

# **FROM INFLUENCING TO ENGAGING: THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION IN PROTECTING ENDANGERED SPECIES**

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JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO

## TIIVISTELMÄ

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Tiivistelmä - Abstract <p>Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on selvittää, mikä on viestinnän rooli uhanalaisten eläinlajien suojelussa. Kohdeorganisaationa on WWF Nepal. Nepal valikoitui kohteeksi, sillä maassa on saatu aikaan merkittäviä suojelusaavutuksia. Nepal on muun muassa saavuttanut jo neljä kertaa vuoden mittaisen jakson, jonka aikana ei ole salametsästetty yhtäkään sarvikuonoa. Lisäksi maan sarvikuono- ja tiikerikannat ovat kasvussa. Nepaliläisten uhanalaisten eläinten suojelusta on siis selkeästi opittavaa, ja tämä tutkimus pyrkii etsimään viestinnällisten tekojen vaikutuksia prosessissa. Tämä tutkimus on abduktiivinen, eli teoreettisen viitekehyksen rakentaminen ja aineiston analyysi ovat edenneet limittäin. Aineisto muodostuu 20 laadullisesta teemahaastattelusta, jotka koottiin Nepalissa helmi-maaliskuussa 2017. Jotta mahdollisimman laaja ja syväluotaava tutkimus aiheesta olisi mahdollinen, sekä WWF:n työntekijöitä että valtion, paikallisten kyläyhteisöjen ja median edustajia haastateltiin tutkimusta varten. Haastattelut analysoitiin teema-analyysillä. Tutkimuksen mukaan viestinnän rooli nähdään merkittävänä: viestintää on kaikkialla ja se vaikuttaa kaikkeen. Onnistuakseen luonnonsuojelu vaatii laajan sidosryhmäverkoston, jonka yhteistyö olisi hankalaa ilman tehokasta viestintää. Tärkeiksi viestinnällisiksi tekijöiksi nähtiin tietoisuuden kasvattaminen, käytöksen muuttaminen, sidosryhmien sitouttaminen sekä lobbaaminen. Tämän tutkimuksen mukaan viestinnällä on monipuolinen rooli uhanalaisten eläinten suojelussa, eikä tuo rooli ilmene vain viestintäasiantuntijoiden työssä. Se nousee esiin myös organisaation muiden työntekijöiden vuorovaikutustilanteissa sekä sidosryhmien kautta. Näiden toimijoiden välisillä suhteilla on suuri vaikutus luonnonsuojelun onnistumisessa. Vaikka eri tekijöitä, jotka vaikuttavat luonnonsuojelun onnistumiseen, on tarkasteltu aiemmässakin tutkimuksessa, ei niiden nimenomaista viestinnällistä roolia ole juuri tutkittu laajasti. Tämä tutkimus ehdottaa, että viestintä käsitettäisiin jatkotutkimuksissa entistä laajempaan kokonaisuuteen, ja sen kokonaisvaltaisten vaikutusten tarkempi tutkimus olisikin tärkeää.</p>	
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## ABSTRACT

Author Lilli Pukka	
Title From influencing to engaging: The role of communication in protecting endangered species	
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Abstract <p>This research aims to find out what is the role of communication in protecting endangered species. Case organization is WWF Nepal. Nepal was chosen to be in the focus of this research since the country has shown significant results when it comes to achieving conservation goals. Nepal has for example been able to celebrate zero rhino poaching years for four times. Additionally, rhino and tiger numbers are growing in the country. Thus, there must be something to learn from Nepal's conservation and this research is focusing on the communicative factors in the process. This research is abductive, and more based on data than theory. Data is formed from 20 qualitative interviews that were held in Nepal in February and March 2017. WWF professionals as well as representatives from the government, local communities, and media were included in the data to get as broad view from the researched phenomenon as possible. Interviews were analyzed by thematic analysis. This research focuses on communication broadly and seeks to find results without predetermined theories or hypotheses; all results are based on the thoughts of individuals interviewed and how they perceive the role of communication. Based on this study, the role of communication is seen as important; communication is everywhere and it affects everything. To be successful, conservation requires multi-stakeholder approach, which would be difficult to maintain without good cooperation and effective communication. What was highlighted as important communicative factors were raising awareness, changing behavior, engaging stakeholders, and lobbying. Based on the results of this study, communication has a diverse role in protecting endangered species, and it can be seen not only in the actions of communication professionals but also in the actions of other employees of the organization as well as within the stakeholders. The relationships between these actors are critical when it comes to successful conservation. Although the different factors that affect nature conservation have been exploited in previous research, their explicit communicative role has not yet broadly been explored. This research suggests that communication should be considered as a wider entity in further research, and a more detailed study of its comprehensive role would be important.</p>	
Keywords awareness raising, behavior change, communication, conservation, environmental communication, lobbying, stakeholder engagement, strategic communication	
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I got interested in the research subject while working at WWF Finland as a communicator. The magnitude of how species are vanishing from Earth and the constant efforts that conservationists do to solve the situation are both unbelievable – in very different ways. I knew that even though human beings are the reason behind the issues endangered animals are today facing, they are also holding the keys to solve these urgent issues. I wanted to know whether communication has a role in this process, and if so, what kind of role it is.

Even though the interest for writing this research is based on my own personal experiences from working at WWF, being connected to WWF did not affect the ethics of this research. Rather it helped me to have the access to the field. WWF or any other quarter had no involvement in the collection or analysis of the data, or the writing of this research.

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Thanks to my friends who listened to my concerns and guided me to the right direction when I did not know where to go, and my family for their never-ending support.

Last, but definitely not least, I would like to thank my supervisor Laura Asunta, who always trusted me and gave me the courage to trust myself.

Namaste!

Jyväskylä, Finland, January 2018

Lilli Pukka

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ABSTRACT

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

We are currently living in a geological epoch called the Anthropocene. This means that for the first time in the history changes on Earth are caused by acts of human beings - not natural forces. The change from the Holocene to the Anthropocene happened around 1950, so human-caused changes have occurred in the course of only one generation. Development of technology, "rapid growth of the human population, and increased consumption of resources" are the main reasons why human forces are responsible "for many of the anthropogenic signatures" that have been happening ever since. (Waters et al. 2016.)

The magnitude of human impact on Earth is so massive that "the Anthropocene might be characterized by the world's sixth mass extinction event" (WWF 2016a, 10). Between 1970 and 2012 there has been a 58 percent overall decline in abundance of vertebrate population (WWF 2016a, 18). According to WWF's (2016a, 12) Living Planet Report, the world is on track to lose two-thirds of its vertebrate species by 2020. Impacts of human beings are the reason for the rising level of species extinction and destruction of habitats (Blewitt 2011, 711). But with humans lies also the solution; conservation is not done by biology alone, there are people needed (Jacobson 2009). When people are needed, communication is needed too.

At the same time the world is losing its iconic species, in Nepal, however, the numbers are increasing. Nepal has been one of the first countries in the world to be able to celebrate zero poaching years of rhinos and tigers. The rhino population is growing, and Nepal is on track to double its tigers by the year 2022; a global goal that regards all of the 13 so called tiger countries (The Himalayan Times 2016).

All this success in conservation makes Nepal's conservation strategy interesting. There must be a lot to learn from Nepal, and this research seeks to find out what the role of communication is when it comes to achieving concrete conservation goals. The case organization of this research is WWF Nepal, since it is one of the oldest conservation organizations working in Nepal and one of the key partners of the government of Nepal in conservation. The case organization will be shortly introduced later in this chapter.

Communication is influencing. And by influences we, as individuals, act, make decisions, and build our knowledge. Communication in this research means the functions and contents of communication and its relation to the case organization's operations and practices. Communication is everywhere and we all communicate nearly all the time, and because of that, communication is not only meant to represent the actions of communication professionals of the case organization. As it is commonly occurring in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is also more sensible for this research to focus on the relevance of communication for achieving the goals of an organization instead of researching its role in transferring messages (Juholin 2013a, 22-23).

The research problem is what kind of role communication has in concrete conservation work and achievements. The research questions (RQs) are:

RQ1: How is the purpose of communication perceived in protecting endangered species?

RQ2: What kind of communicative factors are perceived as important in conservation?

RQ3: How could communication be used as a tool in resolving challenges in conservation to the opinions of the individuals interviewed?

This research is focusing on the thoughts and perceptions of WWF Nepal's staff, including conservation specialists and communication professionals. It also expresses the views of the stakeholders of WWF Nepal; the government, media, and local communities living next to the protected areas. By this, the research shows how communication is perceived both by the staff members of WWF Nepal and by its key stakeholders.

It is recognized in communication studies that the role of communication is vital for an organization. Even though many scholars have studied organizational communication, this kind of research from the non-profit field that studies the role and purpose of communication for an organization and its mission achievement is somewhat slender.

Through this research, conservation organizations could review their own communication and get some new ideas based on the perceptions of the individuals interviewed. Even though this research cannot point out any definite truths, by viewing the thoughts of individuals who are linked to conservation, it could help in justifying the role of communication for conservation organizations in general.

## **1.1 Philosophical approach and axiom of the research**

Even though this research tries to represent the conventions of communication and its concrete relations to conservation, then again it portrays and conceptualizes individuals' views of conservation and communication. This

research cannot tell any absolute truths, but its purpose is to understand the phenomenon through the thoughts of the people interviewed.

When seeking to present questions about the nature of reality and phenomenon, ontology can be discussed (Hirsjärvi, Remes, & Sajavaara 2009, 130). In this research, the ontological standpoint is that individual's social life is understood as "part of the world's complexity and inchoate interconnectedness" (Connor & Marshall 2016, 3). Ontology can be discussed when trying to explain how reality is understood and what are the axioms of reality. Ontology answers to questions such as whether reality is based on objectivity or subjectivity. In objective point of view, reality exists without experiences or knowledge of individuals. In subjective point of view, the thoughts and knowledge of individuals determine their understanding of reality. (Harisalo 2008, 42.) This research believes in subjective ontology; it understands that individuals that are interviewed view the world in different ways and that their thoughts and experiences shape their understanding of the world.

This research also believes that there are multiple ways to view the world. It applies a relativistic approach to philosophy; there is not just one correct way to understand the world. For relativists, everything depends on the observer and their point of view. This means there can be "different, but equally legitimate, ways" to view the world. (Letherby, Scott, & Williams 2013, 14.)

The general goal of this research is not to test any particular theories or hypotheses. The aim is rather to provide a holistic and comprehensive understanding of the researched phenomenon; communication and its role in conservation. The axiom of this research is somewhat paradoxical; on the one hand communication is acknowledged as an important resource for organizations, but on the other hand its overall effectiveness especially in achieving conservation goals is not yet broadly covered in previous research. This research aims at filling this gap in the existing research.

## **1.2 Introduction of the case organization**

The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) is a conservation organization operating worldwide. Conceived in 1961, WWF has since grown to be one of the world's largest conservation organizations. (WWF 2016b.) WWF's logo, which features a giant panda, is one of the most recognized logos in the world (e.g. Sinclair 2014).

WWF states that its mission "is to stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature". This mission is being reached "by conserving the world's biological diversity, ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable and promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption". (WWF 2016b.)

WWF offices are divided into two categories: "those that can raise funds and carry out work autonomously" (known as WWF's National Organizations) and "those that must work under the direction of one of the independent WWF

offices" (known as Programme Offices). Whether an office is National Organization or Programme Office, it carries out conservation work "such as practical field projects, scientific research, advising local and national governments on environmental policy, promoting environmental education, and raising awareness of environmental issues". (WWF 2016c.) This research is focusing on WWF Nepal, which is a Programme Office working under the direction of WWF USA.

Even though WWF Nepal was officially founded in 1993 (WWF 2016d), WWF started to work in Nepal with a rhino conservation program in 1967 (WWF 2016e). During the 50 years of conservation, WWF has changed its focus in Nepal. When at first WWF in Nepal focused in single species in 1960s, in 1990s the focus shifted to integrated conservation and development approach. In early 2000s it evolved into "a new horizon of landscape level conservation encompassing national, regional and global scales of complexity". When in WWF Nepal's early years "the focus was on research and conservation of species conservation under strict law enforcement practices", now, over the years, WWF's support "has been centered on integrating conservation and community development with an attempt to address the issues of livelihoods of local people living near protected areas". (WWF 2016e.)

### **1.3 Structure of the research**

The study is structured as follows; First, conservation in the context of this research is briefly presented, including an introduction to conservation in Nepal. In the following chapter, the theoretical background for this research is formed, based on the research data. This chapter portrays strategic communication as well as different communicative factors that affect conservation; raising awareness and changing behavior, engaging stakeholders, and lobbying. The fourth chapter represents the methodology and implementation of this research, including how research data was gathered and analyzed and interviews implemented. Next, the results and conclusions of the research are portrayed. Finally, this thesis will be concluded by the discussion, including the evaluation of the research and suggestions for the future research.

Even though this research is built in a way where theory is presented before data, the actual order in making of the research was that first there was a data and based on the analysis of the data, the theoretical background was built.

## 2 CONSERVATION: CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK

“Conservation biology is an applied, goal-oriented discipline that seeks to stop the current extinction spasm and recover the Earth’s natural systems so that natural selection and evolution can continue. As such, conservation biology is value laden, based on the premises that biological diversity and evolution are good and that untimely extinction is bad. Conservationists possess expertise in a wide variety of fields but are united in their desire to stem the loss of global biodiversity at the hands of humanity.” (Miller & Reading 2000, xvi.)

This chapter focuses on conservation in this research’s context. Additionally, nature conservation of Nepal is discussed. Some topics might overlap with the next chapter, which focuses on the communicative factors that are vital in the context of this research. For example, in this chapter there is a discussion about community-based conservation, which is also highlighted as part of stakeholder engagement in Chapter 3.

### 2.1 Why conservation is important

Is it necessary to protect endangered species and why? It is true that the existence of human beings does not depend on for example the Bengal tiger. But does that mean that we should not protect them? We think that the Mona Lisa is unique and value it for that, even though nobody’s existence depends on that painting. So why cannot we say that nature needs to be protected because we believe it has a unique value and because we want to do that? As Professor Emeritus Michael Soule (2014, 637) states in his comment, not all beliefs and ideologies can be tested by empirical science, and “one of these beliefs is the notion that wild things and places have incalculable intrinsic value, at least as salient as the value of humanity”.

However, it is estimated that investing in conservation is also an economic-wisely good move. According to estimations, global nature conservation may cost around US\$58 billion dollars annually (McCarthy et al. 2012). While conservation might sound expensive, it has a great economical value; it is estimated that conservation goods and services may deliver the annual value between

~US\$4400 billion and US\$5200 billion (Balmford et al. 2002). In other words, if these estimations and hypotheses would be correct, the rough ratio between benefits and costs would be around 100:1. Also, according to United Nations, “natural disasters caused by ecosystems disrupted by human impact and climate change already cost the world more than US\$300 billion per year” (UN 2017a).

To be able to save the species from extinction, we must conserve them. Ceballos, Ehrlich, and Dirzo (2017) state in their recent study that the extent of the current sixth mass extinction has been underestimated. The sixth mass extinction of Earth we are currently witnessing “has proceeded further than most have assumed”, and the great loss of populations is damaging the ecosystems and services they provide to civilization (Ceballos et al. 2017, E6095). The study also states that many mammal species that were rather safe only one or two decades ago are currently defined as endangered. Even though there are some varying between species, the extinction of mammal populations is a global phenomenon. (Ceballos et al. 2017.)

Human overpopulation and overconsumption are great threats to the natural world, amongst with for example invasive species, overexploitation, and climate disruption. The study by Ceballos et al. (2017, E6095) comes to the conclusion that species extinction is rapid and irreversible, and “all signs point to ever more powerful assaults on biodiversity in the next two decades, painting a dismal picture of the future of life, including human life”.

Species living in the wild are not the only ones that are affected by the Anthropocene; people are also victims “of the deteriorating state of nature”. Living ecosystems are vital for maintaining breathable air, drinkable water, and nutritious food. (WWF 2016a, 12.) Thus, saving the species from extinction is not only urgent for the lives of animals, but also for the survival of human beings.

## 2.2 Why human participation is important

Even though the causes of species endangerment such as overexploitation might in a way seem obvious or even easy to understand, the underlying factors for endangerment are usually not so simple to address. This is because the causes behind the species decline are “primarily social, political, and economical”. (Miller & Reading 2000, xvi–xvii.)

Environmental issues are linked with for example authority and power, attitudes and beliefs, and economy, as well as with development (Miller & Reading 2000, xvii). Regarding development, there is a question of how conservation and development can be integrated; and which way is better for sustainability, conservation through development or development through conservation. Tai (2007, 1199) studied the subject and came to the conclusion that conservation should be given priority, since “conservation efforts directly improve the ecological foundation of a sustainable development”. Development is important, and giving priority to conservation does not mean the end for development, quite the opposite; as Tai (2007, 1199–1200) suggests, implementing

development through a conservation approach is likely to lead to effective institution building.

Conservation requires not only biology but also active human participation. Thus, taking the human factor into account in conservation is vital. The key for long-term conservation is public participation; if the ideas and knowledge of local people are not valued and local people are not participating in the decision making, the conservation goals could be impossible to achieve. (Clark & Wallace 2002, 92–93.)

From the early days of strict conservation approaches, the trend has now shifted to understanding the human factor in conservation (Clark & Wallace 2002). In general, the strict approach, which kept people outside, was popular in conservation in 1960s and 1970s; nature was seen as a wilderness and people as a threat. The human-value of nature was praised, and only little interest in local communities and rural people was given. As a matter of fact, local people were seen as a threat to nature and that is how the “fortress and fines” conservation approach emerged; to keep them out of protected areas. (Fisher, Maginnis, Jackson, Barrow, & Jeanrenaud 2005, 18–20.) As mentioned, now the trend has shifted from keeping people outside to keeping them involved. Today, community-based conservation is widely practiced, since it has been noted that the support from community members is vital for the successful conservation (Sawchuk, Beaudreau, Tonnes, & Fluharty 2015, 98).

In the early 1900s, Dewey (1927) defined public participation as deliberation on issues by those who are affected by decisions. In conservation, public participation is often discussed together with community-based conservation; communities implementing the programs, involved in the governance, bearing the costs, and sharing the benefits and incentives from conservation efforts (Baral 2012, 42).

Community-based conservation aims at conserving biodiversity and providing incentives for local people. The link between these two is important; when communities are benefiting from conservation and taking ownership of it, they are more likely to be supportive for nature conservation. (Campbell & Vainio-Mattila 2003, 421.) Public participation in community-based conservation is focusing not only on the conservation goals, but also on the communities that are affected by the acts of conservation. Support from local communities is vital in biodiversity conservation. (Sekhar 2003, 339–340.)

## 2.3 Threats to species

There are different actions that form threats to wildlife. One of them is illegal wildlife trade. Every year hundreds of millions of wild animals or plants are either caught or harvested, and then sold. Even though a lot of that trade is legal, a massive amount of it is illegal. Illegal trade is one of the main reasons why species are threatened, whereas overexploitation is the second-largest threat to many species after habitat loss. (WWF 2016b.)

Illegal wildlife trade can involve either live animals and plants or different products, such as “skins, medicinal ingredients, tourist curios, timber, fish and other food products”. One of the biggest motivation factor for illegal wildlife trade is economic benefit. It ranges from “small scale local income generation to major profit-oriented business”. (TRAFFIC 2017.)

Before the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there was no regulation or criminalization of transnational wildlife trade. However, even after regulations and criminalization, illegal wildlife trade is still continuing. (Ayling 2013, 58.) Estimations show that wildlife trafficking generates US\$5 billion to US\$23 billion in revenues each year. Halting illegal wildlife trade is important, not only for species survival but for the local communities as well; trafficking creates instability, finances corruption, and decreases the resources from local communities. (Global Financial Integrity 2016.)

Illegal poaching is a great threat to species, since it has the potential to cause species extinction (Ayling 2013, 57). To be able to control the illegal poaching and other activities regarding illegal wildlife trade, policies and enforcement strategies must take into account what drives the illegal behavior (Felbab-Brown 2011, v).

The protection of endangered species is recognized as a part of global goals. United Nations (UN) has noted protection of endangered species as a major subject in sustainable development goals (SDGs). SDGs goal 15, which is about life on land, states for example that countries have to “take urgent action to end poaching and trafficking of protected species of flora and fauna and address both demand and supply of illegal wildlife products”. Countries also have to “enhance global support for efforts to combat poaching and trafficking of protected species, including by increasing the capacity of local communities to pursue sustainable livelihood opportunities”. (UN 2017b.)

Additionally, goal 15 states that countries need to “integrate ecosystem and biodiversity values into national and local planning, development processes, poverty reduction strategies and accounts” by 2020 (UN 2017b). Taking care of the life on land is not only about protecting endangered species, but safeguarding the livelihoods of people; land degradation affects directly around 75 percent of the world’s poor (UN 2017a).

Habitat loss and degradation is the most common threat to declining species population. It is generally driven by for example unsustainable agriculture, logging, transportation, and development. Pollution, invasive species and disease, and climate change are other common causes for wildlife besides illegal wildlife trade, species overexploitation (such as poaching), and habitat loss and degradation. (WWF 2016a, 20–21.)

Species loss is likely to have major effects on ecosystem functioning, since declining populations represent significant changes in biodiversity. Animal loss is impacting for example water quality, human health, and pest control. However, there are unknown gaps about the impacts of Anthropocene defaunation (human-triggered animal declines). Thus, more research is vitally needed. (Dirzo et al. 2014, 401–404.) Dirzo et al. (2014, 406) state that “if unchecked, Anthropocene defaunation will become not only a characteristic of the planet’s sixth

mass extinction, but also a driver of fundamental global transformations in ecosystem functioning”.

## 2.4 Conservation in Nepal

Nepal is a mountainous country in the central Himalayas. It has a rich biodiversity due to its geographically unique position with variation in altitude and climate. The country’s climate ranges from tropical to arctic; it goes from tropical lowlands of Terai, where altitudes are between 60 and 300 meters, to the Himalayan mountains, where eight out of ten of the tallest mountains in the world are located. (Paudel, Bhattarai, & Kindlmann 2012, 1–5.)

Biodiversity conservation is an important issue for developing countries, such as Nepal. Habitat loss and fragmentation are key issues that affect the wildlife of Nepal. (Bhattarai, Paudel, & Kindlmann 2012, 41, 50.) Together with these, poverty and rapid human population growth are significant conservation issues in the Himalayas, also in Nepal (Kindlmann 2012, 216).

The first wildlife protection legislation in Nepal was established in 1958. The protection was focusing on rhinos in Terai. Modern conservation started in Nepal when a rhino sanctuary in Chitwan was established in 1964. Nowadays that area is known as Chitwan National Park, which is the first national park in Nepal. Today, more than 20 percent of Nepal’s surface is protected. (Bhattarai et al. 2012, 41–45.)

As was the global trend mentioned earlier in this chapter, the first approach to conservation in Nepal was to keep people outside; “even usufruct rights of local and indigenous people were curtailed”. Now, Nepal has experienced a shift from strict conservation, which had no interference of people, to an approach that is blatantly more engaging. (Sunam, Bishwokarma, & Darjee 2015, 179–180.)

Introducing a buffer zone program in Nepal was the starting point for the participatory and community-based conservation in Nepal. A buffer zone is an outside and adjacent area of national park, or nature reserve, and is inhabited by local communities. Buffer zones aim at both, conservation and socioeconomic development of local people. Besides these, outcomes of buffer zones are for example partnership in conservation as well as policy and institutional development. Through buffer zones, new arenas for constructive dialogue with park authorities were opened up for local communities. Buffer zone activities have had a significant impact in these areas, such as infrastructure improvement. The first buffer zone in Nepal was established around the Chitwan National Park in 1996. (Paudel, Budhathoki, & Sharma 2007.)

In Nepal, around 50 percent of the annual park incomes are steered to community development activities (Budhathoki 2004, 335; Paudel et al. 2007, 46). Additionally, since buffer zones are outside national parks and from time to time there are conflicts between local people and wildlife, there are schemes to compensate against the wildlife-caused loss of property or human casualties (Paudel et al. 2007, 46).

Nepal's conservation strategy shifted in 2001 from site-based conservation to landscape-based conservation through Terai Arc Landscape (TAL). TAL was initiated "by the government of Nepal with the collaboration of WWF Nepal and Department of Forests (DoF) and Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC) of the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation". The idea of TAL was to provide a system of "corridors and protected areas for landscape-scale conservation of tigers, rhinos and elephants". TAL is not only limited to Nepal; the landscape-scale approach means that TAL is focusing to restore the corridors and bottlenecks between Nepal and India, and the major strategy to maintain the landscape-level work is through community forestry. (WWF 2017a.)

Nepal is one of the few countries in the world which deploy army to the protection of wildlife (Budhathoki 2003, 72). The responsibility for an army in conservation is to prevent illegal activities (Bhattarai et al. 2012, 45). The Maoists People's War (1996–2006) affected conservation efforts in Nepal, including the army. During the war, law enforcement in the protected areas was absent since "soldiers had to be withdrawn to fight the rebels", which led to the "complete breakdown of conservation enforcement" and poachers to take a "large toll on many endangered species". Wildlife trade escalated and tourism sector suffered from the insurgency. (Baral & Heinen 2006, 8.)

Baral and Heinen (2006, 8) state in their article that, to their knowledge, not a single third-party organization has ever been collaborating successfully anywhere in the world with combatants (rebels, government, or both) during a civil war. However, in Nepal, programs of independent non-governmental organizations (NGOs) like WWF continued in spite of insurgency (Baral & Heinen 2006, 8–9).

In many Asian cultures, conservation of wildlife is seen as a sacred act. In Nepal, especially Hinduism and Buddhism have influenced people towards conservation efforts. (Sharma 2012, 15.)

### **Endangered species in Nepal**

A lot of species living in Nepal are "endangered, critically endangered, or even close to extinction due to human impact". Human impact includes for example "habitat fragmentation and destruction, fuel wood consumption, poaching" and livestock grazing. (Kindlmann 2012, v.) Some of the most iconic megafauna in Nepal are the Bengal tiger (*Panthera tigris*), greater one-horned rhino (*Rhinoceros unicornis*), and snow leopard (*Panthera uncia*).

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the world's largest environmental network, maintains a list of threatened species (The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species). IUCN's Red List is "the world's most comprehensive inventory of the global conservation status of plant and animal species" (IUCN 2017a). The Bengal tiger (IUCN 2017b) is listed as endangered, and the snow leopard (IUCN 2017c) and the greater one-horned rhino (IUCN 2017d) are listed as vulnerable. This means that all these species still have hope, but due to threats such as habitat loss, human-nature conflicts, and poaching, urgent action is needed to save these species from extinction.

Human-wildlife conflict is a challenging issue in Nepal. It results in loss of lives and damages on properties, and also increases risks to food insecurity. For example, when tigers settle in the surrounding buffer zone of a protected area, its natural main habitat, confrontations and conflicts with community members increase significantly. One of the major drivers for human-wildlife conflicts in Nepal is formed by the changes in land use, including fragmentation. There is a compensation mechanism to mitigate losses, but studies suggest that if communities get economic incentives from conservation itself rather than compensation mechanisms, conservation is valued. Thus, the economic opportunities that conservation provides as well as the costs it might include are important drivers for the support of the community at the individual or household level. (Joshi 2016, 5–6.)

There are challenges with the species living in Nepal, but there are also achievements. Nepal's first national park, Chitwan National Park, has since 2011 achieved four times a period of 365 days of zero poaching of rhinos (The Kathmandu Post 2017a). Rhino population is growing in the country, and Nepal's goal is to increase the number of rhinos from the current 645 individuals to 750 or even 800 by the year 2021 (The Kathmandu Post 2017b).

Additionally, the community-based conservation approach has been noted to be beneficial in the Annapurna Conservation Area, for example resulting in a clear decrease of poaching (Bajracharya, Furley, & Newton 2005, 246). WWF (2016g) states that the "coordinated response right from the central to the grass-roots level, heightened protection measures within Protected Areas by the Nepal Army and buffer zone and community forests, and a clamp down on illegal wildlife trade by the Nepal Police and Wildlife Crime Control Bureaus (WCCB) are the key contributors towards Nepal achieving the zero poaching success".

### 3 COMMUNICATION: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This chapter examines communication broadly from an organization's point of view, and how it can affect not only people's perceptions but also their behavior; especially in the context of conservation and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). It explains the important communicative factors that affect conservation; raising awareness and changing behavior, engaging stakeholders, and lobbying. In addition, this chapter introduces the concept of strategic communication and its general drift, which is in the basis of different communicative factors raised during the interviews. Since this research is abductive, all communicative actions and the whole theoretical background is built around the research data.

