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ECCR

ENVIRONMENTAL COLLABORATION &
CONFLICT RESOLUTION NETWORK

International course

Environmental Collaboration and Conflict Resolution: Community-based Natural Resource Governance in Rural Uganda

21-25.08.2023, Fort Portal, Uganda

Environmental Collaboration and Conflict Resolution: Community-based Natural Resource Governance in Rural Uganda 2023, course report Denis Dobrynin, Frank Ojwang, Irmeli Mustalahti, Ahimbisibwe Karemba, Ubaldus Tumaini, Jordan Byekwaso, Lasse Peltonen, Kristen Wright, Eve Nabulya, Tiina Kontinen, Ida Herdieckerhoff, Willy Ngaka

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SUMMARY

The course was designed around community-based natural resources governance. The course was built on theoretical frameworks related to natural resource conflicts, conflict elements and analysis, conflict resolution strategies, and collaborative practices. The course participants were introduced to and interacted with different concepts such as environmental collaboration, the collaborative approach, environmental and natural resource governance, conflict resolution, interdependency, conflict mediation and consensus building, the best alternative to a negotiated agreement (BATNA) and trust building. These concepts and approaches were explained and contextualised by various facilitators during the course. The theoretical frameworks and concepts were illustrated with a field visit related to conflicts and collaboration related to tourism, nature conservation, wildlife, farming and local communities' livelihoods. The field visit was conducted in the Bigodi Community, Western Uganda. The course also included interactive discussions, several group works and hands-on exercises in negotiation, mediation, active listening skills and trust building.



Photo 1: A group discussion led by Irmeli Mustalahti

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1. THE COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course was coordinated by the Department of Geographical and Historical Studies at the University of Eastern Finland (UEF) and the Department of Adult and Community Education, School of Distance and Lifelong Learning at Makerere University, Uganda. The ECCR 2023 course attracted 36 participants, of whom 26 were students and 10 were teachers. The course participants were students, teachers, researchers and government staff from Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Finland, and the USA.

