Conflict Sensitivity and Conservation: Evaluating Design, Implementation & Practice

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CONFLICT SENSITIVITY AND CONSERVATION:
EVALUATING DESIGN, IMPLEMENTATION, & PRACTICE

A Doctoral Dissertation

Presented to

The College of Humanities & Social Sciences
School of Conflict Management, Peacebuilding, & Development
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By
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This dissertation investigates the use of a conflict sensitivity framework in supporting environmental conservation work. Employing an action research methodology, it consists of a multi-phase evaluation of the design and implementation of Conservation International’s (CI) Environmental Peacebuilding Training Manual. Through needs assessment, formative evaluation, and outcome evaluation phases, the dissertation explores questions related to what conflicts conservation practitioners face; what form a relevant, accessible, and effective conflict sensitivity framework might take; and what effect such a framework might have on the knowledge, attitudes, capacities, and actions of conservation practitioners. The findings indicate that conservation practitioners face a variety of conflicts stemming largely from their engagement with stakeholders, and that a conflict sensitivity framework is likely to be useful in responding to those conflicts. However, if conflict sensitivity is to have a sustainable impact on environmental conservation work, more must be done to support its integration. This includes: clarifying key concepts such as the difference between peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity, further defining how and when a conflict sensitivity framework should be used, ensuring a framework’s adaptation to the context and needs, and reinforcing the development of conservation practitioners’ capacity through ongoing guidance and applied practice. As a collaborative, action-oriented research project, this dissertation also includes a reflection on and recommendations about how to best take advantage of opportunities and address challenges associated with academic-practitioner research partnerships.
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the conservation practitioners, enthusiasts, and supporters of the world who strive against great odds to protect our beautiful and only planet. On est ensemble.
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I am extremely grateful to the many people who made this dissertation a reality. First, I would like to thank the many Conservation International (CI) staff—past and present—who made this work possible, particularly the staff of the Peace and Development Partnerships (PDP) team. Their wealth of experiences, guidance, support, and friendship over the last two years made this research process a fun and exciting one. All of the CI staff I met contributed to making my dream to conduct a collaborative research project that would positively impact environmental conservation work a reality. I learned so much from them and the good work that they do, and I wish them great success in the future. The PDP team also provided funding for this research, which spoke to the value of the work and CI’s belief in it and me. Thank you.

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<tr>
<td>ADR</td>
<td>Alternative Dispute Resolution</td>
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<tr>
<td>CBC</td>
<td>Community-Based Conservation</td>
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<td>CCB</td>
<td>Collaborative Consensus Building</td>
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<td>CCT</td>
<td>Conservation Conflict Transformation</td>
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<td>CI</td>
<td>Conservation International</td>
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<td>DAC</td>
<td>Development Assistance Committee</td>
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<td>DRC</td>
<td>Democratic Republic of the Congo</td>
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<td>FPIC</td>
<td>Free, Prior, and Informed Consent</td>
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<td>GECARR</td>
<td>Good Enough Context Analysis for Rapid Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HWCC</td>
<td>Human-Wildlife Conflict Collaboration</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICD</td>
<td>Integrated Conservation and Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>IISD</td>
<td>International Institute for Sustainable Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPACS</td>
<td>Integrating Peacebuilding and Conflict-Sensitivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRB</td>
<td>Institutional Review Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IUCN</td>
<td>International Union for the Conservation of Nature</td>
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<tr>
<td>M&amp;E</td>
<td>Monitoring and Evaluation</td>
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<tr>
<td>MSTC</td>
<td>Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Nongovernmental Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>PCIA</td>
<td>Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment</td>
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<td>PDP</td>
<td>Peace and Development Partnerships</td>
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<td>PES</td>
<td>Payment for Ecosystem Services</td>
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PRA Participatory Rural Appraisal

SWOT Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats
On March 6, 2018, The Washington Post published an article with a picture of a disemboweled Sumatran tiger hanging from the ceiling of a building in an Indonesian village (Bever, 2018). The author of the article wrote that although it was unclear why villagers killed the tiger, “local news reports say [the tiger] had mauled at least one or two residents who had followed it to its lair – to determine whether it was a mythological, supernatural being.” A U.S. government conservation group staffer noted that her group had urged residents not to harm the tiger. She said, “We explained to the villagers that the tiger is an endangered animal… but they didn’t like our way of handling this situation.” And so, the villagers killed the endangered Sumatran tiger.

Conflicts like these—disagreements over the management of natural resources involving conservation organizations, communities, wildlife, and oftentimes other stakeholders such as government officials and business owners that sometimes lead to violence—are common. In East Africa, for example, rural pastoralists have clashed with the government and conservation groups over the designation and management of protected areas. Underlying these conflicts are deeply rooted issues that go back decades if not longer, including political marginalization of some ethnic groups, problematic land tenure policies, transitions in traditional governance structures, and climate change related vulnerability (Okech, 2010). As another example, wolf conservation in the United States is heavily contentious, with farmers and cattle ranchers, the U.S. government, and conservation groups regularly arguing over what effective and appropriate wolf conservation should look like. Lawsuits have been filed and wolves have been illegally killed (Amos, 2018). And in April 2018, five park rangers were killed and another two people injured
in Virunga National Park in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) following an ambush by a rebel group (Burke, 2018a). More than 170 rangers from Virunga have been killed over the last 20 years, the victims of decades-long regional insecurity. This insecurity has forced the park to close until 2019 (Burke, 2018b).

While conflicts involving control over natural resources are not new, environmental conservation discourse has only recently shifted from a focus on establishing protected areas that keep humans and nature separate and preserve so-called pristine environments to an expanded view of conservation that recognizes humans and nature as connected and promotes integrated solutions that address the sociocultural, political, and economic needs of communities in addition to conservation goals. This change in perspective to one that considers conservation “counter-narratives” (Campbell, 2002) has also created space to explore conflicts inherent to conservation—like those noted above—as well as possible solutions for them.

Meanwhile, conflict sensitivity frameworks have been in use for more than twenty years by organizations operating development, humanitarian aid, and peacebuilding projects around the world as a way to guide those organizations and their staff on sufficiently and effectively considering the conflict context in which they work and their interactions with it (Abitbol, 2014). Like conservation discourse, the concept of conflict sensitivity has also evolved over time, expanding from a more limited focus on understanding how interventions can avoid negative impacts on conflict to a focus that encourages those same interventions to directly address and (when possible) ameliorate those conflicts.
Project Background

One exploration of how conservation practitioners can respond to conflicts in their work has been undertaken by Conservation International’s (CI) Peace and Development Partnerships (PDP) team. CI is an internationally active, nongovernmental organization (NGO) seeking to address environmental conservation problems through people-oriented solutions. The PDP team, located in the Policy Center for Environment and Peace at CI, has been involved in a number of initiatives to connect peacebuilding and conservation. I learned about the team’s work from an email announcing a brown bag discussion on conflict sensitivity in early 2016. After following up with the PDP team contact listed in the email, I learned that CI approaches conflict as an intrinsic part of conservation, and that the PDP team was looking to develop training resources for CI staff to deal with those conflicts. At that time, the team had compiled case studies from its various country offices and had a conflict analysis learning module that it was using to train its staff. The PDP team was looking to further develop its trainings to better reflect its emphasis on environmental peacebuilding, or incorporating “the value of natural capital and its related benefits into security, humanitarian and development objectives in order to prevent conflict and promote peace” (Ajroud et al., 2017, p. 7).

The timing for our encounter was perfect. I had been searching for an organization to partner with to explore potential connections between conflict sensitivity and conservation. Meanwhile, the PDP team was ready to draft a complete manual to assist CI staff with understanding and managing conflicts and promoting peacebuilding in their work—what would become the Environmental Peacebuilding Training Manual. Our initial partnership was limited to my assistance with a needs assessment and reviewing pieces of the manual that had already been developed with an eye toward how to better incorporate conflict sensitivity and monitoring and
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evaluation (M&E), themes with which the PDP team wanted help. From there, the team and I continued our collaboration for almost two years, reviewing and revising iterative versions of the manual and implementing a pilot workshop based on it in the Philippines in May 2017. I worked with my PDP team collaborators at each step of the (research) process to draft evaluation questions, share results, and discuss how to use the findings to inform our next steps. I presented a final evaluation of this complete process, from the manual’s design to its pilot workshop implementation, and suggested next steps to the PDP team at the end of 2017.¹

Research Questions

Through this research project, and in collaboration with the PDP team, I explored the potential implications of a conflict sensitivity framework designed specifically for conservation practitioners. Beginning with the assumption that conservation practitioners face conflicts as part of their work and that conflict sensitivity frameworks might therefore support them in that work, I asked the following questions:

How might conflict sensitivity frameworks support conservation work?

• What conflicts, issues, and needs should a conservation-focused conflict sensitivity framework address?

• What form might a relevant, accessible, and effective conservation-focused conflict sensitivity framework take?

• What effect might a conservation-focused conflict sensitivity framework have on the knowledge, attitudes, capacities, and actions of conservation practitioners?

¹ See Appendix A for the final evaluation document.
Research Procedures

To answer these questions, I employed an action research methodology in the form of a multi-phase evaluation. Action research is a participatory and often iterative research process with the objective of solving a problem through information collection, analysis, and reflection (Bargal, 2008; Herr & Anderson, 2005; Stringer, 1996). To solve the “problem” of how conservation practitioners can better address conflicts in their work, the PDP team and I developed and implemented a conflict sensitivity framework (the Environmental Peacebuilding Training manual and pilot implementation workshop). We then evaluated it based on key principles found in both the conflict sensitivity and evaluation literature, assessing the framework’s relevance, accessibility, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability (see OECD, 2010).

