

AFRICA BIODIVERSITY COLLABORATIVE GROUP



Participants at the November 2017 African Leadership Network at Lake Burunge Tented Camp, Tanzania where Maliasili Initiatives and The Nature Conservancy brought leaders from eight local conservation organizations, based in Kenya, Tanzania, and Namibia, together to participate in a first-of-its-kind leadership training. Photo credit: Rachel Ambrose

Piloting Mechanisms for Strengthening African Conservation Leadership and Organizational Capacity

INTRODUCTION

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and the World Resources Institute (WRI), recipients of the Africa Biodiversity Collaborative Group's (ABCG) Emerging Issues small grant recently concluded their project titled, *Piloting Mechanisms for Strengthening African Conservation Leadership and Organizational Capacity*.

Through its Emerging Issues small grants, ABCG identifies and develops strategies to respond to new and growing threats that are likely to shape conservation priorities in the coming years, and influence the effectiveness of biodiversity conservation efforts in Africa.

One of the themes funded under the small grants program, *strengthening African civil society*, was designed to build on and compliment continuing efforts

The **Africa Biodiversity Collaborative Group** is supported by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) to advance understanding of critical biodiversity conservation challenges and their solutions in sub-Saharan Africa. ABCG is hosted by the Wildlife Conservation Society, in coalition with the African Wildlife Foundation, Conservation International, the Jane Goodall Institute, The Nature Conservancy, World Resources Institute and World Wildlife Fund.

to explore and develop strategies, methods and tools for investing effectively in the capacity, impact, leadership, and sustainability of African civil society organizations (CSOs) as a key element of addressing major conservation challenges and goals in the region today and in the future. The findings of this work are expected to provide options for improving and scaling the capacity-building work of the ABCG members and other conservation organizations around the world.

Considering the interconnection between biodiversity and natural resources in Africa and the increasing threat to both, well-organized African conservation organizations are now more important than ever. The purpose of this project was to strengthen African CSOs by enhancing the management and leadership capacity of key members working in natural resource management and conservation. TNC worked with [Maliasili Initiatives](#), a nonprofit that supports the growth, development and performance of leading CSOs working to advance sustainable natural resource management practices in Africa, to host a series of leadership workshops in Africa for conservation leaders as part of their pilot African Conservation Leadership Network (ACLN) Initiative. They also commissioned (via Maliasili Initiatives) a retrospective analysis of WRI's previous investments (largely USAID funded) in the long-term development of African CSOs in East Africa. Meanwhile, in the United States, WRI hosted Edward Lekaita from Ujamaa Community Resources Team for a month-long fellowship at its Washington, DC headquarters.

PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS

The first ALN workshop, funded in part by the Emerging Issues grant, was held in Kenya on August 16-20, 2016 with 18 individuals participating from nine local organizations based in Tanzania, Kenya, and Namibia. The workshop succeeded in changing perceptions of leadership with several individuals expressing the notion that leadership is not only about being the "boss", but also about one's character and/or behavior. Another result was the garnering of strong interest from the participants for this kind of network and there are plans under way for continuing exchanges and collaborations between organizations. Furthermore, Maliasili and TNC supported the ACLN with leaders from



Dickson Ole Kaelo, CEO of Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association, and John Kamanga, Executive Director of SORALO, at the African Conservation Leadership Network seminar in Tanzania. Photo credit: Rachel Ambrose.

the first cohort group participating in ACLN sessions in Tanzania in November 2016 and in Namibia in September 2017.

The case study titled, [*African Advocates: Partnerships for Building Civil Society, a review of World Resource Institute support to East and Southern African civil society organizations 1995 – 2005*](#), was recently completed with the findings being encouraging. WRI's initiatives made possible the establishment of several leading African environmental CSOs each of which grew in the last 10 to 20 years to varying degrees. In turn, these CSOs facilitated and informed constitutional and legislative changes, called governments and international bodies to account, and empowered rural community partners to claim rights and meet responsibilities related to natural resources.

WRI hosted Edward Lekaita for a fellowship from February 20 – March 24, 2017. Lekaita is currently the Legal Advisor, Head of Advocacy and a Wildlife Management Authority Governance Specialist at Ujamaa Community Resources Team.

Lekaita had the opportunity to work with Peter Veit, Director of the Land and Resource Rights Initiative, at WRI. Together they reviewed the December 2016 draft of the National Land Policy for Tanzania, and prepared a policy note summarizing the

main findings and recommendations of the review. This note will contribute to the closing regional workshop for the ABCG Land and Resource Tenure Rights working group in year three of ABCG's current phase. Lekaita concluded his fellowship by being the featured speaker in ABCG's DC Speaker Series with a presentation concerning Certificates of Customary Right of Occupancy (CCROs), which are used to formally allocate parcels of village lands to individuals or groups. The presentation titled, *Scaling a Collective Land Rights Approach: The Role of CCRO in Strengthening Tenure in Tanzania* proposed the use of CCROs as a valuable legal tool or approach for strengthening land tenure, especially for pastoralists and hunter-gatherers whose livelihoods and practices calls for commonly shared resources.

Overall recommendations for strengthening African leadership and organizational capacity

- Understanding one's own strengths aids in building capacity and leadership skills.
- Individual mentoring/support is an important teaching tool, since it cannot be assumed that all leaders have the same capacity levels.
- Self-awareness is critical for knowing how to effectively interact with others, influence others and build strong and dynamic teams.
- Tailor support to the partnership and context, while maintaining a clear overall vision and a scope that allows meaningful engagement.
- Treat partners as equals and ensure that support is invited/wanted by local partners.
- Provide partners with appropriate and sufficient funding.
- Facilitate the emergence of networks built upon relationships and trust, which will allow CSO leaders to develop mutually strengthening collaborations.

CONCLUSION

The ALN created a flexible framework for enhancing leadership and collaboration in African conservation organizations. Strengthening leadership and creation of

a network enables a greater exchange of diverse practices and experiences and enhances the potential for future collective action in relation to conservation challenges.

The retrospective review was essential in providing best practices for how donors and international non-governmental organizations should engage with and support African CSOs. Appropriate support of CSOs makes them more self-sufficient and provides the opportunity for them to impact other organizations and alter how natural resources and biodiversity are conserved.

NEXT STEPS

Next steps would require assessing the impact of the ACLN by determining the extent to which lessons learned during the workshops were put into practice by the leaders of the participating conservation organizations. It would also be important to note whether the best practices developed have altered how international non-governmental organizations interact with CSOs.



Sam Shaba, Program Manager for Honeyguide, and John Griffin, facilitator from Reos Partners, going through an exercise during the two-day African Leadership Network seminar in Tanzania. Photo credit: Rachel Ambrose.