities
 - a. Communities may not be consulted, or consultation processes might be badly done
 - b. Conservationists should really listen to local people & get them involved from the start
 - c. It is vital to consider & take on board local knowledge & experience
- R Lack of accountability of practitioners, donors & governments within the sector
 - a. People are not held accountable for their actions & decisions
 - b. People can act with impunity
- R Poor reputation of conservation(ists)
 - a. Conservationists can be very radical & pushy in their messaging
 - b. Conservationists need to work with people, not against them
 - c. Activism & negative engagement can put people off
 - d. Evictions in the name of conservation create resentment

Internal, further divided into finances (F), leadership (L), governance (G) & management (M)

- F Inappropriate financial management
 - a. Inability to manage funds
 - b. Bad budgeting
 - c. Lack of cash flow management
 - d. Weak financial position
- G Poor governance structures
 - a. Inappropriate or unstable board structure
 - b. Not having the right people or skills represented on the board
 - c. A poorly functioning board
 - d. Poor working relations between the board & Executive Director
- L Difficulty in demonstrating the impact of conservation work
 - a. Monitoring & evaluation is challenging/absent
 - b. Monitoring & evaluation may not be well designed/executed
 - c. Data obtained are not always effectively used

- L Lack of organizational strategy
 - a. Conservation organizations are not always good at planning
 - b. Conservation as a field is not very strategic; players often operate in crisis mode
 - c. Lack clarity about the organization's mission, targets or end goal
 - d. Organizations are not always true to their mission, sometimes getting side tracked by alternative ideas or ill-fitting funding opportunities
 - e. Assumptions of what the intervention will achieve, now & in the future, can be incorrect
 - f. Some organizations know what they want to do, but not how they to do it
 - g. Ideas are not always tested out before being implemented
 - h. Logframes, although useful, are often not used in the most effective way
 - i. The principles of adaptive management are often not applied
 - L Ineffective leadership
 - a. Insufficient leadership skills & capacity
 - b. Leadership & values are not shared throughout the team
 - c. Succession planning is not done/effective, leaving the organization at risk when key staff leave
 - d. Teamwork is lacking
 - e. Poor/ineffective communication within the organization
 - M Inadequate management policies & practices
 - a. Poor management of operations
 - b. Too much bureaucracy within organizations
 - c. Insufficient identification & management of risks to success
 - M Inappropriate hiring, management, development & retention of people
 - a. Not hiring the right people, i.e., values, work ethic, passion, skills & experience
 - b. Poor employee management policies & procedures
 - c. Not offering employees enough incentives to stay with the organization
 - d. Poor working relations between office & field staff
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