



**Communities and Carbon
Projects**
Making *Change* an Opportunity

Michelle Wieland, PhD
Conservation & People Consultant

Are we ready for change?

- How are we doing *now* on conservation targets?
- What grade would you give conservation efforts in the region?
- Don't get an A for trying—graded on results
- How do we improve so that we are ready for change?
- Present a case study on the development of a carbon project in Rwanda

Are we ready for **climate** change?

The 'we' in conservation

– Governments

- REDD Readiness and risk assessment progress?
- Is the institutional capacity and willingness for collaboration?

– Supporting implementers

- Engaging stakeholders?
- Will the chase for funds result in biodiversity conservation ?

– Higher education

- Is there integrated curriculum that prepares future generation of practitioners for the messy problems they'll have to face?
- Integrating with secondary education system in countries to train teachers?
- Are we teaching students how to do carbon assessments?

– Communities...

Are communities ready for **climate** change?

- They experience stochasticity already

Why should we care?

- Rural people struggle to maintain livelihoods and gain upward mobility
- People seize on opportunities to exploit their natural resources; some illegally exploit, but most want to stay within societal rules (government must enforce laws)
- As people's livelihood security decreases, they depend more on natural resources, including the ecosystems governments are trying to protect
- **If we want to maintain ecological integrity of protected areas conservationists have a vested interest in ensuring that the majority of people outside them have that possibility to maintain current livelihoods and upwards mobility *legally***

How can we use carbon projects not only to sequester carbon, but to simultaneously strengthen conservation goals and people's livelihood security?





Nyungwe Carbon Project

- Assisted natural regeneration after human-induced fires in the 1997 el Niño drought
- Cut ferns to aide growth
- Project inside the park, so no FPIC requirement to engage local people



Why include people?

- Reason 1. Challenge arose: the project didn't have enough funds to cut all ferns. We were asked to get people to cut the ferns for free.
- Reason 2. Nyungwe has serious threats. How could we build the carbon project from just hiring some people to a more strategic vision that strengthens long-term conservation (additionality)?



Approach

- Went to 3 villages chosen as the ‘worst offenders’ of the major threats to the park
- Reviewed threats to and benefits of Nyungwe with the people—well versed communities
- Introduced carbon project idea, and asked for their ideas—
 - what did they think of the paid vs unpaid scenarios?
 - how do we make this project go beyond cutting ferns into activities helping them reduce threats?



Results from the meeting

- In general, if the revenue sharing scheme was better operated, the threats would be reduced already
- Hiring people was preferred—target marginalized who are often the illegal resource users
- But, ferns are highly valued as fertilizer, so people will harvest for free if transport available!
- Additionality: Use funds from project to hire someone to serve in a facilitation role for gov't initiatives on energy, micro-finance, agriculture, and erosion in Nyungwe-bordering communities
- Remaining challenges: some ferns too far to do for free so there should be a mixed approach

Where are we now?

- Govt of Rwanda is in discussions on carbon revenue and will soon get the PDD
- But, the project is unlikely to be profitable because of the costs of fern cutting
- Even if there is a net monetary loss, the costs would produce benefits
- Challenge to get gov't to reinvest revenue on the additionality project to better protect Nyungwe
- If the project is not realized, there is a vision for how to move forward with communities

Final Thoughts

- Formal inclusion of communities in carbon projects varies between projects—most will have an FPIC component
- Engaging communities must be substantive and not an exercise to tick a box--listening to communities as partners can result in innovative and mutually agreeable solutions
- Conservation departments and their partners must engage border communities and other govt sectors on climate adaptation, particularly as the protected areas are so small



Thank you