#### 3.1 Conceptual framework and overview of theoretical approaches

The conceptual framework of this research and choice for the subchapters addressed, together with theoretical approaches, are based on the research data. The conceptual framework, presented in Table 1, portrays different communicative factors that are important in conservation; raising awareness and changing behavior, engaging stakeholders, and lobbying. It goes through the main points of each concept and key authors. Additionally, Table 1 presents strategic communication, which is vital in the context of this research and emerged from the research data as a critical element behind effective communication.

TABLE 1 Conceptual framework and key authors

Concept	Main points	Key authors
Strategic communication	Communication based on strategic choices, not random actions. Communica-	Falkheimer, Heide, Simonsson, Zerfass, and Verhoeven (2016), Juholin (2013a;

	<p>tion should aim at engaging stakeholders, not solely influencing audiences.</p> <p>Communication should be linked to organization's strategy and bottom-up approaches should be implemented. Holistic viewing of communication is vital; communication cannot only be seen in the actions of communication professionals, but in every employee's day-to-day encounters.</p>	<p>2013b), Hallahan, Holtzhausen, van Ruler, Verčič, and Sriramesh (2007), Wilson and Irvine (2013)</p>
Raising awareness and changing behavior	<p>Increasing knowledge and aiming at behavior change.</p> <p>Awareness is considered to be in the basis of behavior change. However, stakeholders might change their behavior without any environmental concern. Finding the barriers behind desired behavior is vital in the sense of effective conservation.</p>	<p>Kang (2014), Kollmuss and Agyeman (2002), McKenzie-Mohr and Schultz (2014), Reddy et al. (2017)</p>
Engaging stakeholders	<p>Interacting with stakeholders through dialogues and involving stakeholders in decision making.</p> <p>When stakeholders are engaged, conservation efforts are more likely to become successful. Nowadays, it has been noticed that engaging should happen through dialogues and interaction (bottom-up approaches) rather than through passive, hierarchical ways (top-down approaches).</p>	<p>Aakhus and Bzdak (2015), Clark and Wallace (2002), Taylor and Kent (2014), Painter and Kretser (2012)</p>
Lobbying	<p>Influencing decision-makers either directly (inside lobbying) or through media and public pressure (outside lobbying).</p> <p>Lobbying is vital part of conservation, since political willingness is in the core of sustainable development.</p>	<p>Beyers (2004), Hesselink and Zeidler (2012), Hessenius (2007), Jaatinen (2003)</p>

After introducing strategic communication, the framework begins with raising awareness and changing behavior, since this theme is in the basis of communicative activities. When stakeholders are aware and willing to change their behavior, they flow more naturally towards the engagement in a long-term basis. Lobbying is needed especially in a high-level engagement; thus, it is an important part of stakeholder engagement. Besides engagement, lobbying increases awareness; both within public and decision-makers. Thus, communicative activities analyzed in this research are strongly impacting each other. Combining these is vital and inevitable, as this research further shows.

For the convenience of the reader, it is important to note that even though strategic communication is explained and introduced as a main concept in theoretical background, it is not handled as its own theme later in this research. This is justified since strategic communication is in the basis of all communicative activities (raising awareness and changing behavior, engaging stakeholders, and lobbying); elaborating it as its own theme would not have been reasonable.

### 3.2 Strategic communication

The wildlife issues we are currently witnessing are related to human impact on Earth, and communication is required as part of the solution (Jacobson & McDuff 2009, 302). Through communication, conservation professionals can justify the role of conservation to their audiences (Jacobson 2009). Studies (e.g. Balmford et al. 2002; Bennett & Dearden 2014) show poor communication and lack of information affect conservation efforts negatively.

When discussing the communication practices of any organization – corporations as well as NGOs – it is vital to take a look into *strategic communication* (Hallahan et al. 2007). Hallahan et al. (2007, 3) define the term as “the purposeful use of communication by an organization to fulfill its mission”. From the perspective of corporate communication, Argenti, Howell, and Beck (2005, 83) define it as “communication aligned with the company’s overall strategy, to enhance its strategic positioning”.

In its name, strategic communication is not based on random acts but strategic activities (Hallahan et al. 2007). Hallahan et al. (2007) remind that even though the word strategic has carried negative connotations – it has been linked with being manipulative or solely benefiting from stakeholders – the preferred outcome of strategic communication is for example stakeholder engagement, which includes creating the mutual dialogue rather than using stakeholders as resources. This study also understands the term strategic communication as a purposeful use of communication that is not aiming at solely influencing the audiences but rather engaging them in a holistic way.

One part of strategic communication is effective communication. Effective communication, regarding conservation, means shifting from campaigns that aim at influencing people towards engaging audiences. This means involving people not only to conversations but also to decision making processes. When

people are actively participating in environmental efforts and creating the institutions, the outcome is more likely to be positive and long-term. (Brulle 2010.)

When used effectively, environmental communication works as a bridge between environmental issues and “the related socio-political processes of policy-making and public participation”. It is sort of a mediator between technical expertise and behavior change. (Ongare et al. 2013, 66.) Adding social factors to conservation, and taking into account the social dimensions, effective problem solving in conservation is more likely to happen (Clark & Wallace 2002, 93).

As critical as it is to have communication, it is vital to take into account the importance of correct communication channels. They should be based on communication goals and target audience. (Jacobson & McDuff 2009, 302.) The environment in which a message is presented can be as important as the content of the message. However, communication is not only about the technical process. It is also about the relationships between people and the meanings they generate. Communication also creates the preconditions for work and strengthens community and culture. (Juholin 2013b, 23.)

Well-coordinated communication and public relations are important for NGOs and international NGOs (INGOs), and the more strategic they are, the more successful they may become. To be able to maintain legitimacy and achieve the goals set, using strategic communication “should be crucial for NGOs”. (Schwarz & Fritsch 2014.) Therefore, to be effective, communication should be based on strategy (Juholin 2013a, 15) and linked to the organization’s goals and mission, as the yearly published European Communication Monitor (Zerfass, Verhoeven, Moreno, Tench, & Verčič 2016, 43) suggests.

Communication helps in achieving an organization’s goals and mission; this is the core of strategic communication (Hallahan et al. 2007, 4). Effective communication helps to “ensure a consensus within the organization as to the strategic problems and issues faced and appropriate methods for their resolution” (Moss & Warnaby 1998, 135).

By engaging communication to strategy, communication professionals can redeem the place of communication as a strategically important area. However, Falkheimer et al. (2016, 155) state that “communication professionals in general have difficulties in describing the values of strategic communication”; “they are urged to describe this value in economic terms, but they often have problems to describe qualitative values of communication”. To get the valued role for communication within an organization, communication professionals have to prove that value. One way of doing so is to “relate communication activities to overall organizational goals”. (Falkheimer et al. 2016, 143–144.)

The results of communication can be immediate or indirect. Immediate results are for example noticing and identifying messages. Change in opinions and attitudes, or willingness to act, are examples of indirect results. (Juholin 2013a, 36.) When thinking about the value of communication for an organization, it is vital to remember that communication might not only produce something good, but it can also prevent or even block harmful events from happening. A satisfactory result might also be that some situations remains the same. (Juholin 2013a, 30.) Identifying the desired results might help in measuring communication.

Although organizations might measure their communication, Juholin (2013a) points out that the link between communication and an organization's strategy and goals is not always clear. However, as Hallahan et al. (2007, 10) state, while the world is becoming more complex and the arenas that organizations work in are getting more holistic, it is "increasingly questionable whether the effects of any particular communication activity can be validly examined in isolation".

Strategic communication is something that shifts through the whole organization and seeks collaboration at all levels (Overton-de Klerk & Oelofse 2010). Juholin (2013a) underlines it is important that communication supports an organization's strategy and that organizations realize that transferring information is not enough communication. Ströh (2007) has a similar reminder, stating that dialogic communication is a vital part of communication strategy since the meanings are created through participation, not influence. It is critical to note that participation does not mean only getting the agreement or feedback from stakeholders, but involving them truly to the strategic decision-making process (Ströh 2007).

Thus, when discussing strategic communication, it is vital to take into account different approaches, such as top-down and bottom-up communication strategies. Top-down communication aims at transferring messages and influencing people for example to change their behavior in a dominant way. In a bottom-up approach, an organization takes into account its stakeholders' views and focuses on dialogues and listening - as well as changing the behaviors together - than solely giving orders. (Huang 2004.) According to Wilson and Irvine (2013, 98-99), the top-down communication approaches are not as likely to have an impact on desired behavior change outcomes within the stakeholders as the bottom-up approaches do.

Wilson and Irvine (2013) suggest that top-down communication approaches, such as media publications, could be used when aiming at raising awareness. Top-down approaches are generally cheaper than bottom-up approaches, so at times it could be a good strategy to use those mechanism and approaches; such as when reaching the larger masses. However, Wilson and Irvine state that empirical research supports the current trends which suggest that organizations should move from traditional and authoritarian top-down approaches towards more engaging and beneficial bottom-up approaches. When using the communication approaches that are engaging the audience, it is more likely that not only does their awareness but also their behavior change. (Wilson & Irvine 2013.) Holtzhausen and Zerfass (2015) note that to make strategic communication pleasing, it is critical to tie the stakeholder behaviors to the work and goals of strategic communicators.

For example, if a conservation organization uses communication that only aims at influencing its stakeholders, this could be seen as a top-down strategy; as for a bottom-up approach, an organization would take into account the facilitation and reinforcement of the stakeholder initiatives. Previously (see Chapter 2) introduced community-based conservation is an example of a bottom-up approach; it includes stakeholders into planning process, takes their knowledge into account, and is built on dialogues rather than giving orders and transfer-

ring messages. Studies (e.g. Aakhus & Bzdak 2015; Taylor & Kent 2014) suggest that to be effective, communication should be built around dialogues and involving stakeholders, not keeping them outside and only seen as receivers of the messages.

Baú's (2016) study focuses on communication approaches in peacebuilding. Noting that conservation is a different field than peacebuilding, both are strongly linked with development. There are crucial similarities when it comes to sustainable development regarding both of these issues; communication is in the center of all activities. Baú (2016) reminds that the way communication is handled affects to the effectiveness and desired outcomes. Whether communication is used as a top-down strategy or as a bottom-up strategy makes the difference. When engaging the communities with bottom-up approaches and linking the public to decision making, the outcome is more likely to be positive than when exploiting the hierarchic top-down approaches. (Baú 2016.) These indications from various fields support the current trends of not treating the audiences as objectives but including them to the dialogues; shifting from top-down to bottom-up.

In general, the views on communication have changed over the years. When in the end of 1990s organizational communication aimed at being controllable, in the 2000s there has been a shift from an organization-centered model to stakeholder-oriented thinking. In the context of organizational communication, over the years, the perspective has shifted from a rational to a strategic approach; from being controllable to creating dialogues. (Juholin 2013a, 22-24.)

### **Roles of different communicators**

The role of communication for an organization is significant. When at times corporate communication was seen especially as creating press releases and maintaining the media relationships, today it has been noticed that corporate communication is cross-cutting the whole organization. Its role is more holistic than ever, and requires different approaches to be beneficial for the business. Additionally, the change has affected the role of communication professionals; today, they are not only the "doers" but also the facilitators that manage the organization-wide communication activities. (De Beer 2014.) Hallahan et al. (2007, 4) add that, nowadays, organizational communication works in a world that requires a holistic approach and dealing with "increasingly fragmented audiences and delivery platforms".

When the world is being increasingly complex, organizations try to compete for the attention and allegiance of various kinds of stakeholders; "customers, employees, investors and donors, government officials, special interest group leaders, and the public at large". Thus, organizations need strategic communication to reach their audiences and goals. (Hallahan et al. 2007, 4.)

At the same time the audiences and stakeholders are getting more complex, Heide and Simonsson (2011) remind that organizations are now living in an era where everyone communicates. It has been recognized that it is not only communication professionals who communicate, but the communicative role includes all employees; each employee can be seen as an ambassador and mes-

senger of the organization. In their day-to-day encounters, all employees are likely to communicate with different stakeholders and audiences. Therefore, all employees need communication skills; not only internally but in their relation to their organization as ambassadors. In a way, the role of employees is becoming more and more complex, and all employees should understand the values and strategies of their organization. How everybody's work is fitting into the bigger picture and how to communicate accordingly should be taken into account by every employee of any organization. (Heide & Simonsson 2011, 201-205.)

Thus, as Hallahan et al. (2007, 7) highlight, organizations present themselves through different actions by different actors, such as its leaders, employees, and communication professionals. Strategic communication focuses on how this presenting is happening; "the emphasis is on the strategic application of communication and how an organization functions as a social actor to advance its mission" (Hallahan et al. 2007, 7).

Even though communication is recognized as a vital tool for organizations working in today's world and communication professionals are seen as important asset for achieving organization's goals, Falkheimer et al. (2017) note that this is still not the reality in all cases. Coworkers or management might not even know what the role of communication professionals entails and what the benefits of their work can be for the organization. Communication professionals are in many cases seen as technicians or channel producers, and their role in strategic planning may not be clear; communicators are partly there where the strategic planning happens, but they might not have much say in the actual decision making. (Falkheimer et al. 2017, 99-100.)

Sometimes communicators are seen as supporters by the other coworkers and managers. Durutta (2006) states that to be able to give this support to their fellow employees, communication professionals must have knowledge of the work of their colleagues and work closely together, not only with them, but also with other stakeholders such as media and communities. Organizations aim at effective communication, but to make communication effective, communicators must also know and understand "the information requirements, concerns, and goals" of different audiences and stakeholders to "devise a communication solution that meets the organization's greatest needs". (Durutta 2006, 15-16.)

Organizational messages may have unexpected messengers, when communication made by stakeholders, such as community-based communication, is taken into account. Ongare et al. (2013) studied the link between effective environmental communication and participatory sustainable natural resource management. Ongare et al. (2013, 70-71) found out that local communities ranked government officers as the tenth most trusted source of information, while community elders and community meetings were ranked as two of the most efficient information channels. The fact that they are embedded into the communities might be the reason why they are the most trusted sources of information (Ongare et al. 2013, 71).

The study of Ongare et al. (2013) shows it is important to link the communication to the culture and communities, and to note that who brings the message affects the credibility of the information. Taking this into account while

planning communication might give tools for moving beyond raising awareness to actually changing the behavior.

### 3.3 Raising awareness and changing behavior

Awareness and education concerning sustaining biodiversity are vital; there has to be knowledge and action for change (Singh & Rahman 2012, 145, 150). NGOs have become “influential actors in creating awareness of international social, political, environmental and economic causes in global society” over the last decades (Schwarz & Fritsch 2014, 161).

Raising awareness can be passive (for example posters) or active (for example workshops). When choosing the right method, organizations must understand their target audience and the behavior of that audience. For example, the language of the target audience and giving the reasonable amount of information are vital aspects to take into account when it comes to successful awareness raising. (Singh & Rahman 2012, 146–150.)

Through the Anthropogenic changes, human beings are in the core of conservation problems the world is facing (Waters et al. 2016). Even though people are part of the problem, they are also part of the solution, as Jacobson (2009, 6) reminds; and to be able to change the behavior, garner funds, or influence conservation policy, effective communication is essential. Additionally, Kang (2014, 399) underlines the importance of motivation in linking the awareness and knowledge of stakeholders to supportive behaviors.

The conservation field has been aiming at behavior change of key actors for a long time (Reddy et al. 2017, 248). Behavior change is critical action when it comes to achieving a sustainable future (McKenzie-Mohr & Schultz 2014, 35). One of the oldest models of pro-environmental behavior suggests that environmental knowledge leads to environmental awareness and attitudes, “which in turn was thought to lead to pro-environmental behavior”. This linear progression assumed that educating people about environmental issues would be enough and result in pro-environmental behavior. However, studies show that awareness and giving new information to the audience does not alone lead to pro-environmental behavior change; hence, it is a complex matter. (Kollmuss & Agyeman 2002, 241; Jacobson 2009, 30.)

Evaluating the approaches of behavior change could give conservationists knowledge on how to “remove barriers between awareness and action” (Reddy et al. 2017, 255). When removing the barriers, it is vital to both know what are the barriers that exist and “what would motivate people to act”. The barrier might be that people are not aware of the action, or that they are not equipped to do the change. Identifying the barrier is a first step to removing it. (McKenzie-Mohr & Schultz 2014, 36.)

For example, if people do not believe that their actions can make a difference, the behavior change is unlikely to happen, contrary to the situation where stakeholders are engaged and feel that their actions matter (Kang 2014, 412). In addition, acknowledging the influence of emotions makes communication more

effective when aiming at a change of environmental behavior. Emotions can, for example, relate to motivation for the behavior change. When people care about the issue, they are more likely to change their behavior. (Roeser 2012.)

Convenience also has a role in behavior change; if for example cyclists are provided with traffic privileges, it could be more convenient for a person to ride a bike to work rather than driving a car would be (McKenzie-Mohr & Schultz 2014, 42). Additionally, what people think other people think about their actions matter in behavior change. The opportunities and ability that people believe they have to be able to change behavior is also important. (Brown, Ham, & Hughes 2010, 884.)

One reason for adapting to new sustainable behavior could be the fact that friends or colleagues have changed their behavior and told others in their social circle about it, which encourages others to behavior change. This phenomenon can be called social diffusion, and it “has been found to influence a broad array of actions, from the installation of programmable thermostats to the uptake of behaviors that protect watersheds”. (McKenzie-Mohr & Schultz 2014, 39.)

Studies show that individuals are likely to conform to the perceived norm. Even though in some cases people want to stand out, generally it is “easier and preferable to go with the flow”. However, in many behavior change campaigns the message says something like *many people are not doing the preferable action but you should be a hero*, thus highlighting the undesirable behavior. When developing communication for behavior change campaigns, understanding different behavior approaches and backgrounds is vital for the most effective messaging. (McKenzie-Mohr & Schultz 2014, 39-40.)

Some people do not think about their actions in the long run while others focus on the long-term consequences of their actions (Demarque, Apostolidis, & Joule 2013, 214). Jacobson (2009, 30) states that conservation problems might seem “national or global in scope” which makes it difficult for individuals to think that they can do anything to help. This might be the case especially with urban audiences, who are not directly linked to the areas where conservation issues, such as poaching or deforestation, occurs. Understanding the causes behind human behavior and their effects is important when aiming at behavior change; knowledge of behavior could help conservationists to avoid “designing programs that are ineffective” (Reddy et. al 2017, 248, 255).

It is also important to remember that the public is not the only audience that needs to be convinced. Messaging generally targets the public, but industries and politics are also vital stakeholders that need to be engaged. It is a risk that these various stakeholders influencing the environment are just passing the buck around – maybe thinking that their actions do not matter, maybe not knowing enough, maybe lacking interest – which might result in no actual actions towards positive behavior change. (Roeser 2012, 1035-1037.)

McKenzie-Mohr (2014) reminds that behavior change includes different levels. It is important for the long-term behavior change whether the behavior needs to be changed only once, or that it does require for example giving up some level of comfort. Thus, maintaining and managing the behavior change, and aiming for the most effective change, can be challenging. However, behavior studies show that people who are willing to make a small commitment are

more likely favorable to engage in a more extensive behavior later. (McKenzie-Mohr 1994, 226, 229.) This phenomenon – small commitments leading to extended ones – is known as cognitive dissonance. It suggests that people prefer to view their behavior closely linked to their beliefs. It also suggests that individuals prefer to be and be seen coherent in their behavior. (Festinger 1985.)

Cowling (2014) says that when it comes to behavior and conservation, the role of animal behavior has been recognized very well in the research field. However, when it comes to human behavior, the research is somewhat slender; even though “most conservation scientists and practitioners acknowledge that the grand challenges for conserving biodiversity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century lie in production landscapes – the places where humans work and live”. Without the necessary changes in human behavior, conservation achievements become difficult; the future of our nature lies in the choices and behavior of human beings. (Cowling 2014.)

Jacobson (2009) states in her handbook for conservation professionals that it is extremely complex to change behaviors that relate to environmental protection; consequences are often long-term and may not provide enough incentives for people facing day-to-day concerns. The actual behavior change is more likely to occur when people are closely linked to the cause. (Jacobson 2009, 30.)

Legal regulations and financial incentives might motivate people to change their behavior, but taking into account the urgent need for environmental behavior change, there is a need to create motivation in people to change their behavior voluntarily (Lokhorst, Werner, Staats, van Dijk, & Gale 2013, 4). Economic incentives work as a motivation for behavior changes typically in situations where cost “operates as a barrier to the action” (McKenzie-Mohr & Schultz 2014, 41).

Occasionally the change in actions might seem relatively small, but requires “changing, and sometimes coordinating, the behaviors of multiple actors”. The behavior of one actor might affect others, and all behaviors may not be easy to observe. When solving a problem in conservation it is vital to take this into account, and ask “what is the human behavior of interest?” and not just focus on the biological side of conservation. When finding out the reasons for behavior and knowing who is engaging in these behaviors – and what is the baseline level of behavior – the actual achievement of conservation goals becomes clearer. To be able to conserve the nature, conservationists must understand human behavior, too; not only the behavior of the conserved species. There are barriers between awareness and action when it comes to conservation but when systematically evaluating the behavior change, new ways to remove those barriers can be introduced. (Reddy et al. 2017.)

Additionally, it is vital to realize what are the different behaviors that might occur in a program, and what is the most effective one that the program should target for the successful outcome. For example, is it important for the success of the program that communities switch to more effective lightning or that they turn up the temperatures of air-conditioning? Knowing what is the most desired behavior change is critical when developing effective programs. (McKenzie-Mohr & Schultz 2014, 36.)

Thus, various factors affect people's decisions, for example whether we have possibilities to change our actions, feel that there is value behind some actions, or get any economic incentives from the pro-environmental actions. Moreover, to develop communication activities it is beneficial to have basic knowledge about environmental issues and what behaviors facilitate that people act environmentally friendly. For example, people might behave in a more environmentally friendly way for no environmental concern; if some action is more expensive than another, people tend to move towards the less expensive solution, and the decision might not have anything to do with its environmental impact. (Kollmuss & Agyeman 2002, 250–257.)

### **Participation and cooperation boost the behavior change**

Communication that is customized to the beliefs of target audience is more likely to be effective than communication that is based on managers' intuition or guesswork (Brown et al. 2010, 885). Participation of community stakeholders is important. For example, giving local stakeholders a say in the development of the message is one way of engaging people and making interactive learning and sharing possible. (Singh & Rahman 2012, 149.)

Concerning attitude change, it has been studied that by combining preparatory act and persuasive messaging, people are more likely to change their behavior. This can be called binding communication; not only raising awareness but also linking preparatory act to the messaging. Preparatory act is a low-cost act by the target group itself, for example writing down the acts that a person would be willing to do to reduce climate change. (Parant et al. 2017.) Parant et al. (2017) studied binding communication within students in France. They showed a climate change movie for two student groups, with the only difference that one group did have the preparatory act included and the other group did not. The result was that preparatory act increased the efficiency of the persuasive message; even though knowledge was raised in both groups, only the group with preparatory act was affected positively towards attitude and behavior change. (Parant et al. 2017.)

Environmental education studies show that "youth in service learning facilitates recognition of the collective power to effect positive change in communities and enhances the likelihood that civic responsibility will sustain into adulthood". Some youth-based conservation projects combine environmental education with health topics, such as raising awareness on HIV/AIDS, malaria prevention, or sexual health. Programs and projects where youth take part could have positive outcome in problem-solving ability, moral reasoning, academic performance, getting along with others, and leadership skills. Thus, youth-based environmental education could increase both cognitive and social competency, besides raising knowledge and awareness about conservation issues. (Johnson-Pynn & Johnson 2005, 27–31).

Studies show that for example in Namibia, in communities where community-based conservation and HIV/AIDS education are linked with behavior change communication, multiple sex partnerships, which are the main behavioral determinant of HIV/AIDS in Africa, have reduced. These results indicate

that community-based conservation together with effective communication might not only lead to better conservation achievements but could also be helpful in relation to the health sector. (Naidoo & Johnson 2013.)

One tool in conservation education is community-based environmental education, such as the projects mentioned above. In community-based environmental education, the “classroom” is the community. This approach both builds individual knowledge and skills but also helps to create an ambience that is sustainable, equitable, and empowering. Community-based environmental education can take the form of, for example, study circles or one-on-one demonstrations, and the educator can be from the community. (Andrews, Stevens, & Wise 2002.) Raising awareness among students might contribute to future environmental issue solving and actual behavior change. Youngsters are the future decision-makers and also influential actors within their families. (Parant et al. 2017, 340.)

Community-based environmental education is aiming at behavior change, and is based on the realities of the economic, political, and social context of the community. Community-based environmental education involves citizens to work together to find and implement solutions. Community members work together, for example in workshops, to figure out what are the problems in their community and think about the solutions. The approach which takes into account the realities of target community, is action oriented, and is both information and community-based, could help in achieving the ultimate goal; behavior change and responsiveness to environmental issues. (Andrews et al. 2002.) Communication is crucial for approaches requiring cooperation of community members, such as community-based environmental education.

### 3.4 Engaging stakeholders

“Engagement is part of dialogue and through engagement, organizations and publics can make decisions that create social capital. Engagement is both an orientation that influences interactions and the approach that guides the process of interactions among groups.” (Taylor & Kent 2014, 384.)

Taylor and Kent (2014, 384, 396) define engagement as mentioned above, adding that “engagement benefits publics, organizations, and the society in which it exists”. In their article, Taylor and Kent (2014, 388–389) stress the fact that dialogue is an important part of engagement. It takes into account different stakeholders and tries to “involve participants in conversation and decision-making”. Co-creating the reality together with stakeholders happens through dialogue. (Taylor & Kent 2014, 388–389.) Additionally, Kang (2014, 411) points out that when stakeholders are engaged, they are more likely to speak positively about the organization. Engagement also increases loyalty (Kang 2014, 411).

Social media is one of the new possibilities for organizations to engage their audiences. Social media platforms, such as Twitter and Facebook, allow organizations to connect with their stakeholders, as well as gives stakeholders opportunities to provide feedback and take part in conversations. It makes dia-

logue between organization and its stakeholders possible. Additionally, sharing interesting and informative links might get organizations' social media followers interested in stories in a similar way newspaper headlines do. (Lovejoy, Waters, & Saxton 2012, 313–314.)

Additionally, stakeholder engagement could happen through effective storytelling. Telling stories is one of the oldest and most powerful ways of communication. Organizations can communicate their values, goals, and achievements to their stakeholders, employees, and other audience through storytelling. Stories attract people and make them buy the idea or product behind the story more effectively than showing statistics do. Through stories, people can feel more attached to the topic – and the topic seems more real to the audience when there is a story. (Kaufman 2003.)

When it comes to contemplating stakeholder engagement, Aakhus and Bzdak (2015) point out organizations should realize that nowadays there is a need for multi-stakeholder engagement. We are witnessing a shift to value-creating networks, where the shared problems or issues are in the center and different actors donate their time and knowledge to solve them. Collaboration is the key word between multi-stakeholder environment. When organizations are facing new stakeholder engagement practices, the role of communication and communication professionals becomes more and more important. To develop a working multi-stakeholder, value-creating engagement, organizations must “reflectively update their premises about how communication works and how it ought to work”. (Aakhus & Bzdak 2015, 189.)

It has become important to note that the stakeholders are solving the problems for themselves, by themselves, and not for the organization. This shift to stakeholder engagement needs effective communication in the multi-stakeholder environment to assess these issues and stress the facts why the stakeholder input is needed. The justification and legitimacy for the dialogue and the engagement of a stakeholder network comes by their “effectiveness in discovering how social-environmental-economic problems are generated and legitimate when its premises are updated relative to evidence based on efforts to co-design solutions to problems”. (Aakhus & Bzdak 2015, 195–196.)

Targeting the right message for the right stakeholder is an important factor in the stakeholder engagement process, and it affects the success of the project. It is vital for organizations to realize that the subjects of the engagement are people, and that people are the ones that make any project possible. That is why “effective relationships built and maintained through effective communication” is vital for project success. (Bourne 2016, 433, 438.)

### **Stakeholder engagement and conservation**

Different stakeholders among the public are important for NGOs. A relationship with donors, volunteers, employees, and members is vital for the existence of an NGO. Understanding what is behind these stakeholder relationships could help NGOs to maintain the relationships. When organizations show commitment to their publics, share power, and build trust, they are more likely to maintain the relationship. (Bortree 2011, 44–45.) In her study, Bortree (2011,

47) found out that volunteers are more likely to maintain their positive relationship with the organization also in the future if “the organization works to involve the volunteer in the organization and if it uses strategies to build a high quality relationship with the volunteer”.