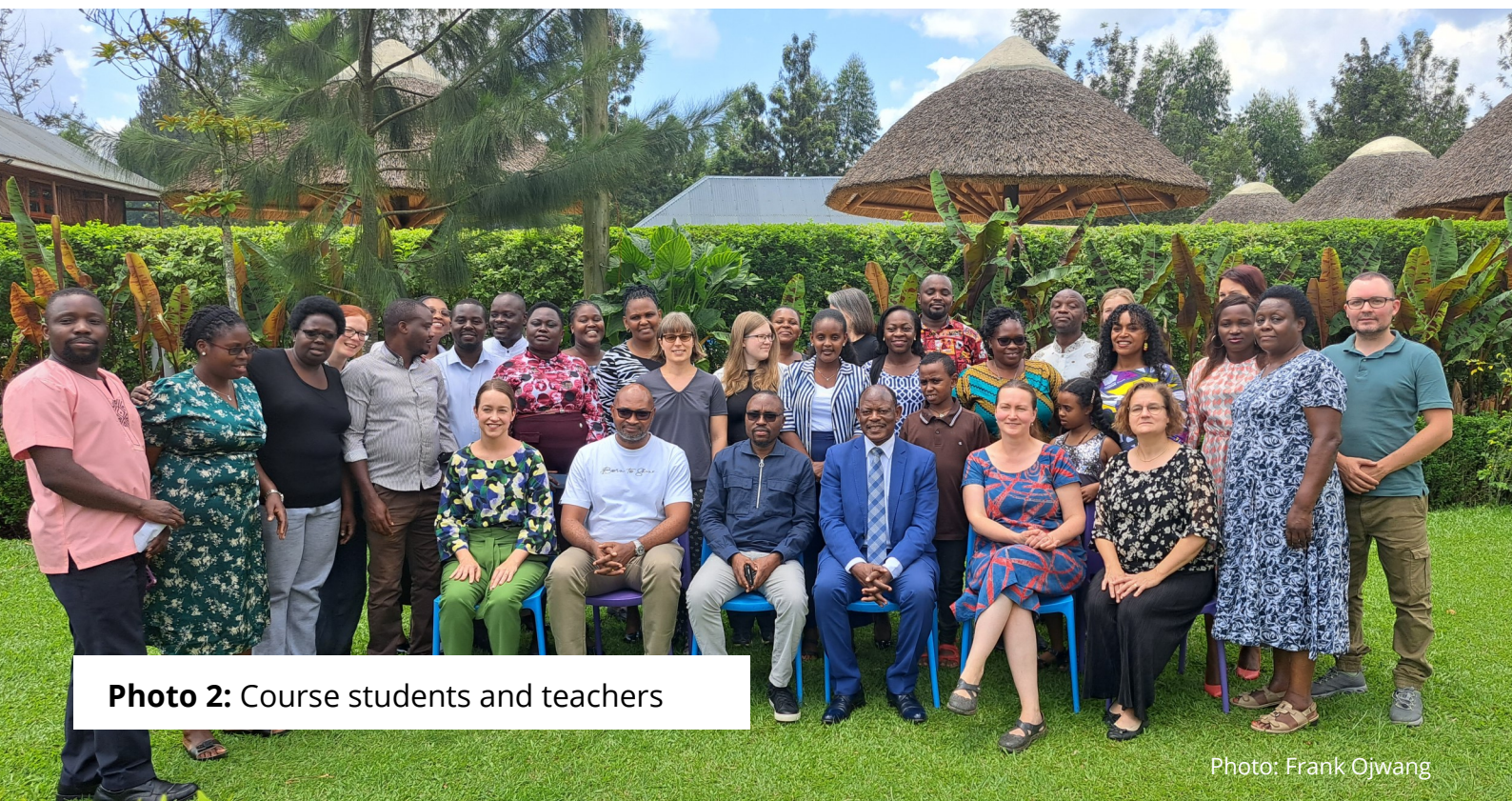


Photo 2: Course students and teachers

Photo: Frank Ojwang

A multidisciplinary and multicultural group of participants enriched the quality of the discussions and outcomes of the group assignments. The ECCR course comprised classwork and a field excursion. The participants were expected to actively participate in all sessions and deliver the assigned tasks. The tasks were handled as group tasks, and the groups were changed to allow for interaction between as many participants as possible. The facilitators supervised the group tasks and offered guidance as the participants worked through the tasks. Different group models were adopted

for different group tasks to optimise learning and participation. All students attended the course in person. The learning sessions were conducted in person except for one session that was delivered online. The in-person participation enhanced the quality of the discussions, networking, and trust building during the course.

The course included sessions about trust building, mediation, representation and interdependence between actors. The field excursion added value to the course because the participants were able to observe what they were learning theoretically, and through the group discussions, they arrived at practical solutions that they could apply to such situations in different contexts.

1.2. Course planning

The planning for the ECCR course began in the spring of 2023. The facilitators, led by the UEF, convened the meetings to prepare and plan the course implementation in Uganda. The planning included but was not limited to identifying facilitators, a suitable venue, and possible case studies for the excursion, and to agreeing on the application procedure and student selection process, the assessment and evaluation processes, and sponsorship. The ECCR course trainers and coordinators held a series of planning meetings ahead of the course delivery. The pre-training planning meetings were held remotely except for the last meeting that was held in person at the training venue in Fort Portal, Uganda. The pre-training planning meetings were attended by the course facilitators and coordinators and were essential for its planning, execution and delivery. The learning methodology, tasks or exercises, evaluation methods, roles and responsibilities mapping were reviewed and agreed on during the pre-training meetings. The pre-training meetings helped the course trainers to arrive at a shared understanding of the course delivery methodology.

2. INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

2.1. Launch of the course

Professor Irmeli Mustalahti (University of Eastern Finland), the ECCR course series' teaching network leader and principal teacher, and Jordan Byekwaso (Makerere University), host coordinator, opened the course. Mustalahti facilitated an exercise to introduce participants to each other, which also emphasised the importance of members working together during the course and developing and maintaining the ECCR network.



Photo 3: Opening speech of Resident City Commissioner (RCC) of Fort Portal

Photo: Frank Ojwang

The Resident City Commissioner (RCC) of Fort Portal, Catherine Hellen Kamwine, officially launched the ECCR course. The RCC mentioned the problem of climate change's impact on local farming. According to her, local communities cultivate crops but do not harvest enough every season due to unaddressed environmental challenges. The RCC challenged the participants to be innovative and use locally available resources to improve the environment and livelihoods of communities. She further challenged the doctoral researchers in the course to lead in championing change at the grassroots and be agents of change using a bottom-up approach. The RCC stressed that land utilisation and environmental challenges needed concerted effort and attention. *"Approach the environmental challenges with the knowledge that the world today is a global village, and everyone has a role to play in making our world a better place, by starting from where we are – in our*

communities,” she emphasised.

The RCC advocated for a mindset change in the communities and challenged all the participants to drive the change from their homes to serve as an example in their communities. The RCC mentioned the problem of illegal activities affecting the environment and hindering nature conservation in the district. The RCC also pointed out that women were still missing in the environmental sector and hoped that more women would join the conversation about environmental collaboration and conversation.

The District Police Commandant (DPC) shared that the security agencies and all stakeholders needed to speak the same language to create an enabling environment for nature conservation and restoration. The DPC challenged various actors in environmental protection and conservation work to collaborate more to achieve an impact in Uganda.