Over four research phases—a needs assessment, the manual development, a formative evaluation, and an outcome evaluation—I used semi-structured interviews, participant observation, pre- and post-tests, and a survey to collect information that I then shared with my PDP team collaborators so that we could together evaluate to what extent the framework that we had developed would meet the needs of conservation practitioners and achieve the objectives of developing knowledge of, changing attitudes about, and developing capacities related to environmental peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity. I also provided a formal evaluation of the process of designing and implementing the manual to the PDP team, providing recommendations for next steps in using the manual and evaluating that use. In total, I spoke and interacted with 48 people during two years of research. After developing evaluation questions with my collaborators, I collected and analyzed qualitative and quantitative information through in-person
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and Skype interviews, a Google Form survey, my participation in a workshop in Palawan, Philippines, and informal phone and in-person discussions. The information was analyzed first using hand coding and, later, using MaxQDA software. Together, the PDP team and I identified themes and patterns, discussed their relevance for our work, and used the information to inform iterative drafts of the Environmental Peacebuilding Training Manual and its implementation. I also captured this information in the final evaluation provided to the PDP team.

Research Significance

While there is recognition that conflict sensitivity can be applied beyond the fields of development, humanitarian aid, and peacebuilding (Barbolet, Goldwyn, Groenewald, & Sherriff, 2005), and some organizations have begun to integrate conflict sensitivity into their conservation work (e.g., Hammill, Crawford, Craig, Malpas, & Matthew, 2009; Madden & McQuinn, 2014), there is limited research and thus understanding of just how conflict sensitivity frameworks might actually support the work of environmental conservation practitioners. Conflict sensitivity frameworks aim to make interventions in conflict contexts more effective and sustainable by ensuring that they respond to the needs of that context. However, the real impact of those frameworks on conservation practitioners and their work remains largely unexplored.

This research project addresses the gap in understanding of conflict sensitivity’s impact on conservation work. As an action research project, it attempts to fill that gap through a collaborative and iterative approach that has timely implications for conservation practitioners’ and their work. Thus, this research project is relevant not just for the broader discussion on conflict sensitivity, its utility, and its impact, but it also has the potential to influence current conservation practice, promoting real-world change in practitioners’ actions and activities. The
findings of this research can be used to inform other studies of conflict sensitivity frameworks by academics as well as to more immediately inform the work of CI or other conservation organizations that are interested in implementing conflict sensitivity practices as part of their projects. Additionally, this research project provides a description of and reflection on the action research and evaluation process. Action research is focused on the development of knowledge and understanding for use (Bargal, 2008; Bhana, 2006), and the knowledge and understanding it has the potential to generate for the field of conflict sensitivity broadly—and for conservation practice more particularly—is significant.

**Dissertation Organization**

The dissertation begins with a discussion and analysis of the relevant literature on conservation and conflict sensitivity. I begin by summarizing a significant shift in conservation discourse that has expanded the field of conservation work to include a concern for the sociocultural, political, economic, and otherwise human factors that affect and are affected by conservation initiatives. This shift has opened up space to consider conservation-related conflicts. Next, I survey the relevant literature on conflict sensitivity to develop a basis from which to explore the idea of a conflict sensitivity framework for conservation.

In Chapter 3, I discuss the research paradigm, methodology, and methods I employed in this research project. I describe the action research methodology, the components of participatory and utilization-focused evaluation that heavily influenced my research approach, and the specific methods employed. These methods include interviews, participant observation, pre- and post-tests, and a survey. I then outline the process of each of the four research phases. The second half
of Chapter 3 comprises a consideration of my role as a researcher and collaborator, a description of how I analyzed the information collected and its analytical quality, and an examination of significant ethical considerations.

Chapter 4 addresses the first research sub-question, “What conflicts, issues, or needs should a conservation-focused conflict sensitivity framework address?” by way of a presentation of the results of the first phase of the research project, the needs assessment. This phase of the research shed light on what conflicts conservation practitioners face as part of their work and what their needs may be in terms of addressing those conflicts. The results of the needs assessment supported the utility of a conflict sensitivity framework for conservation work and was one of the main sources of information drawn upon in the development of the Environmental Peacebuilding Training Manual.

Next, Chapter 5 responds to the second research sub-question, “What form might a relevant, accessible, and effective conservation-focused conflict sensitivity framework take?” In this chapter, I summarize the process of refining the manual based on the needs assessment. I then provide the information collected during the formative evaluation phase of the research project—which included an expert review and pilot implementation workshop—discussing what this information means in terms of the relevancy, accessibility, and effectiveness of the manual and workshop.

Chapter 6 answers the final research sub-question, “What effect might a conservation-focused conflict sensitivity framework have on the attitudes, beliefs, and actions of conservation practitioners?” In this chapter, I present the information gathered during the outcome evaluation phase of the research project. Based on this and the information collected in this and the other phases, I also begin to answer the overarching research question, “How might conflict sensitivity
frameworks support conservation?” by exploring the framework’s potential for sustainable impact. The significant opportunities for and challenges to impact, I note, are related to conceptual clarity, clarity of purpose, individual capacity building, and organizational mainstreaming.

Finally, I end the dissertation with the main findings from the research project’s four phases, particularly those exploring the potential for conflict sensitivity to have a real and positive impact on environmental conservation work. From these findings, I identify lessons learned and recommendations for those working in environmental peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity as well as for future research and action in these areas. I then note the limitations of this research project, ending with a brief discussion of the potential for action research projects to positively support projects and interventions that combine academic research and real-world problem solving.
To understand how conflict sensitivity frameworks might support conservation practitioners and their initiatives, it is critical to first understand what the literature says on both the conflicts faced as part of conservation work as well as what conflict sensitivity is, what needs it addresses, and how conflict sensitivity frameworks can be used. This understanding provides the context in which to situate the research process, including the fundamental principles and relevant gaps that informed this research project and its outputs and outcomes, and a lens through which to analyze the research findings. The gaps in conflict sensitivity frameworks, both those identified in the literature and the ones that I identified myself, served as lessons learned for the Peace and Development Partnerships (PDP) team and I to consider and address during this project.

In the first section of this literature review, I discuss the transformation in environmental conservation thinking over time to increasingly include a consideration for the sociocultural, economic, political, and otherwise human factors at play in conservation initiatives. This change in conservation discourse has made discussions of the relationship between conservation and conflict possible, and the next section of the literature review is a summary of those relationships. I then survey the literature on conflict sensitivity, noting important principles and relevant critiques. Finally, I examine existing conflict sensitivity frameworks designed specifically for conservation work, including their strengths and shortcomings, as the precursors to Conservation International’s (CI) Environmental Peacebuilding Training Manual.
The Changing Nature of Conservation

Environmental conservation’s focus has expanded over the years to include a more developed consideration of the social worlds within which conservation takes place. Early conservation efforts during the 19th and 20th centuries centered on a fortress-style protected areas approach. Popularized by the establishment of Yellowstone National Park in the United States in 1872, what became known as the “Yellowstone model” entailed setting aside land, sometimes using fences or other barriers, and excluding people from living there or using the land. This approach stemmed from assumptions about the intrinsic value of nature, the belief in a fundamental divide between humans and the natural world (Klein, Réau, Kalland, & Edwards, 2007; Mulder & Coppolillo, 2005; West, Igoe, & Brockington, 2006), and the assumption that humans are often the source of environmental degradation (Adams & Hulme, 2001). It is built on Western science and a view of reality as defined by objective scientific truths (Kapoor, 2001) and is dismissive of the relationships between nature and culture. The Yellowstone model of national parks has been extremely influential internationally, becoming a “global business, with the proliferation of many governmental and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) dedicated to their management” (Mulder & Coppolillo, 2005, p. 27).

Today, many in the conservation community have moved away from the practice of exclusionary protected areas. This is in response to a number of critiques, such as those that question the efficacy of the model, describing it “socially insensitive, unjust, and unable to meet the complex challenges of nature conservation” (Klein et al., 2007, p. 453; see also Brown, 2002). Critics also point to the longstanding cultural and spiritual practices of local communities that have contributed to the maintenance of the natural environment over hundreds of years (Mulder & Coppolillo, 2005), which is in direct contradiction of the assumption that people
inherently have a negative impact on the environment. They also cite the economic impacts of protected areas, which frequently alienate communities from the resources they need to sustain their livelihoods (Brown, 2002). Based in a recognition of the complex social realities in which conservation takes place, these critiques led the way for new approaches to conservation work that incorporate people and their sociocultural and economic needs into the design and implementation of conservation projects (Peterson, Russell, West, & Brosius, 2010).

New conservation approaches subsequently emerged, guided by the principles of community participation, a utilization-focused view of nature, and the integration of mechanisms to ameliorate poverty and inequality (Adams & Hulme, 2001; Campbell, 2002; Chapin, 2004; Hammill & Besançon, 2010; Klein, 2007; Waylen, Fischer, McGowan, Thirgood, & Milner-Gulland, 2010). These approaches assume that local communities, conservation practitioners, governments, businesses, NGOs, donors, etc. are all connected through conservation work (Brosius, 2006), and they recognize that local and indigenous peoples have both deep knowledge of their natural environment and great incentives to protect it (Agrawal & Gibson, 1999; Mapara, 2009). In practice, these “new conservation” approaches (Hulme & Murphree, 1999) bring nature and people together through shared objectives. They come with labels like community-based conservation (CBC), participatory rural appraisal (PRA), sustainable development, integrated conservation and development (ICD), payments for ecosystem services (PES), ecotourism, and protected areas outreach. Although distinct approaches, each is concerned with community inclusivity and the use of nature for sustainable economic growth.