There has been a shift from sharing information to communities to building relationships and shared responsibilities. It has been realized that the voices of community members should be heard in the decision making, and that the stakeholder engagement should be a long-term process. When it comes to these new models of stakeholder engagement, “NGOs and other civil society members are held accountable not only by the funder and/or regulator but also by those they serve. In many cases, the metrics are developed to measure the social benefits for the common good rather than a particular business benefit”. (Aakhus & Bzdak 2015, 195.)

Jacobson (2009, 7) states that to be able to have successful conservation programs, it is important to understand “how to engage with audiences and effectively communicate conservation goals”. Aakhus and Bzdak (2015, 191) add that “a better understanding of governance through communication and the values and norms underpinning stakeholder engagement can be achieved through better reflection on communication design practice”. When communication is effective, nature-conserving goals will be accepted in people's minds (Jacobson 2009).

To be able to establish the common goals in conservation and prevent the natural disasters in a broader, long-term scale, Brulle (2010, 94) suggests that there should be “a broad-based democratic discussion”, which includes and engages people to the dialogue. In the case of Nepal and rhino conservation, it has been noted that gaps in trust are linked with lack of communication. Thus, maintaining the level of dialogues has been noticed to be important in long-term conservation and ensuring that people are being taken care of at the same time the rhinos are being protected. (Sedhain & Adhikary 2016.)

To be able to mobilize local communities and get their support, citizens should be included in mutual dialogue, not treated as objects of manipulation. Thus, communication should be integrated “into broader efforts to foster political mobilization in support of social change”. Engaging people to communication is vital for successful conservation. Public should not be just informed about the current environmental issues or the need for their support, but environmental communication should aim at “developing messaging procedures that involve citizens directly in the policy development process”. There should be a link between people's self-interest and “an awareness of long-term community interest”. (Brulle 2010, 91–93.)

Understanding and valuing the local culture is crucial in creating trust with local communities. Trust is an important factor in stakeholder engagement and effective community-based conservation; the more there is trust, the more sustainable the conservation programs are. (Baral 2012, 49.) Thus, understanding community members has become important factor in engagement; communities have become crucial stakeholders when solving social issues (Aakhus & Bzdak 2015, 195).

Involving local people is vital also in “the definition of boundaries, a clear understanding of which resources can be harvested and by whom, and monitoring of biodiversity conservation processes” (Agrawal & Ostrom 2006, 682). Involvement of local communities to conservation and recognition of their role as participants in conservation could happen for example through social and economic means; such as diverting park funds to local communities or promoting development programs (Sekhar 2003, 339).

Alliances and partnerships are important for successful conservation (e.g. Johns 2003). To be able to conserve endangered species properly, it is required to have “understanding, support, and participation from user groups and other stakeholders”. Different reasons affect stakeholders’ support, and they are in many cases somewhat complex; such as social, cultural, and psychological factors. (Sawchuk et al. 2015, 98.) Organizations should seek ways to “positively engage their stakeholders for meaningful partnerships” (Kang 2014, 399).

Variation in stakeholders create more need for communication: “land-owners concerned with property rights, politicians concerned with votes, businesspeople concerned with the tax base, hunters concerned with access, preservationists concerned with protecting the ecosystem, animal rights activists concerned with protecting individual animals, and parents concerned with outdoor recreation opportunities”. It is typical that the interests of the stakeholders overlap and conflict. This complexity creates need for effective communication. (Jacobson 2009, 7.) Additionally, NGOs and especially INGOs typically have audiences and stakeholders from various national and cultural backgrounds, which causes challenges for effective communication (Schwarz & Fritsch 2014, 164). Variation between stakeholder’s perspectives makes the role of communication challenging in general (Pilkington 2013, 107–108).

It is important to engage local communities already in decision making process and not only in managing, since that results in better achievements in conservation efforts (Robards & Lovcraft 2010, 259). Hence, partnership building should take the local context into account; that way it “generates knowledge of the underlying social and political structure in given area, and provides a more nuanced understanding of potential actions and resulting impacts to better anticipate outcomes and local reactions to those outcomes”. When the world is becoming more and more global, conservation organizations must also seek innovative, new partnerships with nontraditional partners. Even though the values might be dissenting, the aimed outcome could be similar. For example, the health sector might be considered as one of the nontraditional partners in conservation. (Painter & Kretser 2012, 358.)

TABLE 3 The seven types of public participation possible in endangered species recovery (from Clark & Wallace 2002, 93; originally modified from Pimbert & Pretty 1995)

<b>Participation type</b>	<b>Descriptions</b>
Passive participation	People are told what is going to happen or what has happened. Communication is unidirectional. Information being transmitted belongs to outside experts.

Participation in information giving	People answer questions put them by experts in questionnaires or other surveys. People do not influence the process otherwise.
Participation by consultation	People are consulted and outside experts listen. Outside experts define problems and solutions. No concession to public.
Participation for material incentives	People provide resources such as labor for food, cash, or information.
Functional participation	People form groups and meet objectives. This may happen once a recovery effort has been set up by experts.
Interactive participation	People involved in joint analysis, production of action plans, and enhanced organized participation.
Self-mobilization	People take independent initiatives apart from experts and government. This may or may not challenge existing experts and government.

How can local communities be engaged to nature conservation? As Table 3 shows, engagement can be either passive or active. The key for long-term and lasting conservation is public participation in the active ways; functional, interactive, and self-mobilized. Not to put too fine a point on it, if the ideas and knowledge of local people are not valued and if local people are not participating in decision making, the actual goals of conservation efforts could be impossible to achieve. (Clark & Wallace 2002, 92.)

The most active participation types – functional and interactive participation and self-mobilization – have one crucial similarity; people are working in cooperation and achieving goals together. Passive participation types can be seen as top-down communication approaches, where people are told what to do and communication aims at influencing. Active participation can be seen as a bottom-up approach, where people are working together and formatting meanings in a group. As mentioned before, when people take actively part to the recovery of species, the outcome is more likely to be successful.

Local people and experts can also be engaged in research and monitoring, which seems to be beneficial for conservation science and practice (Elbroch et al. 2011, 1200). It is good to notice that in some conservation issues, it might be vital to involve also national and regional levels, and not only local communities (Clark & Wallace 2002, 92).

Studies show that effective problem solving in nature conservation requires public support and human social process (e.g. Pimbert & Pretty 1995; Clark & Wallace 2002; Robards & Lovcraft 2010). Local communities have also been noted to be the part of the solution for ending illegal wildlife trade (Biggs et al. 2017, 6). If local people are not engaged to conservation, conservation programs are more likely to fail since the support from local communities is vital (Robards & Lovcraft 2010, 274). It is important to include the public to conservation communication and inform them well, because the public has a great impact for both success and failure of conservation efforts; well-informed public can boost the success of conservation while poorly informed public can mean the end of innovative wildlife management (Jacobson & McDuff 2009, 303).

According to Pimbert and Pretty (1995), engaging the public in conservation activities, capacity building, and skill development is important for maintaining the support of local communities in a lasting way. If local communities are involved in planning, implementing, and maintaining projects for example in tourism, the results of those projects are likely to be more sustainable and effective than projects that are imposed by outside experts (Pimbert & Pretty 1995).

Studies show that communities living in natural resource management areas are more engaged and have for example more access to incentives than communities that are more difficult to reach. Thus, these communities might be responsible “for higher level of environmental degradation than other landholders”. There should be different communication strategies to reach different landholders, and in any case, communication is required to have greater engagement in natural resource management. (Morrison, Greig, Read, Waller, & McCulloch 2015.)

Painter and Kretser (2012, 358) suggest that when local communities are partners in conservation and engaging in conservation work, it also sends a great message for the decision-makers about the importance of nature conservation and the broad concern that requires attention. However, Sterling et al. (2017, 160) state that the question of how engagement impacts the actual outcomes of conservation has been given less attention than other questions in stakeholder engagement research – partly since it might be “difficult to evaluate, whether in terms of shifts in individual attitudes and behaviors or ecological effects”.

### 3.5 Lobbying

Lobbying means regularly influencing policy making, and it can be seen as a communication process. Lobbyists try to effectively shape their messaging to have an impact on decision making. (Milbrath 1960.) Zetter (2011, 3) defines lobbying as “the process of seeking to shape the public policy agenda in order to influence government (and its institutions) and the legislative programme”. Lobbying is a crucial part of conservation communication. When conservationists successfully influence political decision-makers, they can make the conservation angles linked to policy. (Hesselink & Zeidler 2012.)

Persuasive communication is part of lobbying. Key to effective lobbying is understanding how the shaping of effective communication works. (McGrath 2007, 278.) Since the communication environment is changing all the time, it is vital to be clear what the desired outcome is and which is the best communication channel to reach that (Zetter 2011, 91–92). With organizations such as NGOs, effective communication might relate to the overall success of the project, for example if successful lobbying affects to legislation or budget funding (Juholin 2013a, 36).

Lobbyist is one of the oldest professions; “whenever an individual or group wields power over society, there will be other individuals or groups of

individuals who will have tried to persuade them to exercise that power in a particular way". Thus, lobbying seems natural and, additionally, inevitable. When talking about the history of lobbying, one may go as far as the famous ancient Greece and Rome, where lobbyists were seeking to influence "senators and plebeians for or against the issues of the day". (Zetter 2011, 8.)

Jaatinen (2003) reminds that, today, one of the aims of lobbying is boosting the development of society and impacting the resolving of societal problems and issues. Lobbying requires constant communication and clarifying both current and future themes in the field in which the lobbying affects. When before lobbyist was communicating one-way to decision-makers, lobbying is changing to be more and more interactive and it requires negotiation between different groups. (Jaatinen 2003, 173–175.)

Interaction and dialogue between individuals are about changing ideas and meanings. Both the receiver and the sender of the message interprets the communication that occurs. Interactive communication can be seen as negotiation and creation of meanings, rather than just exchanging the thoughts and meanings. Lobbyists are not only handing out messages but they also expose themselves in interaction and influencing. (Jaatinen 2003, 34–36.)

When discussing lobbying, it is vital to note whether the lobbyist is influencing policy making through direct or indirect communication. Inside lobbying means influencing policymakers through direct interaction and communication, whereas outside lobbying means mobilizing the public and influencing policymakers in that manner (Beyers 2004, 213–214; Weiler & Brändli 2015, 746–747). Unlike inside lobbying, outside lobbying is indirect. Inside lobbying often occurs in closed doors (such as meetings and expert committees) when outside lobbying is happening in public sphere (such as media or demonstrations). (Beyers 2004, 213–215.)

Access to inside lobbying is established through being a trusted source of opinion. Outside lobbying might have as good impact as inside lobbying, but it is likely to be more high-profile and expensive. Sometimes organizations are aiming at outside lobbying rather than inside lobbying, especially if the main focus is in increasing the profile of the organization among stakeholders. (Zetter 2011, 37.)

Information is vital part of inside lobbying, for example when aiming to attract the attention of a politician. Thus, well-edited and summarized expert information is in general appreciated. (Weiler & Brändli 2015, 747.) However, as Beyers (2004, 218) highlight, decision-makers are aware lobbyists are interested in pursuing their own goals, which sometimes results in policymakers having consultations from different interest groups to avoid bias.

Additionally, Hesselink and Zeidler (2012, 127–129) suggest that when trying to influence policymakers regarding conservation efforts, it is vital that communication is used not only to promote scientific facts, but to make those facts relevant and interesting to the desired audience. That means that to be effective, well planned communication must be in the focus of lobbying; after the policymakers are aroused by the messages, they could be more willing to be open for conservation contents. Policymaker, as well as any other person, changes their opinions and practices more likely because they want to do so,

not because they are told to do so. That should be taken into account when planning communication and lobbying materials that are aiming at influencing the policymakers. Additionally, taking into account what the policymakers already know and think is vital; for the desired outcome, it is more effective to link communication to current knowledge and attitudes of the stakeholders rather than issues that might be vague or unappealing to the policymakers. (Hesselink & Zeidler 2012, 127-133.)

Outside lobbying can aim, for example, at gathering media coverage. To be able to pressure decision-makers, it is vital for organizations to attract media and public support. When organizations try to get media's attention by for example releasing press releases, they are more likely aiming for awareness raising within public, whereas mobilizing communities in actions such as demonstrations or boycotts, organizations attract media coverage through the public participation. (Tresch & Fischer 2015, 356-357.) One of the results of media strategies used by organizations according to Tresch and Fischer (2015, 368) is that "protests and mobilization do not have a news value per se, but their news value is dependent on who makes use of them".

Maintaining a relationship with journalists might result in having coverage in news segments (Tresch & Fischer 2015). Although, Beyers (2004) point out that being in a public arena does not in all cases mean trying to attract the largest possible audience. Sometimes the messaging is directed to some specific group. If there is for example article in Financial Times, it might not attract widespread audience but is widely read by the financial and business elite. (Beyers 2004, 214.)

Even though lobbying is targeted to affect political change and decision making, Jaatinen (2003) suggests that talented lobbyist also includes different levels of interest and participation in lobbying. That could be for example creating concern in media and public towards the subject under lobbying. In the end, lobbying is part of stakeholder management and creating stakeholder relationships. (Jaatinen 2003, 15-17.)

An average person can also participate in impacting the politics. That can happen for example through e-mails, letters, or demonstrations. Online activism can also occur for example through Twitter or other social media platforms. (Lorenzen, Gill, & Andreoni 2016, 380-383.)

Representing and pleading their cause is in the core of most NGOs (Hessenius 2007, 5). Lambell, Ramia, Nyland, and Michelotti (2008) remind that NGOs are vital communicators in influencing public opinion; NGOs are nowadays seen as a part of multi-actor network, working together with governments, multinational enterprises, and intergovernmental organizations, such as United Nations. As Junk (2016) underlines, NGOs are aiming for active participation from public and impacting policy-making.

Public is expecting influencing the policy, which is offered by having a relationship with decision-makers. Being visible in public arena offers NGOs reputation and public backing, which in some cases might be required to attract the attention of policymakers. Both arenas also offer financial resources, which are necessity for the survival of NGOs. However, sometimes NGOs might focus especially on either inside lobbying or outside lobbying, depending on what

kind of lobbying relationship is required for the survival of the organization. (Junk 2016, 238–239.) In any case, Hessenius (2007, 12) reminds that lobbying is important for the survival of NGOs to play in the same field as other businesses, and by the same rules.

For example, trying to achieve access to international negotiations is important lobbying channel for NGOs. Mobilizing stakeholders is one strategy for NGOs to raise the issues and public concern. That can happen through for example developing campaigns or organizing petitions, and attracting media coverage. Besides its effects on decision making, lobbying process raises awareness. (Szarka 2013.)

Hessenius (2007, 7) suggests that NGOs should create as much public pressure as possible. Singh and Rahman (2012, 145) propose that NGOs should include an educational component to their “lobbying for change in public policy and public perception”, as otherwise it would not be successful. By education, Singh and Rahman (2012, 145) do not only mean schooling youngsters but also communication that happens with stakeholders, public, and decision-makers.

Organizations, such as NGOs, might use, for example, appeals which aim to affect decision making. Organizations reach out to the public to sign petitions and join in the persuasion process. This kind of lobbying through the public could be effective since it raises public interest and concern, and might put the issue to the frame of the political decision making. (Lorenzen et al. 2016, 383–386.)

One example from a recent public participation and global persuasion movement that affected legislation could be found from action towards saving endangered marine species in Mexico. Leonardo DiCaprio, actor and conservationist, pledged on May 2017 together with different organizations, such as WWF, to ban illegal gillnets in Mexico’s Gulf of California to save critically endangered marine species, vaquita (DiCaprio 2017; WWF 2017b). Over 200,000 people around the world signed the online petition to save the vaquita, the rarest marine mammal and of which only less than 30 individuals still exist. In June 2017, the Government of Mexico, the Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation, and the Carlos Slim Foundation signed an agreement that included the permanent ban of the gillnets. (WWF 2017c; WWF 2017d.) Even though this recent lobbying campaign has not yet been scientifically evaluated, it is possible that the lobbying formed one reason for the urgent action taken to save the vaquita.

## 4 METHODOLOGY AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RESEARCH

This chapter introduces the qualitative interview and critical incident technique (CIT), which formed the core of the data gathering. Additionally, it emphasizes how the interviewees were selected and how the qualitative interviews were conducted. This chapter portrays the research data and explains how it was analyzed by utilizing thematic analysis.

### 4.1 Qualitative research and interview method

This research is qualitative. In qualitative research, data is typically collected by interviews, questionnaires, and observing. It can also be based on documents. Researcher can use different kind of data collection methods individually or combine them. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 71.) Research interviews are the main source of data for this research. It is very common to use interviews as a method to get information (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2014, 34). As a matter of fact, interviewing people to get data for the research is the most common data gathering procedure in qualitative research (King 2004, 11). In a qualitative interview as a research method, a common theme is more important than, say, the number of interviews or how in-depth the processing of the topic is (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2014, 48).

This research is not striving for generalization, as is typical for qualitative research (e.g. Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 85). It rather attempts to represent the researched phenomenon and understand certain situations and actions. In this research, this means representing individuals' thoughts about protecting endangered species and what is the role of communication in it. This research does not strive just describing the situations but it aims to form larger, social meanings. In qualitative research, it is not always about quantity but rather quality and broad view; researcher tries to position the research subject to its societal relations and give as wide historical view as possible (Eskola & Suoranta 2014, 18).

As it is typical for qualitative research, there are no finalized presuppositions on the research topic and this research is not built on hypothesis. Even though all observations are charged with our own experiences and knowledge, those factors do not outline the research configurations – quite the contrary, the researcher is learning new things and, in a way, is being surprised as the research goes on. In qualitative research, researcher finds out new points of views rather than tries to verify their own assumptions. (Eskola & Suoranta 2014, 19–20.)

Theory and context of this research are built around and from empirical data, which is typical for an analysis that is based on research data (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 95). Even though theory does not have to outline the research, theory helps to find out relevant factors from research data and makes the dialogue between data and previous research more pleasing. Additionally, theory is helpful when reflecting the generalization and representativeness of the research. (Eskola & Suoranta 2014, 82–84.)

There are different terms that one may use about qualitative interview method. King (2004, 11) notes that terminology is often a problem and “the types of interview which fit this label are variously referred to as ‘depth’, ‘exploratory’, ‘semi-structured’, or ‘un-structured’”. Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2014, 47) call their qualitative interview method ‘thematic interview’ (teemahaastattelu); they state that some aspects of the interview are predetermined but not all, there are no strict questionnaires, interviews do not have to last the exact same time, and questions may vary between the interviews. For example, Patton’s (2015, 438) term ‘interview guide approach’ has the same explanation for the term: topics and issues are predetermined but “interviewer decides the sequence and wording of questions in the course of interview”.

King (2004, 11) uses the term ‘qualitative research interview’ and states that all qualitative interview methods have certain characteristics in common; such as the fact that their focus is not on abstract level or in general opinions but in interviewees own experiences. King (2004, 11) describes that “the goal of any qualitative research interview is therefore to see the research topic from the perspective of the interviewee, and to understand how and why they come to have particular perspective”. As Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2014, 48) note, when interviews are based rather on predetermined themes than predetermined questions, it gives more voice for the interviewees and helps the researcher to understand that the views and thoughts of interviewees are critical and important.

To get as broad view of the phenomenon as possible, this research exploits interview guide in interview formatting. Interview guide lists topics that the interviewer should try to cover during the interview, and it also suggests probes that could be used to “follow-up responses and elicit greater detail from participants”. Interview guide is developing all the time; it does not stop when the first interview starts. Instead, it can be modified, “adding probes or even whole topics which had not been originally included, but have emerged spontaneously in interviews; dropping or re-formulating those which are incomprehensible to participants or consistently fail to elicit responses in any way relevant to the research question(s)”. (King 2004, 15.)

According to King (2004), researcher must realize their own role. Even though interviewer's role is not in the focus of the interview, qualitative research interview is not 'relationship-free'. Interviewer responds to interviewees answers and actively shapes the course of the interview. (King 2004, 11.) In general, recognizing the prejudices is important. In this research, too, the researcher had the idea before conducting this research that communication might play some kind of role in nature conservation. Additionally, the past role of researcher working at WWF was taken into account, so that the prejudices or relations would not affect the ethics of this research. In accordance with phenomenologist-hermeneutical tradition, the researcher of this study is aware of their own prejudices (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 96) and was actively taking them into account during the different phases of the research.

It can be argued that it is impossible to avoid mixing one's own views, thoughts, and values with the research subject but at least researcher can try to recognize these thoughts; objectivity starts with recognizing subjectivity (Eskola & Suoranta 2014, 17). Remembering these axioms were helpful during the interviews and in the analysis of this research, as the assumptions of the precedent could be taken critically into consideration throughout the whole research process.

## 4.2 Critical incident technique (CIT)

Within the qualitative interview, this research exploits the critical incident technique (CIT) as one of the themes of the interview guide. CIT-inspired theme of this research is focusing on one specific case; rhino conservation in Chitwan. That is considered to be a great conservation success story since constant conservation efforts have resulted in increasing rhino numbers and improving habitats, and attitudes, towards wildlife.

The CIT was first introduced by Flanagan (1954), who defined the methodology as follows:

*"The critical incident technique consists of a set of procedures for collecting direct observations of human behavior in such a way as to facilitate their potential usefulness in solving practical problems and developing broad psychological principles. The critical incident technique outlines procedures for collecting observed incidents having special significance and meeting systematically defined criteria. By an incident is meant any observable human activity that is sufficiently complete in itself to permit inferences and predictions to be made about the person performing the act. To be critical, an incident must occur in a situation where the purpose or intent of the act seems fairly clear to the observer and where its consequences are sufficiently definite to leave little doubt concerning its effects."* (Flanagan 1954, 327.)

CIT can be exploited together with interviews. Researcher can look for commonalities from the themes and incidents that arise from the collected data. During the analysis, CIT "enables the researcher to relate context, strategy and outcomes, to look for repetition in patterns, and thus to build up a picture of tactics for handling difficult situations". This is an advantage for the researcher,

since it gives “first hand evidence of the relationship between context and outcome”. (Chell 2004, 45–47.) Keeping this in mind, it was also useful to use the CIT as an inspiration for one of the themes of this research.

In CIT, themes are raised from the collected research data, which means that it exploits largely unstructured interviews (Chell 2004, 47). This is a good premise in this research, too, since the interviews are semi-structured and theoretical background is raised from the collected data. Only the subject of the study and the themes of the interviews were predetermined in this research. Whatever thoughts interviewees have or whatever incidents inside the theme they describe are not directed. This way qualitative interview method together with the CIT in this research are more in the unstructured than structured direction. As Chell (2004, 48) states, “the objective is to gain an understanding of the incident from the perspective of the individual”, which this research also believes in.

With CIT, researcher can outline reasons behind certain actions (Flanagan 1954, 328). This is useful in this research, since it seeks to find out the reasoning for communication and its usage in a case organization. This research aims to find answers to the question “What is the role and general aim of communication in protecting endangered species?”.

In most situations, there are differences between the thoughts persons have about the general aim of the activity. In this research’s case, this means communication and its role. However, this does not mean that some interviewees are correct and others are wrong, or that a researcher could not aim to find the objective and acceptable general aim for the activity. (Flanagan 1954, 336–337.)

### 4.3 Selecting the interviewees

It is vital for this research to try to understand what kind of actions and communication affects people that are linked to conservation work and how communication could change, weaken, or strengthen their views. This goal is reached by focusing on a case organization, WWF Nepal, and interviewing individuals linked to its work.

To get as broad view of the phenomenon as possible, 20 individuals interviewed were selected as follows; ten professionals working at WWF Nepal’s office in Kathmandu, two professionals working at WWF Nepal’s field office in Chitwan, two communication professionals of WWF Nepal, one government representative, one media representative, and four individuals living in Chitwan Valley (two volunteers of community-based anti-poaching unit, one entrepreneur, and one president of the buffer zone users committee).

The interviewees were selected to get a broad, 360-degree view from different stakeholders engaging in conservation; WWF Nepal’s aim is to protect endangered species, and community members that were interviewed live in the buffer zone area and participate in conservation. Media has an informative role that affects conservation, and the government of Nepal leads all conservation

programs in Nepal. Although the interviewees share different backgrounds, this is by no means a problem for the quality of this research. On the contrary, different backgrounds and stakeholder relationships make it possible to study the subject versatile.

When researching a specific topic, it might not be pleasing to pick research group randomly. Researcher should rather choose individuals that are linked to the topic. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 85–86; Eskola & Suoranta 2014, 18.) Thus, in this context, we can talk about elite sampling; selecting interviewees based on the fact that they have knowledge of the researched topic (e.g. Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 86). For this reason, for example people who are not aware of nature conservation in Nepal were not interviewed for this research.

There was no dependency between the researcher and the interviewees which would have influenced the ethics or reliability of the provided information (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2014, 55). Additionally, WWF did not have any role in formatting the questions or determining the course of the interviews, or the contents of the research for that matter. Instead, having connections in the case organization helped the researcher in enabling the research altogether; WWF Nepal provided contacts and helped to arrange the meetings with the interviewees for this research. None of the interviewees were pressured to participate in this research.

### **Pilot interview**

Before the data gathering, a pilot interview was implemented. Even though this interview was not included to the analysis, it gave great feedback that was beneficial for the actual research interviews. It also showed some shortage in the interview guide, which were rectified before the data gathering. The pilot interview was for example too structured and leaning too much on predetermined questions. Realizing this gave the researcher an understanding to use more semi-structured interview guide with the actual research interviews.

However, when formatting the interview guide it seemed difficult to the researcher to predetermine themes or discover the questions because of the lack of theoretical backing. Usually themes base on theoretical background (e.g. Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2014). Due to this it was even more important that the pilot interview was implemented before the actual data gathering. Questions and themes were formatted to more understandable and reasonable direction before the actual research interviews.

The critical incident technique (CIT) was not part of the pilot interview. The pilot interview showed that having one focused theme could help interviewees to give more examples from concrete situations. This is when the CIT-inspired theme (rhino conservation in Chitwan) was decided to be part of the actual research interviews. It was chosen that the CIT-inspired theme should be the last theme of the interviews so that the theme would not put too much focus on one specific situation and that it would be possible to gain information from other incidents and situations.

#### 4.4 Implementation of the interviews

The interviews were implemented in Nepal during February and March of 2017. The qualitative interviews were carried out as individual interviews with the exception of one case where two of the interviewees wanted to discuss at the same occasion. This was not seen as a problem for the research. The locations where the interviews took part were selected based on the fact that the interviewees must get to the place easily and that interviews could be held with closed doors. Thirteen of the all twenty interviews were implemented in Kathmandu and the remainder seven in Chitwan Valley. Some of the interviewees wanted that the interview was held in a public place or a place where some other people might cross the place. In all cases, the situation and the location was completely in the decision of the interviewee.

Before the actual implementation of the interviews, all interviewees were asked to allot at least one hour to the interview, two if possible. None of the interviews were interrupted or ended ahead of time because the lack of allotted time. Additionally, the interviewees were informed how the situation is going to proceed and that the interviews would be handled anonymously. The interviewees were also told that they do not need to have any specific data with them and that everything discussed during the interview is about their own thoughts, opinions, and experiences.

All interviews were recorded by using two recording devices to make sure that the research data would record correctly. Recording devices were iPhone's voice recorder app and Olympus recorder. All interviewees knew that the interviews will be recorded.

All interviews with the exception of two were held completely in English. One interview was implemented partly by using an interpreter and one interview was held completely by using an interpreter. The interpreter was not familiar to the interviewees beforehand and there was no conflict of interest. The interpreter translated the questions from English to Nepali and answers from Nepali to English. The interpreter knew that the researcher had the opportunity to use an outside interpreter to make sure that they did not distort the truth, which gave the researcher confidence to believe that the interpreter did not have any interest in distorting the truth.

Before starting the interviews, the interviewees were told that the research data is handled anonymously. The interviewees were aware that, if needed, the researcher would ask some follow-up questions after they have shared their thoughts about the themes discussed. Since the used interview method was semi-structured, researcher had predetermined list of questions that could be used if necessary.

It was important when formatting the interview guide that the interviewees would not be imposed with communication or pressed to talk about communicative factors, but that communicative factors and actions would be raised from the answers and discussed more broadly after that. The interviewees were told that they had the possibility to talk flexibly about the subjects they see that are relevant regarding the research subject. In the theme that was focusing on

communication, only questions and defined examples of topics that were previously raised in the interview, were asked. This theme was formed sort of as a probe to raise more examples of the communicative factors.

Before every interview, the interviewees were also explained the purpose of the research; that it is researching what is the role of communication in protecting endangered species and that it is about the work of WWF Nepal. They were also explained the main subjects of the research; what communication, conservation, and stakeholder is meant in the research. They were explained that communication is meant to consist all situations where any kind of communication occurs. They were told that even not giving information is communication. Conservation was explained to mean especially the conservation of endangered species. Stakeholder was explained to include all individuals, organizations, and other actors that either affect or are affected by the work of WWF Nepal.