Ahead of the course launch, Ahimbisibwe Karemba (Makerere University) acknowledged the struggle between livelihood and environmental conflict across Uganda while underscoring the urgency with which environmental conflict needed to be addressed and resolved. Karemba emphasised the need to optimally gain from the multidisciplinary and multicultural pool of facilitators and participants from different countries and with different experiences and expertise. *“The 2023 ECCR course in Uganda is being attended by participants from different geographical, socio-economic, educational, cultural and career backgrounds and experiences,”* said Karemba. *“It is our hope that participants will build a global network of researchers and practitioners working with environmental collaboration and conflicts related to natural resources governance,”* he added. Karemba reiterated the committee’s careful selection of participants to achieve the greatest impact through learning and participating in the course and encouraged everyone to leverage this diversity and build synergy for a great learning experience during the course.

Western Uganda

The Western Region of Uganda is one of four regions in the country. As of Uganda's 2014 census, the Western Region's population was 8,874,862. The region borders the Democratic Republic of Congo in the West, Rwanda in the North, and Tanzania in the South (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_Region,_Uganda). Covering a vast area of 55,277 km², the region is endowed with national parks and reserves, as well as natural landscapes such as forests, lakes, rolling hills, mountains, swamps, rivers, waterfalls, and shimmering blue crater lakes (https://www.discoverafrica.com/safaris/uganda/western_uganda/).



Kabarole District

Kabarole District is in Western Uganda at a road distance of about 300 km from Kampala, the capital city. This district covers a surface area of 1,814 km² and lies at an altitude of 1300–3800 meters above sea level. The residents are predominantly the Batooro, who have a deep rooted, rich culture dating back centuries. The major languages spoken in the district are Rutooro, Rukiga, and Runyankore. The main economic activities are agriculture (crop, animal, and fish production), which benefits from a bimodal rainfall (ranging from 1,200mm to 1,500 mm per annum), tourism, and other service sectors (<https://kabarole.go.ug/>).

Fort Portal City

Fort Portal was elevated to city status on 1st July 2020. Fort Portal is located on the northern foothills of the Rwenzori Mountain ranges in the Western Region of Uganda. The city is named after the British Consul General of Zanzibar, Sir Gerald Portal, who came to Uganda in the 1890s to formalize the British protectorate status over Uganda. Fort Portal is the centre of the Toro kingdom. The residents are also predominantly the Batooro. However, as a regional trade hub and a popular tourism destination, Fort Portal has attracted a mixed cultural population comprising not only local and regional tribes but also international visitors. Several hotels, restaurants, and banks have been established in the city due to tourism development (https://fortportal.go.ug/about_fort_portal_city/).

2.2. Situation Analysis of the Environment in Uganda

The ECCR 2023 course started with a situation analysis of the environment's status in Uganda by the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA). NEMA highlighted the status, challenges and recommendations needed to enhance collaboration and mitigate conflict. The NEMA manager for environment education and advocacy, Wilbert Ikilai, noted a worrying trend: the decline of the forest cover observed from 2010-2019. This was largely attributed to charcoal burning and the growing conflict in wetland areas. *"Wetland areas are protected by the government, but communities still want to farm in some of the wetland areas,"* he said. Ikilai pointed out that sustainable solutions are needed to address the population-changing patterns, challenges arising from land division and increasing population, among others. *"The threat of conflict is increased by the animal and human population increase. As animal population increases, they come to the communities in search of food, while human population increase creates demand for more land which leads to conflict,"* he added.

Two Ugandan researchers participating in the course shared their reflections on the situation analysis presented by NEMA. The first reflection by Constance Mudondo helped to tease out key issues when addressing conflicts emerging in the wetlands. This also brought out the need for alternative livelihoods as critical for averting and addressing the conflicts and challenges in the wetlands. Additionally, justice and equal treatment are considered necessary when addressing matters of environmental conflict. Constance said that human-wildlife conflicts are a reality that must be integrated into the strategic environmental management plans.

Anthony Kadoma's reflection focused on stakeholders' participation in wetland conservation and restoration services in central Uganda. Kadoma emphasised the need for everyone to acknowledge that they are actors in environmental discourses. *"Without the participation of the local person in the discussions at grassroots engagements, the implementation and participation become challenging,"* said Kadoma. He stressed the need for understanding and engaging the various forms of participation that can occur directly

through training, policy formulation, and idea exchange in restoration and conservation work. These reflections set the tone for the course classwork and excursion.