However, the increasing orientation toward communities, inclusion and participation, and economic development have exposed some potentially faulty assumptions and critical issues. For example, these new conservation approaches might not always empower communities, and
participation can often be superficial (Adams & Hulme, 2001; Hulme & Murphree; Kapoor, 2001). Additionally, it may not always be possible to do both conservation and economic development simultaneously and do it well (Mulder & Coppolillo, 2005). Indigenous communities do not always engage in cultural practices that benefit the environment (Dove, 2006; Lu Holt, 2005). The benefits of sustainable development-focused conservation initiatives may not be equally and fairly distributed among the communities they are intended to benefit (Andrew-Essien & Bison, 2009). And how do you engage with local communities while also recognizing that they are not homogenous or static entities (Berkes, 2004; Brown, 2002; Cohn, 1988)? This lack of clarity points toward the complexity of and potential conflicts involved in conservation. Human-environmental relationships are dynamic, not easily defined, and exist in different shapes at different levels (Bayrak, Tu, & Burgers, 2013; Boonzaaeir, 2010; Manfredo & Dayer, 2004; Salafsky, Margoluis, Redford, & Robinson, 2002; West et al., 2006). There are inevitably disagreements.

**Conservation & Conflict**

“Across the globe, conservation is increasingly in conflict with other human activities” (Redpath et al., 2013, p. 100). As a result of the shift in conservation’s focus to include the more social aspects of the work, there is now occasion for and space within which to explore conflicts that emerge when balancing the protection of biodiversity with the preservation of indigenous culture (Dowie, 2009); when environmental scarcity, such as competition over water resources, results in violent conflict (Hauge & Ellingsen, 1998; Homer-Dixon, 1994); or when the illegal wildlife trade fuels insecurity and violent conflict (Douglas & Alie, 2014). In today’s conservation context, “compromise, contestation and conflict are more often the norm” than
imagined “win-win scenarios, where both natural resources are conserved and human well-being is improved” (McShane et al., 2011, p. 970).

In summarizing these various relationships, Jarraud (2008) outlines four possible connections between conflict and the environment. First, cooperation on environmental problems can ameliorate conflict and post-conflict situations by bringing together conflict actors to work collaboratively to address the problems while simultaneously improving the relationships between those actors. These changes in relationships increase the possibility of long-term conflict transformation (see Ali, 2007; Hamill & Bescançon, 2008). EcoPeace’s Good Water Neighbours approach, for example, uses water resource management as a way to mobilize people in Palestine, Jordan, and Israel so that they can build trust and develop a collective identity (Harari, 2008). Youth from each country visit communities across the political divide to learn more about their water issues, and adult community members establish dialogue mechanisms to discuss water shortages and sewage problems.

Peace Parks, or conservation zones that are dedicated to both conservation and peace (Ali, 2007, p. 1), are founded on this idea of environmental conservation leading to cooperation and conflict amelioration. The Cordillera del Cóndor border region between Peru and Ecuador, which was formerly a site of armed conflict, is an example of the peace park model. After recognizing the ecological value of this area, the governments of both countries worked with civil society to create a bi-national conservation mechanism and network of protected areas, bringing together stakeholders to discuss conservation challenges and, in the process, developing trust between those stakeholders as they pursued common goals.² While there have been challenges in implementing parts of the peace park plan (such as the slow pace of removing

landmines and government-sanctioned exploitation of the area by mining and logging companies), the process of establishing the conservation mechanism is considered “instrumental to the resolution of the Peru-Ecuador conflict and the demilitarization of the border zone” (Kakabadse, Caillaux, & Dumas, 2016, p. 822).³

Jarraud’s (2008) second relationship covers the role of the environment in provoking or intensifying conflicts. Control over and decisions about natural resources like land, oil, or water is inherently political (Alao, 2007), and there are differing ideas about what conservation is, what nature or wilderness means, and what role science should play in environmental management (Dowie, 2009). As a result, conservation conflicts can arise “when two or more parties with strongly held opinions clash over conservation objectives and when one party is perceived to assert its interests at the expense of another” (Redpath et al., 2013, p. 100). One common form of conservation conflict occurs when protected areas are established without consideration of how they might disadvantage surrounding communities. This can lead to conflict between governments, conservation organizations, and communities as community members experience and respond to the negative impacts of the protected areas, such as limited access to livelihood needs (Alao, 2007; Hamill & Bescançon, 2010; Linnell et al., 2010; Redpath et al., 2013; West et al. 2006). In cases such as these, when the interests of one group of stakeholders are at odds with another, it is important to consider a multitude of criteria when making conservation decisions in

³ While conservation can bring stakeholders together and promote dialogue and the development of trust, this model is not without critiques. Collaborative environmental initiatives can limit effective decision making when there are too many stakeholders seated at the table (Coglianese, 1999). Alternatively, a focus on stakeholders in the immediate vicinity of the issue can result in alienation of other, more geographically distant stakeholders or those from less obviously interested groups (McClosky, 1999). Collaboration also does not ensure that power imbalances are addressed (Aas, Ladkin, & Fletcher, 2005) or that the “right” people are speaking for the environment (Jamal & Stronza, 2009).
order to better understand the wide variety of impacts that those decisions can have (Davies, Bryce, & Redpath, 2013).

As an example of this type of conflict, Igoe (2004) describes the relocation of Tanzanian Maasai as a result of the conservation efforts based on the Western model of exclusionary national parks. The relocation resulted in clashes over land rights, contributed to an increase in poverty once people were moved away from an area containing the resources they needed, and culminated in conflicts between community members and park officials. However, even after conservation organizations switched to a community-based model, conflicts remained. Maasai social movements were forced to transform into officially recognized NGOs in order to “take on a form that Tanzanian authorities and international donors could recognize and accept” (p. 111). NGOs became a business among the Maasai, fomenting competition and mistrust between people as well as cultural debates as to what being Maasai really means. Additional research mirrors Igoe’s findings. Cernea and Schmidt-Soltau (2006), for example, found that parks in the Congo basin have contributed to the impoverishment of 120,000 to 150,000 people through displacement. Vedeld, Jumane, Wapolila, and Songorwa (2012) found a similar situation near Tanzania’s Mikumi National Park, where communities living around the park incurred a 2-20% cost on total household income as a result of their proximity to the protected area. The authors attribute conflicts between the communities and park officials to these costs as well as the evictions of community members from the park 35 years ago. These conflicts are often the unintended consequences of contextually-insensitive conservation efforts, and they have significant impacts on both conservation outcomes and the wider social contexts in which conservation takes place.
The third environment-conflict connection is the negative impact that conflicts can have on the environment and conservation efforts (Jarraud, 2008). Violent conflicts can destroy the natural environment and result in a loss of biodiversity. Ongoing conflicts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), for instance, have significantly damaged the country’s parks and wildlife populations. A recent New York Times article notes that after armed militias reached the DRC’s Garamba National Park in 1997, “half of the park’s elephants, two-thirds of its buffalos and three-quarters of its hippos disappeared in three short months” (Nuwer, 2018). Only three northern white rhinos remain today. In the DRC and elsewhere, militias have used natural resources to support or even directly fund war, poaching elephants and trading their ivory for supplies (Agger & Hutson, 2013; see also, Alao, 2007). Armed groups have fed on institutional fragility and the widespread availability of arms to exploit natural resources (Beyers et al., 2011). The resulting negative impacts on the environment, both direct and indirect—such as when displaced people and refugees must rely on and may then deplete scarce resources as they are forced to flee or settle in unfamiliar locations—can result in prolonged or new conflicts (Gaynor et al., 2016; Hanson et al., 2009).

As another example, human-wildlife conflicts can inhibit the effectiveness of conservation efforts when animals like elephants, apes, or lions destroy peoples’ property, crops, or livestock (Bowen-Jones, 2012; Linnell, 2010; Redpath et al., 2013). In the wake of this destruction, communities often feel animosity toward wildlife. Without adequate preventative (fences, deterrents) and reactive (removal of the animal, offset of the financial costs of property destruction) measures, communities may not support conservation measures and may even retaliate against the wildlife or the organizations seeking to protect them (Bowen-Jones, 2012). Dickman (2010) argues that these human-wildlife conflicts are often “manifestations of
underlying human-human conflicts, such as between authorities and local people, or between people of different cultural backgrounds” (p. 458). Understanding the root causes of conflicts are therefore important to addressing human-wildlife confrontations.

Finally, Jarraud’s (2008) fourth connection concerns how ongoing conflicts can unintentionally preserve the environment when they disrupt human activity in a particular area over time (see also Jarraud & Lordos, 2012). Such is the case in the demilitarized zone between North and South Korea, which is now a de facto environmental sanctuary due to the restrictions on activity there (Kim, 2007). Today, a number of endangered and rare species call this space home, including the red-crowned crane and the Asiatic bear (“Conflict Conservation”, 2010).

Another example of unintended conservation as a result of conflict is the effect of Somali pirates patrolling the waters off the coast of northern Kenya. Their presence there has drastically reduced the number of foreign fishing boats trolling the waters, resulting in flourishing fish populations. Although indirectly related to conflict, the area around Chernobyl is now teeming with wildlife like elk, deer, and wild boar after the exclusion of humans following the 1986 nuclear accident and subsequent permanent evacuation of residents (Deryabina et al., 2015).