All interviewees were not asked the same questions. Varying between interview questions was needed since the interviewees came from different backgrounds; it was vital that with for example WWF communication officers the interview situations were more focused on the communicative side of conservation, with WWF field staff with the field work, and with communities with their perspective as a stakeholder, and so on. That is why, as Annex 1 shows, there were different questions formed for different interviewees, based on their background. It was not meaningful for the research to ask questions for example about the age or sex. These factors would not have been meaningful to analyze and for that reason were not asked.

The research interviews focused on four themes that were discussed with every interviewee; enabling factors in conservation, challenges in conservation, communication in conservation, and what are the critical incidents that has happened in Chitwan to make rhino conservation successful.

The last theme focusing on rhino conservation in Chitwan is inspired by the critical incident technique (CIT). The first three themes of the interviews were more about abstract level of conservation, and CIT was selected to be part of the research interviews to make the last theme more focused. The CIT-inspired theme was helpful tool to get the interviewees to go back in time and give examples from one specific case.

When exploiting the CIT, it is normal to ask questions that are based on some suggested time frame; for example, what critical incidents have happened in the last five years (Chell 2004). In this research, the time frame of the CIT-inspired theme was rhino conservation in Nepal. The subject was selected since broad conservation in Nepal started with the focus on rhinoceros and the conservation successes in Chitwan, including four zero rhino poaching years, are considered to be great achievements in conservation. All interviews were familiar with the rhino story of Chitwan in prior to the interviews. CIT as a method was explained to the interviewees briefly and rhino story was introduced as one of the themes before moving to the final theme.

During the CIT-inspired theme part of the interview, the interviewees had a chance to use an A4 paper that had a line on it. This is a good way in CIT to gain information from the interviewees; it is easier to go back in time when you

have a timeline ahead of you (Chell 2004). Some interviewees did not want to fill the line themselves, so in those cases the researcher was using the pen instead and together discussing with the interviewees filled the incidents to the timeline. It was found out to be convenient that someone is drawing and writing; in a way, it helped the interviewees to focus on the critical factors they felt that are important. These papers were also part of the collected research data.

After every interview, the interviewees were asked if they have anything else they would like to add. It was also asked if the interviewees could give any additional information after the interview situation if the interviewer would like to know more about some theme or other issue discussed. All the interviewees answered in the affirmative.

## 4.5 Research data

All in all, there were 20 interviews that together lasted for 31 hours (1,867 minutes). Interviews lasted from 50 minutes to 2 hours 34 minutes. Average length of one interview was 1 hour 33 minutes. All interviews were transcribed, making a total of 292 A4 papers (759,236 characters) of transcribed material. However, all transcribed material was not included in the analysis. What was left out was for example conversations that were clearly about something else than this research or its topics; such as personal conversations. Also, not everything was transcribed; repeated words and colloquialisms which could break the anonymity of the interviewees were left out. Only the researcher has had access to the material of this research. After transcribing and analyzing the data, all tapes were destroyed properly.

All interviews were named with their own codes; INT1, INT2, and so on. All interviews were transcribed and coded in a random order to keep them anonymous. For protection of the anonymity, interviews are not coded after the position of the interviewees or the stakeholder groups. It is not significant for this research to categorize the interviewees or to analyze them within different groups. All topics that were analyzed and themed did not rise in all interviews. However, it did not affect the credibility of this research; this research is not comparative, it rather aims to build a holistic and broad view of the phenomenon, and thus all communicative factors that were underlined as important factors in conservation were given the same value.

To be able to provide the promised protection of anonymity, the disclosure of identity has been made as difficult as possible during the analysis (Eskola & Suoranta 2014, 57). In addition to coding the interviews in random order, this means that for personal comments, such as words or sentences that would reveal the identity of an interviewee, the researcher has replaced the revealing word with anonymous form that explains the meaning.

In practice, this could be for example replacing the word we/they (if interviewee was from WWF Nepal and referring to their workplace or from stakeholder group and referring to WWF Nepal) by using the form [WWF Nepal]. The replacing was used only within citations that would reveal the identi-

ty; not in all cases that would reveal the interviewee group if that was not important for the protection of anonymity. Modifying all personal forms from citations would have made the text difficult to read and there could have been a chance for the researcher to present the thoughts of the interviewees wrongly. In some citations, the language has been modified to be more readable. This was also important for the protection of anonymity, so that the interviewees could not be identified by the manners or some certain recognizable spelling they might have.

#### 4.6 Thematic analysis

Research data was analyzed by using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is the recommended method when research aims at finding essential information for practical research problem (Eskola & Suoranta 2014, 179). The analysis started with reading and re-reading transcripts of the interviews to understand the vital points and to be able to point out some critical factors, themes. According to thematic analysis, the most important factors and key topics of the research problem were separated from the broad transcript (Eskola & Suoranta 2014, 176).

Each transcribed interview was first analyzed individually and then together to get more holistic perspective of the phenomenon. In general, it is typical for qualitative research that researcher goes from individual findings and observations to more general claims (Eskola & Suoranta 2014, 83).

Carrying out the analysis, the transcribed research material was read and re-read for several times. During the first reading, interesting topics relating the research subject were highlighted. During the second time of the reading, research phenomenon was viewed more focused through each interview and quotes from each interview were selected to represent these findings. The researcher was looking for commonalities as well as differences and formed themes based on the findings. After this, transcribed material was once again read to make sure that the founded themes were comprehensive and that the researcher did not miss out something important. The idea of the analysis is not to show how many times some themes occur or how many times something was said, but it rather aims to show the broad, holistic meanings regarding the research subject.

Figure 1, which is introduced on the next page, shows the different phases of the analysis that the researcher went through, and how the three final themes were ultimately formed.

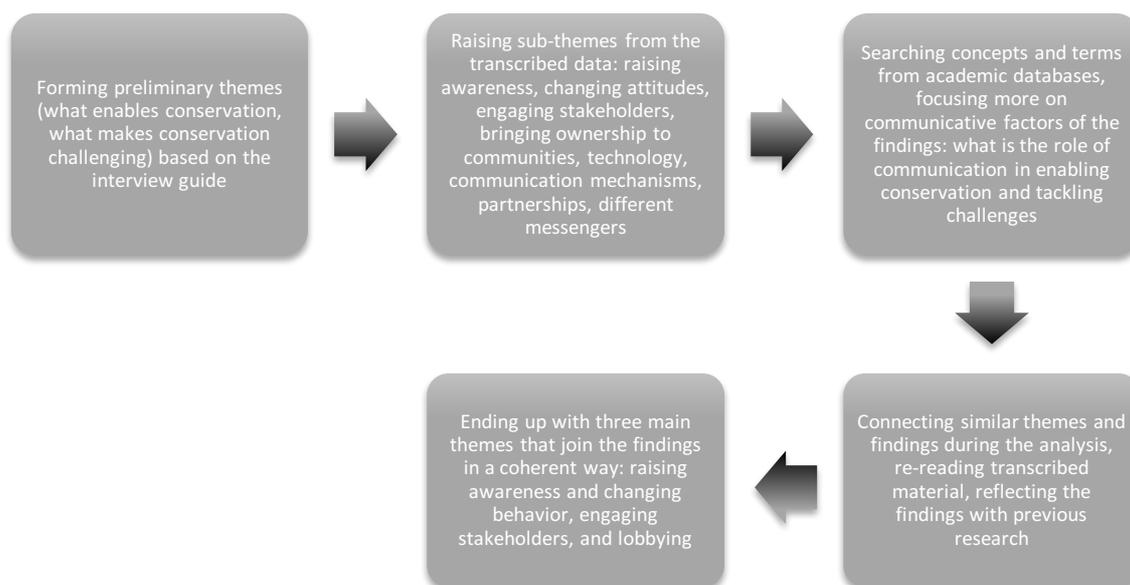


FIGURE 1 The phases of the analysis.

In the beginning of the analysis, the researcher was focusing on two themes – what makes conservation possible and what are the challenges in conservation – which were also in the focus of the qualitative interviews. Then actions, such as bringing ownership to communities and the role of partnerships, were raised from the material as sub-themes. When forming the themes based on this division, the researcher noted that the sub-themes overlap heavily with each other and that it would be difficult to form the findings in a coherent way. In this phase, the researcher went through academic databases and searched for previous research based on concepts and terms raised from the data; such as ownership, engagement, awareness, and stakeholders. When getting familiar with previous research, the researcher noted that in this research, it would be wise to link similar sub-themes together, and all in all focus in communicative factors in themes; altogether, the aim of this research is to find out what is the role of communicative factors in conservation.

When analyzing the data, the researcher went constantly through what they are looking for from the material; emphasis on research issues and problems, what role does communication have and where it is displayed, how communication is perceived, and what kind of communication there is in the first place. The researcher did not focus solely on the issues mentioned directly as communicative factors, but was addressing communication in a wider context; for example, if an interviewee was discussing how important it is to convince different stakeholders and engage them through dialogue, this process was seen as communication.

Thus, communication is seen in this study as a whole, and this was kept in mind when doing the analysis; the researcher was looking for extensive communication, and not just the most traditional communication elements. This was a good solution regarding the broad premise of this thesis, also as it was not clear to all interviewees what are the roles of communication professionals,

or what communication professionals actually do. It was therefore wiser to concentrate on broader communication; especially since there were not only WWF staff members included in the interviews but also stakeholders. Since the interviewees were also other than just representatives of the case organization, it would not have been suitable to investigate, for example, how the case organization plans their communication, as not all respondents had this kind of experience.

As the Figure 1 (pp. 47) shows, the researcher started to link theory to the findings during the analysis. Even though theory did not determine the findings of this research, findings were reflected with theory. Thus, pure inductive inference did not occur. Between pure inductive and deductive inference, theory-bounded research can be discussed to exist. In theory-bounded research, the analysis of the material is not strictly based on theory nor is it strictly based on data; links to theory can be observed, but theory does not determine the analysis (Eskola 2010, 182).

Theory-bounded research can be called as abductive research (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009). This research is based on abductive approach; even though theory did not determine the course of collecting the research data, nor did it determine the analysis, theory and previous research has been exploited when forming meanings during the analysis. As it is typical with abductive research, previous knowledge regarding this research is not theory-testing but it rather opens up new paths for thinking (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009).

Even though the research interviews are the prime data for this research, it is important to note that prior to the interviews the interviewer had knowledge of the research subject and was familiar with the conservation in Nepal, including its history and different phases. This prior knowledge helped the researcher during the analysis, as it is common in abductive research in general. Noting this already shifts the research and its analysis from inductive towards theory-bounded approach.

It can be argued that pure inductive inference is not even possible, since it is based on the description of mere observations without any preconceptions about the studied phenomenon. Absolute data-based research is difficult to implement because findings are generally theory-based. Thus, there are no objective observations since for example the concepts and methods implemented are set by the researcher and affect the results. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 96.)

During the analysis, the researcher was looking for communicative factors raised by the interviewees from the research data. Themes were formed by asking research questions from the research material and by forming meanings about the subjects mentioned by the interviewees. Themes that were raised during the analysis are not the same as they were in the interview guide. Since the researcher had no hypothesis or theory behind them before the data gathering, it was logical for the interview situations to find out the communicative factors by talking about what makes conservation possible and what makes it challenging, and all the other factors that are linked to conservation. By observing the answers and analyzing the data, the researcher ended up having three themes; raising awareness and changing behavior, engaging stakeholders, and lobbying. These themes are discussed within the next chapter.

## 5 ROLE OF COMMUNICATION: RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this research and themes raised from the research data are introduced and discussed within this chapter. Since the theory was reflected on with the findings during the analysis, the conclusions made from earlier research are highlighted and discussed within the results.

All themes were viewed from communication's point of view in the analysis, keeping the research problem and research questions (RQs) in mind. To refresh the memory of these matters, the research problem is what kind of role communication has in conservation work and achievements. The research questions are:

RQ1: How is the purpose of communication perceived in protecting endangered species?

RQ2: What kind of communicative factors are perceived as important in conservation?

RQ3: How could communication be used as a tool in resolving challenges in conservation to the opinions of the individuals interviewed?

This chapter is formed as follows; First, the link between the main predetermined themes (what makes conservation both possible and challenging) and the themes raised during the analysis (raising awareness and changing behavior, engaging stakeholders, and lobbying) are compared and discussed in the light of the aim of this research. This first subchapter gives answers to RQ1 and RQ3. Then, the themes raised during the analysis are introduced and explained. These subchapters (5.2, 5.3, and 5.4) elaborate on RQ2 and show the different communicative factors that are perceived as important in conservation. As the results introduced in these subchapters indicate, many of the themes overlap with each other; when talking about awareness, the interviewees underlined that it is important to engage the audiences or raise the awareness in political

level through lobbying. Thus, same topics might be highlighted in different subchapters of the results.

Finally, a summarizing chapter of important communicative factors is introduced. What came up during the analysis is that the rhino conservation story of Chitwan, which was in the core of theme inspired by the critical incident technique (CIT), is something that included all communicative factors that were mentioned to be important during the interviews. This last subchapter summarizes the findings in one case.

## **5.1 Effective conservation requires effective communication**

Prior to the data gathering, the researcher wanted to know whether communication has a role in conservation, and if so, what kind of role that is. That role was searched during the interviews with two main questions in mind; what makes conservation possible and what makes it challenging. Above all, the researcher wanted to find out what is the role and purpose of communication in the whole conservation process.

It became clear during the analysis that the communicative factors raised from the research data are additionally holding the answers to the questions mentioned above, as everything is based on communication. Even though the interviewees did not point out that communication is the only matter that affect conservation, the whole process of making a conservation project successful would be impossible without communication. Communication is linked to conservation in every possible way, and its role and effectiveness should not be underestimated.

In summary, the purpose of communication was clearly perceived as highly important by the interviewees. Without communication, nothing would work. People have to be in touch with each other, and there is a need for dialogue when trying to achieve conservation goals.

In addition to this, when trying to solve conservation problems, communication again has a great role. Without discussing the problems, without interaction between stakeholders, and without having proper communication, problems that are in the way of successful conservation could not be tackled. The main challenges in protecting endangered species the interviewees raised were poaching, habitat fragmentation, and human-wildlife conflict. Even though these challenges are strongly linked with broad social issues, such as economy and development, when trying to address these issues there is a need for communication and dialogues. As the interviewees pointed out, poorly informed public and stakeholders can mean an end to even the most innovative projects.

Even though communication is not the only solution for everything – if there is a need for a fence, only talking about the fence will not solve the problem but the actual building of the fence should happen – still, everything seems to start with communication. And when communication is handled properly, planned carefully, and used strategically, it can truly help conservation and boost its success.

Themes that were raised from the research material include different communicative factors and actions. First theme, raising awareness and changing behavior, is in the base of all conservation communication. To be able to engage stakeholders, which is the second theme, stakeholders and other target audiences have to be aware and know how their actions affect their lives and surroundings. The third theme, lobbying, is the communicative factor that engages decision-makers and tries to affect both their behavior and attitudes towards wildlife. As a conclusion of the results of this research, communication is strongly linked with protecting endangered species and tackling the problems that are in the way of conservation. Thus, when trying to find out what both enables and challenges conservation, it seems inevitable that there has to be discussion about communication.

## 5.2 Awareness and action are critical for change

Raising awareness, building knowledge, and communication that is aiming at behavior change are highly important in nature conservation. Although awareness alone does not necessarily lead to changes in attitudes and behavior, consciousness is an important basis for the change. People must be aware of the prevailing circumstances and how their behavior can affect their own and surrounding environments' future. As Kollmuss and Agyeman (2002, 250) state, to be able to change behavior in a conscious way to act eco-friendly, people have to have knowledge of the current situation. Thus, there has to be knowledge and action to be able to have change (Singh & Rahman 2012, 150).

The interviewees of this research emphasized the need for awareness and growth of it on the basis of all conservation activities. Communication is needed to make people aware of the issues. The interviewees felt that constant communication efforts have resulted in changing attitudes towards conservation and engaging policymakers.

By communicating with people, conservation issues can be linked to people's own emotions and life, making the change of behavior more feasible. The interviewees pointed out similar issues as Roeser (2012); after understanding and valuing the subject, people can change their behavior. That should be taken into account in communication; when communication is based on the needs of the target audience, the change is more likely to happen.

Attitudes can change once you know the value of it only. If you don't value that thing, no matter how much I tell you, your attitude will not change. So the most important thing is that how you are going to propose that value to the right stakeholder. And if he or she does value that proposition, it could be through dialogue or giving them incentives, then only that will create a change in attitudes. Otherwise if you cannot create that, I think the attitude will never ever change. (INT17)

People tend to be ignorant about things or they tend to have a negative attitude because of lack of awareness or because they don't see them getting benefitted. At those stages when if I'm not concerned about anything or if anything is happening and it's not affecting me in any way, then I would not be bothered about it; "as long as it's

not affecting me, I'm fine". Or it has to, I have to like see "oh if I do this, it is going to benefit me in a long run". (INT13)

Although this research is not focusing for example on any particular communication event and cannot point out any absolute truths about what is the role or impact of communication in it, the interviewees mentioned that, in their perception, communication is changing the actual behaviors and thus impacting conservation efforts. This came up for example during the CIT-inspired theme about rhino conservation in Chitwan, when an interviewee pointed out that due to awareness and conservation activities, poaching in Chitwan has decreased and local communities<sup>1</sup> are engaged to conservation.

There was a time when people actually used to harbor poachers because they were part of community and they protected people from their community. But now, given the broad understanding of anti-poaching and the threats of poaching, communities now report back to the government and to the WWF in fact, if they notice something suspicious. (INT1)

In Nepal, communicating with local communities has helped conservation partners to realize what is the situation in the community and what are the barriers in the way of pro-environmental behavior. Studies show that discovering the barrier helps in removing it (McKenzie-Mohr & Schultz 2014, 36). The interviewees stressed that gut feeling is not enough; it is vital to ground the actual gaps locally and try to find the accurate solutions. In searching for the gaps, communication is a vital tool. Studies also show that communication that is targeting to the beliefs of target audience is more likely to be effective than communication that is based on guesswork (Brown et al. 2010, 885).

Communication is power. If people don't know anything, then there are different types of issues. So, to aware the people, communication is the most, you know, proper communication is needed for the understanding things. So, first of all, we have to know about what is exactly happened there. If something is happening, we have to know about the all the exact, you know, the issue. Then, only then can, we can solve the problem by different interventions. Otherwise we don't know. So, the communication is very crucial to solve any problem. (INT8)

Sometimes the problem could be, for example, that wildlife has started to roam in the buffer zone area, and that has caused fear in local communities. Or the issue might be that people do not know how to behave with wildlife, or what are the benefits of conservation. After recognizing the barrier and removing it, by for example installing a fence or informing people how to act with wildlife, the problematic situations and behaviors have been noted to change.

Communication was highlighted to be important in both enabling conservation and resolving conservation challenges. When people are not aware, they might act against the wildlife. When people are aware and know the benefits, laws, and mechanisms that affect the wildlife and themselves, conservation efforts are more effective. Additionally, Nepal has compensation schemes in case of casualties, and to make people aware of the incentives, there is a need for

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<sup>1</sup> For the convenience of the reader; throughout the results, *local communities* (or in short *communities*) stand for communities living next to protected areas.

communication; incentives and alternative mechanisms work only if people are aware.

Due to lack of awareness, with the problem they [local communities] are facing they can't work for the conservation, so you have to tackle that problem. If you can create awareness and show the benefit of the conservation, then they will help you with the conservation as well. If you can raise awareness, make them aware that if you conserve that particular species, it should benefit to them as well. For example, people will come and see that rhino in that area so it will create a lot of employment opportunities as well. So these kind of if you show them, then they will be aware and change their behavior. (INT15)

Lack of information increases the anger towards wildlife. They don't know about the values of wildlife, values of other things. If something happens, a wild animal comes and attack people, and people don't know why that is happening and what they should do to minimize the conflict, they get angry. Because of lack of information and awareness. So information is very important to them. They don't know about the facilities or what they get after this and this kind of incidents, we should give them that kind of information. They don't know how to get good information, what are the facilities, they don't know. So communication is very important. (INT5)

In addition to recognizing what affects human behavior, it is important to take into account the animal behavior. The interviewees stressed that as important as it is to make people aware of their own behavior and consequences their actions have, they should also know how species behave. When knowing the typical behavior of, for example, rhino or tiger and knowing how to behave when crossing the paths with them, the possibility of conflict when an animal comes to the village might get minimized.

If you know the behavior, tiger, rhino and some other animal, it's safe. If you are staying around the national park and the jungle, you must know the value of jungle, value of the tiger, rhino and their behavior. Then it stops casualty which happen sometimes. (INT10)

If you don't know how to behave with the animals, then it becomes problem. (INT20)

Recognizing the behavior of species, and understanding how human behavior affects animals, is interesting and important topic to discuss, especially since the human-wildlife conflicts are expected to increase in Nepal in the future. The population of animals are increasing in Nepal due to successful conservation, but at the same time human population is also growing. However, habitats are getting decreased. It is therefore essential for people to know how the actions of individuals can contribute both to their own safety and living conditions, and to nature conservation.

In conservation, success starts with communication; if there is not knowledge from both sides of what creates the problems and what are the solutions for the problems, and how the local communities perceive different things, it is impossible to do the right thing. The interviewees mentioned that whenever there is a problem or challenge with conservation, the way to resolve it is through communication; by interacting with people, discussing with stakeholders, and trying to find the solution together. Communication creates the environment and base for awareness, behavior change, and mutual trust.

The interviewees felt that if people do not interact with each other properly and constantly, long-lasting problem solving would be difficult. It is important to have a dialogue between stakeholders; *dos* and *don'ts* does not work, there has to be mutual understanding. Conservation success is linked with dialogues and convincing communication.

When there's a conflict, when there's a misunderstanding, the only thing that we can change is through the communication, appropriate communication. (INT11)

I think all of those activities that we [WWF Nepal] have been able to do is all about the fact that we have been able to convince local people with our communicating skills. (INT18)

It is also important to recognize and remember that to be able to change attitudes and raise awareness, it takes time. If for example conservation organization like WWF wants to change attitudes, then they have to be patient and invest time in the process.

It's [changing behavior] something which you have to give time. Because you just can't go to community today and say this is good and this is bad and imagine they are going to convert to good and not bad in a day or two. You have to have patience to ensure your message is sort of flood well, it sort of reaches as many people as possible and then they get to understand it. So, that's why for conservation it has been in terms of attitude changes it has been very long, painful yet impactful process. (INT1)

### 5.2.1 Remember your target audience

In protecting endangered species, showing the results and informing people about the outcomes of their actions is important to make the behavior change possible and sustainable. Being able to show the actual results of conservation projects and programs was seen as important; whether the results are economic, social, or environmental. Awareness raising and communication happens in different methods and approaches, based on the target audience.

The interviewees highlighted that when planning and implementing messages and interaction, it is important to remember that everything should be done with the target audience in mind. Awareness raising is aiming at behavior change, and different target groups are triggered by different communication tools. With some stakeholder group, data-based information might be the best way to reach the audience, and with some other stakeholders for example videos or posters might have the best results. In that sense, it is required to ponder what kind of message works with each stakeholder and target audience in a long run and in the most effective way.

It's not one size fits all; different target audiences need different awareness and different types of communication so that communication can become more effective. (INT20)

Providing the things [local communities] need, attitudes can change, and also with different awareness programs. By teaching or by, you know, the different activities trying the different activities like street drama or different, you know, the message broadcast from radio or something, different awareness program. Also, we try to change their attitude. (INT8)

So maybe the local people, they know, the stakeholders we [WWF Nepal] work with they know, but some of the outer societies they might not be aware with our work or with conservation work. So we can develop some materials to them as well. I mean audience based materials, we have to develop audience based materials. For local people, for grass-root level, we can develop very simple things. Very simple thing that can, for our mass areas, we can provide them but for external society we can have different type of communication things. (INT2)

Media also plays an important role in raising awareness and, at the same time, changing behavior. Through media, messages go to larger masses than, for example, workshops or street dramas might do. Media may also sometimes be the only channel if a person cannot participate in an activity of the community.

Every Nepalese people have their own culture. And if culture and nature are linked, it is easy to communicate with people about conservation. [...] Communication tools are different; different people, different tools. [...] Some are very effective by the paper, some are very effective by the FM [radio], some are very effective by street drama, cultural performs, or the interaction meeting. That depends upon the locality and the culture of people also. We see the culture, in the Muslim area it is not allowed for the women of the Muslim to participate in big gathering and that time maybe the FM is useful. What is the scenario of the locals, we choose the tools and types accordingly in that area. (INT14)

The above citation is a good example of the role of media, and also how important it is to take local cultures into account when planning messages. The interviewees underlined that awareness raising that is aiming at behavior change is more likely to be successful if local culture has been taken into account from the beginning. The closer the message is to the recipient, and the more specific it is thought how it suits the culture and habits of the target audience, the more likely it is that raised awareness will lead to changes in behavior.

If the local culture is not taken into account when planning the communication methods, it is difficult to get the message understood and, in some cases, even accessible. Previous research also supports the importance of understanding and valuing the local culture; it helps in creating trust with local communities, and the more there is trust, the more sustainable the conservation programs are (Baral 2012, 49).

And sometimes if you just devastate the culture then people do not believe and then the attitude may not be changed. So we have to develop some harmony within the culture to have, how culture and conservation is interlinked. (INT2)

Planning the message with keeping the target audience in mind is vital. The interviewees explained that when the communication is planned, it should always be modified for the target audience. For illiterate people, for example, the interviewees said that it is not wise to use text-based communication. In those cases, it is more convenient to use for example cultural performances, such as street drama, which is popular communication method used in Nepal.

In addition to culture, recognizing the language and barriers it might cause is important. The tool or message may be correct, but language may form a wall between the message's comprehension and internalization. Nepal has more than 120 languages, and while most of the people understand Nepali, and especially among young people English is spoken more and more, it is essential

to take the language of the audience into consideration, particularly in the field. Previous research also shows that taking the language of the target audience into account is vital part of effective communication (Singh & Rahman 2012).

Language is an overall problem in Nepal. Sometimes it is a barrier for communicating. When the people don't communicate properly, their behavior and attitude don't change. That's why I learned [the language of the majority of the people] I work with. When I speak [their language], they feel different. And they feel the closeness. If I speak only Nepali, they feel different. Language is very important for any communicating. (INT14)

When discussing target audiences and reaching them in the most effective way, the role of communication unit of WWF Nepal came up during the interviews. Communication professionals are the ones who plan the messages that take into account different stakeholders and desired target groups. Especially WWF staff members stressed the fact that conservation professionals know what is happening in the field but they might not have the best knowledge of how those stories and situations should be communicated correctly. That is why they inform communication professionals, who then decide what is the best communication methods for the best outreach and outcome.

[Conservation professionals] don't know about the communication science, right. So [they] provide [communication professionals] information, how they want to portray, so it's up to the communication team. Like do they want to write some press release or some editorial they want to write, or as a story they want to portray, or through the video, so it's up to the communication team. They see who are the target audience based on that, so they build the whole story for that particular assessment we are stating, like OK this might be a very good thing for the other stakeholders to know as well. It's up to [communication unit]. When you write a very technical thing, you know, people might not understand. So it's up to communication team how they can portray the same thing from the different perspective. (INT15)

Communication unit of WWF Nepal has to think who are the target audiences and which are the best ways to reach them. The interviewees pointed out that when communication professionals are involved in the planning process of programs and projects, they can think about communication in a holistic way and give their views on how to reach the audiences in the most effective way. All in all, the programs where communication has been linked with the overall organizational strategy were perceived as the most effective. This is a coherent notion with previous communication studies (e.g. Hallahan et al. 2007).

[Program teams] would not be able to think about [planning] from the communications side. Which is why it's important that [communication unit] come in from the very beginning. So then [communication unit] understand that OK if this is the case and that's the issue you are trying to handle, let's use communication then in this format, so that you can address those challenges, actions, better. (INT1)

One example from having communication unit in the planning process was given from snow leopard collaring. The collaring generally takes about 30 to 45 days, sometimes even 2 months, due to the remoteness of snow leopard habitat and the behavior of the species. WWF made a document out of the process, and they showed that document to different stakeholders to illustrate how difficult

the process is, who are involved, and how it helps the conservation of the species. These kind of communication materials are very important, and the interviewee underlined that communication is vital when explaining to stakeholders what WWF does and why, and why conservation needs support.