2.3. Environmental Collaboration and Environmental Conflict

2.3.1. Community-based natural resources governance

The participants collectively and through their group tasks reiterated the need for communities to collaborate with the stakeholders and actors on the environmental issues. The critical role played by the community-based natural resources governance was emphasised by facilitators Irmeli Mustalahti and Ubaldo Tumaini, who underscored the bridging role it played in ensuring accountability and a trust-building process in an environmental conflict situation. *“The role of the convener in representation and participation is critical in environmental collaboration and environmental conflict,”* said Tumaini. The significance of the convener’s role was reiterated during the plenary after the field excursion following the observations made by the conflicting parties. The group assignments illuminated the significance of environmental collaboration in preventing conflict and when mediating conflict situations. The collaboration efforts play a role in active community participation and enhance community involvement in natural resource governance and environmental conflicts.

During a group exercise, three groups identified conflict scenarios and how the actors could be empowered for decision making and representation. The scenarios the groups identified were human-wildlife conflicts, wetland conflicts and protection of water sources that had several uses in the community. The groups addressed the actors’ empowerment needs by discovering whether all actors had sufficient information on the subject matter and how to make the information available to provide meaningful participation.

The term ‘empowerment’ became contentious during the group exercise to discuss community empowerment. A participant argued that capacity and ability to participate were perceived to be determined by several other factors, and the extent to express oneself freely was debated. Mustalahti

used some examples from Tanzania and Finland to enhance understanding about community-based natural resource governance.

2.3.2. Conflict elements and conflict analysis

Lasse Peltonen facilitated an online session on the elements and analysis of environmental conflict. The session highlighted the common elements in the definition of conflict and further narrowed it down to environmental conflict. Environmental conflicts considered within the course are intrasociety/ intergroup, manifest, non-violent conflict situations involving multiple motivations and contexts, with the potential for constructive consequences. Environmental conflicts are usually caused by the actors' incompatible goals related to the environment: environmental quality, resource use, environmental change and risks. The context of the environmental conflicts encompasses both natural and human elements (Bartos & Wehr 2002). Natural resource conflicts may have various dimensions, including ownership, access and decision making over natural resources as well as the distribution of resource revenues, benefits and burdens. Peltonen emphasised the importance of conflict analysis and shared a conflict mapping guide that includes such elements as history, context, parties, issues, dynamics, possible routes to solutions and conflict regulation potential (Wehr, 1979).

Addressing a question from the plenary, Peltonen underscored the dynamics of conflict from where it starts and the evolution of a conflict into a complex issue, e.g., boundary disputes, and how conflicts escalate and become complex and how more parties become drawn into the conflict. He noted the intractable conflicts at play and emphasised the need to understand the dynamics and sources/forces at play and whether there are no agreeable boundaries of a conflict. Collaboration plays a role in preventing conflict, but a convener or negotiator with good mediation and listening skills and a good understanding of the conflict elements will be more effective and efficient.

Responding to the relationship between communities and national authorities, Peltonen highlighted the delicacy that exists in some cases, especially when clarity is lacking regarding the stakeholders' participation. A

lack of clarity on the role and scope of participants and authorities fuels conflict. Peltonen also appreciated the integration of indigenous knowledge, adding that it complements scientific knowledge and is relevant in building a better picture of a conflict situation. *“Knowledge gap and absence of factual clarity can be a good platform for collaboration or joint fact finding, which is about bringing the brains at conflict together and mediating the resolution process,”* Peltonen concluded.

2.3.3. Framing the conflicts and finding the ways to collaborate

The session was led by Ubaldo Tumaini and Irmeli Mustalahti. It focused on the pursuit of sustainable solutions when framing conflicts, when finding solutions or seeking ways to partner. The process of framing a conflict is lengthy and requires an understanding of the conflict context, the conflict analysis and approaches to conflict mediation. Tumaini laid more emphasis on the roles of the external mediator and how critical it is to identify the individuals who fuel the animosity that escalates the conflict and to diplomatically approach them to calm the situation. *“It is the role of the communities to end and own the conflict resolution and sustainable solutions,”* concluded Tumaini.

Mustalahti weighed in on the convener and facilitator roles, on leveraging the framing of conflicts and finding ways to collaborate, on building synergy with the understanding of conflict elements, and on the corresponding conflict analysis and approaches to conflict mediation presented earlier by Peltonen. Collaboration, mediation skills and trust building were considered key ingredients for environmental conflict resolution, with an emphasis on the capacity to turn conflict into collaboration.

2.3.4. Collaborative approach for resolving conflicts

“The goal of collaboration is to get a better result,” began Kristen Wright. Addressing the collaborative approaches (Greenwood et. al, 2021; Ansell and Gash, 2008) to resolving conflicts, Wright highlighted the role of competition and the importance of trust in collaborative approaches to resolving conflict. She reminded the participants about collaborative situations being a prompt for inquisitive behaviour. Wright used stories and graphics to enhance

comprehension and understanding of competitive behaviour and collaborative approaches. She emphasised social interdependence as a precondition for collaborative actions. Wright explained the concept of Moving Towards the 'Northeast', which is about the situation in which for one party to win, another party must win, too. Moving Towards the Northeast is an alternative to the 'win-lose' approach in which one party cannot win unless the other party loses (moving either 'North' or 'East').

