

Brief 4: How to engage with local communities



This brief was summarised by Yvette Harvey-Brown (BGCI) from Chapter 10 of BGCI and IABG's Species Recovery Manual



Introduction

Successful species recovery programmes require detailed knowledge of the target species, its uses, habitat and local context. This important knowledge is often held within local communities and they can often help to ensure that appropriate interventions are selected. Furthermore, continued monitoring and care is also required for species recovery, which specialists are often unable to provide, for example if they are located far away from the project area. It is therefore important to empower local people to conserve their own environment and the species within it, thereby increasing the likelihood that the impact of the recovery programme is sustainable and lasts beyond the timeframe of practical interventions.

TOP TIP *Appropriate and successful methods to engage with local communities will vary considerably in different countries and contexts. The guidance given in this brief will therefore need to be considered within the local context of the recovery programme.*



Who to engage?

Stakeholders: *Are people or organisations who have an interest in, or are affected by, a recovery programme and can be directly or indirectly included in the decision making process.*

A stakeholder analysis should be undertaken to identify and investigate the perspectives of key people, groups and institutions affected by a proposed species recovery action. The stakeholder analysis should be as comprehensive as possible. The table below provides examples of who to engage in species recovery programmes.

People/bodies that must be engaged/ informed before the start of the project	Additional people/bodies whose engagement will likely increase project success
Land owners/managers	People using the species
National or regional government	People using the land where the recovery interventions are planned, but who do not own the land
District/county/local government	Traditional authorities Indigenous groups Local conservation NGOs Civil society organisations, community-based organisations, community forest associations (or equivalent) Local schools, colleges or universities Local businesses Media

TOP TIP *When engaging with stakeholders, are there any formal consultations or permissions that need to be sought first?*

When and how to engage with local communities

Efforts should be made to involve local communities from the project outset, throughout the project and beyond the timeframe of the project if possible.



Gathering information

It is important to consider the best ways to share and obtain information, depending on the cultural and local context. Some key questions to ask yourself when sharing and obtaining information are:

- Does information need to be translated in to a local language(s)?
- Is written information appropriate or would verbal communication work better?
- Is a formal or informal approach better?
- Do the intended participants need support to attend a workshop?
- Is there a cultural or gender-related approach that should be respected in the current context?
- Is there any legislation that may restrict or protect the use of local knowledge that needs to be considered?

TOP TIP *Records should be kept of the source of information and whether any of it is sensitive or should not be published.*



Community involvement in project implementation

Various opportunities exist for active community participation in species recovery projects. Key questions to ask, particularly for threatened species, include:

- **Are community members equipped to carry out the tasks according to the specialist needs of the target species? If not, can community members be trained to implement the task effectively?**
- **Is supervision by an expert or trained specialist required?**
- **Do manuals or guides need to be produced to help communities carry out their tasks?**

It is important not to compromise the outcomes of a recovery project by giving too much responsibility to people who are not sufficiently trained or lack skills to carry out the tasks concerned. Species recovery projects therefore provide you with an opportunity for delivering training to address these gaps.



Monitoring

It is important to ensure that training is provided where needed, so that data that is being captured is of a high enough quality to accurately monitor the impact and effectiveness of the recovery programme. Local communities can also help to inform project managers of an increase in the prevalence of threats. This will help to keep the project on track, even if the project managers are located far from the site.

Incentive-based mechanisms

It should not be assumed that people or groups are willing to help for free. In many cases, some kind of monetary or non-monetary incentive will be needed to secure community participation. A key question to ask is, to whom are incentives offered or not offered? There needs to be a clear and transparent approach to determine who is eligible and why.

The table on the next page identifies different kinds of incentives that can be offered to communities for their active or passive involvement in species recovery programmes.



Active/ passive role	Description of role	Type of incentive	Description of remuneration
Active	Weeding, removal of invasive species, growing plants, planting, monitoring.	Monetary	Employment – community members are employed to work on the project and are paid for the work they do.
		Monetary	Carbon/biodiversity credits – payment made for planting or protecting tree species that sequester carbon or species of particular biodiversity value.
		Monetary	Selling plants – communities gain income through growing plants that are sold to the recovery project or to a commercial market to alleviate pressure on wild resources.
		Non-monetary incentive	Training or access to facilities – community members take an active role in the project, but instead of receiving payment, they receive other benefits.
		Voluntary	Recognition – community members receive recognition or a sense of achievement/contribution.
Passive	Agreement not to harvest material of the target species so as to take pressure off remaining wild individuals.	Non-monetary incentive	Alternative plants / species – people using the target species are offered an alternative supply of the plant, for example plants grown in a garden/community nursery, or alternative species, or alternative species.
		Non-monetary incentive	Alternative areas – people using the area where the species recovery programme will take place are offered an alternative piece of land for the same activity.
		Non-monetary incentive	Alternative income – people dependent on the target species for income are provided with an alternative livelihood/income-generating activity, e.g. one which supports them in producing biodiversity-friendly products or helps them become involved in community-based eco-tourism.
		Voluntary	Recognition – in some cases, achieving recognition for allowing their site to be used for conservation, or formal designation of a site as a protected area, may be enough reward for land-owners.

TOP TIP

Unless a clear and transparent approach is used to select who is eligible for incentives, it may generate a negative response from people not receiving incentives.

**Botanic Gardens
Conservation International
BGCI – Plants for the Planet**
Descanso House, 199 Kew Road,
Richmond, Surrey, TW9 3BW, U.K.

Tel: +44 (0)20 8332 5953
Fax: +44 (0)20 8332 5956
E-mail: info@bgci.org

Visit: www.bgci.org



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