The Sansom Conservation Leadership Alumni Fund: Social and environmental impact assessment

Cambridge Conservation Initiative

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE ALUMNI
CONSERVATION LEADERSHIP ALUMNI NETWORK

Social and environmental impact assessment

Introduction

Biodiversity conservation projects aim to have a net positive impact on the environment, as well as avoiding negative social impacts (and enhancing positive social benefits where possible). Conducting a social and environmental impact assessment as part of the development of a project is an important step to help strengthen the project, improve its performance, avoid conflict and harm to both people and environment, and enhance the prospect of long-term success and sustainability.

The SCLA Fund application process asks applicants about the potential social and environmental impacts that their project might have (in the Impact Assessment section 3.3). This document provides a brief overview of some environmental and social issues that may be relevant to your project. It is intended to act as a tool to help applicants consider the potential social and environmental risks of their project. An overview of how these impacts will be monitored should also be included in Section 3.4 (Measures of Success) in the Collaborative Fund application form.

The nature of your project will affect the type of impacts your project might have. This document considers different types of project focus (research involving human participants or personal data; field work involving interventions in the natural world; field work involving interactions with human communities), and outlines some of the issues you should consider for each of these different components. Your project may well involve more than one of these different components, or it might involve none of them.

Please note that we would welcome your feedback on this document - are there areas we have missed, or are there any sources that you use that you feel are particularly useful that we could include? Please let us know by emailing Shelley Bolderson (sr445@cam.ac.uk)

1. Research involving human participants or personal data

Although pure research projects are ineligible for SCLA Funding, if your proposed work involves any human research participants (e.g. through surveys or interviews) you need to ensure your research and its practices protects the dignity and preserves the well-being of the people you are engaging with.

You should consider the following points:

- Research participants and contributors should be fully informed regarding the purpose, methods and end use of the research. They should be clear on what their participation involves and any risks that are associated with the process.
- Research participants must participate in a voluntary way, free from coercion. The ‘free, prior and informed consent’ (FPIC) principles provide a useful framework for engaging with human participants in research.
- Participants must have the right to withdraw at any time.

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- Research must be independent, and any conflicts of interest or partiality must be explicit.
- Normally information gathered from the participants should be anonymized and kept strictly confidential, with findings being made publicly available in ways that do not allow identification of individuals unless specific consent has been given (except for ex officio statements).
- Data gathered during research should be safely stored and archived. Data storage and management must comply with Data Protection legislation.
- Vulnerable persons (e.g. children, institutionalised persons or those involved in illegal activities) are entitled to protection and special procedures to protect their interests. Research involving vulnerable persons requires enhanced ethics approval from the University of Cambridge.
- Researchers should be open and honest about their status, and the aims and purpose of their research.

Note that all materials prepared for publication should respect academic professional standards, including the recognition of previous work and the involvement of other researchers. Many journals require research projects involving human participants to have gone through a formal ethical review process prior to the commencement of data collection.

Further information on research ethics

Ethical Guidelines for Good Research Practice (Association of Social Anthropologists): https://www.theasa.org/ethics/guidelines.shtml

The Concordat to Support Research Integrity (Universities UK): https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/topics/research-and-innovation/concordat-support-research-integrity

Singapore Statement on Research Integrity: https://wcrif.org/guidance/singapore-statement

European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity (ALLEA, the European Federation of Academies of Sciences and Humanities): https://www.allea.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/ALLEA-European-Code-of-Conduct-for-Research-Integrity-2017.pdf

Guide to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (Information Commissioner's Office): https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr/

FAIR principles on ethical data management: https://www.nature.com/articles/sdata201618

CARE principles on the use of ILK data from indigenous and local communities: https://www.gida-global.org/care

2. Work involving interventions in the natural world

While conservation projects aim to have a net positive impact on the environment, there is always a risk that proposed interventions will have negative impacts, whether they be localised or more widespread, short-term or more persistent (and spreading).

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For example, these might include:

- Changes in natural resource management/use (e.g. accidental introduction of invasive species).
- Increase in recreational use of an area (e.g. overuse of campsites or trails, increased waste, harvesting of live wood for campfires, disturbance of wildlife, accidental fires, trespassing into fragile areas, erosion along trails).
- Reintroduction of captive-bred threatened species (e.g. leading to introduction of disease into the wild).
- Invasive alien species removal, whether by physical or chemical means (that may also lead to removal or decline in native species).
- Adverse impacts on local people.
- Changes in policies that affect the natural world and those who interact with the natural world.