FAMILY OUTING ROLE-PLAY EXERCISE

One of the engaging group tasks was the family role play done by 6 groups of 4-5 people each. The role play presented a practical scenario and example about the negotiations and how the Best Alternative to Negotiated Agreement (BATNA) was applied. The group presentations and plenary discussions that followed the presentations underscored the merits and challenges of BATNA and how power dynamics influenced the directions of conflict resolution. Listening and collaboration were critical elements in the exercise, and trust played a key role in the negotiation.



Photo 5: Family outing role-play exercise

Photo: Denis Dobrynin

Wright also introduced the concept of the Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement (BATNA). BATNA is about other ways one could achieve one's interests if it is not through collaboration and if negotiation failed. She mentioned the role of a third party to help parties involved in a conflict be aware of and re-evaluate their BATNAs considering interdependence. Wright also acknowledged that collaboration is not always the best option for all conflict situations. She added that power dynamics are critical when deciding whether to collaborate.

2.3.5. Environmental collaboration and landscape approaches

Denis Dobrynin connected environmental collaboration with the landscape approach - a popular concept in science, policy, conservation and nature management practice. He introduced a variety of interpretations of the terms landscape and landscape approach. The integrated landscape approach is considered a tool for collaboration across administrative and management boundaries to provide sustainable nature use and to balance the competing demands within a landscape. Dobrynin explained that the integrated landscape approach is positioned as an alternative to the traditional sectoral, or so-called 'silos', approach to managing lands and natural resources. He demonstrated similarities between the integrated landscape approach and the concept of collaborative governance (Greenwood et al., 2021). Then he asked the course participants to discuss in pairs who can collaborate within a landscape and what objectives can/cannot be achieved through this collaboration. After the introduction of examples of landscape initiatives, Dobrynin critically looked at the landscape approach as a tool for the development of collaboration and multi-functionality. According to him, criticism and scepticism around the landscape approach are related to challenges in implementing collaboration in practice. Collaborative landscape management is challenged by incompatible claims over land and natural resources within a landscape and difficulties in overcoming administrative and sectoral barriers.

3. FACT-FINDING MISSION

3.1. Background to the Bigodi Case

The field day was focused on conflicts related to community-based nature conservation, farming, and the tourism sector. On the one hand, tourism in protected areas generates income both at the local and the national levels; on the other hand, tourism also creates conflicts. The national parks in Uganda are owned and managed by the state and by nature reserves established and managed by communities. One such community located in a village – Bigodi – was selected for the field excursion for the course participants. Bigodi village is in the Kabarole District in Uganda’s western region. Tourism has been developing here since the 1990s. One of the tourist destinations is the Bigodi community-based nature reserve aimed at conserving a local swamp, rewilding forest habitats, and attracting tourists. Tourists travel to Bigodi to observe the diversity of primates and birds and to experience local culture, traditions, and handicrafts. Tourism contributes to community development and diversifies livelihood sources for the community members, including women (Gosling, 2011). However, tourism is



Photo 6: Tourists during an excursion, Bigodi community walk

not always a win-win solution that reconciles nature conservation with sustainable nature use and development (Gosling, 2011). Bigodi is not an exception in this regard and experiences multilayered conflicts. The course participants recognised the following layers of conflicts within the excursion fact-finding mission: a). human-animal conflicts, b). conflicts between authorities and locals, and c). conflicts between competing tourism cooperatives.