Because the complex social, economic, and political context in which conservation takes place is disposed to conflict (Dickman, 2010), conservation practitioners must find ways to sufficiently understand and explicitly respond to conflicts if they are to be effective (Madden & McQuinn, 2014). They must grapple not only with how they will achieve their primary, environmental-focused objectives, but also with how to do this in a complex conflict context. This can be challenging for a field that has only recently (within the last 50 years) looked beyond the biological, legal, geographic, and economic aspects of environmental issues to the sociocultural, economic, and political (Madden & McQuinn, 2014; Peterson et al., 2010). Yet
considering conservation processes in terms of their relationships within the conflict context necessitates a holistic conservation approach, one that acknowledges the complexity, variability, and interconnectedness of more than ecological systems and extends consideration and action to the social realities in which conservation work takes place. What might such a holistic approach look like?

**Conflict Sensitivity**

Within the fields of development, humanitarian aid, and peacebuilding, discussions about how to attend to the full (conflict) context in which interventions take place are well under way. The notion of conflict sensitivity emerged more than two decades ago following the 1994 Rwandan genocide (Abitbol, 2014; Ahmed, 2011; Paffenholz, 2005a). In the wake of the genocide’s devastation, development, aid, and peacebuilding organizations began to recognize that their interventions do not inevitably support peace and may, in fact, exacerbate conflict (Saferworld et al., 2004; Kamatsiko, 2014). With this recognition, these organizations became more aware of their roles in the conflict and in supporting peace, and this “awareness went hand in hand with the demand to make the underlying assumptions concerning the effects of aid on peace and conflict explicit” (Paffenholz, 2005b, p. 3).

As an example of how these questions began to surface, Pottier (1996) describes the distribution of emergency food aid in refugee camps following the Rwandan genocide. Initially, food aid distribution was “hijacked” by the military and those “experienced” refugees who knew how to financially benefit from aid delivery (p. 326). Even after aid agencies changed the distribution system, aid delivery by members of certain ethnic groups resulted in resentment by other ethnic groups. Another issue arose due to aid agencies’ ignorance of the food preferences
of different ethnic groups. The agencies handed out yellow maize grain; however, the rural poor and elderly refugees preferred either root crops or white maize flour, as they were not used to cooking the yellow maize grain and could not afford to mill it. Hard maize grain also required longer cooking times, which in turn meant more water and fuel wood were needed to eat, and this in turn resulted in environmental degradation as people sought out more wood for cooking. As a result, some refugees were malnourished, and many had reduced confidence in the agencies providing aid.

Responding to the realization that their interventions could have a negative impact on people and the conflict context, development, aid, and peacebuilding practitioners began experimenting with more contextually relevant interventions (McCandless, 2014) as well as ways to anticipate and evaluate their impacts on conflict (Bush, 1998). In 1999, Mary Anderson published *Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace - Or War*, which outlines the ways in which aid provided in conflict settings “can reinforce, exacerbate, and prolong the conflict” (p. 1). Anderson called on aid agencies to stay true to their missions while simultaneously identifying ways to support peace and avoid inadvertently contributing to conflict. She also laid out an innovative framework that involves determining the drivers of conflict, local capacities for peace, and an organization’s impacts on both. Her approach paved the way for a broader consideration of the relationship between humanitarian, peacebuilding, and aid interventions and the conflict contexts in which they operate.

Today, the concept of conflict sensitivity extends beyond Anderson’s (1999) *Do No Harm* to include a more comprehensive assessment of the conflict context as well as a more proactive stance toward contributing positively to the management of conflict. Although there is no commonly accepted definition of conflict sensitivity, one of the most popular is from the
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Resource Pack, which defines conflict sensitivity as the ability of an organization to “understand the context in which you operate; understand the interaction between your intervention and the context; and act upon the understanding of this interaction, in order to avoid negative impacts and maximise positive impacts” (Saferworld et al., 2004, Introduction, p. 3).

A variety of possible approaches have emerged for the application of conflict sensitivity. These include peace and conflict impact assessment (PCIA), Aid for Peace (Paffenholz & Reychler, 2005), Peace and Development Analysis, integrated peacebuilding programming (Kamatsiko, 2014), social impact assessment (Barrow, 2010), and World Vision’s Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts (MSTC) and Good Enough Context Analysis for Rapid Response (GECARR) frameworks. While there is no one, predominant tool (Barbolet et al., 2005), common elements of conflict sensitivity frameworks include:

- A proactive orientation to the “context-intervention interaction” (Abitbol, 2014, p. 4). Practitioners should have an in-depth understanding of the context in which they work as well as an appreciation of the positive and negative linkages between their work and that context (Bush, 1998; Bush, 2003; McCandless, 2014). This understanding is often developed through some form of a conflict analysis (Barbolet et al., 2005; Hoffman, 2003), which can be qualitative and/or quantitative, focused on different organizational and geographic levels ranging from the project to the country, and used during any and all project cycle stages from planning to evaluation (Leonhardt, 2002);

- Reducing an intervention’s negative impacts on conflict while increasing its contributions to peace (Paffenholz, 2005a). “At the core of conflict sensitivity is an investment in

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4 See [https://www.wvi.org/peacebuilding](https://www.wvi.org/peacebuilding) for more information on World Vision’s frameworks.
learning about the conflict context and a responsibility to act upon that learning to make better-informed choices” (Barbolet et al., 2005, p. 4). Conflict analysis contributes to the formulation of appropriate responses to the conflict that go beyond avoiding negative impacts to actively contributing to positive ones (Abitbol, 2014; De la Haye & Denayer, 2003; McCandless, 2014; Paffenholz, 2005a). This effort extends to evaluations of the interventions, which should assess primary objectives (the main objective of the humanitarian, peacebuilding, or aid effort, such as the delivery of food or provision of medical services) as well as the impact of the intervention on the conflict context (Bush, 1998);

- Inclusivity, local ownership, and empowerment (Abitbol, 2014; Barasa-Mang’eni, 2014). Conflict sensitivity promotes the meaningful involvement of all people living in the intervention area with the intent of increasing their capacity to respond to conflict while also addressing their needs (Bush, 2008; Paffenholz & Reychler, 2005). Bush (1998) describes the original intent of PCIA—one of the principal conflict sensitivity frameworks—which was to empower individuals and institutions “to assert control over the political, economic, and social aspects of their lives” and to “challenge existing systems of control” (p. 24) While Bush (2003b) later laments that the intention “to create the space for those in the South to re-engage the idea” of PCIA (p. 38) has been eroded by the co-option of the concept by donors and Northern-based NGOs, Abitbol (2014) indicates that PCIA is still used to “cultivate engagement” and “challenge hegemonic practices, critically and meaningfully putting discomforting questions, banished knowledge and marginalised people’s concerns on development and peacebuilding agendas” (p. 5). Collaborative, participatory approaches to interventions—the type of
which conflict sensitivity supports—are important because they increase the chances of an intervention’s effectiveness by encouraging stakeholder buy-in and the potential for sustainable impacts (Saferworld et al., 2004; Paffenholz, 2005a). If used properly, conflict sensitivity frameworks provide an opportunity for consultation and give stakeholders a voice (Achitei, 2014; Leonhardt, 2002); and

- Reflexivity, flexibility, and adaptation in the face of a changing conflict and contextual dynamics. Being conflict sensitive requires a shift away from linear thinking toward responsive and dynamic approaches that are rooted in the context (Abitbol, 2014; Bush, 2008; Macabuac-Ferolin & Constantino, 2014). Conflict sensitivity is about understanding and responding to a specific context, one that is likely to change. This responsiveness is increasingly seen as more than just a discrete and occasional impact assessment and evaluation, but as an embedded part of the whole project cycle that is practiced continuously and reflected up on in order to make proactive and reactive changes to the project (De la Haye & Denayer, 2003; Leonhardt, 2002).

Relevant Critiques of Conflict Sensitivity

Although there is widespread recognition of the importance of conflict sensitivity to interventions in conflict and post-conflict contexts, there are also a number of meaningful critiques that are relevant to this research.

**Limited Accessibility.** One of the most important critiques of conflict sensitivity—primarily because it is so paradoxical—is a lack of accessibility. As conflict sensitivity frameworks have proliferated, they have been criticized for their “continued lack of methodological coherence, transparency, and effective communication” (Abitbol, 2014, p. 5),
which in turn can make their implementation difficult. This is partly the result of efforts to balance flexibility and the ability to adapt frameworks to the context in which they are used with clarity and ease of use. While Hoffman (2003) warned that conflict sensitivity frameworks were on the way out because of “the multiplicity of efforts” (p. 33) and the lack of “a practical, usable tool” (p. 34), Bush (2003a) argued in response that understanding these frameworks as a set of “interpretive tools” (p. 42) necessitates flexibility in applying them. Bush comprehends conflict sensitivity as a process to be adapted rather than a discrete set of tools that can be pulled off of the shelf at any time and immediately implemented (Bush, 2008). However, the lack of concrete guidance on how to use conflict sensitivity frameworks as well as the numerous available approaches can overwhelm potential users and pose a challenge to the widespread adoption of conflict sensitivity (Ahmed, 2011; Kamatsiko, 2014; Paffenholz, 2016). As Paffenholz (2016) puts it, “Today, so many tools to address conflict sensitivity exist that it has become hard to choose between them” (p. 2).