Where your project includes activities such as those above (the list is not exhaustive) that have potential to impact adversely on the environment, you should consider:

- The measures you will need to take to avoid or mitigate adverse impacts, and how and when these will be implemented.
- How you intend to monitor the environmental effects of your work.
- Who will be responsible for implementing and monitoring the mitigation measures and how much these measures will cost.
- How you will show evidence of compliance with national laws on access and use of species and habitats that are regulated?

3. Work involving interactions with human communities

Biodiversity conservation projects should strive to avoid negative social impacts and, where possible, enhance positive social benefits. If your project involves working in field sites it is likely that you will need to take account of the people and communities who have an interest in the areas in which you are working. Likewise, if you are developing policy tools or other mechanisms to shape international, national or local policy you will need to consider the ramifications of such changes on people and communities likely to be affected.

If your project work falls into the above categories, you will need to consider the following:

- **Participation:** You may need to ensure that all relevant stakeholders are engaged from the very beginning. You may need to use a range of processes to identify all affected households and groups, and will need to think about how to ensure equal access to participation in your work regardless of gender, age, status etc.. Bear in mind that (a) poor and marginalised people may be socially invisible and harder to contact; (b) some categories of people may not be present year-round (for example, mobile pastoralists, migrant fishers, students) yet may have long established claims to the area and resources in question.
  Note that the issues raised in "Research involving human participation or personal data" (above) are also relevant here.

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- **Vulnerable persons:** Certain groups in your project area, or certain people affected by the conservation action, may be particularly vulnerable based on factors such as age, sex, ethnicity, socio-economic status, education level, etc. You will need to consider whether to include appropriate measures to ensure that all stakeholders are equitably included.

- **Intersectionality:** If your project is seeking to conserve/affect resources in some way, you will need to consider the implications of the changes your project might result in for individuals in the context of the intersection of the axes of social difference that position them, including gender, ethnicity, age, occupation, socioeconomic status, religion, location, resident or migrant status, etc. How are individuals' use of these resources different, and how will their lives and livelihoods be affected by the project? People might also face different barriers (or benefits) from participating in your project, so you will also need to take account of this in your work.

- **Livelihoods and wellbeing:** The degradation or unsustainable use of resources can negatively affect people's livelihoods and quality of life. Conservation can help prevent such negative outcomes, with positive social, cultural, and economic impacts for communities. However, by regulating or restricting use of resources, conservation projects can also have adverse consequences for some people. You will need to consider whether the project (and/or the policies it advocates) is likely to have an impact on the use of or access to natural resources and products by people living in and around the project area, and/or whether the project will affect the ability of local people and other stakeholders to carry out not only their livelihood activities but also their recreational activities and their cultural or spiritual customs.

- **Tenure and rights to land and resources:** Will your project affect the access of people to places and resources (including those of recreational, cultural as well as economic value) which they currently have legal or traditional user rights to, have traditionally used or upon which they rely?

- **Resettlement or displacement:** If your project recommends displacement or restricted access to resources on which people's livelihoods depend, you should consider whether there are other ways to achieve project outcomes that don't include physical or economic displacement. Any displacement will need to take place with free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) of all rights-holders affected.

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Useful resources

Participation

Participatory Methods (Institute for Development Studies): http://www.participatorymethods.org/

Stakeholder mapping

Stakeholder analysis matrix template (tools4development):
http://www.tools4dev.org/resources/stakeholder-analysis-matrix-template/
Stakeholder Mapping Guide (Conservation International):
https://iwlearn.net/documents/download/d20fc335-aa29-440b-ae14-f94f37321427
Stakeholder Analysis (Evaluation Toolbox):
http://evaluationtoolbox.net.au/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=52&Itemid=133
Tools for stakeholder analysis are also available via the FFI page on Tools for participatory approaches (see above)

Free, prior and informed consent

Guidelines for applying free, prior and informed consent (Conservation International):
https://www.conservation.org/projects/free-prior-and-informed-consent-in-context
FPIC – Manual for project practitioners (Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations – FAO): http://www.fao.org/3/a-i6190e.pdf

General

INTRINSIC: Integrating Rights and Social Issues in Conservation (A Trainer's Guide) (Cambridge Conservation Initiative): https://www.cambridgeconservation.org/projects/intrinsic-integrating-rights-and-social-issues-in-conservation/