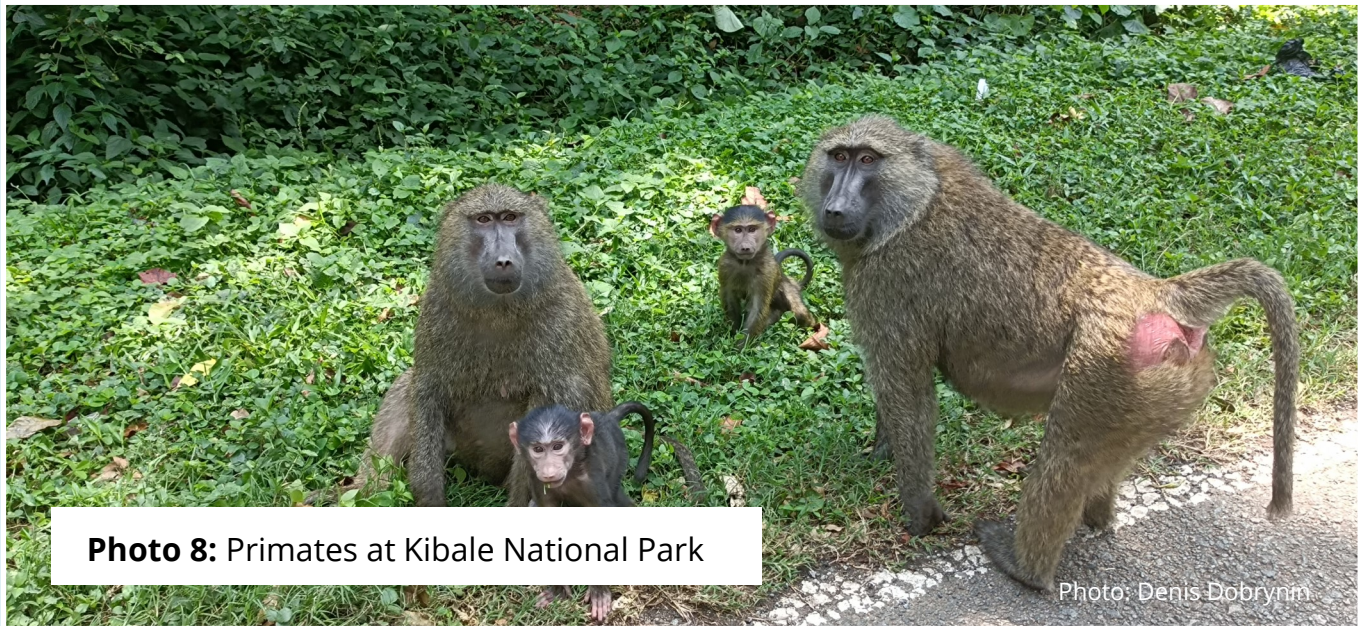
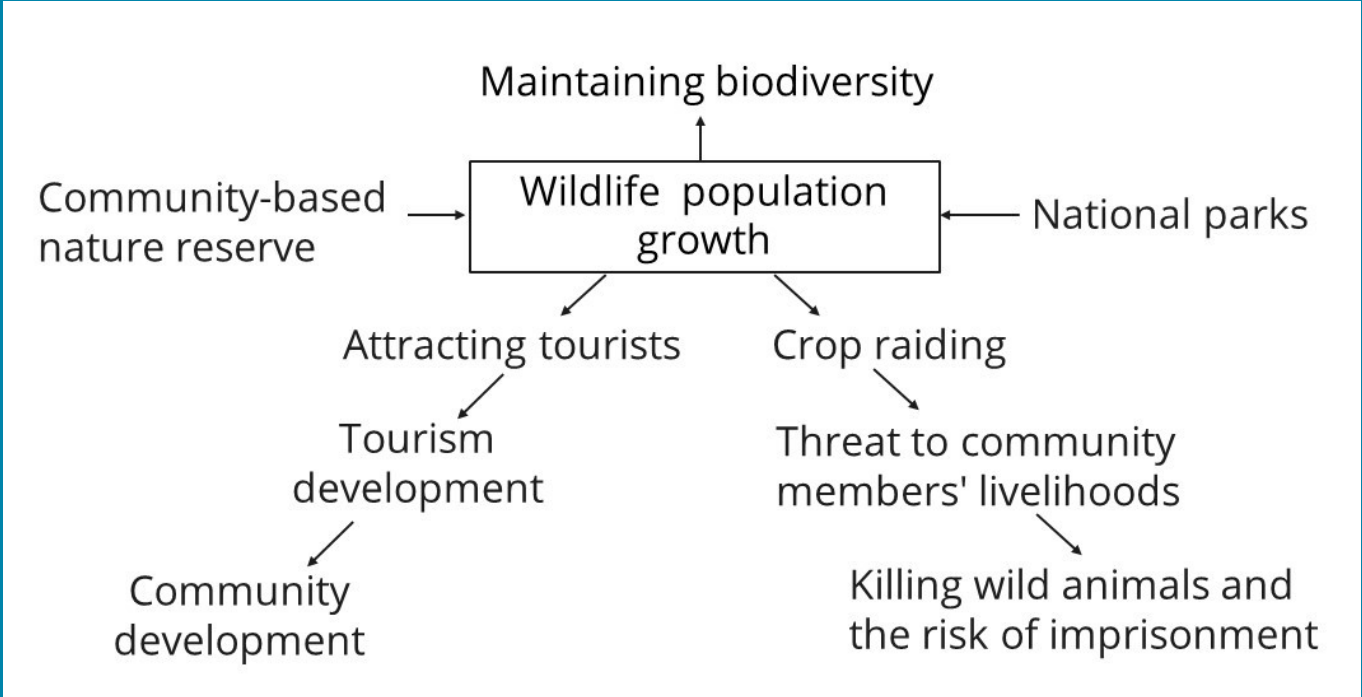
Due to the reserve, the population of wild animals, mainly primates, is growing, and they raid fields and destroy crops (Lepp, 2008; Gosling, 2011). A tourism cooperative pays compensation to its members, while other community members receive nothing; even those who receive compensation may be dissatisfied. The recommendation to plant coffee (that does not attract wild animals) instead of maize and other crops is not accepted by the farmers since they cannot eat coffee, either.