The snow leopard habitat is very remote, that's why what we thought it would be better to have some document together with the --- whole process. So we decided to make this documentary and we hired professional film maker and then we prepared a documentary. It really helped us to show our work, it really helped us. Even now we also show it to the strategic people that how it happens, how snow leopard collaring is happening. It is quite interesting and how communication really helped in out-reaching part. Everybody when they saw the documentary they really realized how difficult the work is. And what the behavior of snow leopard is. (INT2)

Videos and documents were highlighted in other interviews too as an important communication tool, especially when educating illiterate people. The interviewees mentioned that if a person cannot read, video might be the best form that educates them.

When discussing key stakeholders, the government, local people, and conservation partners, such as WWF, were highlighted in all interviews. Besides these, major stakeholders mentioned in most of the interviews were international audiences and tourism. Both of the latter are important income channels for local communities. The interviewees underlined that it is important to reach not only the people living near protected areas, but also to reach out national and international audiences – to make people aware of the nature of Nepal and why people should visit the country.

If there are no tourists, no income. There is no income, there are no activities in the buffer zones. If there are no activities in the buffer zones, the conflict will rise, attitude of the community people will be negative. So, tourism is important to develop buffer zones and to make positive community people throughout the park. (INT4)

Discussion about tourism emerged above all during the CIT-inspired theme. Communication has helped tourism in Terai region. The interviewees said that sometimes even people in Kathmandu do not know that Nepal has rhinos, not to mention foreign tourists. When awareness of the existence of rhinos has been raised, tourist flows to Chitwan have grown and, consequently, local living conditions have improved and become less dependent on nature. Communication was seen as important element to attract tourists and donors. However, the gap has not completely been removed, which means that there is still a lot to do in communicating about Nepal and its conservation to audiences.

What Nepal will always face is that our issues might not be relevant to everyone. Everybody might totally not understand why would I want to spend time conserving rhinos in Nepal for example. [...] It was quite surprising when [name hidden] went to Germany, the German folks were like they never knew that Nepal had rhinos. They, it was the first time they heard that we actually have rhinos in Nepal. See, so there is always the gap out there. Which means there's still a lot of work that communication has to do in that front. (INT1)

Raising awareness in local communities is different than raising awareness in urban settings, and the interviewees mentioned that the fact has to be taken into

account when planning and implementing the message. When realizing the differences between target audiences and planning communication according to this, the interviewees felt that it is more likely to reach desired results with the messaging. The level of prior knowledge of conservation is important to take into account.

If targeting people of Kathmandu, then there is more targeting towards urban level. Probably, literacy-wise, they are bit higher than people in for example [buffer zones] but then they might lack the education in conservation. And when targeting people in [buffer zones], then they may not be educated in terms of getting higher school certificates but then because they face that every day in the conservation part, because that's how they have been brought up, being close to the environment. So they may not need the similar level of orientation when it comes to conservation. (INT13)

The interviewees stressed that it is also vital to realize when not communicating is the best communication. Not communicating was highlighted especially within failed conservation projects. The interviewees especially from WWF Nepal mentioned that it might not be wise to highlight failures externally but they should be used as an internal learning tool. Since there are many actors involved in conservation, all plans do not always work accordingly and some scale of failures are inevitable. However, failures should not be hidden, and the interviewees felt that sharing failures are important for learning internally and avoiding some possible issues in the future projects.

Failures, it's internal learning mechanism. It's not meant to be promoted and saying this is where we failed. Of course, you might seem humble to the outside world, but coincidentally, fortunately, unfortunately, people like to hear good stories about externally. And that's what markets the programs better. But you should not lose touch on your failures as an internal communication strategy. And the big challenge in terms of failures again is people should be brave enough to talk about failures. (INT1)

Most important thing is to document both success and failure stories. So, failure stories we [WWF Nepal] can share within our organization. What are the problems that we face when we implement any programs. So these are the things that we have to share within our organization so we can learn from that and then reflect in our future programs. But for the successful programs we have to share with the global audience; inside and outside WWF network. And then we'll enhance more funding to come and then again we can implement more programs. So communication is one important part in conservation program. To share, to learn, and to get more funding. [...] We have to share success stories in conservation of rhino, tiger, elephant, whatever. That's why international conservation stakeholders want to work with you, want to see what we are doing, and want to support, they also are happy to fund us because we are doing good. (INT16)

The above citation mentions funding, which was underlined in many interviews. Nepal is a developing country, and WWF Nepal does not have its own national fundraising. Thus, international donors are highly important for the sustainable conservation work in the country. The interviewees mentioned that the communication of WWF Nepal cannot only focus on national and regional scope, but also on international audiences; not only to attract tourists, but also to attract funding. Many of the interviewees stressed that this is again why the role of communication professionals is so vital for the organization; without

communicating properly to donors, it would be more difficult to get funds and thus, maintain conservation.

We [WWF Nepal] always focus on our audiences. Our channel varies according to our audiences. If we have to reach out to donors, then we do have like short videos, stories, I think this is, audiovisual is more, we focus on that. For the community people, it's more of you know posters and radio programs and dramas and more upfront, interaction on that level. For like news and information kind of things, we have press releases. And we also have social media, that's one. We use the TGG [The Generation Green], there's another. So these are different channels that we use, and it depends on like who our target audiences are. (INT13)

Attracting the attention of international audiences requires broad understanding of how communication works and which channels and tools are the best. The interviewees pointed out that within WWF Nepal, this is the arena for communication professionals, and underlined the importance of having communication professionals within organization and planning the messaging.

### 5.2.2 It matters who brings the message

In some cases, it is important to let the message come completely from the outside of the organization. As it is commonly occurring today, communication professionals or the employees of the organization are not the only ones who are important messengers of the organization. It became clear during the interviews that sometimes it is better for the desired outcome if, for example, local community members are educating each other. This was highlighted especially when talking about communicating with people who might not be in favor of conservation or conservation organizations.

If a person from WWF Nepal or from forest committee comes, then local people don't want to attend to those kinds of meetings. So, it's important that [the message comes from] someone within the community, from within their circle, who has to stand up and tell them. (INT9)

At the grass-root level it really makes a difference. So and taking a politician and asking him to say the same thing, or her to say the same thing, and taking a media person, or an actor, or Miss Nepal to say the same thing, it does make a difference. (INT13)

The interviewees underlined that especially in sensitive cases, such as with situations where the audience is suspicious towards conservation, it could be better if the message comes from within the community and not from authorities such as the government or WWF. Previous studies also indicate that sometimes local community members are more trusted than authorities, and might be better informants than for example the government authorities (Ongare et al. 2013).

It [raising awareness and engaging people] was initially baby steps. Lot of trade union workers wanted to get skill development training. So WWF facilitated that, they agreed to do that, so this slowly started to build trust within the community. [...] And then with that kind of skill development training [WWF and trade union] also jointly forced the conservation issues and why conservation is important, and then the people who were participating in the training program started to realize what's the importance of conservation as well. (INT9)

As the citation above shows, sometimes it is a good strategy to hide the conservation agenda; awareness about conservation cannot always be raised with the focus in conservation. The interviewees mentioned that to make conservation sustainable, conservation has to be linked with livelihoods. Sometimes the message has to start with the needs of target audience, and conservation issues should be raised as a secondary. For example, if a local community's livelihood that is not depending on nature needs to be developed, it is better to approach the topic from perspectives and interests of the target audience than from the nature conservation's angle. The interviewees emphasized that it is important to find out what is the desired angle for the specific target audience and use the communication tools and approaches based on that.

You can't just tell the communities that they need to protect tigers, when they don't have any motivation for the conservation on that particular animal. So how do you justify your work during when you have your hidden agenda with you, right? We can say that if you stop the encroachment that will have much more benefit to the community itself, and if you protect the forest it will also have effect on degrading the particular area from flooding as well, so that will create safer environment for the communities as well. And since it's connected with the protected areas, so tiger will also come that area and that will create a lot of opportunity for you know managing the endangered species as well. That's the hidden agenda we want to push. Sometimes you don't get it directly, you have to first try to see what their motivation is highly like in that area. (INT15)

The main issue right now towards conservation communication is that people don't want to actively participate on conservation classes or awareness campaigns. Because they think that if they focus on conservation, their livelihood is taken away. So, usually when [training programs are conducted] they conduct it in a way that it's only for raising awareness towards their rights and trade union. You know, and then they also highlight the conservation issues in that program. [...] WWF Nepal has helped [local people] a lot by providing funds for [different income generated activities]. So that people can work and they employ. And then [WWF Nepal] is raising awareness for the importance of conservation through this. (INT9)

Regarding communication, it is a challenge to reach and to interact with audiences that are not in favor of conservation or changing behavior to more environmentally friendly. It is vital to realize that during the planning process of the messages and invest enough time and thoughts to sustainable and successful communication.

The interviewees mentioned that WWF Nepal focuses on raising awareness above all within children and youth. They explained that to be able to have sustainable future, it is convenient if children and youth learn from the young age how to respect the nature and do the right decisions regarding conservation. Previous studies also suggest that people are logical in their manners, and once internalized approach is likely to continue in the future (McKenzie-Mohr 1994, 226, 229).

The interviewees highlighted the importance of education especially when talking about long-term conservation. Studies show that raising awareness within students might contribute to future environmental issue solving and actual behavior change, since, as the interviewees of this research also stressed, youngsters are the future decision-makers (Parant et al. 2017, 340). During the interviews, conservation education was seen as an important investment and

communicative factor. Many of the interviewees pointed out that future generations are also the political leaders of the future, so if they are positively engaged stakeholders from the young age, it is more likely that they will do eco-friendly decisions in their future careers.

Because as our economy is developing, our lifestyle is getting more consumptive and there is more use of resources, and no matter what you do, everyone should have conservation in their mindset as a common agenda. And that's very important to do, to reach masses, and that's what we [WWF Nepal] are doing through The Generation Green project. Making sure that our future decision-makers will do better decisions, coordinated decisions. Now it is very uncoordinated. It's not about lack of understanding, it's about lack of coordination skills and facilitation, how things can be done better. (INT20)

Investing in education and youth is important to make conservation sustainable and long-term. The Generation Green is an education program of WWF Nepal, which is about environmental education in schools. Its aim is to engage youth for sustainable livelihoods and nature conservation, and make them long-lasting stakeholders. (WWF 2017e.) Students may also form eco clubs, which aims to implement sustainability to school practices (WWF 2017f). The interviewees also stressed that children and young people are important messengers at their homes and can raise the concern towards environmental issues. This has been highlighted in previous research, too; youth are influential actors within their families (Parant et al. 2017, 340).

Like with the eco clubs, it's not about parents teaching the students or the children, but the children teaching their parents, you know. So, communication is not always just one way, but it should also happen in two ways. (INT17)

Some interviewees felt that the awareness level is high in Chitwan, especially through environmental education. This came up during the CIT-inspired theme about rhino conservation in Chitwan. The interviewees felt that same kind of investment in other areas would help with some other endangered species.

Whatever we are doing, the WWF, TAL [Terai Arc Landscape] and other people. I think if we continue the good work in future, in very good way, very strong way, then we can save the rhino. Same time with people we also maintain the good relation. And in Chitwan, I think that the awareness level is high, but in other parks, conservation education is not so high. (INT10)

In addition to schools, awareness among children and youth is increased in different ways. There are passive forms such as posters, and active ways such as workshops, street drama, and community-based anti-poaching units (CBAPUs). CBAPUs are formed from local youth, who are voluntarily participating in patrolling and protecting the forests from illegal activities such as logging, poaching, and wildlife crimes. The interviewees mentioned that CBAPU members educate each other and also other youths outside their own communities, and underlined that CBAPU unites and engages youth to long-term conservation.

CBAPUs do not communicate only about conservation issues, but they link development and livelihoods to their awareness raising. The interviewees underlined that CBAPUs are important in both, awareness raising and engag-

ing. This was highlighted especially since the approach of CBAPU is that youth are communicating with each other, which was seen increasing the trust and also motivation to participate in conservation. In addition, the fact that CBAPUs are led by the volunteers was something that the interviewees said that shows the level of engagement. The interviewees felt that because youth are raising awareness and engaging with each other, that could help in resulting in positive behavior change. Additionally, CBAPU increases not only the communication skills of the members but also has an impact in building leadership skills and empowerment within CBAPU members and communities.

[CBAPU] conducts many kinds of programs, like plantation program, sanitation program, awareness campaigns, street drama, and health and environment related awareness program in schools and out of schools. So at that time [CBAPU] invites other youth to join in and be part of the conservation and also the CBAPU. So the number of CBAPU members is also increasing, and they also motivating other people. And after engaging CBAPU member and WWF and TAL program also support in providing many kinds of technical support and they also provided leadership training and CBAPU training, so youth got chance to improve their empowerment and leadership also. (INT6)

One reason for adapting to new sustainable behavior could be the fact that friends or colleagues have changed their behavior and told others in their social circle about it, which encourages others to behavior change (McKenzie-Mohr & Schultz 2014, 39). This phenomenon known as social diffusion could be the case with CBAPUs and why they are so effective communicators, too.

In order for the right message to find the right audience, it is important to think who are the target groups and what kind of communication works best with them. From an organization's point of view, it is important to think about the channel and message as well as who says the message. The message does not always reach its audience in the best possible way if it comes within the organization, but must also be able to communicate outward, such as the example of CBAPU shows. CBAPU is also an example of a bottom-up communication approach; it brings stakeholders to the core of communication and is not based on solely influencing the audience. This is a good premise, since the bottom-up approaches are better for changing the behavior in a sustainable way than the hierarchical top-down approaches would be (Wilson & Irvine 2013, 98-99).

In addition to CBAPUs, Behavior Change Communication (BCC) was highlighted during the interviews as one of the awareness raising methods and as a good example of how the form of the message and its messenger affect its effectiveness. BCC is a form of training used by WWF Nepal, especially in the Terai Arc Landscape (TAL) region. It is intended that members of the village community will discuss with each other, engage with each other, and raise awareness in their community. BCC is about educating a selected person on environmental issues and advising them on how things can be discussed in a group, and how for example health care can be link to nature conservation debate. After training, the person assembles a group of 20-30 people from their village community and the group meets on a weekly basis. They discuss both health care and nature conservation. The interviewees underlined that linking conservation to livelihoods is important approach in awareness raising. Studies

show that when there is a link between conservation and health education, it might not only lead to better conservation achievements but could also be helpful in health sector (Naidoo & Johnson 2013).

The interviewees emphasized that it is important that the members of the BCC class are approximately the same age and belong to the same cast or status. Nepal still has a strong casting culture, especially in some areas, and the interviewees said that if the message comes from within the same cast, it is likely to be more effective.

People's livelihood perspective is very important. It is about balancing the conservation related programs and people's livelihood improvement programs. It is necessary for conservation; without livelihood of the people, I think it is very difficult to mobilize them for the conservation. Another important thing is the sensitization, for their behavior change. In Chitwan, we have very unique activity; Behavior Change Communication (BCC) for youth. Every week they learn some topics, they discuss some topics. [...] It matters who says the message; that it comes from the same age group, same status. They can easily share their knowledge, their problems also, their experience also, with each other. (INT14)

They [in BCC class] just talk about OK I have this issue, for example, sometimes they have some issue about sexual health, some issue about sanitation. So, they talk about the things. And then they try to find the solution. And then during that time they also talk about conservation, "OK what's going on, what can we do, how can we solve this issue". For example, if elephant has killed someone, what can be done. People gather their youth and exchange their thoughts, and they are the same age. (INT19)

BCC is not only striving for awareness raising, it also engages people in action. In its name, it aims at behavior change. The interviewees underlined that, in addition to raising awareness, it is important to motivate people to change their behavior in general. Mere awareness is not enough, but in all communications, it has to be a long-term effort to change behavior; only then communication is useful. Sometimes it is important, however, to raise consciousness at all, and long-term engagement can happen later.

### 5.2.3 Technology provides more channels

To be able to communicate properly, there needs to be access to different technological communication systems. Without having communicational channels, interacting with stakeholders in a holistic way would be difficult. Especially during the CIT-inspired theme, there was discussion about communication technologies helping in conservation. When Chitwan National Park (CNP) was established and when conservation started in Nepal<sup>2</sup>, communication technologies were not as developed as they are today. Some interviewees stressed that this made communication and interaction difficult.

One interviewee told that during the time when CNP was established, it was difficult to know what is happening in the other side of the park, and monitoring the whole conservation system was tricky. Even making a phone call

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<sup>2</sup> First wildlife legislation in Nepal was established in 1958, and the protection was focusing on rhinos in Terai. A rhino sanctuary was established in Chitwan in 1964. (Bhattarai et al. 2012, 41–45.) That area was proclaimed as Royal Chitwan National Park in 1973 (Chitwan National Park Office 2017).

required arrangements. There were no vehicles to use in patrolling, patrolling units were not completely aware about what they are supposed to do, and poachers knew that there are communication problems within park authorities. After new technologies arrived, it became easier to communicate with each other and conservation efforts started to succeed. Increasing technological support and enlarged communication has helped in conservation education, raising awareness, and engaging stakeholders.

Chitwan was totally like a remote area. Communication was very poor, and it was also very difficult to conserve the animal. [...] In the beginning, conservation work was not so strong. And those days the conservation education, awareness, was also not good. I think it was zero level when we established the national park. But now, it has changed completely. Awareness is good. I think people know what is conservation, and why. (INT10)

Especially in the field, to communicate properly and to conserve the wildlife, there must be proper technical communication systems. The interviewees stressed the fact that when there were only few security posts in Chitwan, communication did not happen accurately and it was difficult to know about the issues on the field. Additionally, tackling poaching was hard. Now, when there are several security posts inside CNP, CCTV cameras, and Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool (SMART), people in the field know what happens and where. SMART is a conservation tool for people who are directly involving in wildlife conservation, such as rangers, and it makes real time patrolling possible and easy to use. The interviewees underlined that because units can communicate through effective communication system, it is easier to control poaching and other illegal activities in the forest.

[Through real time patrolling], the commander can see the activity where his troops are at the moment in the screen. So, he can find out how much distance the troops cover, how much time they spend in field, and all these things. If there is something illegal activities, they click the program in field and, you know, it can be seen in the monitor. So, boots on the ground and eyes on the screen. So this is you know the one of effective program, effective activities that [WWF Nepal] supported. (INT8)

And [army] are just watching from the center office and we do have a mobile phone, each other, so we can communicate. It's very important. And the communication system doing very vital role to control poaching and they are helping to manage park properly, it's very good initiatives. Technology is making a change. (INT4)

Communication and developed technologies have helped conservation especially in Terai region, as the interviewees pointed out. Some interviewees stressed the fact that in the mountain areas there are still gaps with communication systems, and that it hampers the interaction and conservation.

During the CIT-inspired theme, mountain areas were raised multiple times when discussing the conservation approaches. The interviewees felt that Chitwan is kind of a model area for conservation, and a good example of well managed multi-stakeholder environment. The interviewees felt that same methods used in Chitwan are vital in other areas, too; strong awareness raising that is aiming at behavior change, environmental education, engaging local communities, and working closely with different stakeholders is important in

conservation regardless the area. However, the geographical differences create issues and barriers that have to be considered, and that is why same conservation tools and approaches are not always transferable in all cases, such as with mountain areas.

Sometimes when it is way too far then it's not also reachable for us. Because basically in the mountains, it's like one village is here and the next is one day away. So, sometimes yeah we just call one of the representatives, that's how we communicate our ideas, because it's not simply as easy at the mountains. (INT18)

Yes, at the moment, in Terai region, that means the lowland of Nepal, we have developed communication systems within the peers, but still in the mountain region, little bit difficult to communicate. We have no telephone, no mobile network, no Internet service, so that at that moment there's still problem in the mountain region. Comparing the mountain to the lowland, for example Chitwan is better than other protected areas with communication systems. (INT3)

Infrastructure and communication technologies are important elements in effective communication, and lack of them can be seen in mountain areas where sometimes are conservation difficulties. Difficult-to-reach areas are a good example of trying to adjust the communication to the situation and use right methods to aware and engage audiences.

### **5.3 Stakeholder engagement builds strong relationships**

Stakeholder engagement and committed stakeholder groups are key factors in nature conservation. Without engaged stakeholders, achieving conservation goals would be difficult, if not even impossible.

During the interviews, the interviewees were asked to name who they perceive as stakeholders in conservation. Each interviewee mentioned the interaction of three actors as the most important; the government of Nepal, local communities, and conservation organizations such as WWF. In addition to this, other key stakeholders that were mentioned in interviews included for example community-based organizations and other local organizations, media, army, police, trade control, customs, political leaders, universities (and education sector in general), health sector, international audiences such as donors and other funders, tourism sector, and volunteers such as CBAPU members. All interviewees stressed that conservation is multi-stakeholder work that requires engagement of all sectors.

The interviewees underlined that due to effective communication, stakeholder engagement has been possible. Without interacting with each other, it would be difficult to maintain multi-stakeholder approach and achieve conservation goals. Effective communication is also highlighted in theory when discussing stakeholder engagement; multi-stakeholder environment has created a shift to values-creating networks, where the shared problems or issues are in the center and different actors donate their time and knowledge to solve them,

and to be able to share responsibilities and engage in the diverse arena, effective communication is vital (Aakhus & Bzdak 2015, 189).

That is a key element actually because if we can't communicate the importance or the benefit to these major stakeholders, if we could not communicate our vision of what we were looking at, through for example the landscape level approach, if could not sort of communicate with communities and say that this approach is one of benefits for you, it's not actually a threat for your livelihoods, without that we wouldn't have been able to sort of make things happen. Of course, a lot of these communications might not have been totally about having specific strategies and these tools and then using these kinds of details and such. Because a lot of times our own people become communicators, our own program people who work with the communities they become our communicators, they become the communicators of WWF. So the fact that what they say to the communities makes a lot of a difference. So all of this has a very big sort of trust in communications for that matter. (INT1)

Communication professionals are not the only ones who communicate, raise awareness, and engage stakeholders. The interviewees felt that the people working in the field are important communicators, especially because they already have a role in local communities and are trusted sources for information. Thus, developing the communication skills within all employees is vital in today's organizations.

If we [conservation partners] act like a big manager, they [local communities] are very far from us, we are not close. When we are not close, we are not open. When we are not open, then their participation is not likely to happen. That is why WWF always respect the people. Our presence is always as a helper, mentor, not donor, not boss. Everyone is at the same level, eating same food. I always enjoy the people, we always stay in the homestay. Dancing with people, singing with the people. That is the strategy to mobilize the people. That is the also easy communicating system. Not necessary only the book, communicating materials. It's the person, it's important. Then they can start engagement and increasing the engagement. (INT14)

To be able to provide effective communication that is targeted to the desired audience, it is vital that in the planning process there are not only the ones who have technical expertise of communication but the ones who are actually in an interaction with the people. This adds the understanding of the local conditions to the messaging, which the interviewees said that helps with the outreach. Locally grounded experts and action in the field was seen as something that enables the work of WWF, and communication in the field is especially important for the engagement of local communities.

If WWF office was just based in Kathmandu, I would say we wouldn't be effective at all. Probably we would be just writing some stories and sending those outside. We have a team on the field; probably they are not good at writing [communication materials] but at least they know what to communicate to the people verbally or through pictures or through videos. And we have a team in Kathmandu, because [field team] might not know how to write what we have done. So, I would say that the communication in the field, because we have local team established, and they can communicate to right stakeholders in a right manner. And at the same time, we have a team in the center, and they provide the technical experts from the different fields that can work together and communicate to big audience. (INT17)

Communication helps to keep the multi-stakeholder approach harmonious. The interviewees stressed that without mutual understanding and dialogue, it would be difficult to work towards the conservation goals. When stakeholders are working in isolation, it does not result in great conservation success. This was especially highlighted during the CIT-inspired theme; rhino conservation in Chitwan was seen as successful mainly because all actors have come together and work for the mutual goal. This has not always been the case in conservation, not only in Nepal but in general, and the interviewees pointed out that when engagement started to increase, the conservation success started to bloom too. The importance of dialogue is also highlighted in theory, as for example Taylor and Kent (2014, 388–389) suggest that it is vital part of stakeholder engagement.

For me I think that the first and foremost is the dialogues. And developing the plans. But not only developing the plans on paper but also implementing those plans is key. So it starts with the dialogue process. But at the same time, sometimes putting the strong regulations that you cannot come in and you have to stop that, that is also sometimes wrong. So you have to think about how you can engage them [local people] in that process. It [conservation] could be more effective if you could engage them. (INT17)

The main thing I would like to say is that all the people should be part of the communication. (INT19)

Especially the importance of local communities as a major stakeholder was highlighted in the interviews. Even though conservation was seen as a multi-stakeholder approach, the main thing that has changed conservation in Nepal was seen to be actively participating local communities.

The government and the Nepal army and the Chitwan National Park and buffer zone area, they cannot do individually. So they should engage the local communities and local people. (INT7)

The special thing is engaging the communities. It's not only about the security forces, but also putting the communities in the forefront of conservation. That is the big factor. Like army is not enough, bringing communities to the forefront of conservation was the game changer, I would say. (INT17)

It was stressed during the interviews that conservation is a common effort that would not be successful without the participation of all stakeholders. The interviewees highlighted that even though all stakeholders might have different roles and responsibilities, it is required that they collaborate and coordinate conservation projects together, in mutual understanding. Recognizing that all actors are working towards the same goal is important. Enabling multi-stakeholder approach happens through different communication methods, whether they are formal or informal tools, and two-way dialogues.

It [conservation in multi-stakeholder environment] is two-way communication, you know, every stakeholder is communicating in two-way and that is why it works. (INT8)

If you drive a car, so engine have to work, wheel have to work, each thing has to work. And then the car runs. Like that; army is doing well, park authorities are doing

well, community people are doing well, partner organizations are doing well, civil society and other community people, political leaders, all are doing well. And doing accordingly, not according to their interest but according to multi-stakeholder interest. So, that is the main factor for that achievement I think. (INT4)

Things are more transparent in this time of the world, and it's more and the connectivity is very strong. So I can't work on isolation or stand alone. It's all connected, and we have to have that connectivity in one way or another. So that's way we have to be connected with lots of organizations when we work in Nepal. (INT18)

As mentioned earlier, especially the role of local communities participating in conservation was highlighted during every interview. Nepal has experienced a shift from conservation approach that was not involving people to community-based conservation model, which was seen highly important in current multi-stakeholder environment. This came up especially during the CIT-inspired theme, which was about success of rhino conservation in Chitwan.

The interviewees mentioned that good partnership with all stakeholders have made rhino conservation possible, and that there is a clear difference now to the times when people were excluded from conservation. Local people are now actively participating in conservation; they are part of the decision making and have a say in conservation programs. As Table 3 (pp. 32-33) shows, this is one of the active participation types in species recovery. Active participation is needed for sustainable conservation (Clark & Wallace 2002, 92). Increasing communication and dialogues have been part of this change in Nepal.

Before, when [Chitwan National Park] was established, we had very hard time those days; rhinos were killed by poachers, people are always against the park and park management. Very bad situation. And after that it was realized this is not good way, just one way, "don't come, don't do like that", becomes bad relation. So, [the national park] should have good relation with people. Otherwise the protection of these animals is not possible. Then the convincing people started, good cooperation, like that. That's also when the buffer zone concept came here. To involve people. And give them some benefit. That is why 50 percent of [the national park's] money is going to buffer zone areas. [...] And the other thing is that in the ministry level, in the prime minister level, we also have it covered. And in army, police, and other high level, there is commitment. (INT10)

When only government or only community or only conservation partner [is doing conservation], it is not sufficient. We have many, many stakeholders come to the conservation. That means community, private sector, tourism sector, conservation partner, local NGO, universities... media, police, military, customs. We have committed in the conservation from local community to the policy and the political level, in the prime minister level. To conserve the species. That is the major thing. We have faced different challenges, different problems, different situations, but we committed, all stakeholders are committed to conserve the rhino and other species. And gradually, we achieved success. And increasing the number [species populations]. (INT3)

Every work, with [WWF Nepal], we are two-way discussing. For any planning phase, community people, and WWF Nepal, we sit together, discussing, and [WWF Nepal] promote the idea and knowledge of [local communities]. The engagement of local communities is important. Mostly the conservation related work and activities is that we sit together and communicate with each other. (INT14)

The interviewees mentioned that during the time CNP was established, conservation focus was on the species and people's perceptions were excluded. As the

interviewees explained, this did not lead to achieving conservation goals. Only after including people and local communities in conservation, change started to happen. According to the interviewees, through community-based conservation and buffer zones, and through engaging all stakeholders from local communities to prime minister, achieving zero poaching became possible.