Conflict sensitivity’s limited accessibility is also the result of its professionalization and commodification (Abitbol, 2014). A reliance on experts to implement conflict sensitivity frameworks as well as donor requirements for their implementation interfere with the principles of contextualization, empowerment, and ownership discussed above. As a result, critics point to a disconnect between conflict sensitivity frameworks and local realities as well as limited space for local participation (Ahmed, 2011; Barasa-Mang’eni, 2014). Ahmed (2011), for example, describes how local staff working on development projects in Pakistan found the PCIA process to be “alien” (p. 18), burdensome, and “yet another evaluating tool coming from the West and thus something which they don’t find relevant to their work” (p. 20). Because the PCIA tools were required by donors without being sufficiently explained, local staff did not understand their
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purpose and questioned how PCIA related to their projects on youth development, human rights, and women’s empowerment. This approach of implementing tools and complex frameworks without first assuring understanding “seems to be a primarily Western approach that often has limited resonance with many Southern organisations” (Barbolet, et al., 2005, p. 2).

For conflict sensitivity frameworks to be useful, they must be practical, accessible, and sufficiently relevant for practitioners to adapt them to the context in which they work without having to rely heavily on outside experts whose approach may seem foreign and uncomfortable (Ahmed, 2011; Barasa-Mang’eni, 2014). One way to demonstrate relevance and increase the accessibility of conflict sensitivity frameworks may be to publish case studies that include a detailed discussion of the process of implementing the conflict sensitivity framework as well as the resulting challenges and lessons learned. Case studies with step-by-step descriptions and discussion of results can demonstrate the practical use of these frameworks and ways to assess their effectiveness. The more that is known about what works and how to integrate these lessons learned into organizational processes, the more likely it is that conflict sensitivity will be successfully integrated into projects.

**Lack of Capacity Development & Mainstreaming.** Another salient critique of conflict sensitivity is related to a lack of real capacity development and institutional mainstreaming. Although capacity development and mainstreaming are regularly discussed in the literature as necessary to effective conflict sensitivity efforts (Saferworld et al., 2014; Barbolet et al., 2005; Bush, 1998, 2003a), and a number of guidance documents and organization-specific tools have emerged (Goddard, 2014) with donors and NGOs setting a course for mainstreaming conflict sensitivity (Hoffman, 2001), many organizations have not successfully or sufficiently integrated conflict sensitivity into their organizational plans or project cycles (Goddard, 2014). This is
despite the fact that “nearly all leading development and peacebuilding agencies have in some way or other pursued a kind of ‘conflict sensitivity mainstreaming’” (Handschin, 2016, p. 12), creating an “expert community” of conflict sensitivity practitioners (Paffenholz, 2016, p. 2).

Paffenholz (2016) puts forward a few potential explanations for this limited amount of conflict sensitivity mainstreaming. The first is the possibility that no actual mainstreaming ever took place. Mainstreaming, or “the long-term process of incorporating a methodology, concept or practice into all aspects of an organization’s programming and practice” (Goddard, 2014, p. 3), takes a tremendous amount of effort over a long time scale. It should involve changes to organizational policies and procedures, the development of standards of practice, and “quality in application” (Kamatsiko, 2014, p. 40). In some cases, when mainstreaming has taken the shape of a department or unit—what Goddard calls “departmentalizing” (p. 5)—the result is limited impact of conflict sensitivity on an organization’s operations or outcomes. Mainstreaming and the development of institutional capacity for conflict sensitivity are about using “the sum of [an organization’s] human and organisational capital to minimise negative and maximise positive impacts on the conflict dynamics of the environment(s) where it works” (Saferworld et al., 2004, Chapter 5, p. 1). If conflict sensitivity does not become the responsibility of all staff, mainstreaming cannot be achieved (Goddard, 2014).

The second reason for a lack of capacity development, Paffenholz (2016) says, may be a reliance on tools and ticking boxes. Simply checking the right boxes to appease a donor can happen without any true understanding of what conflict sensitivity means and why it is useful (Goddard, 2014), and this can lead to a rejection of conflict sensitivity frameworks by project staff who do not understand their value or how to use them (Ahmed, 2011; Bush, 2003b; Leonhardt, 2002). Too much of a reliance on tools may also mean that conflict sensitivity
systems are not being integrated into the fabric of the organization (Lange, 2004; Paffenholz, 2016). This is linked to an inadequate understanding of training as the primary component of developing conflict sensitivity capacity. As Potter and Brough (2004) put it, mainstreaming is often “merely a euphemism referring to little more than training” (p. 336). Macabuac-Ferolin and Constantino’s (2014) description of a PCIA process in Mindanao exemplifies this: The authors state that to build capacity, local leaders were trained in PCIA, conflict management, and other conflict assessment tools. However, they offer no evidence as to if and how this capacity was sustained. Training on its own is generally insufficient to maintain momentum and does not necessarily ensure that conflict sensitivity is integrated into the organization or the project cycle (Goddard, 2014). Instead, it must be accompanied by accountability mechanisms and opportunities for applying the knowledge gained in trainings as well as mentoring and other organizational changes (Gullette & Rosenberg, 2015; Lange, 2004).

Finally, Paffenholz (2016) also notes that other, more urgent or emergent priorities may have diverted attention away from conflict sensitivity mainstreaming. She cites the release of the UN Sustainable Development Goals as one such priority that may have rerouted attention and funding away from other priorities like conflict sensitivity. Scott (2016) also highlights local realities and “the tyranny of the urgent” (p. 19) as a reason for why conflict sensitivity is not implemented. Conflict sensitivity requires a great deal of resources, and if there are other, competing priorities for those resources, it is possible that conflict sensitivity initiatives will fall by the wayside.

To address the failure of truly mainstreaming conflict sensitivity principles, capacity development must be systematic, focused on altering organizational culture, and supportive of mechanisms for accountability (Lange, 2004; Potter & Brough, 2004). As Handschin (2016)
states, “Conflict sensitivity mainstreaming is, or should also be about organizational/institutional transformation” (p. 13). To that end, Lange and Quinn (2003) suggest program evaluations as well as policy and operational reviews along with a willingness to change an organization’s culture. Additional measures may include mechanisms for sharing lessons learned, mentoring, and “establishing a close link between the organisation’s mandate and conflict sensitivity” (Lange, 2004, p. 5). Designating resources for regular assessments of an organization’s efforts are also important (Gullette & Rosenberg, 2015).

**Insufficient Monitoring & Evaluation.** Conflict sensitivity frameworks also suffer from an insufficient attention paid to monitoring and evaluation (M&E), both doing M&E in a conflict sensitive manner and the process of monitoring and evaluating conflict sensitivity efforts (Goddard, 2014). Although assessment is a fundamental component of conflict sensitivity, very rarely are there discussions in the literature on how to know when efforts at being conflict sensitive are successful. Ahmed (2011), for example, notes that PCIA cannot currently answer questions about its impact. Yet conflict sensitivity frameworks such as PCIA should be “learning processes with end products that should not only be perceived to be useful but will in actual fact be used to bring about the desired changes for better peace impact” (Kamatsiko, 2014, p. 36). This is not possible without a systematic approach to M&E.

Two notable exceptions are Goldwyn and Chigas’s (2013) *Monitoring and evaluating conflict sensitivity* guidelines and Chapter 3, Module 3 of the *Resource Pack* (Saferworld et al., 2004). These documents address what monitoring and evaluating conflict sensitivity might look like, how to do it, and what tools and indicators might be useful. The approaches to M&E that they put forth are different than traditional M&E processes because they are intended to monitor for unintended impacts that go beyond the primary objectives of the intervention—i.e. the impact
of the conflict context on the intervention and vice versa. While potentially useful guidelines, there are few case studies on just how the M&E of conflict sensitivity takes place, which can in turn limit the accessibility of the M&E processes for those who are unfamiliar with applying them to conflict sensitivity and might benefit from instructional examples.

**Conflict Sensitivity vs. Peacebuilding.** Another critique is the lack of clarity between the concepts of conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding as well as their objectives. From Anderson’s (1999) Do No Harm framework—which focused largely on avoiding an intervention’s negative impacts on conflict—to today, the objectives of conflict sensitivity as well as the definitions of what qualifies as a conflict sensitive intervention are often unclear, sometimes including conflict resolution, transformation, or even peacebuilding (Abitbol, 2014; Bush, 2003a). This has muddied the waters somewhat. For example, Leonhardt (2002) states that PCIA—one of the primary conflict sensitivity frameworks—promotes the mainstreaming of peacebuilding, Bush (2003a) talks about PCIA’s “peacebuilding impact” on a project (p. 4), and Ahmed (2011) says peacebuilding objectives need to be considered in the planning stages of an intervention. Meanwhile, Anderson (1999) cautions that aid agencies do not have to become peace agencies to be conflict sensitive, and Hoffman (2003) encourages those using PCIA to limit stakeholders’ expectations of peacebuilding impacts.

Where are the boundaries, then, between conflict sensitivity frameworks and peacebuilding? Woodrow and Chigas (2009) describe how, over time, development and humanitarian organizations “have come to operate under the (false) assumption that conflict sensitive programming is the same as peacebuilding” (p. 1). These organizations may consequently fail to be either conflict sensitive or to achieve their peacebuilding objectives, believing that conflict sensitivity automatically results in peacebuilding or that doing
peacebuilding work automatically makes you conflict sensitive. In order to clarify the difference, and to address these gaps, they point toward the separate definitions outlined in the Conflict Sensitive Approaches to Development, Humanitarian Assistance, and Peacebuilding: A Resource Pack (Saferworld et al., 2004). These definitions describe the main objective of conflict sensitivity as working effectively in a conflict context, while peacebuilding is about working on conflict to “contribute to Peace Writ Large” (Woodrow & Chigas, 2009, p. 10). Conflict sensitivity is applicable to an intervention operating in a conflict context, while peacebuilding applies to interventions with the explicit goal of securing peace. Therefore, while conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding often overlap, they are not the same, and conflating the two can be problematic.