Moreover, the human population in the Bigodi community is also growing, and people need more land and resources to survive. Thus, farmers are in conflict with the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) over the killing of wild animals and unsatisfactory compensation for the destroyed crops. Community members are also in conflict with the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA); this emanates from protected wetland encroachment.

Two competing tourism cooperatives are in conflict over the use of the community reserve for the tourism business. Moreover, the conflict between these two tourism cooperatives is an intergenerational conflict fueled by different visions of mature and young entrepreneurs on the development of tourism and the involvement of community members in tourism.



Photo 7: The village of Bigodi community



3.2. Field excursion

The coordinators visited the Bigodi community twice prior to the course to meet with all the actors to explain the course aim and to plan the time schedule and route for the excursion, including safety and logistic issues. The facilitators also held a separate pre-excursion meeting to divide the roles and plan the excursion activities.

The excursion occurred on the third day of the course and all participants and facilitators participated. The field excursion was preceded during the course by a pre-guidance session about the field excursion site, expectations, and tasks. The Bigodi case was presented in such a way that the course participants formed a general understanding of the community and its actors. However, the course participants had to discover the details of the relationships between the actors (interests, conflicts, interdependencies, collaborations, etc.) on their own through observations and communication with community members. Irmeli Mustalahti, based on her experience working in Eastern Africa and around the globe, emphasised the do-no-harm principle when engaging with the community during the excursion. This means that the excursion should neither lead to new or escalate existing conflicts nor attempts to resolve a conflict.



Photo 10: Course participants during the excursion

Participants were provided with a field note form to fill out during the excursion. The form comprised information about the context of the conflict under consideration, its key actors, the existence of hidden conflicts and/or mistrust between the actors, each actor's interests, the Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement (BATNA), as well as collaborative solutions and mutual gains.

The field excursion program was flexible to allow for any changes if needed due to changes in weather or unforeseen circumstances, but everything went according to the initial plan. The Bigodi Community Walk (BICOWA) was selected to host the field excursion by the Uganda coordination team. BICOWA is a community-based organisation whose aim is to "empower" the community through conservation awareness, job creation and improving livelihood. The BICOWA staff outlined the conflict situation in the Bigodi area and responded to the participants' questions and concerns about the conflict situation and the potential for mediation and collaboration.

The participants were split into two groups; each group visited the swamp and one select activity in the community such as coffee preparation, traditional healer, etc. The participants asked questions and gathered information during the excursion



Photo 11: Bigodi community crafts

group visits and engaged the guides and members of the community to evaluate the situation of conflict and collaboration in Bigodi. The participants convened afterwards at a local church where they met and engaged the community representatives and leaders on issues around conflict, mediation, trust building, representation and collaboration between the actors in the community. The community representatives shared their grievances and reflections about the environment and environmental conflict situation in Bigodi. Human-wildlife conflicts and conflicts between the community members and authorities dominated the discussion. The participants asked about the mediation efforts, collaboration attempts and trust-building process. A representative of the police in the community shared their interest-driven convener role and offered to mediate the stakeholder conflicts in Bigodi. Participants appreciated the swamp walk and visit to various community conservation activities because that helped give them a contextual understanding of the issues in Bigodi.



Photo 12: Course participants during the excursion

Photo: Frank Ojwang

3.3. Reflexion on the field excursion

The day after the excursion, reflecting on the excursion was held by applying the World Café method. There were 4 tables in the World Café. Each table was focused on one of the elements of the field note form that the course participants worked with during the excursion: 1). Hidden conflicts and mistrust between actors; 2). Key actors and their underlying interests; 3). Best alternatives to a negotiated agreement; 4). Collaborative solutions and final mutual gain.



Photo 13: Course participants during the World Café

Photo: Frank Ojwang

World Café participants emphasised the multifaceted and multilevel nature of conflicts and tensions in Bigodi. They include farmers vs. animals, farmers vs. authorities, farmers vs. tourism associations, members vs. non-members of tourism associations, and conflicts between competing tourism associations. The World Café consolidated presentation at the plenary agreed on the need to listen to both parties in a conflict. It was observed in the exercise that only BICOWA had the platform with the participants and was heard, but the community open forum at the church revealed that KAFRED, a rival actor, was also helping in the community. The plenary also discussed the roles of conveners and mediators.

Group 2.