Generally, people come [and ask] how did you stop this poaching because in Africa poaching is high and India is also poaching going on, Nepal how [did] you stop. So I always think: before, the government was just alone doing. Then we have the protection unit and then we convince the people awareness program. So when we have three, good relation, I mean relation with three person, that was a main. And of course WWF and other organization in the key, because they are helping, financing, idea and some this thing. So these three, four things, it's doing good. And the other thing is that in the ministry level, in the prime minister level, we also have own organization. That is also good. Army, police, and other I mean prime minister and government, the main, high level officer has own organization. It makes very helpful in the field area. (INT10)

The interviewees mentioned that engagement should happen in positive ways. One interviewee mentioned that with WWF, everything starts with the positive angle. This was seen as important in engaging especially community members in a long run; when local communities see the positive sides of conservation, both for the environment and their own communities, they are more likely to be engaged. Kang (2014, 399) also stresses the importance of positive engagement.

Always we [WWF Nepal] start positive things, not negative things. Our passion and commitment for the conservation is important. And when people feel passion, it works. (INT14)

Engaging only community leaders was not perceived enough when trying to achieve conservation goals; it requires grass-root level participation and youth engagement. Additionally, including nontraditional stakeholders and areas such as health to conservation is important. Even though the values might be dissenting, the aimed outcome could be similar (Painter & Kretser 2012, 358). Multi-stakeholder approach requires that there are different levels of stakeholders engaged and that their actions are seen in a holistic way. Thus, reaching only local communities living next to protected areas is not enough; there is a need for nontraditional partners. Among health sector, more examples of nontraditional partners were given from trade unions, infrastructure, and engineering.

It's not everywhere you see health and conservation been linked together. But we saw the benefit, we saw the need for it, and that worked perfectly fine. [...] Another non-traditional partner we've got is for example trade unions. Because we saw there's lots of forest based workers who rely on the forest for their livelihood. (INT1)

To make these things more sustainable, to keep things ongoing, then you need to extend your partnership. For example, [WWF Nepal] is working with the infrastructure department because, of course, being a developing country the infrastructure is playing a vital role. So, making the infrastructure smarter, like at least in a common point. Like while you plan the highway, coming through the national park, then at least you have to invest to the underpass or overpass while you construct this. (INT19)

Right now, because conservation cannot be isolated in itself, cross-cutting issues became critical stakeholders. [...] In the early days, the conservation was like the people that are close to the national asset that you are talking about and the government, and people facilitating those processes - but now, it's also other stakeholders, that's why we are talking about the private sector, we are talking about academicians. But at the same time, we also talk about engineers and infrastructure designers. (INT17)

As the previous subchapter of raising awareness and changing behavior already indicated, it matters who brings the message. This was also highlighted when talking about engaging stakeholders. The interviewees mentioned that stakeholder engagement takes time, and sometimes it is the best approach to engage some people from the target stakeholder group, for example local communities, and then stress the issues through them.

The interviewees said that when trusted persons from within the community who are engaging their peers and community members, people are more likely willing to engage in conservation than if the message comes only through authorities. Youth are engaging each other through community-based anti-poaching units (CBAPUs) and Behavior Change Communication (BCC), kids are educating their parents and raising engagement within their families, and trade union leaders are giving the messages to their peers and engaging them to conservation. People felt that true engagement has been possible through different engagement approaches that are long-lasting and targeting to people's engagement from childhood to adult life.

Initially [local community from Chitwan valley] had some problems running the conservation activities because there was not much awareness amongst the people. As years rolled on, WWF and different conservation activities kicked in to schools, to raise the awareness of conservation. So slowly the kids became aware of the importance of conservation and how they can benefit from ecotourism for example. So they became educating their parents as well. From that perspective. So what are the benefits of ecotourism. So now the kids who have got the conservation education they are developing their leadership skills so that in future they can lead different kind of units, like CBAPU or that kind of units. (INT6)

TAL started in 2001. With the leadership of the government. WWF always back and support them. For 16 years we have had relation with the people, relation with the government. That is not a joke. Some were very small kids when we started, now they are adults. Now, after all that time, the young generation is now adult and they are leadership person. Community forest user group chairperson, buffer zone user group committee chairperson. In that time, the eco club member is now in a user committee, same person. See, they love the eco club and the child is grown now and the leader of the buffer zone user committee. They love the nature. That is the long relation. (INT14)

The above citation shows that if the relationship with the stakeholders is maintained and if there is enough investment in building the trust and cooperation, the stakeholders, such as volunteers, are likely to be involved in conservation also in their future. Long-lasting relationships are important for the sustainable conservation. Like Bortree (2011, 44–45) studied, it is important that NGOs are having relations with the public, and for example volunteers are often vital for the existence of an NGO. When organizations are showing their trust and commitment to their publics and share power, they are more likely to maintain the relationship; for example, investing in volunteer relationships, volunteers

are more likely to maintain their positive relationships with the organization in the future, too (Bortree 2011, 44–47).

When there is for example human-wildlife conflict, it requires immediate action. One interviewee gave an example of human-wildlife conflict and how immediate action (providing for example vehicle for kids to go to school and investing in funeral costs) and communication (talking with the community and partners about the situation) prevented that there were no demonstrations against conservation; the situation was taken care of and discussed together with all stakeholders. In this situation, it was also important who brought the message; that it came from the community. As Ongare et al. (2013, 70–71) found out in their study, local communities ranked community elders and community meetings as two of the most efficient information channels. This is vital to take into account when planning the message and choosing the medium, especially in sensitive cases.

[WWF Nepal field staff] immediately sat with the government authorities and community leaders and then they decided OK we should do this and this to address this and this. [...] We immediately use the local community leaders and then we have their representative over there with the group of people, and then they engage them and [tell them the situation]. (INT19)

The interviewees underlined that selecting the right approach for stakeholder engagement starts with recognizing the target audience and their need. If people are willing to participate in active conservation engagement, then the active ways are used, but if people require basic knowledge and are not in favor at actively engaging, it is better to start the engagement with more passive ways. However, the interviewees stressed that in a long run, active ways of engaging local communities are more beneficial. Clark and Wallace (2002, 92) also suggest that to make conservation sustainable in a long run, active ways are required and public's participation is vital.

When trying to get the attention of different audiences, storytelling is a good way to make people aware and engaged. Telling stories from the field was seen important both nationally and internationally in the perspectives of the interviewees. Especially when engaging international donors, success stories from the field were highlighted as important. Kaufman (2003) also suggests that stories work better in stakeholder engagement than showing only statics. However, showing statistics might be a good strategy when attracting the attention of political leaders or decision-makers. Navigating between the right tools and channels is important in making communication effective.

### **5.3.1 Ownership furthers sustainable conservation**

When stakeholders are doing conservation for themselves, by themselves, and not for the authorities, conservation projects are more likely to be successful and sustainable. In that sense, ownership is an important element when discussing stakeholder engagement in conservation. Ownership in conservation, and in this research, means that communities do the conservation work not because conservation partners or organizations have asked them to do that but

because it is for themselves, and they do the work by themselves. This engages and makes communities feel more linked to the programs. The interviewees of this research felt that especially with local communities, there needs to be the feeling of ownership. That boosts conservation projects to be long-term.

In general, conservation can only happen if every sector, or every stakeholder, participates and takes ownership of it. [...] It's important that it's a common agenda. Otherwise conservation cannot happen. (INT20)

We [WWF Nepal] don't need to talk about ourselves, while you visit the community, they [local community-based organizations] will talk about it. They have the support from the stakeholders, conservation stakeholders, and now they are thinking in that way. They will tell you. So that was the thing that you can be proud of. (INT19)

Success will breed success. And if people can get something out of a certain event or incident, if they can see for example, even if they are not part of that particular celebration or part of that particular success, the fact that it's from the country that they live in, from community that they come from, if they can take some ownership on that, I think that will help a lot in, with the success in the future. (INT1)

Campbell and Vainio-Mattila (2003, 421) state that when communities are benefiting from conservation and taking ownership of it, they are more likely to be supportive for nature conservation. Aakhus and Bzdak (2015) also stress this in their research; it is vital that stakeholders are solving the problems for themselves, by themselves, and not for the organization. Communication helps in the process to assess the issues and stress the facts why the stakeholders and their input is needed. The interviewees underlined that through effective communication, communities and other stakeholders can be convinced of the importance of conservation, and the benefits it gives can be argued.

With ownership, valuing the indigenous knowledge is important for the stakeholder engagement. Clark and Wallace (2002, 92) also state that if the ideas and knowledge of local people are not valued, the actual goals of conservation efforts could get impossible to achieve. With valuing the local cultures and enhancing the indigenous knowledge, the interviewees felt that it is easier for local communities to engage in conservation. Elbroch et al. (2011, 1200) also suggest that adding local people and experts to research and monitoring could be beneficial for conservation science and practice.

There should be more focus on capturing the knowledge of local communities, indigenous knowledges. Because sometimes indigenous knowledge is stronger than science based knowledge, so maybe we can collect, capture indigenous knowledges from the local communities and that can be applied in managing, in conserving the rhinos, one of the thing. It could give more ownership to the communities. (INT2)

Mostly we support people, not pushing our idea. First try to develop their idea, find out their idea and knowledge and experience. And we always try to link their knowledge and experience for the conservation. And always we put the people in the front. Always front. That's how they can feel all things ownership. (INT14)

Painter and Kretser (2012, 358) suggest in their article that "effective partnerships constructed to incorporate context sensitivity are stronger because they are locally grounded". The interviewees of this research also stressed the fact

that to make conservation possible and to have strong partnerships, there has to be locally grounded engagement of partners. When taking into account the local knowledge and capacity in partnership, the overall conservation outcome is more effective according to the interviewees.

Supporting local communities and their knowledge helps in maintaining and increasing engagement. The interviewees stressed that through effective communication, ownership can be long-lasting. If communities learn to engage each other and make conservation sustainable, it also makes it possible that conservation can be done and increased without the facilitator. The interviewees highlighted that in a long run, communities should do conservation by themselves, for themselves, because facilitators such as WWF might be able to stay in the area only for a limited time. This is why ownership was seen as inevitably important. Ownership will make conservation sustainable, and the results will not stop when a project in the area ends.

NGOs and INGOs, we work on project basis, like we are there as long as we have the resources from the project funding, but we move out as we don't have the resources for some area. So, the idea to keep that going is to have the right institutions in place that have access to right amount of resources, and that will keep on building the capacities and also bringing the right types of changes within time. (INT17)

For the success of any conservation project, it is vital that local communities are engaged in conservation from the very beginning. When local community members are part of the decision making, it makes the ownership of programs more feasible. The interviewees mentioned that before, when there was no long-term relationships and ownership with the local communities, conservation programs were not as successful as they are today. Now, for example zero poaching has been possible to achieve. Even though this research cannot prove that these perceptions are representing all of what has happened, it was clearly underlined within the interviewees that keeping communities outside of the decision making did not result in sustainable conservation efforts. Robards and Lovecraft (2010, 259) also state that when local communities are included in the decision making, the conservation projects are more likely to be successful.

When thinking about conservation projects and their success, stakeholder engagement through communication seems inevitable. To be effective, communication should always be planned with the target audience and desired outcome in mind. Gut-feeling can make some projects successful, but for long lasting and sustainable conservation, there is a need for strategically planned communication which aims at creating dialogues and strong relationships. As Hallahan et al. (2007) remind, strategic planning is in the core of strategic communication; not random actions. Bourne (2016, 433, 438) also adds that when relationships are built through effective communication and keeping the stakeholders in mind, projects are more likely to success.

### **5.3.2 Trust boosts conservation success**

Every relationship is built on trust. As was highlighted during the interviews, in conservation, it is required to be constantly in touch with stakeholders. That

creates trust and engages stakeholders. However, engagement does not happen overnight, and it does not become long-term if it not given enough time.

The interviewees pointed out that maintaining stakeholder engagement requires frequent communication between stakeholders. They stressed that communication does not have to happen only through formal channels, it can also be done through informal channels. In general, constant communication is needed when stakeholders are wanted to keep motivated and in the process for a long-term.

We [WWF Nepal] should constantly be in communication with these people [key stakeholders], it doesn't have to be only formal channels but also the informal channels. That keeps them motivated. And the fact that we can jointly show conservation results. And the fact that we acknowledge the fact that it's not WWF doing it, but because of their support and all this is possible. Even if you look at the stuff that we have done, we normally don't put WWF in the forefront, we always put the government in the forefront, saying that it has been them doing it and we have just been supporting them in that thing. So that again gives another stake at them. Again, with communities, we say that they are actually leading conservation on the ground. So that gives them the credit and again that is how they keep motivated. (INT1)

WWF has supported [in conservation] with raising awareness, providing resources, providing technology, getting their [stakeholders] support, and improving the quality of both people and nature. So this way the relation has been improved. But this has to be continuous. "Oh now the people are aware so we stop", you know, because new generation will come they have to orientate, they have to be aware, they have to be trained, they have to be capacitated, so it's continuous process. (INT12)

Without communicating with each other, stakeholders would work alone, which would make achieving the conservation goals difficult. The interviewees stressed that to make the multi-stakeholder approach working and stakeholder engagement possible, people need to work together and respect each other. Communication helps; it is easier for people to respect each other when they know about each other's work and achievements, and their views about them.

The interviewees underlined that trust plays critical role in stakeholder engagement. Earning the trust means being open enough and straightforward with stakeholders, and this should be taken into account in communication.

I think that it [trust] has again to do with how well we have been communicating from the very beginning of things that we've done. And also sensitize enough people that we have been communicating to. So, all I can say is that it's very important to build that trust through frequent communications about what we do. (INT13)

When an organization builds trust with its stakeholders and shows commitment to its publics, maintaining the relationship between stakeholders is more likely to happen. Trust creates trust; and behind trust, there needs to be understanding and valuing the stakeholder. Bortree (2011, 44-45) also highlights this in her study and suggests that understanding what is behind stakeholder relationships could help NGOs to maintain the relationships.

The interviewees underlined the same fact as Brulle (2010, 91-93) highlights; local communities should be included in mutual dialogue and not be treated as objects of manipulation. The interviewees mentioned that when engaging local communities, there should be a lot of investment in relationships

and building trust. This makes people feel like they are valued stakeholders. When people are valued, they value the conservation; and, according to Baral (2012, 49) the more there is trust, the more sustainable conservation projects are.

Stakeholder relations are very important. Otherwise, it's a 3 year project, a 4 year project, a 5 year project; project come, project go. Nice report prepared; then done. But our relations are long relations. Every people know us, we know the people. That is why we are happy; without relationship, no happiness. That's why I always say that people come first. Trust the people, love the people, and they will trust and love you. As much as possible, try to make good relationship. Not only with the people, but also with the wildlife. If you have much money, doesn't work. Good qualifications, doesn't work. It doesn't work if you don't have good relations. (INT14)

Communication was seen as an important tool in solving problems. However, the interviewees stressed that some situations are difficult for communication. When for example human-wildlife conflict happens, and people lose their family members, it could be hard to decide how to react and what to say. Some people would need instant communication from the government or from supporting organizations such as WWF, but some people would rather be distant.

Knowledge of how to handle difficult situations was something that some of the interviewees pointed out that WWF Nepal has to think about more in the future, especially because they felt that since habitat is decreasing but human and species populations are growing, there will be more conflicts in the future and they need to be handled properly. Additionally, since social media and other communication technologies provide the platform for fast communication, organizations like WWF have to be able to react fast and in a right manner.

Sometimes when that person loses a family member because of a wildlife then we cannot say how that person will react, they could go against conservation or just be, so at that point of time it becomes so difficult to control or give a right type of message, suppose I mean in the field. Like WWF, we have to talk about the conservation, OK that is good but when the incident happens, then what happens? What is the type of communication we give to them? Though there is a compensation, the government process is so slow, it takes months for that person to get the money, and WWF doesn't have that kind of money that we could give that money for example to 10 people at the same time, and also regarding these situations we have to think about how these situations are handled and communicated. (INT17)

Sometimes people have already put it to Facebook [when something happens] before we can react. I think our [WWF Nepal] information doesn't get in time sometimes, that's a challenge. It's quite challenging, because being an institution you need to have lots of processes to complete. (INT20)

Conservation success is more likely to happen when stakeholders are both aware and engaged. The interviewees highlighted the same fact as Jacobson and McDuff (2009, 303) state in their study: public has a great impact for both success and failure of conservation efforts, and while well-informed public can boost the success of conservation, poorly informed public can mean the end of innovative wildlife management.

Communication is a vital tool in engaging communities, and that is why the interviewees pointed out that to make sustainable engagement possible, handling conflict situations with communication should be considered in con-

ervation even more in the future. Communicating properly affects and creates trust, and its role in handling conflict situations should not be undermined.

### 5.3.3 Engagement and alternative livelihoods decrease poaching

Alternative livelihoods in local communities have been developed in Nepal in recent years. Tourism has developed in the country and, for example, the number of homestay accommodations have increased, especially in Terai Arc Landscape (TAL). This has helped local communities to be less dependent on jungles, and conflicts between humans and wildlife have also decreased in some areas.

Providing alternative livelihood options was highlighted in every interview. Only knowledge is not enough, there has to be some alternatives, too. To change the behavior, there needs to be something that the communities can do other than use the natural resources, or they have to be given the knowledge how to use natural resources eco-friendly. One way for motivating people are economic incentives, which work typically in situations where cost is a barrier to the desired action (McKenzie-Mohr & Schultz 2014, 41). In Nepal, national parks allocate about half of their profits to the development of local communities (Budhathoki 2004, 335; Paudel et al. 2007, 46), which was seen as important factor in stakeholder engagement. Studies (e.g. Sekhar 2003, 339) show that in conservation, diverting funds to local communities is one method to engage stakeholders in conservation.

The government of Nepal directly share 50 percent of the revenue to local community, local people, for their different activities, community development, income generation, conservation education, and conservation activities. So, that's the good policy, good mechanism, how to give an opportunity to local people from the protected areas. (INT3)

What came up especially during the theme inspired by CIT was that homestays in Chitwan have helped both communities and nature; people are introduced in alternative livelihood options and are thus less dependent on nature and, at the same time, poaching has decreased considerably. According to the interviewees, everything has begun from being aware of the issues first, and communicating with people about the benefits and importance of conservation. Then alternative ways of life have been introduced, and the commitment and engagement of stakeholders have resulted in conservation being successful.

Earlier there were no homestays. So, WWF Nepal justified that OK if you protect these kind of protected areas, these wetlands, these animals, then people will come there and you will get benefit by making homestays. So now people are making homestays and they are motivated for making conservation. So, these are the kind of justification that we have to of course make. Which without they will not be motivated for the conservation. (INT16)

When stakeholders see their actions affect their life in a positive way, they are more likely to engage in pro-environmental activities in a long run. If there is no benefit from conservation, the interviewees felt that the strong engagement would not be possible. Communication is needed in the process; without communication, it would be impossible to know what kind of motivating actions

are needed in the local communities. Additionally, alternative livelihood options could not be marketed and implemented within communities without communication. When there is for example conflict with the nature, knowing about the incentives is important; if people do not know, they are more likely to act against nature than if they knew. Providing and informing about alternative livelihood options have resulted in decreased poaching in some areas.

If I think about the snow leopards in the mountains, the most of the people, they rely on livestock. And once the snow leopard kills their yack or goat or their livestock, the people, what they really would like to do, is they just want to kill the snow leopard. And then and we really massively just get engaged with the community to work with, we provide some alternative options and we also educate them to have some indirect benefit from the conservation, for instance tourism. If they protect the snow leopard and the ecosystem and tourist may arrive and then they can have some entrepreneurship to support tourism, and they can get back the, having the incentives from for their livelihoods. And we have in most of the cases now there is no entirely killing of snow leopard in the mountains. (INT2)

The interviewees stressed that finding and sharing alternative ways of life is important for local people to change their habits. If the basics of living conditions are not good and people do not feel safe, thinking of conservation can easily be secondary. Sometimes the problem is that there is not enough awareness, but raising awareness is not always enough; the barrier that is in the way of the behavior change and engagement has to be recognized and removed.

So we [conservation partners and community-based organizations] did different conservation awareness programs. And people know [that] conservation is important, wildlife is important, rhinoceros is our pride. But every day rhinoceros comes to their field and have their crops. So, from their heart, rhinoceros is not important for them. Once we installed the electric fence, people said me, right now rhinoceros is ours. Because our crops and our house are protected. Then, right now, the rhinoceros is important for us. They said me. [...] That types of events [installing a fence] helps to change their attitude to towards the wild animals, wildlife. Otherwise, if only the conservation awareness things, dancing and doing seminars and saying people that rhino is endangered, it's globally threatened, it's iconic species, small population we are trying to save with our landscape level conservations, all these things are stupid things for them. Yeah. They just want to save their life, they want to save their crops, they want to get alternative livelihood opportunity. (INT4)

We'll [conservationists] have to provide them [local communities] alternatives, we'll first have to tell them that why is it important, and primarily we'll have to make them understand that if they conserve that tree, it's primarily for them and not for me. Conservation will not be successful leaving people hungry or without fulfilling people's basic needs. Because if I can't feed my children in the night and that's all I can think about, then if somebody comes to me telling that "OK you'll have to plant trees or you'll have to conserve tigers", I'm not going to listen to them, because my primary thing is my kids, feeding them. (INT13)

We need to provide more capacity training for youth. So after that they will also involve in livelihoods and they will also better involve to conservation also. I think that would help. (INT7)

The interviewees pointed out that when there is no communication with local communities and they are excluded from conservation, it is easier for high-level poachers to recruit members of villages to do the poaching. The interviewees

explained that poaching works in different levels; there is the planner and recruiter, who does not come from the village but from urban areas or abroad. Then there is the actual poacher, the one who kills the animal, and that person is usually from the village. If the high-level poacher has stronger engagement to the villager than the government or conservation organizations, it is more likely that the animal gets poached than if the situation is other way around.

So the people at the local places they have been used for killing, for poaching. Although they just get very minimal incentive, but they poached it. And because one of the reason is their poverty, their subsistence living, they can be used. And the second thing is, their, you know, innocence, they don't know what the punishment is. Lack of information. So if we can aware them, what the punishment is from if he kill tiger or rhino. So we know for example there is 15 years in jail here, the provision is there. If he or she knows then they might not be engaged on that. This, in this part, communication is quite important to influence the masses. What the incidence is, what will they impact of that particular poaching, or something else. (INT2)

Mainly people who are from low income families, they are involved in poaching. So, to remove that, they need to be made aware and their living standards need to be raised up. And then from children to people of old age they need to be aware of the importance of conservation, how they are benefiting from conservation. [...] If some kind of illegal activities is going on, we [people who know about conservation and its benefits] have to aware them, you need to stop doing that because you need to look at the future of your children as well. Because if you do that you will go in to jail for ten to fifteen years. Then they ask them to join different training programs to learn about different kind of activities. Legal activities depending on the forest. (INT9)

The interviewees explained that previously, when the awareness level was not as high as it is now, people saw poaching as a way to earn money. They did not know about the setbacks poaching would have in their lives, community, and family. Different activities provided by the government and partner organizations such as WWF Nepal have helped in raising awareness, changing behavior, and especially engaging communities in conservation. Now, when people know about the laws and regulations, they are more likely to engage in pro-environmental activities than illegal activities. However, raising awareness is not enough; as the interviewees stressed there is a need for positive engagement when fighting against poaching.

Obviously poaching might give money to poor people, because they see it as a very immediate sort of return. But the setback it has on their own lives and on the lives of community, of their own family, in terms of wildlife in general. If they are informed about those kind of stuff, then that might help in the future. So, in that sense, communication again plays a very big role making sure that people understand the context of these challenges. (INT1)

Ultimately, we can win the game. They [poachers] are smaller and smaller, when conservation is getting stronger and stronger; partnerships and stakeholder engagement is increasing. And poachers number is decreasing. Because of the awareness increase. People know about the law and regulations and rules. That's why, ultimately, we will win. We can win the game. (INT14)

The interviewees felt that communication has helped in decreasing poaching and making people more aware of the setbacks of illegal activities. During the CIT-inspired theme, one interviewee gave an example of a village in Chitwan,

where there are many people in jail because of poaching. High-level poachers used to recruit them as poachers, and took advantage of the illiterateness and innocence of the people. After the engagement, for example through environmental education and awareness raising, started in that specific area, now the people from that community know about the laws and, additionally, the importance of the species. They have been introduced to alternative livelihood options, and there are no more poaching occurring in that village. The interviewee underlined that without communication this success would not be possible; engagement starts with interaction and communication.

[In one village], 19 people, poachers, are in jail. Some people 10 years, some people 9 years, some people 5 years. Some 14 years. Only small village, 19 people are in jail. Because of lack of knowledge of rules and regulations. And the outside [people who hire poachers], they mobilized them. They are very poor, nothing there. But last 5 years, no one has been arrested as a poacher from that area, because [WWF Nepal] is working there; communicating the people, and supporting the people's livelihood. Not only raising awareness of the law, but supporting another parts, too. People's livelihoods in that area. And last 5 years, no people has been arrested. (INT14)

When people get their income from conservation and other environmentally friendly actions, there is no need for illegal activities. However, poachers might offer a lot of money to people; thus, positive engagement towards conservation, and increasing alternative livelihood options and communication about them, is vital when building sustainable livelihoods.

If they [local communities] get employment opportunity and the hotel, why they will be negative with the wildlife? If they get skill training to make different souvenirs, different product and if they will get chance to sell that, yeah, even a sculpture of rhino a sculpture of tiger a sculpture of elephant, and with sustainably harvested wood and make such a wooden sculpture and if they get chance to sell that, why they would be negative, there is no any necessary to be negative. The poachers come and offer them money, if you just go and kill and give me, yeah. I'll give you two million [Nepali rupees]. So they don't have even opportunity to get in whole their life to get that two million, so and poacher is offering for that, only for one rhino horn. So that is the issue, even though we have a very tight and good security system and community people are so aware, the situation maintains. So and if we want to be able to maintain that situation, we have to address the livelihood opportunities issues. And then the situation will be sustain. (INT4)

The above citation shows that if the alternative livelihood options are maintained and increased, there is no need for local community members to involve themselves in poaching. When introducing alternative livelihoods, the interviewees felt that conservation happens almost automatically.

With skill development training, they [trade union and WWF Nepal] also jointly forced the conservation issues and why conservation is important with the, and then the people who were participating in the training program, like labor workers, they suddenly slowly but surely started to realize what's the importance of training and they were happy to participate in other training process as well. (INT9)

If you don't do rural development, how can you justify conservation? For local communities, it's important that there is development. They need kids to go to school, they need good schools. They need drinking water, they need sewage system, they need little bit tourism better managed, better managed homestays, they need skill

development for that to happen. All kind of things that are more or less development, nothing to do with conservation. If you do all this development, conservation will happen automatically. Then people don't go to cut trees because you have alternatives provided. So all those things, negotiations with communities, are justifiable for conservation, justify the community to communities benefit. (INT20)

The interviewees mentioned that to make conservation projects sustainable in local communities, there is a need for sustainable development. Whether conservation should happen through development or development through conservation is a debate that for example Tai (2007, 1199) has studied. The interviewees mentioned that conservation happens automatically if development takes place. Tai (2007, 1199–1200) suggests that implementing the development through conservation approach is likely to lead to effective institution building. However, as Tai (2007, 1199–1200) and the interviewees stressed, giving thoughts to conservation does not mean the end for development.

The interviewees stressed that engaging local people to conservation is important to decrease poaching and reduce anger towards wildlife. This can be seen for example with species translocations, and how engagement has to be in prior to the activity. The interviewees mentioned a case from early 2017, when 18 wild water buffalos were translocated from Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve to Chitwan National Park. This was not a quick task. The interviewees explained that the preparations for the translocation started more than a year before the actual action. Preparations included not only making the biological situation as well managed as possible, but it also required meetings and dialogue between community members and other stakeholders. The interviewees pointed out that to be able to keep the species safe in their new habitat, local communities have to be engaged. Otherwise, the species could be for example poached, and even biologically good translocations would be hampered. That is why communication is needed both before and after translocations.

The other area people have to send their buffalos and these people have to accept that. So, because buffalos are going to grace your field anyway, buffalos are going to eat your crops, so you try to bring buffalos to a place where you even didn't have a problem with eating the crops, now the buffalos are going to eat your crops. Then the other side, they don't want to send because that's the only place they have so they won't have a pride on that. And with rhino, same thing. Some areas they say why do you want to take our rhinos because we need more rhinos in Chitwan, because we have more tourist then. And the other would say, bring some more rhinos, because we also want to have the tourism benefit as Chitwan's getting on it. It's not necessary always biology. It needs negotiations, not only with communities but with politics, political leaders. And negotiations with the departments. Ministries. It's a long process. [...] You have to invest in relationships also after the translocations. (INT20)

Suppose, when there is a translocation of the wild buffalos from Koshi, there has been some resistance from the local people. They did not want their wildlife to be translocated to Chitwan. Some cases. They come up and the local government agencies they talk it and they made them understand that why they are translocating it. And they invited WWF for a verification. They asked the scientist from WWF what we are doing and he will talk it. And when people listened the scientist and local government manager and deputed organizations, they understand. (INT11)

To maintain conservation and to make that long-lasting, keeping stakeholders in the dialogue and informing them constantly about current situations is im-

portant. The interviewees mentioned that engaged stakeholders are more likely to be willing to participate in pro-environmental actions after they are once engaged. Behavioral studies also suggest that individuals prefer to be and be seen coherent in their behavior (Festinger 1985).