When Is Conflict Sensitivity Needed? A final critique of conflict sensitivity frameworks is that many are designed specifically for use in situations of violent conflict, either during, immediately after, or facing the threat of. Anderson (1999), Bush (1998; 2003a), Leonhardt (2002), De la Haye and Denayer (2003), and Paffenholz (2005a) all explicitly state that development, aid, and peacebuilding interventions can have an impact on situations of violent conflict. This is, in fact, the rationale behind why those involved in these interventions must consider their impacts: the conflict is violent and destructive and, therefore, needs to be addressed.

However, more recent discussions of conflict sensitivity have included an expanded definition of the situations in which it is useful. Ahmed (2011), for example, notes that the conflict sensitivity framework PCIA “is not about being sensitive only to traditional forms of conflict and violence but also to non-traditional insecurities associated with socioeconomic disparities, gender inequalities and various forms of discriminations leading to or having
potential to turn into violent conflicts” (p. 26). For Ahmed, the focus is still on the threat of violent conflict, but he recognizes that other forms of conflict can pose problems for the success of interventions. In their inception paper introducing the project “Conflict Sensitivity – Concept to Impact,” Brown and her colleagues (2009) also consider a broader definition, stating that “conflict sensitivity applies to all contexts, regardless of the severity or frequency of violence, even in situations where underlying tensions have not recently resulted in violent” (p. 12).

**Conflict-Sensitive Conservation**

As the use of conflict sensitivity in the fields of development, aid, and peacebuilding has developed over the last 25 years, there has been limited consideration and adaptation of these frameworks by conservation organizations and practitioners. This is surprising given that many of the reasons behind conflict sensitivity’s use in those fields of early implementation are also applicable to conservation practice. Describing the basis for conflict sensitivity, Brown and her colleagues (2009) note the assumptions that “Any initiative conducted in a conflict-affected area will interact with that conflict…” (p. 7; emphasis added). Like development, aid, and peacebuilding work, conservation often takes place in conflict areas and involves decisions about the distribution of resources, which can in turn result in tensions when resources are limited or inequitably distributed or people do not agree on how they should be managed (Hammill et al., 2009). As a set of interventions with sociocultural, economic, and political implications (Hammill & Bescançon, 2010), conservation is similarly impacted by the conflict context and has an impact on that context in return: “conservation interventions affect more than ecosystems – they have implications for economic livelihoods, community and cultural identifies, political autonomy and control” (p. 15). In fact, conservation work may at times be even more relevant to
the conflict context than economic development; as Bush and Opp (1999) note, “Interventions designed to affect access to, and control over, natural resources are located in areas in which the propensity for conflict (both violent and nonviolent) is perhaps higher than in other areas of development activity” (p. 185). Hammill and Bescançon (2010) provide the example of transboundary protected areas, which are often established in regions with recent conflicts. In addition, protected areas “have a legacy of fueling tensions between various actors” (p. 1). It is therefore important to consider their impacts on conflicts carefully in addition to their potential to contribute to peace.

Based on the above, it is worth exploring how conflict sensitivity can be integrated into conservation work. There are only a handful of examples of adapting conflict sensitivity frameworks to conservation contexts. One of the early adaptations was the project on Armed Conflict and Environment, which explored the impact of the Mozambican civil war on the environment as well as ways to mitigate that impact. The result of this study, *The Trampled Grass* (Shambaugh, Oglethorpe, Ham, & Tognetti, 2001), is a guide that addresses conservation’s “little experience in dealing with social, economic, and political issues in armed conflict situations” (p. 12). It provides conservation practitioners, policy makers, and conservation donors with advice for dealing with the impacts of conflict and post-conflict situations on conservation work. Similar to other conflict sensitivity frameworks, the guide encourages readers to look for opportunities to collaborate with organizations in other sectors (e.g. development) as well as government and communities, to be flexible and adaptable in the face of conflict situations, and to remain aware of the context in which they are working. The guide is useful for developing practical responses to conflict situations and includes guidance on training staff to respond to security emergencies and developing appropriate communication.
strategies. However, it leaves unexplored the impacts of conservation work on the conflict context as well as strategies for managing them. Understanding those impacts and attempting to then mitigate them is a key component of conflict sensitivity that is missing from this early framework.

Nearly a decade after *The Trampled Grass*, the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) published the *Conflict-Sensitive Conservation Practitioner’s Manual* (Hamill et al., 2009). The manual’s purpose is “to provide an analytical framework to help organizations integrate conflict sensitivity into their work” (p. 2). It explores how conservation work can actively support conflict resolution and furnishes instructions for developing an organization’s conflict sensitivity. To make conservation work more conflict-sensitive, the manual lists two steps: analyze the conflict, and design, implement, and monitor the solutions. Like *The Trampled Grass*, it is meant to be practical, providing its users with tools like the conflict tree and conflict map to examine the conflict context and an organization’s relationship to it. There are also several case studies of IISD collaborations with other conservation actors in which its conflict-sensitive conservation approach was used (see, for example, Crawford, 2012, and Crawford, Brown, & Finlay, 2011). One limitation of the manual is that it provides insufficient guidance to conservation practitioners on how to regularly monitor and evaluate their conflict-sensitive approaches. This is a common limitation of conflict sensitivity frameworks despite the necessity of M&E for determining the effectiveness of conflict sensitivity efforts and whether any changes need to be made to increase their effectiveness.

A final example of a conservation-focused conflict sensitivity framework is the Human-Wildlife Conflict Collaboration’s (HWCC, now the Center for Conservation Peacebuilding) conservation conflict transformation or CCT approach. CCT is “a way of thinking about,
understanding, and relating to conflict” that is based on the principles of conflict transformation “adapted from the field of peacebuilding to the needs of conservation” (Madden & McQuinn, 2014, p. 98). The Center works with conservation practitioners and others to apply CCT principles to wildlife conservation. Like the IISD manual, CCT promotes more effective conservation processes by encouraging conservation practitioners to develop a comprehensive understanding of conflict and to address deeply rooted conflicts. The approach is grounded in Lederach’s (2003) discussions of conflict transformation, which Madden and McQuinn (2014) identify as appropriate for conservation because both conservation and conflict transformation “are engaged in multi-level, long-term strategy change” (p. 100). To illustrate the CCT approach, they discuss two case studies of building conservation practitioner capacity for conflict transformation. While the case studies are useful and one of the only examples of cases that describe conflict sensitivity as capacity development, there are limited details on the actual process of developing that capacity. Madden and McQuinn also do not discuss a process for regularly evaluating conflict sensitivity approaches, which is important for understanding and responding to the fluid contexts in which quick and inventive responses may be necessary.

These examples illustrate how conservation practitioners are beginning to innovatively apply conflict sensitivity approaches to conservation work. They also evidence an advancing comprehension of the conflict-conservation relationship, promote a progressively deeper understanding of the conflict context, and provide practitioners with concrete steps for applying conflict sensitivity to their work. However, case studies that concretely outline how practitioners have applied and evaluated the frameworks and which could increase to the accessibility of these approaches, remain few and far between. This limited availability becomes all the more important when considering that conflict sensitivity is a skill that must be developed over time.
Reading or referring to a manual does not necessarily designate one as conflict sensitive, and conflict sensitivity “is not an easy add-on” (Saferworld et al., 2004, Chapter 5, p. 2). Without more information about how practitioners have implemented these frameworks in a variety of contexts and over time in order to develop capacity, it is difficult to know how well they work, what benefits they bring to conservation work, and how someone outside of the organizations that developed them may be able to implement them.

**Conservation and Conflict Sensitivity: Important Overlap**

This review of the literature has demonstrated that conservation organizations encounter and engage with a variety of conflicts in their work, many of which mirror the conflicts faced by aid, development, and peacebuilding organizations. As such, it seems plausible that conservation practitioners would also benefit from conflict sensitivity frameworks, and indeed a few conservation-focused frameworks already exist. However, a review of the literature on conflict sensitivity and the available frameworks highlights gaps in current approaches and points toward ways in which improvements might be made. With this knowledge as an essential backdrop, it is more possible to delve into the process of designing, implementing and evaluating a conservation-focused conflict sensitivity framework, one that seeks to address the needs and gaps identified while also providing a tailored solution for each conservation-conflict relationship. In developing a conservation-focused conflict sensitivity framework, this research project continues the balancing act identified above between conflict sensitivity approaches that are flexible enough to be adapted to the particular context and those that are accessible enough to provide concrete instructions and guidance. It also wrestles with the challenges to developing
conflict sensitivity capacity and the need to provide sufficient detail on how to monitor and evaluate conflict sensitivity as part of a conflict-sensitive conservation project.
Chapter 3: Methodology

Based on the similarities between development and peacebuilding work and the work of environmental conservation as discussed above—particularly with regard to the challenges associated with working in a context that includes a variety of conflicts—it is conceivable that conservation may benefit from the incorporation of conflict sensitivity. There are a handful of frameworks in existence that speak to this possibility (e.g., Hammill et al., 2009; Madden & McQuinn, 2014). However, there is little if any research on the process by which these frameworks are adapted for conservation, how appropriate those adaptations are for the specific needs of conservation practitioners, or the impacts that those frameworks have on conservation practice or outcomes. This research project, therefore, explores the following questions:

How might conflict sensitivity frameworks support conservation work?

- What conflicts, issues, and needs should a conservation-focused conflict sensitivity framework address?
- What form might a relevant, accessible, and effective conservation-focused conflict sensitivity framework take?
- What effect might a conservation-focused conflict sensitivity framework have on the knowledge, attitudes, capacities, and actions of conservation practitioners?