KEY ACTORS

A. CBOs esp. BICOWA + KAFRED

B. Community members/farmers
- CBO members **business**
- non-member

C. Local govt + law enforcement
District Council

D. UWA
NEMA

E. Politicians, MP, PM

UNDERLYING INTERESTS

A. Business
KAFRED - dominance
BICOWA - community impact
KAFRED - community interest, nature conservation
BICOWA - nature conserv. employment

B. Livelihood + ^{income} security
Safety from wildlife
Nature conservation
Basic services
Food security
Peaceful community
Compensation

C. Law + order
Nature conservation
Local revenue
Mediation
Money from corruption?
Compliance to rules, regulations

D. Wildlife conservation
Compliance
Revenue
Nature conservation

E. Political capital, popularity

Photo 14: Sketches of one of the World Café tables

4. TAKE AWAY LESSONS

4.1. Trust building

After the excursion, the course weighed in on trust building and its role in environmental collaboration and conflict resolution. The key ingredients in the trust-building process include ability, integrity, and charisma. The facilitator shared that the trust assessment process can be based on cognitive, affective or psychological processes. *"It is easier to break the trust than build the trust,"* said Irmeli Mustalahti. The trust-building dynamics were discussed with the trustor and trustee, along with the expected outcome of the trust-building process if the due process is implemented well. A campfire discussion approach was used to discuss not only the trust scenarios but also when the trust was broken (in a person or system). The participants shared personal and professional experiences when trust was breached and broken. The session was concluded with the understanding that there is a need to acknowledge individual peculiarities and to take the time to build trust. *"When one becomes a facilitator in an environmental conflict situation, it is good to recognise the peculiarities as a facilitator and give people time when it is needed,"* said Tiina Kontinen, adding that, *"Trust depends on the expectations of the trustor and how they are met at the end of the process."* The significance of trust building was emphasised and its role in mediation was amplified during the ECCR course.

4.2. Accountability

The focus on collaborative solutions and mutual gains sharply put the significance of accountability in the spotlight. The *responsibilisation* and need to idealise the community/actor without underestimating local people and the community was discussed and a shared understanding was arrived at: that is, that actors needed to be accountable for their mandates and contributions to environmental conservation and protection. The authorities, such as UWA and NEMA, and all other actors need to be accountable for their share of the obligations and to ensure compliance with the environmental laws. Accountability strengthens collaboration and reduces potential or existing conflicts between the various actors.

4.3. Interest and BATNA

The participants collectively agreed that the actors' interests needed to be given adequate attention when addressing conflicts in Bigodi. The participants did not raise several questions on the mediation process in environmental collaboration and conflict resolution situations. However, the critical function of mediation was heavily noted in the field excursion in Bigodi village. The role of the security agency – the police as a mediator – was recognised and the significance of a mediator who is trusted and perceived as impartial, reputable, and fair was very critical. The facilitators underscored the role of mediation and the importance of good listening skills in the mediation process. The facilitators emphasised the importance of good listening in conflict resolution and its complementing function in mediation efforts.

Moving Towards the 'Northeast' was perfectly demonstrated with the mediation discussion and how effective listening skills enabled the move towards mutual gain. Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement (BATNA) was a key component of mediation, because the mediator needed to adopt good listening skills and, where needed, help the conflicting actors to find BATNAs that would be the best solution in various circumstances of conflict in different ecological situations and cases.

4.4. Representation

The importance of representation was echoed by Kristen Wright, Ubaldus Tumaini and Irmeli Mustalahti, who reiterated the role of representation in collaboration negotiations and discussions and the critical role of representatives during environmental conflicts. The representation of various interest groups and actors in the community contributed significantly towards strengthening the environmental collaboration and, more importantly, when resolving or addressing environmental conflicts and looking for solutions to end or manage existing conflicts. The quality of representation also ensured a win-win negotiation and made compromise easier for one party when the sense of being listened to, fair treatment and trust existed between actors. The approaches to promote stakeholder

participation were reiterated as a way to enhance representation.

4.5. Interdependence between actors

The participants had a shared understanding of the actors in the Bigodi case being the farmers, state agencies like NEMA and UWA, local leadership, the community, various civil society organisations and NGOs, investors and the public. The interdependence between the actors played a key role in environmental conservation and protection in a way that was mutually beneficial to the community and all the stakeholders involved. The risk of conflict rises whenever the interdependence between the actors is threatened. A strong sense of collaboration and partnership to leverage the efforts of the various interest groups and build synergy in environmental conservation and protection plays a central role in maintaining peace and order in Bigodi.



Photo 15: Group presentation preparation

Photo: Frank Ojwang

Good listening skills between the actors are useful for achieving a shared value and maintaining peace in Bigodi. The actors need to build trust between each other as a way to strengthen collaboration. The role of reputable and trusted mediators in resolving the row between conflicting actors in Bigodi and in addressing the human-animal conflict is critical for a safe environment.

Course teachers:

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