When talking about the rhino situation in Chitwan during the CIT-theme, some people said that all key stakeholders and the leaders of different stakeholder groups are having enough information, and communication flows well between these stakeholders. However, some interviewees raised the fact that the grass-root people who are living next to the protected areas or especially outside buffer zone areas are not having enough information.

The grass-root people are not getting that much information. But the policymakers and private sector people and even civil society leaders, political leaders, have information. (INT4)

People in buffer zones, they know about the conservation, but it's not sufficient to aware only these people, because people outside the buffer zone, they have to also engage in conservation, they have to also know about conservation. (INT7)

Some interviewees thought that to minimize conflict, there should be more grass-root level interaction and engagement in areas where there is not strong program engagement now, especially outside buffer zones. The interviewees mentioned that there is communication and the level of awareness is now better than ever before, but grass-root level follow-ups and technical support are still somewhat slender. Thus, it could lead in broader conservation success if communication would be more focused to grass-root level as well as outer societies.

## **5.4 Lobbying furthers sustainable decision making**

Impacting decision making through lobbying is important communicative factor in conservation. This subchapter is focusing on two aspects of lobbying introduced in theoretical background; inside lobbying (impacting political decision-makers in a direct way) and outside lobbying (influencing policymakers through mobilizing the public). In general, the interviewees underlined that both, inside and outside lobbying, are required in protecting endangered species in Nepal. The communicative role of lobbying is highlighted in this theme.

### **5.4.1 Inside lobbying**

The interviewees felt that through communication and lobbying, organizations like WWF can justify conservation and put that in the mindset of decision-makers. They pointed out that especially since Nepal is a developing country and, in its name, there is an aim for development, now more than ever it is vital to affect decision-makers so that the development could happen in a sustainable way. Thus, linking conservation and development in communication was seen

as vital. Additionally, different issues regarding conservation can be raised within the public through lobbying, and that creates pressure in policy level.

It was seen to be important that organizations like WWF Nepal try to affect decision-makers. To be able to link conservation and development in lobbying, it requires effective communication and planning the message correctly.

Nepal is undeveloped country. Government of Nepal is trying to develop big roads, big dam, high dam, big road, everything. We are trying, WWF also not against the development. For the development. Beyond the conservation, without the conservation, very difficult. Balancing the conservation and development is the challenge now. [...] [Conservation partners can do] policy engagement; engage the policy, wildlife friendly structure. To make the wildlife friendly development. That's why the WWF deputies the policy engagements. It's OK, road is OK, but we need the wildlife friendly road. (INT14)

You have to have some strength among the stakeholders, the government and communities, that you have something that the others don't have. So that's how you will build the strength to be part of that policy. (INT19)

As our economy is developing, our lifestyle is getting more consumptive and there is more use of resources, and no matter what you do, everyone should have conservation in their mindset as a common agenda. (INT20)

As the above citation shows, not only lobbying the issues to decision-makers of today is vital, but it is important to make the basis for the sustainable future and get the audiences to understand the need for sustainable development. Lobbying that environmental education is important in conservation is vital for the sustainable future. That is why the interviewees stressed that educating youth for example through The Generation Green is important. Having the sustainability aspect taking into account in curriculum requires lobbying.

To be able to show the importance of conservation and to make that strong part of the long-term policy, conservation organizations like WWF and other lobbying partners must be able to show the actual gaps that policy needs to be filling. Information should be based on data, not gut feeling. This is something that theory also underlines; to be able to affect decision-makers, information is vital part of lobbying (Weiler & Brändli 2015, 747). That requires careful communication planning.

We'll [WWF Nepal] go to the government and we'll try to convince them we need to do here and this is the actual gap we have been address and this we should do to achieve this goal, like this we are trying to convince them also. (INT8)

If you are looking at more of policy level, the more sort of top level communication, then that's got more to do with reports and publications, which are more scientific-based which sort of gives more of scientific community, including the government and major stakeholders in that level. (INT1)

Additionally, to be able to work in new areas, WWF Nepal has to have mandate from the government of Nepal. Having the mandate requires lobbying the government of the importance of filling certain gaps in the areas where they see that conservation should be taken into account more thoroughly.

[WWF Nepal] is working towards the smart infrastructure development with the government and trying to convince them OK we need to build wildlife friendly pass, like overpass wherever the road infrastructure development is happening. Because we also want the development, but we also want the wildlife-friendly development, so we are trying to help the government as well. Especially try to ensure the environmentally friendly safeguard issue well with the conservation as well. So that's how we [WWF Nepal] are trying to lobby with the government, trying to convince them as well and also supporting the government "OK these are also the things we need to take care of". So this is what we are working. (INT15)

We [WWF Nepal] have to also aware [the decision-makers]. We have to also sensitize them on conservation. Otherwise conservation is always in the saddle, there will be no resources from the government side in the district. Or even in the ministries as well. So we have to sensitize policymakers, decision-makers, at central level as well and at the district level as well. (INT2)

Policy was seen as something that drives multi-stakeholder approach conservation and defines the roles and responsibilities of different actors taking part in conservation. Without good policy, the actual conservation work would be difficult to implement in the field, according to the interviewees. Good policy is also required to maintain poaching and other illegal activities. The importance of conservation can be implanted within the decision-makers and for example law enforcement actors through effective lobbying.

Policy is the main instrument to mobilize, to conduct the any activities, any team, and the clear direction of the morality or working morality of work and responsibilities. (INT3)

If political leaders don't consider conservation as a priority, so poachers, traders, people who get caught, can be released. That need influencing. (INT20)

Inside lobbying requires trust. The interviewees felt that because of the long-lasting relationship and mutual trust, WWF Nepal has been able to earn its place from the government committees as an expert advisor. They underlined that the government of Nepal is working in a mutual trust and understanding with its stakeholders, and that persistent lobbying and cooperation has created good policy in the country. Communication has been in the core of this achievement, since creating and maintaining the relationship has required frequent interaction.

Previous studies also show that access to inside lobbying is established through being a trusted source of opinion (Zetter 2011, 37). For the sustainable conservation and development, having a say in decision making was perceived as important, if not crucial, within the interviewees.

The fact that WWF is called in as an expert in government committees to sort of advise the government on conservation issues and sort of interventions and strategies. All of that is a matter of trust. (INT1)

WWF's role being recognized, and we are part of high level meetings, the high-level committees that government forms, that we are invited as an expert and none of the other organizations. So which is I think these are all consolidate effort. [...] We have very good tie and we have been able to build trust with policymakers. So that has also helped us. (INT13)

It is vital to have good relationship with the government to be able to affect policy. The interviewees mentioned that the relationship between WWF Nepal and government is good. The fact that the relationship is built on trust was highlighted as important. The interviewees stressed that the fact that WWF does not work in opposition of but together with the government is helpful element in maintaining the close stakeholder relationship.

We [the government and WWF Nepal] have a good relationship, and government of Nepal and WWF Nepal, we are working together, we have clear vision, we have clear roles and responsibility, how we achieve the good result in wildlife conservation, how to support local community through protected area management system, how to benefit local community, how to take the responsibility from local community in conservation. (INT3)

The interviewees stressed that behind all conservation success in Nepal is the political willingness. That has required a lot of communication between conservation partners, stakeholders, and the government to make the political level take conservation as a priority initiative. To be able to shift the conservation policy in Nepal from the strict conservation approach to the participatory approach, lobbying and dialogue between stakeholders have been vital. Communication has played a major role to bring different stakeholders together and discuss the situation together. This emerged especially during the CIT-inspired theme and discussion about the rhino conservation in Chitwan.

Policy is the major guideline, policy drives the conservation. So that now, government of Nepal, in the beginning we [Nepal in general] have going to the strict protection in the wildlife conservation. That means we have not closely work, we have not discussed, we have not meeting with the local community. So about 20 years we have practiced strict protection in the conservation. But that did not give good result. Then government of Nepal change the policy, revise that policy, that act, and introduced the local community--- introduce local community through the conservation area and the buffer zone area. Your role is very important, very crucial, and benefit also. First you have to take the benefit from the park, that means tourism activities and share the revenue to local communities for their livelihood, you know, it's conservation activities, consensus activities, conservation education. So that is the policy, policy is the when we participate the local community, participatory approach, we have launched conducted the participatory approach, that is what led to the success. Conservation for people, conservation for development, and yes, local community benefitted from the conservation first hand. (INT3)

The interviewees mentioned that it is important that the government takes conservation seriously; government of Nepal is leading all conservation programs, and it prioritizing conservation is vital. Additionally, it was seen to be important that police, army, customs, judges, and lawyers are made aware of the conservation and its impacts and convinced to be partners in conservation.

Since poaching is considered as a serious crime with punishment in Nepal, it has been controllable according to the interviewees. The fact that protection of endangered species is a priority project of the government was seen as an extremely critical factor for the success of conservation. The interviewees pointed out that in the process, raising awareness was not enough communication; it required high-level lobbying to change the policy.

It [lobbying] is more than raising awareness, [WWF Nepal] went to the government and making them change the policy. Convincing them. (INT11)

The interviewees stressed that organizational communication is not only posting cute pictures of animals to social media; it is influencing the political leaders and both informing and engaging people locally, nationally, and internationally. The interviewees underlined that lobbying is about keeping the current stakeholders involved and getting constantly new stakeholders along. Like Jaatinen (2003) suggests, the interviewees also stressed that there has to be dialogue and mutual understanding behind lobbying.

Even though communicating and lobbying are not always done by communication professionals, the interviewees mentioned that they sort of facilitate the whole process; decide who is the target audience and which is the best medium, what kind of approach is the best, and with what kind of communication the situation gets the best possible outcome. As it was highlighted in the previous themes, knowing the target audience and selecting communication tools based on that was seen as highly important in lobbying.

Additionally, the interviewees stressed that since Nepal is a developing country, in its name it needs development. The interviewees pointed out that now is the time for organizations like WWF and local organizations to lobby and make sure that the development is sustainable and takes for example nature into account. To be able to link conservation and development in lobbying, it requires effective communication and planning the message correctly.

The main challenge is we have to consider conservation when you work on development activities as well. So, we have to be more vocal and we have to work with government to aware them, to sensitize them about the importance of conservation or taking conservation and development in parallel way. So but now in case of Nepal somehow development is little bit prioritized. Maybe it's because of the country needs. So I think this is the major challenge in conservation work. (INT16)

The interviewees stressed that they can see many learning points from developed countries and the mistakes they have done with development and nature not going together in harmony, and they want to do all their best to avoid that in Nepal. Thus, the interviewees pointed out that the need for influencing the decision-makers is now more urgent than ever in Nepal.

In order to make the investment in conservation sustainable, organizations like WWF have been lobbying constantly with decision-makers.

Government has some priorities... or the donor, who might also have some strategies, some priorities that they would like to invest. So, you have to be really careful in negotiating with the government so that your priorities will be incorporated in the policy. Otherwise, the government has some priorities already, and then you have some priorities as WWF Nepal, and then you have some priorities from WWF donors. So, you need to engage, you need to have very good negotiation capacity in the planning process, in visioning process. (INT19)

Lobbying can happen through different channels. The interviewees stressed that it does not have to be only through formal ways, but also through informal channels. When trying to impact decision-makers, showing the need for sup-

port can happen for example through having regular meetings. However, constant communication that is based on facts is needed to make lobbying effective.

First the government should realize so now there is a problem, they can, then they can ask conservation organization OK you can support in this kind of activities. For example, if you are trying to sensitize the policymaker, you can just have meeting with them and try to show them like this is happening so we need to do this, this, and this to fill the gap. (INT15)

Some of the interviewees underlined that, in lobbying, it is good if organizations like WWF are partnering with local organizations. That way the concern of the conservation can attract more attention. When there are more actors coming together with a mutual agenda, it attracts the attention of decision-makers.

For example, we discussed about that OK there is no mention about the involvement of the trade union, the forest based levels in the forest policy. And then finally we have, we were able to convince the other stakeholders like the trade union groups that are part of the civil society if you can say but not institutionalized in forest sector, and through our support these organizations, some local NGOs also advocating lobbying with the government, OK this is also another issue that we have to incorporate in the forest policy. So OK, forest based level labors are also the part of this implementing forest policy. So that's how you need to be really smart while you engage in the planning process, I mean the negotiation process with the government. (INT19)

The interviewees stressed it is important that conservation is recognized as important from the grass-root level and local communities all the way to the high-level and prime minister. This kind of engagement of all stakeholders has made conservation possible in the perception of the interviewees. This was highlighted especially during the CIT-inspired theme.

We [Nepal in general] have good policy and we have significant resources in the conservation, government formed different mechanism from prime minister to local community to conserve the wildlife conservation. To conserve the species. That is the major thing. (INT3)

Multi-stakeholder engagement and high-level participation were seen to be possible only with effective and constant communication, whether it is coming from formal or unformal channels. Having the high-level political decision-makers participating in conservation has required lobbying, and the interviewees said that all that work has resulted in successful conservation efforts.

#### **5.4.2 Outside lobbying**

To be able to affect political decision-makers, it is important to have the support of public. Sometimes lobbying can happen behind closed doors, but sometimes it requires broader attention to make the change. When public is participating in conservation and showing their concern, the interviewees said that this also sends a message to decision-makers. Painter and Kretser (2012, 358) also state in their study that when communities are participating and engaged, that sends a great message for the decision-makers about the importance of nature conservation and the broad concern of the public that requires attention. Thus,

maintaining and boosting outside lobbying is vital for organizations like WWF Nepal. As was highlighted already in theoretical background of this research, being visible in public arena offers NGOs like WWF reputation and public backing, which in some cases might be required to attract the attention of policymakers (Junk 2016).

One of the ways for outside lobbying is media. The interviewees underlined that media is especially important for the outreach of organizations like WWF Nepal and for conservation messaging in general. Through media, the messages go out to larger scale masses and across all stakeholder levels.

Another key stakeholder is obviously media. Because they become up primarily avenue through which we can actually get messages out on a more mass scale and not just at certain level but across all levels. (INT1)

It was highlighted during the interviews that it is important to maintain media relationships, both for the journalists and the organization. The interviewees said that for media, having good relationship with WWF officers in the field is important, since journalists can visit the field and get verified information. For WWF staff members, educating journalists about for example the technical language of conservation was perceived helpful in getting the messages out correctly. Additionally, as Tresch and Fischer (2015) state, maintaining a relationship with journalists might result in having coverage in news segments.

[WWF Nepal] invests time in bringing [journalists] up to different issues that are more current, so the more awareness [WWF Nepal] builds on [media] and the issues [journalists] should be reporting on, then the better stories come out. So [media] would not for example tell a conservation story without a background of where it comes from. So [communication unit's] job is to give [media] that background. So that when [journalists] go out and see a story, [journalists] know how to sort of frame it and how to present it to the public. (INT1)

And also media, [WWF Nepal] trains the local media, two days training, three days training, [WWF Nepal] organize the training, train [journalists], because the conservation terminology, conservation words are sometimes very difficult. If media people doesn't know the words of the conservation, the message is negative. (INT14)

[Media] has good relations with [WWF], and [journalists] have visited lots of time in the field. [WWF] take [journalists] to see conservation programs in the society, field, so [journalists] get information from the society also. Many national parks, [the government and WWF] are now together for the programs. So when [journalists] go to national park and to society, [local communities] give [journalists] information [journalists] can verify from [WWF and national park]. It's very easy to get information from [WWF]. (INT5)

Additionally, the attention of decision-makers can be attracted through media. Taking time to engage with stakeholders and sharing mutual understanding was seen as important. Media is also a good way to market the conservation successes to larger masses, both nationally and internationally.

Besides that, we [WWF Nepal] use media to sort of market also some of our conservation successes. So if besides talking about just conservation issues and conservation threats and challenges, they also are provided options where they can go to the

field and see actually good stuff being done. So that they can report that to general public and government and other stakeholders. (INT1)

In general, it was seen as important that media talks about conservation issues so that their importance can be raised within both public and decision-makers. The interviewees underlined that generally local media is highly trusted source of information in local communities. Few interviewees told about a situation regarding rhino translocations and the role of media. The government of Nepal, which is leading all conservation programs in Nepal, has translocated rhinos from Chitwan National Park to Bardia National Park for few times to strengthen the country's rhino population. However, translocations have caused some opposition. The interviewees mentioned that this had a lot to do with the fact that during Maoist people's war, a lot of previously translocated rhinos were killed during the insurgency. That is why some people felt that taking rhinos from Chitwan would again result in poaching, and thus did not want the species to be moved. WWF Nepal highlighted the issue in media and focused on making it clear that the situation has changed and that the translocated species are safe. Communicating through media was helpful, since it decreased the oppose of the translocations.

Because a lot of people in these local areas, they prefer to read local newspapers. So if you have actually these local people going out and seeing the case and the situation themselves, and we are not just talking to them but we actually took them to the location and had them see how it is in the field. Then they can write back like yes, we've been there, we've seen it and we know that they can be protected. Those were some very good ways that we were able to make sure that people were not very opposed to the translocations. (INT1)

It came in the media, there were like couple of news covered by the journalist who were based in Chitwan saying like there has been a voice raised against that. But what we [WWF Nepal] did from our end was we didn't like directly responded it, we took the same journalist who covered these issues of people protesting in Chitwan to Bardia and we, it was a press trip. And they saw how like rhinos were conserved and that was fortunately the time when this one rhino was just given birth to a baby rhino, so they could see the mother and baby doing perfectly fine in their new environment, and when they wrote about it later, it in a way helped to say that they were the same people who wrote about why the rhino shouldn't be translocated and then again these were the same people who wrote that OK it's doing fine. (INT13)

Using the same channels to solve the problem as what were used in raising the issue is wise move when communicating with broad audiences; if something negative is handled in media, it might be a good strategy to correct the claims in media, too. Additionally, having the same journalists to cover the situation in both sides might make the difference. Public support is vital for organizations, and people form their thoughts and impressions of an organization through public arenas. Being visible in public arena is vital for organizations (Junk 2016), thus, it is important to take media relations seriously into account.

Media is an important opinion leader, and can affect even biologically-wise good conservation projects in a negative way. Jacobson (2009, 6) describes in her book for conservation professionals a situation with cougar translocations, and how the event was biologically-wise successful yet local "Kids Not Cougars" campaign got the attention of the media, and translocations got

viewed negatively. This kind of attention that attracts media coverage for the negative side might be harmful for even biologically successful programs. The example that the interviewees told about the rhino translocations shows that handling the media coverage well is a conservation-wisely good move.

Many interviewees highlighted how important it is that WWF Nepal is having constant connection with media. WWF Nepal holds media sessions on a monthly basis; they invite journalists to WWF Nepal's office in Kathmandu and talk about current environmental issues. These gatherings are very informal, it is a way to keep journalists in a loop and maintain a relationship with them. Both, taking journalists to the field and inviting them to WWF's office, were seen as important ways to keep media relationships ongoing and good.

[WWF Nepal] takes journalist to the field, to show our [WWF Nepal's] work. And then they can write you know, they can criticize, they can give us suggestion, they can show our weakness, and that's one way. We take them. Another way is we invite them [to WWF's office]. Now we have monthly program, every month we give one theme, we have tiger theme, we have rhino theme, next time another theme, so we discuss with the media. We inform them, actually, we have presentations. Three or four of us will have one presentation then they can interact, discuss. So, they will write and they will designate things. (INT12)

With one of WWF Nepal's media sessions, WWF Nepal's staff members told journalists about a current issue of that time; a period of 13 months between 2015 and 2016, where there were 12 cases of tiger skins and bones being seized from all over Nepal. Journalists became interested in the topic, and wrote about it in different newspapers with different angles. After that, the government realized the extent of the issue and started to investigate the situation.

So after that news came out, the ministry of forest and soil conservation took the leadership in sensitizing this to the national park, the Bardia National Park, which is mid-Western region, that's where most of the tiger skins and bones were seized in that part. So in the leadership of chief warden of Bardia national park, they had an immediate important meeting. [The meeting] had high level official from police, from army, from government, from WWF, everybody. So they sat together and then they decided what's the next step we are going to take. So they launched a campaign, there was like zero tolerance, like they are going to arrest everybody, even the suspects. And you know, like bring them in custody, and they did that. And there were more than 200 or 300 suspects who were arrested in that particular time. (INT13)

What also happened was that local media and youth volunteers were engaged and activated in the process after the wheels started to roll. Local radio stations talked about the issue every day, and community-based anti-poaching units (CBAPUs) were mobilized to aware other youth and communities about the importance of conservation and how poaching harms both species populations and the communities. CBAPUs were also used in monitoring the situation in the field. In addition to that, sweeping campaign that covered the parks to see if there are any illegal activities going on were arranged. The situation attracted the attention of all stakeholder, and everyone was participating. After the investigation and campaigning, new factors impacting tiger conservation and poaching were found out.

And what they found after that work was these tigers, I mean it is yet to be confirmed if these tigers were killed in Nepal or outside Nepal, from India. Was it like was Nepal just used as a transit hub. But what they came out after this investigation is there is new group of people who is involved in poaching, that is like not the locals of Nepal but like nomad community, reciting from India. So there is this new group that was discovered. So it was very well, after that it was like reported and from that time, no cases of tiger skins or bones seized has been reported so far. (INT13)

What this long example above shows is that one episode can lead to great things; it was that one gathering with journalists that triggered the government through media coverage. And it resulted in a successful outcome; besides this new discovery of a new group attending in poaching, from that time, no tiger skins or bones have been seized so far.

Not in all cases influencing political leaders and triggering the action happens through inside lobbying, but as the example above shows, for NGOs like WWF, outside lobbying through media is vital communication tool. Previous studies (e.g. Tresch & Fischer 2015) also suggest that to be able to pressure decision-makers, it is vital for organizations to attract media and public support. Influencing political decision making is important and communication plays a vital role in this, whether the persuasion happens through inside or outside lobbying.

Communication has also a huge role in creating the constituency of the issue. Which issue to be addressed. From government to individual level. Communication has to draw the attention of the government what decisions to be made. It's not only nationally, internationally too. And then these individuals, how they behave on that, what is the benefit they are going to get from it. (INT20)

The interviewees also mentioned that it is important for organizations like WWF to promote their experts and market them in media. WWF Nepal's conservation professionals write about their work frequently, and communication professionals modify those text from technical language to be more readable and understandable. This was seen as important lobbying mechanism through media; keeping the current issues on display, and that way informing public and decision-makers about the pressuring situations.

[Communication unit] encourages [conservation professionals] to write frequently, so that when people think about climate, then they'll remember [the head of the climate energy program of WWF Nepal]. Because OK, he keeps on writing about these issues, so he should be an expert. And he is an expert, it's just that [WWF Nepal] have to market his, that's what [communication professionals] are doing as well. (INT13)

We [WWF Nepal] should be writing expert articles and as to showcase our expertise, nationally and globally. I think that's something we are now doing, so that we can brand ourselves as experts on some particular field. (INT20)

Overall, the interviewees felt that without communication, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to attract the attention of decision-makers; or media, for that matter. Lobbying was seen as important for the long run conservation; Hessenius (2007, 12) also states that, in any case, lobbying is critical for the survival of NGOs.

## 5.5 Linking the themes with the help of a rhino

The last theme of every interview was the success story of rhino conservation in Chitwan. The theme inspired by critical incident technique (CIT) was used, in particular, to get examples from a certain situation; which is typical when exploiting CIT. Protection of rhinos have been successful in Chitwan, resulting in decreasing poaching and other conservation successes. It was familiar to all interviewees, and was therefore selected to be the CIT-inspired theme.

What came up during the analysis was that the rhino story is in a way like a summary of all important communicative factors and enabling matters in conservation; awareness and engagement levels in Chitwan are high, which has resulted in decreasing poaching and maintaining zero poaching success. Additionally, habitats are getting better and income generated activities have increased in the area. People are engaged to conservation from their childhood and youth, which has resulted in keeping them involved in pro-environmental activities while growing up; some individuals that were in eco clubs during their childhood are now leading community-based committees and continuing with conservation work. Few of the interviewees told that they had been in eco clubs in their childhood, and they all said that engaging to pro-environmental activities has been part of their desire to behave environmentally friendly now and in the future.

Ownership – local communities doing conservation for themselves, by themselves – was one of the important factors enabling conservation highlighted in the interviews. The interviewees stressed that there is a strong feeling of ownership within local communities in Chitwan. They said that communities are not participating in conservation just because someone is telling them to, but because they see the benefit that conservation brings to them and want to be part of the conservation. That was seen as one of the main motivators, and main focus areas of communication; to make it clear to communities why conservation is important for them too, and not only for the species survival.

Lobbying has also been successful regarding Chitwan; people from local communities to the prime minister are engaged to work for the mutual conservation goal. This engagement has been possible only through constant communication efforts and dialogues between stakeholders. However, some interviewees pointed out that the grass-root level information is not as good as the higher-level information in Chitwan, and hoped that people from the grass-root level would be even more engaged to the mutual dialogue.

Conflicts between human beings and wildlife are expected to increase in Chitwan in the future. This was seen as one of the major problems of conservation. Poaching and habitat destruction were mentioned to be other main issues that could get in the way of conservation, now and in the future. The interviewees felt that communication could help in resolving the conservation problems; some interviewees said that they think that all problems are resolved with dialogue and communicating with each other. However, communication must be strategized. There has to be a clear link between the message and the target audience. Also, it is important what kind of medium is used for the outreach.

The critical incidents that have led to conservation success in Chitwan were mentioned as follows; the approach from strict conservation to participatory model was seen as the most important factor. Shift to community-based conservation increased positive behavior change and ownership, which resulted in maintaining the programs from the own will in communities. The fact that conservation first shifted from conserving one species (rhino) to larger scale conservation, and then even to landscape-level conservation, was seen to have a huge impact in conservation achievements; that way there has been more stakeholders engaged and conservation has enlarged. Additionally, lobbying with high-level authorities and getting the great involvement from the decision-makers were seen as important milestones in the rhino conservation in Chitwan.

The interviewees pointed out that the results of the rhino conservation are also visible beyond this one species; protecting rhinos has been beneficial for other animals, too. For example, tiger numbers are increasing with rhino numbers in Chitwan. These species share the same habitat, so rhino conservation has also been beneficial for tigers.

During the CIT-inspired theme, the interviewees had an opportunity to use an A4 paper that had a line on it. As Chell (2004) suggests, using the timeline is a good way to gain information from the interviewees; the line makes it easier to go back in time. Some interviewees did not want to fill the line themselves, so in those cases the researcher was using the pen instead and together discussing with the interviewees filled the incidents to the timeline. Based on these timelines, the researcher formed a summarizing figure (Figure 2).



FIGURE 2 The shift of the conservation approaches in Chitwan

Increasing stakeholder engagement is seen to be a critical factor when it comes to achieving conservation goals. All interviewees mentioned these three milestones introduced in Figure 2 as important incidents in the rhino conservation in Chitwan; starting with species-centered conservation, moving towards community-based conservation, and ending up with landscape-level conservation. The interviewees mentioned that these shifts in conservation approaches have changed the status of the greater one-horned rhino; from once being almost extinct, the rhino population is now growing in Nepal.

The interviewees thought that the shift to the landscape-level conservation has boosted zero poaching; it was seen as even more engaging approach than only community-based conservation. The interviewees pointed out that with

community-based conservation, dialogues between stakeholders started to increase and through landscape-level conservation, the relationships have become even stronger. This was seen as important factor in achieving zero poaching, and mutual understanding was seen as something that can only rise from two-way communication. The cooperation of different stakeholders and the active participation of the stakeholders were mentioned to be in the core of the rhino conservation success.

What was especially interesting regarding this research, communication has played a major role in rhino conservation story in Chitwan. During the strict conservation phase, where people were mostly excluded from conservation, there was no proper communication between stakeholders. As a result of this approach, it was difficult to keep conservation sustainable. When the approach shifted to engaging communities and towards community-based conservation, both the conservation successes and communication evolved. Including local communities to decision making and mutual dialogue helped in creating sustainable conservation projects. Bringing ownership to local communities and local communities doing conservation by themselves, for themselves, resulted in increasing stakeholder engagement and conservation success. Finally, introducing the landscape-scale conservation approach in Nepal created even broader stakeholder partnerships and dialogue between multiple stakeholders.