Because these are questions rooted in current issues that call for sensible responses, I address these questions using a pragmatist research paradigm. Based in the work of John Dewey, pragmatism is instrumental, focused on understanding an issue or problem through experience, and then acting upon that understanding to solve the problem (Boog, 2003; Morgan, 2014; Patton, 1997). It emphasizes the social nature of experience and the importance of “knowing
through doing” (Bradbury & Reason, 2003, p. 158; Morgan, 2014). The researcher—as a part of the social environment in which research takes place—understands only through personal, subjective experience.

Ontologically, pragmatic research is understood as an inherently subjective, social, and value laden exercise (Herr & Anderson, 2005), with the researcher engaging in the process of knowledge generation and action alongside others. Epistemologically, the choice of research methods is rooted in both an acknowledgement of these experiential and subjective ways of knowing as well as a consideration of the chosen methods’ practical ability to solve problems or respond to substantive issues (Wicks, Reason, & Bradbury, 2011). Based on this, as well as my personal commitment to undertake a research project in partnership with others so that the value and impact of the project extends beyond the dissertation, I chose to employ an action research methodology based on participatory and utilization-focused evaluation.

**Methodology**

**Action Research**

Action research grew out of the values of emancipation, empowerment, and participatory democracy (Boog, 2003). While there is no one definition of action research (Dickens & Watkins, 1999), its general orientation is toward problem solving in order to promote “individual welfare in a humanistic way” (Bargal, 2008, p. 18). To do this, it prescribes an iterative and cyclical process of defining the issue, collecting and analyzing data to develop a critical understanding of that issue, using the results to develop action-oriented interventions, and

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5 For more information on the history of action research, see Boog, 2003; Dickens & Watkins, 1999; and Elden & Chisholm, 1993.
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assessing the impact of those actions (Bargal, 2008; Bhana, 2006; Elden & Chisholm, 1993; Stringer, 1996). Put more simply, it is a cycle of “plan-act-observe-reflect” (Herr & Anderson, 2005, p. 9).

Action research involves some degree of collaboration between researcher and participant because it comprehends and values each person’s subjective experience of his or her world (Wicks, Reason, & Bradbury, 2011) and understands the researcher as generally having a more limited understanding of the context than the research participants, who are experts in their own right (Bradbury & Reason, 2003; Stringer, 1996). Researcher therefore takes place both for and with the researcher and participant, blurring the lines between them, promoting dialogue, and emphasizing a collaborative identification of issues, generation of knowledge and understanding, and action (Bhana, 2006; Elden & Chisholm, 1993; Herr & Anderson, 2005). As a result, participants are empowered in the short-term through learning and the development and application of problem solving skills that, in turn, increase their ability to participate in decision-making and exercise agency over their situation in the long-term (Boog, 2003; Dickens & Watkins, 1999).

Because the intention is to promote positive change, action research is also responsive and focused on the social context in which participants are operating and that they want to change (Elden & Chisholm, 1993). This requires the researcher to reflect on that context and its dynamic nature as well as the impact of his or her actions on it (Boog, 2003; Herr & Anderson, 2005). Reflection is the key to positive change; without it, the researcher cannot understand his or her impact well, nor seek to modify and improve it.

While there are numerous approaches that fall under the action research umbrella (Herr & Anderson, 2005), I describe my particular approach as participatory, utilization-focused
evaluation. The standard objectives of evaluation have changed over time. While traditional evaluation narrowly focuses on post-intervention impacts, additional modes of evaluation that encourage a greater consideration of accountability, participation, intervention development, knowledge production, and use now exist alongside these traditional models (Patton, 1997). Additionally, the list of acceptable evaluator roles has also expanded, from external expert to evaluator-as-facilitator or partner in the evaluation process (Hall & Hall, 2004). These changes mean that evaluation is now more compatible with the values and objectives of action research (Herr & Anderson, 2005), with participatory and utilization-focused evaluation approaches being particularly well matched.

**Evaluation**

Evaluation as a formal field of inquiry originated in the United States following 1960s Great Society legislation, for which the government published evaluative guidelines to ensure that it assessed the efficacy of programs established by the legislation (Caracelli, 2008; Patton, 2008). While evaluation efforts multiplied quickly, people became disillusioned with them based on what they perceived as a lack of influence on intervention impacts (Alkin & Daillak, 1979). Some like Patton (2008), taking responsibility for this shortcoming, attributed the problem to the limited use of evaluation findings. He noted that although we live in a time in which we have the capability to capture and store a great deal of information, there is a “challenge of getting people to use the knowledge we produce” (p. 6).

In response to this limited use and also informed by the social movements of the late 20th century—the women and civil rights movements in the United States and movements against historic structures of power in the developing world—new models of evaluation emerged
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(Brisolara, 1998; Cousins & Whitmore, 1998; Patton, 2008). These collaborative models of inquiry were based on a multiplicity of worldviews, methods, and purposes, and they included action research, stakeholder-based evaluation, utilization-focused evaluation, and more (Caracelli, 2008; Cousins & Chouinard, 2012). Moving beyond accountability, these approaches emphasized problem solving through the meaningful use of evaluation findings (Cousins & Earl, 1992; Patton, 2008). They emphasized the importance of contextual and organizational factors as well as the orientation of and evaluator’s relationship to people for evaluation success (Cousins & Earl, 1992; King, 2011; Patton, 2011). The role of the evaluator also expanded to include evaluator as facilitator, coordinator, and teacher (Caracelli, 2008). Two of these collaborative models are participatory evaluation and utilization-focused evaluation, overlapping and linked approaches that informed this research project.

Utilization-focused evaluation, a direct response to the lack of evaluation use discussed above, seeks to ensure the use of evaluation findings for intervention development, design, and improvement (Patton, 1997). It is geared toward “generating high-quality and highly relevant evaluation findings and then actually getting those findings used for program decision making and improvement” (Patton, 2008, p. 11). Its focus is on process, and like action research more generally, it is “done for and with specific, intended primary users for specific, intended purposes” (Patton, 1997, p. 23). It encourages close relationships between the evaluator (researcher) and participants, the development of shared understandings and knowledge, and collaborative decision-making in order to promote evaluation ownership and use (Patton, 1997; Rowe, 2012). Collaboration in evaluation can also increase participants’ evaluation knowledge and skills, and thus the sustainability of evaluative processes and the use of results.
Participatory evaluation is “applied social research that involves a partnership between trained evaluation personnel and practice-based decision makers” (Cousins & Earl, 1992, p. 399; see also Cousins & Whitmore, 1998). The participatory evaluation approach of this research project most closely resembles Cousins and Whitmore’s (1998) practical participatory evaluation, which has as its main objective use for decision making. Similar to utilization-focused evaluation, practical participatory evaluation sees participation as key to relevance and ownership.

Utilization-focused evaluation has in fact greatly influenced the participatory evaluation approach. King (2011), for example, describes the critical influence that reading Patton’s original 1978 *Utilization Focused Evaluation* had on her. Patton’s book opened her eyes to the important role that people had on the outcome of an evaluation. Also influenced by action research approaches, King determined that involving people in evaluation processes would improve their capacities and abilities to learn from evaluations and implement corresponding changes.

Participatory evaluation therefore encourages evaluators to work closely with a small group of evaluation stakeholders “to foster local applied research and thereby enhance social discourse” (Cousins & Earl, 1992, p. 401). The intended outcome of participatory evaluation is learning and capacity development in pursuit of discussion and change.

Both utilization-focused and participatory evaluation have a great deal of leeway in terms of the specific methods used; they do “not advocate any particular evaluation content, method, theory, or even use” (Patton, 2012, p. 5). Rather, these approaches encourage the evaluator to work with stakeholders to choose the most appropriate way forward toward a common goal. This methodology is therefore appropriate because action research, participatory and utilization-focused evaluation, and conflict sensitivity have overlapping goals: namely, they are focused on participation, context-based action, the development of capacity, assessment, and reflection. My
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research project resulted in action, both in terms of concrete outputs—the Environmental Peacebuilding Training Manual, the pilot implementation of the manual, and the evaluation of both—as well as the development of some level of conflict sensitivity capacity among the participants and, to a more limited extent, evaluation capacity among my Peace and Development Practice (PDP) team collaborators at Conservation International (CI).

Definition of Terms

This dissertation includes terms from the literature on conflict sensitivity, conservation, action research, and evaluation. To better ensure the reader’s comprehension of key terms, some important clarifications are provided here.

- **Intervention, program, and project**, are used interchangeably in this dissertation in order to connote a specific activity or set of activities that seek to bring about change or some other effect. While projects generally include only a “single intervention” and programs or interventions “include various activities or projects” (Imas & Rist, 2009), that level of differentiation is not as important within the scope of this dissertation.

- **Goal, objective, or purpose** are also used interchangeably. Although their definitions separate them in traditional evaluation discourse, within the scope of this dissertation, each refers to the overarching change or effect an intervention, program, or project is intended to bring about or promote.

- Alternatively, output and outcome have different meanings. OECD (2010) defines **outputs** as the products of a project or intervention, while an **outcome** is defined as “the likely or achieved short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention’s outputs” (p. 28; see also Imas & Rist, 2009).
Conflicts, problems, and issues are used synonymously to refer to disagreements between actors. However, needs are different and refer to the requirements or necessities in addressing those conflicts, problems, or issues.

In a number of instances, Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment (PCIA) is used as an illustrative example of a conflict sensitivity framework. PCIA is one of the most common and earliest conflict sensitivity frameworks and has been the focus of much of the literature on conflict sensitivity. It is often used as an umbrella term under which a variety of conflict sensitivity approaches are discussed (Leonhardt, 2002).