When all stakeholders – such as the government, conservation organizations, local communities, education, health and tourism sectors, media, customs, police, army, and local organizations – are engaged, it is more likely to achieve conservation goals than if different stakeholders are working in isolation. The interviewees stressed that only after all stakeholders started mutual dialogues and when everyone was engaged, conservation success started to happen.

To be able to engage and convince different stakeholders, organizations like WWF Nepal have to communicate with their audiences, and plan the message for the right audience. Rhino story of Chitwan was seen as a model initiative in conservation and how communication has been part of the success was seen as inevitable.

The researcher suggests that the CIT-inspired theme is a good example of how different communicative factors are equally important and should be taken into account when planning conservation projects and communication. The results support previous studies (e.g. Hallahan et al. 2007) which suggest that when communication is strategically linked with the overall organizational goals, the outcomes and mission achievement becomes more successful and effective.

## 6 DISCUSSION

This chapter focuses on summarizing the results and conclusions, goes through the answers to the research questions (RQs), evaluates the quality of this research, and gives few ideas for the future research.

### 6.1 Summary of the results and conclusions

This research aims to find out what the role of communication in protecting endangered species is through three research questions. In this part of the chapter, those research questions are presented individually and how the results and conclusions of this research can answer them is discussed. Finally, a summarizing table is presented to highlight the findings of this research.

RQ1: How is the purpose of communication perceived in protecting endangered species?

Communication was perceived as highly important among the interviewees. To be able to have effective communication, there is a need for effective conservation. And to make conservation effective, there is a critical need for communication. When both function well, it feeds the success. This study indicates that moving from solely influencing to truly engaging the stakeholders makes the conservation efforts more sustainable and successful.

Communication connects people and enables relationships. Without people coming together, conservation would not be possible. Especially personal communication and taking time to build strong, trusting relationships, were seen as critical purposes of communication. This requires strategic planning of communication and viewing communication holistically.

Based on this research, every conservation effort starts with communication. To be able to make people aware, motivated, and engaged, there is a need for effective communication. If people are not aware of the importance of conservation, it is unlikely that they participate in conservation efforts, especially in

a long run; and public participation is critical, as the interviewees stressed. As the interviewees pointed out, the government or conservation organizations cannot do effective conservation work alone. People affect nature in their everyday life, so they need to be included in conservation. Especially local communities living next to protected areas were seen as vital stakeholders and thus, communicative factors in protecting endangered species are much focusing on them to realize results. To be able to have functioning multi-actor network, communication must flow between all stakeholders.

The interviewees mentioned that during the strict conservation approach, when local communities were not included in conservation as important stakeholders but were kept outside and controlled with only laws and regulations, illegal activities such as poaching did not decrease as wished in Nepal. Only after local communities started to participate in conservation with for example community-based conservation, wider success in conservation started to happen. The interviewees highlighted the role of communication within this process. When local communities were not part of the dialogue and also excluded from the decision making, the results in conservation were not as successful as they are today. The interviewees felt that when including all stakeholders to the dialogue and communication, poaching has not only decreased but zero poaching started to become possible in Nepal. This again indicates that linking communication to an organization's overall strategy is vital for the desired outcome.

As the results show, it is vital to present alternative livelihood opportunities when communicating about conservation and changes. To make conservation effective, people need to change their attitudes and behavior. To inform people about the needed change, communication comes to the picture. To change the attitudes and to achieve the goals through communication, people, especially local people living close to the protected areas, have to be introduced livelihood opportunities that are not depending on natural resources.

Even though this research is not aiming at pointing out any exclusive truths about the role of communication in protecting endangered species, or focusing on for example some particular communication process, the perceptions of the interviewees indicate that communication is vital part of conservation. Protecting endangered species would be difficult without communication. If people who are impacting the wildlife would not be communicating, the protection of endangered species could get hampered. The results show that for example when people are actively participating in conservation and aware of the consequences of their behavior, conservation is more likely to be successful.

Organizations are working in multi-cultural and diverse environments. For conservation organizations, to be able to achieve the concrete goals, there is a need for a mutual goal between all stakeholders. By engaging different stakeholders and by taking them into account in the planning process, chances to achieve the goals gets higher. There is a vital need for communication professionals who know about the communication methods and which approach suits for which target audience. As the research shows, it is vital to choose the communication materials and methods wisely.

The role of communication professionals should be recognized more within organizations, since the stakeholder engagement and the cooperation with

different sectors that make conservation possible are strongly linked with communication. Communication professionals should also recognize their own role and help other professionals in increasing their knowledge and communication skills. Just as it is commonly occurring today, communication professionals should not be seen as the only ones that do communication, but rather as the facilitators that make communication effective and engaging.

RQ2: What kind of communicative factors are perceived as important in conservation?

The interviewees highlighted that raising awareness and changing behavior, engaging stakeholders, and lobbying are the main communicative factors in conservation. These findings show that everything is impacting everything; there is a need for awareness raising, and behavior change can happen after that. When people are aware and willing to change their behavior, they are also more likely to engage in conservation in a long run. Lobbying is needed especially in a high-level engagement, and it was seen as an important part of stakeholder engagement in that sense. Besides engagement, lobbying also increases awareness; both within public and within decision-makers. To make awareness raising, behavior change, stakeholder engagement, and lobbying effective, there is a need for effective communication, and it should be taken into account from the very beginning of the strategic planning of the conservation projects.

The interviewees stressed that to make communication effective, it is vital to know what kind of messages and mediums work with which stakeholders. This highlights the role of communication professionals, as they know how communication works and can make the strategy decisions about this. That is why especially during the interviews with WWF Nepal staff members, the role of communication professionals became part of the discussion.

It is important to see communication as diverse as possible. If one communication approach does not work, it has to be adjusted in contact with the target audience. If for example the target audience is illiterate, it is better to use radio programs, workshops, street drama, or videos rather than text-based materials. In addition to that, scientific-based information and reports are needed when communicating and lobbying with decision-makers. Overall, the variety between stakeholders, communication materials, and communication channels were seen as important.

In addition, the importance of choosing the right communicator was highlighted. Communication professionals are not the ones who do all communication; as it is commonly occurring in today's organizational field, other employees besides communication professionals are communicating with stakeholders now more than ever. Additionally, local leaders and other stakeholders might in many cases be the most influential communicators, and their role in engagement should be exploited.

As it showed in the results, WWF Nepal is working in a multi-stakeholder environment, and that requires communication from all individuals included in the process. Employees are vital resources in an organization, and thus need

good communication skills. Their personal relationships with the various stakeholders were seen as important. Field workers have relations with local communities and are trusted sources of information for that. Conservation professionals who have relations with the government and decision-makers are seen as the best lobbyists, since they are included in their expert role in forums. Communication professionals know how to reach masses, which communication tools to select, and how communication processes work. They were also seen as important resources in supporting other employees.

Communicative actions that were highlighted during the interviews were varying based on the target audience. Concerning donors and the international audience, the interviewees said that it is best to use concrete success stories from the field. The form can be text-based or visual, such as pictures or videos. With national audiences, such as urban masses, stories were also seen as effective. With local communities, videos, radio programs, posters, workshops, environmental education, meetings, and cultural performances such as street drama were mentioned.

The interviewees also pointed out that, to get the message to the right audience, there is a need for communication technologies. Without the communication systems provided by evolving technologies, it would be difficult to both maintain the conservation results and reach the audiences. The effective use of different communicative factors needs proper communication systems.

Communication is a constant learning process and needs new innovative ways to be further explored. Navigating between different communication tools and audiences requires understanding and valuing the culture of the target audience. Taking into account what are the special characteristics of the target audience makes the planning and implementing of communication much more effective than just relying on gut feeling would do.

RQ3: How could communication be used as a tool in resolving challenges in conservation to the opinions of the individuals interviewed?

Conservation is facing many challenges. Especially now, when changes on Earth are caused by human beings and not natural forces, the issues conservationists have to tackle include people – not only as the cause of the problems but as the solutions, too. What were mentioned as the main issues in conservation during the interviews were poaching, habitat degradation, and human-wildlife conflict.

When there is a challenge, there is a need for communication. But as important as it is to have communication, it is important to use communication in the right ways. As the results show, communication tools must be diverse, as are the target audiences. One communication approach does not fit to all recipients, and that is why audience-based communication was seen as important. In this sense, it was highlighted as important that in addition to the channel, it matters who brings the message. When reaching media, donors, or other groups, communication professionals were seen as the best messengers. However, in the field, the most important messengers were either the local authorities, field workers, or local community members. Planning the message with the

right target audience in mind and selecting the right informant based on the desired outcome and current situation are important when communicating and resolving challenges with communication.

To decrease the conflicts and resolve problems, local communities that are engaged to conservation have to have some incentives. Whether it is monetary or some other benefit, the engagement is more likely to be long-lasting if people are benefiting from their actions. Only awareness will not lead to long-lasting behavior change. Communication is a vital element when communicating to people about the incentives and alternative livelihood options; if people are not included in mutual dialogue and communicated about how conservation might benefit their lives, it is not likely that they will change their attitudes.

Communication can target for example the culture, beliefs, and norms of the target audience. This can happen through different mechanism and approaches; if the community is open to conservation, then for example meetings and workshops could be the answer. If the community does not like authorities such as the government or WWF Nepal to be talking about the issues, then it is best to have someone from the target community that is already open-minded towards conservation as a messenger. The interviewees pointed out that sometimes people do not want to hear the message from authorities; for example, in sensitive cases the best method could be asking a trusted person of the community. It is important that organizational communication does not only happen through formal channels or through the organization itself.

The interviewees gave examples of engaging community members and giving them communication tools to engage each other, which indicate that for conservation on the long run, giving a say to outsourced informants is vital. As emphasized in theoretical background, there are different communicators in this research, too; communication professionals, other employees, and communication ambassadors, such as trade union leaders, other community members, and teachers. Youth are educating each other through community-based anti-poaching units (CBAPUs) and Behavior Change Communication (BCC), kids are educating their parents, trusted members from communities, such as trade union leaders, are giving the messages to their peers. The importance of communication and choosing the right approach were highlighted as important; in many cases, it makes a great difference who brings the message. As the interviewees pointed out, navigating between different communicators might get difficult and requires a strategic approach from a communication perspective. The perception that in some cases communication should be outsourced indicates that organizations must learn not to strive to control their communication, which previous research (e.g. Juholin 2013a) also highlights.

The stakeholders interviewed expressed that since they have been engaged to conservation behavior, they are desired to continue with environmentally friendly behavior in the future also. One stakeholder interviewed said that they would like to start a sustainable business that is aiming at pro-environmental actions, and another one expressed their desire to continue with eco-friendly behavior in all actions, such as educating other stakeholders and using less nature resources. This kind of expressions are well linked to the described theoretical background of behavior change which suggests that people

are more willing to be coherent with their behavior after having been engaged to some sort of related behavior.

Good cooperation between different stakeholders is needed to make the communication effective. The role of communication is to unite people and inform all the stakeholders about conservation and its different processes. It became clear that when there is for example misinformation or lack of information, the actual conservation might become difficult. Even though conservation is based on biology, people are always needed to be able to reach the conservation goals. And when people are misinformed or there is lack of information or awareness, the actual biological conservation might get difficult.

There have been situations where lack of information has caused some problems, such as when translocating species from one protected area to another. If people are misinformed or not informed at all, they might get the wrong impression of the situation. Communication is vital in resolving issues in conservation and it should be considered in all situations.

But what is effective communication? The interviewees stated that there is not one correct way of communicating, but it changes according to stakeholders and situations. Communication is not always foreseeable, and above all, it is not controllable. Even well-planned messages often work out different than expected. Communication is a long process of continuous learning – for each stakeholder. If communication is based on trust, it could for example contribute to positive and desired changes in behavior. If the message comes only from top to bottom, it does not work; communication has to strive for a common language and dialogue. Additionally, taking the culture of the target audience into account is important when building trust between partners and stakeholders. Trust can be boosted through effective communication. The interviewees pointed out that when there is trust, resolving challenges is easier than it would be if all stakeholders did not share a basis of mutual trust and understanding.

The interviewees stressed that when communicating, or resolving possible problems with communication, it is important to take the culture of the target audience into account when planning the message. What was brought up was that even though WWF Nepal is part of the international network, it has localized its approach to the context of Nepal. It measures its actions and communication itself. Localizing the communication and actions was seen as important. It has been studied that it is vital for multinational organizations to understand “national and cultural variability across and within countries in which they operate” (Schwarz & Fritsch 2014, 167).

For example, Coca-Cola failed with its *one market, one strategy* approach when it was trying to resolve an international crisis in Western Europe; this was mainly because the company did not understand different cultural responses (Taylor 2000). When international NGOs (INGOs) take into account the diversity of stakeholders and attempt to understand the cultural differences, they are more likely to be successful. This also applies in communication. (Schwarz & Fritsch 2014, 178.)

Additionally, since NGOs and especially INGOs typically have global and multicultural audiences, they can affect policy and decision making in various ways and levels. They can also increase awareness and engage audiences across

boundaries. (Lambell et al. 2008.) This was also highlighted within the interviewees; understanding the broad and holistic effects of communication makes the conservation efforts more sustainable and effective.

TABLE 4 Special characteristics of communicative factors impacting conservation

Communicative factor	Raising awareness and changing behavior	Engaging stakeholders	Lobbying
<b>Results of the actions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Making conservation understandable, justified, and valued</li> <li>- Building basic knowledge and atmosphere for pro-environmental actions</li> <li>- Audience-based communication results in the most effective behavior change</li> <li>- Choosing the correct messenger matters to the target audience</li> <li>- Interaction helps in locating barriers that are in a way of pro-environmental actions</li> <li>- Technology provides more channels for effective communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Building ownership and trust, which leads to long-term conservation success</li> <li>- Decreasing poaching by engaging communities in active ways to pro-environmental actions; promoting bottom-up approaches instead of top-down approaches</li> <li>- Providing the knowledge of alternative livelihood options that are not depending on nature increases engagement and boosts sustainable conservation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Impacting policy and decision making, which results in laws, regulations, and actions that are pro-environmental (inside lobbying)</li> <li>- Attracting the attention of media and spreading the conservation messages to larger masses (outside lobbying)</li> <li>- Getting the attention of decision-makers through public pressure (outside lobbying)</li> </ul>

Table 4 is a summary of the special characteristics of communicative factors raised from the research data. As the results show, there are different levels of communication, and all communicative factors affect conservation in a special way. When raising awareness and changing behavior, it is vital for an organization to make the overall conservation efforts understandable, justified, and valued. Awareness builds knowledge and atmosphere for the behavior change. It is vital an organization remembers its target audience when planning communication, and that it matters who brings the message. Having the support from evolving technologies brings more channels to interact with stakeholders.

With stakeholder engagement, building ownership and trust with stakeholders leads to long-term conservation success. When communication is used effectively and stakeholders are engaged in active participation, it is more likely to decrease poaching and reach positive behavior changes. In this respect, it is vital to manage stakeholder relationships through including the audiences to dialogues and decision making (bottom-up approaches), not through treating

the stakeholders as objectives of manipulation (top-down approaches). Additionally, communicating about the alternative livelihood options is vital for long-term conservation; if people are not engaged in sustainable livelihoods and introduced to activities that are less dependent on nature, achieving conservation goals is likely to get hampered.

Lobbying is an important communicative element in protecting endangered species. Through having an influence on decision making with effective communication, conservation organizations might affect laws, regulations, and pro-environmental actions. Direct lobbying with decision makers (inside lobbying) is important, and having a say in decision making forums boosts the desired change in policy. Attracting the attention of media and spreading the information to larger masses (outside lobbying) is crucial for conservation organizations; not only does it result in raising awareness level with public, but it might create a pressure for decision makers if people get vocal about the issues.

## 6.2 Evaluation of the research

Lincoln and Guba (1985) point out four criteria for evaluating the credibility and soundness of qualitative research; transferability, confirmability, credibility, and dependability. With regard to the transferability of the study, the aim of this study was to collect extensive, heterogeneous material. The broad research data and its strong links to the theory support the transferability; the research examines the phenomenon from a holistic view and provides connections to the previous research. Additionally, it has taken into account the various stakeholder groups and actors in conservation in Nepal so that a broad 360-view would be possible; these factors reflect also to confirmability.

The dimension of the research data also provides confirmability, as does the fact that the interviewees were not randomly selected but their participation in conservation was noted. Additionally, confirmability has been highlighted by binding the findings to theory, so that the analysis of the material would not be just pointing out interesting citations.

Credibility has been highlighted by presenting direct quotations from the interviewees' responses in the text. This way, the reader can see what kind of answers have led to the creation of certain themes and conclusions. To show and promote dependability, the research process has been implemented in accordance with scientific practice. The process has been described as accurately and transparently as possible in order to allow the reader to assess the ways in which the material has been collected and how it has been processed.

When assessing the reliability of this research, it is good to take into account that one interview was fully implemented with an interpreter and two partly with an interpreter. Therefore, the researcher has been evaluating the reliability of the interpreter and the effect of possible misunderstandings on the reliability of the material already at the data gathering stage. In an interview situation, possible inconsistencies were resolved by asking more precise questions and confirming the perceived perceptions from the interviewees.

The researcher's own assumptions of the topic must be taken into account when assessing the reliability of the research. Choices made already at the beginning of the research, for example selecting the methods and the interviewees, have contributed to the results of the study. These choices do not, however, define the ethics of this research. Realizing different axioms have helped the researcher to realize their own role during the whole process, so their own pre-suppositions have been thought critically throughout the research.

One can, of course, consider how the research would have been carried out or what findings would have been made from the data if this research had been carried out by a person who has no relation to conservation or no previous knowledge of the research subject. However, doing this kind of data-based research would have been difficult without previous knowledge, since there is a need for strong understanding of the subject when the researcher is not having any theoretical backing in prior to the data collection.

The researcher has to constantly think about the decisions they made and take a stand on the reliability of those decisions (Eskola & Suoranta 2014, 209). As mentioned before, the researcher of this study observed their own role throughout the whole research process to be as objective as possible; this started with recognizing the own possible subjectivity. Additionally, all steps of the research have been attempted to describe as openly and accurately as possible to make it easier for the reader to evaluate the reliability of this study.

This research does not aim at telling the exclusive impacts of communication, or what the absolute role of communication is. Although the results of this research can be reflected on with previous research, the researcher cannot claim that the findings of this study would be the only factors influencing communication or that communication would not have a role elsewhere. Additionally, what should be taken into account when reading this research is that it does not say that communication is the only thing that affect conservation.

However, the vast number of interviewees and the saturation that happened regardless of the interview group show that similar thoughts did not wake up in just one group of respondents, but the same important factors were raised in all interviews. For example, all analyzed themes were raised by all interviewees even though those themes were not part of the predetermined interview guide. Although some of the themes have been given a different emphasis during different interviews, it is essential for the generalization of the research that saturation was realized without the weight of the interviewee group. In addition to this, a strong link to previous research can be observed, as the results show. The theoretical relevance in data-based research can be seen as an evidence that the interviewees have been consulted without strong prediction assumptions, since the themes did not even belong to the researcher's assumptions or the interview guide.

Overall, the research data was comprehensive; the actual saturation began to take place around the halfway of the data collection. However, it was not decided to suspend the data collection, as the researcher wanted to ensure that the material was as extensive as possible. For example, the fact that the researcher did not test any particular theory and was raising all theoretical background based on the research data urged the researcher to collect as broad data

as possible. Although it was also clear at the analysis stage that the saturation had really occurred before the last interviews took place, it was necessary to analyze all the collected interviews for a comprehensive study. (Look e.g. Eskola & Suoranta 2014, 61–64.)

The purpose of this research is not to evaluate the communication of WWF Nepal. It cannot say whether the communication of the case organization has been successful or unsuccessful. It does not evaluate any particular communication processes and thus cannot point out whether some communication processes mentioned in the interviews have been effective or not. This research is focusing on the perceptions of the interviewees and is exploiting the role of communication as a wider phenomenon. The aim of this research was to build a comprehensive image of the studied phenomenon and examine it through the perceptions of people who affect or are affected by conservation. Thus, this might raise a question whether the results of this research are just guess work and do they relate to the actual communication and its role. However, as the results show, the perceptions of the interviewees cannot be completely ignored and thought as a guess work, since there are so many links between the perceptions of the interviewees and previous research.

As a matter of fact, the researcher found it interesting that so many communicative factors and matters mentioned in previous research were highlighted by the interviewees. The interviewees pointed out the same important factors as the theory underlines. That connects the perceptions of the interviewees of this research to previous studies. As this research points out, communication can be found in many actions of an organization, and how the communication is handled affects the whole success of conservation. Through the findings of this research, organizations can evaluate their communication and examine how they allot time and resources to communication.

Even though cultural context is important, the broad linkage to theory and similarities in the factors that the interviewees raised as vital parts of conservation both support the transferability of this research. Through this research, other NGOs, especially conservation organizations, could evaluate their communicative actions and organizational culture. They should ask themselves at least these three important questions: Is communication linked to organization's strategy; are stakeholders engaged through dialogues or treated as objectives; is influencing the decision-makers part of organization's strategy. This study provides important information regarding these central questions of the researched topic and provides support for the significance of the main communicative actions to an organization.

### **6.3 Suggestions for the future research**

Although there is a lot of previous research that takes into account for example the role of awareness raising and stakeholder engagement in conservation, there is still a lack of holistic research that analyzes different approaches and factors from a communicative perspective. Raising awareness, changing behav-

ior, engaging stakeholders, and lobbying all require communication. However, these views are not broadly researched together as communicative factors. This research opens a field for conservation and communication professionals and researchers to look at the different relationships conservation requires from a communicative perspective. For the future research, it would be important to take communication into account in a broader sense and focus on it holistically. Shifting from solely looking at communication as its own practice might also help organizations in the strategic planning of communication and in viewing the whole conservation process from a communicative perspective.

When talking about strategic planning of communication, it is important to note that communication can be based on a strategy and possibly still not be effective. It can also be a strategical move of an organization to not have communication, or to have communication that is only based on transferring messages. Strategy making requires customization. This research suggests that organizations should think about their strategies, goals, and communication, and how these are linked together. As Falkheimer et al. (2016, 143–144) state, one way of proving the strategic value of communication to the organization is by relating communication to an organization's overall goals. Thus, research on how communication is linked to the organization's goals and mission, and how that link could be improved and strengthened could be useful for both, the communication field and organizations.

This research studied the thoughts of WWF Nepal's closest stakeholders and the interviewees were selected based on their prior knowledge of conservation in Nepal. It might also be beneficial to gain information from areas where conservation programs are not ongoing; what are the thoughts outside the buffer zones? How should communication be improved in the areas, in the eyes of the individuals living there? In general, researching the perspectives of even more diverse stakeholder groups could be vital for both communication studies and the actual protection of endangered species.

Conservationists have been fighting against poaching and other illegal wildlife crimes for a long time, but according to recent studies (e.g. Waters et al. 2016; WWF 2016a; Ceballos et al. 2017), the number of vertebrate species is constantly decreasing. The interesting question is whether studying the impacts of conservation communication could be helpful to future conservation projects. This research indicates that the effectiveness of communication results in effectiveness of conservation projects. If communication would be studied more in the conservation field, this could help organizations and other conservation partners in achieving their goals and in choosing how to allocate funds to their communication and related actions.

Additionally, it could be beneficial for NGOs to research the role of their communication professionals. This research is focusing on communication as a wide phenomenon and takes into account different actors that are implementing communication. If the specific role of communication professionals would be studied, this could give a more holistic understanding and valuing for communication professionals as conservationists. In today's organizations, everyone communicates – it is not only the communication professional's job. That is why different actions should be viewed more as communicative factors; such as

stakeholder engagement and lobbying. Even though the person who handles these situations, such as stakeholder engagement or lobbying, in an organization might be someone else than communication professional, it would be important to recognize these factors as communicative actions. This – the changing role of communication – should be taken into account in the further research, especially in the researched conservation field.

The interviewees stressed that since the species habitats are decreased at the same time that human populations are growing – whereas in Nepal's case, also the species numbers are increasing – there is a possibility that conflicts between wildlife and nature will increase, too. WWF and other nature conservation stakeholders are increasingly struggling with conflicts, and this should be taken into account in advance in communication planning. The need for crisis communication is growing, and as people expect information more rapidly, organizations should figure out how to respond to this need. By evaluating communication and researching where it has an effect on can be helpful in minimizing these conflicts.

Organizations evaluate their projects outcomes, but how much are concrete communicative matters being investigated in organizations? While it may be difficult, as Hallahan et al. (2007, 10) point out, reviewing communication activities could help organizations detect which communicative factors have been functional and where there have been gaps. Justifying and showing the role of a communication can be tricky (Falkheimer et al. 2016, 155), but the more communication professionals can demonstrate the importance of their work and link it to the organizational strategy, the more powerful the overall valuing of communication will get in an organization. This research suggests that in addition to taking the holistic role of communication into account in research, it could be beneficial to do so also within organizations.

Additionally, the results of this research suggest that interaction and personal connection with stakeholders is vital for effective communication and successful conservation. Being together in one place and discussing the issues were raised multiple times during the interviews and were considered as critical elements of conservation. Because of this, both researchers and practitioners should in the future focus more on how to bring the closeness and togetherness from the context of this research to other cultures and situations; for example, how could digital interaction be improved in this regard. Having active dialogues and a feeling of being part of the change is vital when it comes to multi-actor network working together in conservation. Taking this into account in different settings and cultures could resonate in improving conservation efforts. This research gives a broad understanding of how working together at personal level and having the relationship with the stakeholders have been critical especially with handling sensitive issues. Applying this knowledge also to other fields of study and contexts could be beneficial.

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## ANNEX

### Annex 1.

#### Interview guide

#### Background questions:

Name (stress that the answers are handled anonymously)

Title / From

Years in WWF Nepal (if WWF staff)

Years engaged to WWF's work / How is engaged to WWF's work (if stakeholder)

#### Questions for all interviewees:

##### ENABLING CONSERVATION

What are the key elements of conservation and protection of endangered species? Give examples of what one should consider.

In your opinion: what could save endangered species?

What actors/quarters have to be part of the process to make conservation possible and successful?

How actors/quarters are kept in the process?

##### CHALLENGES IN CONSERVATION

What are the main issues that complicate conservation and how could they be resolved?

Has there been any conflicts - if yes, why and what kind? How they were resolved?

Do you know anyone who is / has been against protection of endangered species? Can you explain why they have / have had that attitude?

##### RHINO CONSERVATION STORY (CHITWAN)

Critical incident technique (CIT) is a method that is exploring individuals' thoughts and experiences regarding some certain, critical incidents. This means that interviewee says what comes to their mind and what they see as "critical incidents". Basically, they are explaining what are the main situations or factors

that comes to their mind. The subject in this research's case is the story of protecting greater one-horned rhinos in Chitwan.

Can you describe what happened? What would you say that are critical incidents that has led to the successes / failures? Give examples.

What comes to your mind as you think about the rhino conservation? What has been special and why?

Has there been any problems or obstacles on the way? Is there something you would do differently?

How would you say that these methods/factors used in rhino conservation in Chitwan could be used in another conservation project, with some other species for example?

How do you feel about the rhino protection? How do you think other people feel?

## COMMUNICATION

What channels WWF Nepal uses and is there something you would improve?

What do you think about the communication of WWF Nepal? Has something changed in recent years? What? What do you think about the change?

If you think about a situation where there could be a problem, how do you see communication could be used as a tool in resolving these issues?

Can you think of any ways how communication could help in reaching conservation goals?

### **Questions for WWF staff:**

What has been particularly successful or unsuccessful project / campaign? Can you give an example of what led to this?

What kind of change there must be in the attitudes, knowledge, and actions to achieve the goals?

What has to be done to get people involved and committed, and change their attitude?

How stakeholders are convinced and motivated?

What has helped WWF Nepal to legitimate (justify) the protection of endangered species?

Can you think of any situations regarding communications that was good / bad?

Can you think about any situations where there should have been more / less communication?

Can you emphasize what is the role of communication (in your opinion) when it comes to changing the attitudes of people and getting them involved with conservation?

When planning strategies and operations in your sector, what kind of role communication has in the process?

**Questions for stakeholders (community members, media representative, government representative):**

What motivates you when it comes to protection of endangered species?

What has to be done to get people involved and change their attitude?

Do you trust WWF Nepal? What makes you trust / not trust in WWF Nepal?

How do you get information from WWF Nepal?

Can you give an example of situation where the information was especially good or where there should have been more information? Why?

How does WWF Nepal communicate about the projects, campaigns, and programs that are related to protection of endangered species?

Is there something you would change or some other way you would like to get information?

**AT THE END OF EACH INTERVIEW**

Is there anything that you would like to add?

Can I contact you later for more questions (if needed)?

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