With regard to the people discussed in this document, the difference between collaborator and participant is overlapping but must be maintained. A participant is anyone who participated in this research process by contributing to the evidence collected. I purposefully use participant as a replacement for the traditional “subject” or “informant” as I believe the term “participant” denotes a higher level of value relative to these people’s roles in the research and the knowledge and expertise they contributed (see Fluehr-Lobban, 2008). My collaborators are a subset of those participants and include the members of the PDP team at CI with whom I worked closely in the design, implementation, and evaluation of the Environmental Peacebuilding Training Manual.

Finally, although it is not an issue of definition, I would like to address my use of the first-person voice throughout this document. I have purposefully chosen to use the first-person voice as a way of making explicit the reflective and subjective nature of the research project and the paradigm in which it exists. As Bradbury and Reason (2003) explain, “‘I’ frames, assesses and performs. ‘I’ is the instrument of activity in action inquiry and indeed all forms of social research” (p. 160). This entire research project was
built on a social understanding of research as well as the relationships between the researcher (me) and participants, each of whom brought their own experiences, beliefs, and contributions to the work. The narrative style of action research encourages the researcher to be reflective throughout this process (Herr & Anderson, 2005), and this is why I use first-person voice.

Methods

Action research is an approach to research that is rooted in the context and is thus adaptable. Its methods are determined by their relevancy, appropriateness, and usefulness with regard to answering the research questions and within the specific context in which the research takes place. Similarly, participatory and utilization-focused evaluation does not prescribe specific methods, instead taking a “contingency view” that presupposes “that the individual natures of programs and the uniqueness of evaluation purposes and contextual circumstances requires use of a range of evaluation approaches and methods” (Chen, 2005, p. 12). Consequently, the methods employed during this research project were chosen based on the needs of each particular research phase and in consultation with my collaborators on the PDP team at CI.

Overview of the Research Process

This research project developed from a discussion in early 2016 with a member of CI’s PDP team. At that time, the team was exploring the connections between conservation, conflict, and peace and, based on that exploration, was in the early stages of developing a comprehensive training manual tailored to the needs of CI staff around the world. I learned of the PDP team’s work by chance after reading an article in a newsletter about an upcoming workshop at CI.
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Although I was unable to attend the workshop, I reached out to the PDP team member who had written the article in order to learn more about her work. From the discussions that followed, I learned that the PDP team was interested in better understanding the needs of conservation practitioners vis-à-vis conflict so that it could design the most appropriate and useful manual possible. I had long been looking for an organization to partner with for my research, and the goals of the PDP team closely aligned with my own research questions.

Based on this, the PDP team and I established a collaboration whereby I would work with team members to conduct a needs assessment, using that information to revise what would become the Environmental Peacebuilding Training Manual. From there, our partnership further developed, and my new collaborators and I put together a comprehensive plan for the design, implementation, and evaluation of the manual that had me leading the evaluation processes—namely the development of questions that would guide each research phase, the evidence collection protocols meant to address those questions, and conducting the majority of interviews, implementing the surveys, and analyzing the information collected.

Different evaluation approaches guided each phase of this process according to what was appropriate for that particular point in the manual’s development or implementation. Patton (1997) describes this as a “stage model”:

A stage model begins by making sure the groundwork was carefully laid during the needs assessment phase; then basic implementation issues are examined and formative evaluation becomes the focus; if the early results are promising, then and only then, are the stakes raised by conducting rigorous summative evaluation. (p. 188)

This is similar to Chen’s (2005) “multiple entry evaluation,” in which “evaluators are concerned with conducting an evaluation that focuses on two or more program stages” (p. 70).
Different data collection techniques and instruments were used during each research phase and included interviews, pre- and post-tests, a survey, document review, and participant observation. These different methods allowed me to capture the complexity of the context over time and contributed to data triangulation, or the collection of “data/information from a number of different sources and/or applying different… methods and tools” to the same research question (Carugi, 2016, p. 58). Table 1 outlines each of the four phases as well as when they took place, what data collection methods were used, and how many people participated. Note that there is some overlap between phases as well as the participants in each phase. This is indicative of the iterative nature of the research process, which is common to action research and its focus on learning, problem solving, and reflection.

Table 1: Data Collection Tools by Research Phase

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Data Collection Method(s)</th>
<th># of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Needs Assessment</td>
<td>March – May 2016</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manual Development</td>
<td>May 2016 – Aug. 2017</td>
<td>Participant Observation</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formative Evaluation</td>
<td>May – June 2017</td>
<td>Interviews, Pre- and Post-Tests, Participant Observation, &amp; Document Review</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome Evaluation</td>
<td>Sept. 2017 – March 2018</td>
<td>Outcome Survey</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of the information collected as well as the discussions with the PDP team about that information and how to use it took place at a distance. My CI collaborators were based at CI’s headquarters in Virginia, while other participants live and work in various locations around the world. Discussions, interviews, and the survey generally took place via email, on the phone, or using Skype, although I did attend the pilot implementation workshop in the Philippines and was able to observe the workshop, have conversations with participants, and
conduct some in-person interviews. Overall, 48 people (not including myself) participated in the research during one or more phases. Additional detail on the data collection methods and participant selection is organized by research phase below.

Figure 1: The Four Research Phases

Phase I: Needs Assessment

As the first phase of the research process, the needs assessment focused on understanding the conflicts conservation practitioners face in their working environments and their needs (both explicitly stated by participants and discerned by my collaborators and me) in relation to those conflicts. This phase of the research contributed to a better understanding the problem (Bargal, 2008) and resulted in information that fed directly into both the development of the Environmental Peacebuilding Training Manual and in responding to the first research sub-question: What conflicts, issues, or needs should a conservation-focused conflict sensitivity framework address?

Needs assessments answer questions about what stakeholders require or demand to achieve a certain objective and how those requirements or demands can be met (Patton, 1997).
This type of evaluation can be an essential step in defining the basis for a project and a plan for its implementation using the needs identified by stakeholders through surveys, focus groups, or interviews as a guide (Chen, 2005). In this particular needs assessment, there were two levels of stakeholders. The primary stakeholders were the PDP team’s staff, who were developing the manual and looking for feedback in order to make it more relevant, accessible, and effective for the secondary stakeholders. These secondary stakeholders included CI conservation practitioners, who the manual was designed to assist in managing and responding positively to conflicts as part of their work.

In order to gather the in-depth and contextually situated information we needed, the PDP team and I decided to conduct qualitative interviews with CI staff around the world who would have diverse perspectives based on their individual backgrounds and work experiences. The more diverse the perspectives we explored, the more likely we would be to have a complete understanding of the possible answers to questions about conflicts and needs. With a more complete understanding, we could make the manual more useful by addressing the diverse range of conservation practitioner needs within it. Based on this logic and their knowledge of CI operations around the world, the PDP team purposefully selected staff working in different geographical locations and on various types of conservation projects. Purposeful selection is an acceptable sampling method for qualitative research when the motivation is to best address the research question (Creswell, 2009).

I interviewed those staff who the PDP team chose and who were available and willing to participate in the needs assessment. The PDP team and I collaboratively developed an interview protocol for the semi-structured, in-depth interviews, and I subsequently spoke with 12 people.

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6 See Appendix B for the interview protocol.
via Skype, including CI staff with experience in Africa, the Pacific, Southeast Asia, and South America. Those interviewed had diverse backgrounds in economics, biology, ecology, business, management, international development, and geography. Their conservation work focused on anything from deforestation to protected area management to promoting sustainable development opportunities for communities.

Following the interviews, I worked with a PDP team member to review and analyze the interview information, identify key themes, and present the results to the larger PDP team. The findings were then used to inform changes and additions to the Environmental Peacebuilding Training Manual so that it would be more useful for the largest variety of conservation practitioners and projects. Feedback like the kind acquired from a needs assessment and reflection on it is an essential part of action research (Elden & Chisholm, 1993), and the use of the findings to improve the manual also reflects the action research orientation toward problem solving (Bargal, 2008; Elden & Chisholm, 1993). A full discussion of the findings and how they were used can be found in Chapters 4 and 5.

Phase II: Manual Design

Although I have classified the manual design as a separate research phase, this process took place alongside the other three phases and was already ongoing prior to the beginning of my collaboration with the PDP team. Throughout this research project, the team and I used the results of information collected and analyzed in those other phases to discuss the best next steps.

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7 In addition to the interviews I conducted, a PDP team member conducted eight interviews with CI staff at the organization’s headquarters in Arlington, Virginia. The PDP team also sent a survey to all CI staff, and I provided guidance on how to structure the survey. The interviews conducted by the PDP team member and the survey results are not part of this research project as I had no oversight of those processes; they were, however, included in the evaluation products I provided to the PDP team.
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for refining and revising the manual and its implementation. I took the lead on developing the manual module focused on the conflict analysis and the project cycle, which involved translating the findings from the other research phases into content that would respond to those findings (see Ajroud et al., 2017, Module 4). This process is part of the iterative, action orientation of the research methodology whereby findings are used to inform change (Herr & Anderson, 2005). Refining the manual was also essential for addressing the research question, because without the manual, there would be no way to begin to concretely understand how conflict sensitivity frameworks can be adapted to conservation. Since the manual is the adaptation, it must be completed, implemented, and then evaluated in order to understand its impact.

The primary data collection method during this phase was participant observation, whereby I took unstructured notes on my observations (Creswell, 2009). During phone, Skype, and email conversations with the PDP team, I recorded the content of and my reflections on those conversations as well as the overall process of refining the manual. This process of engaging in dialogue with collaborators, making decisions together, and reflecting on those interactions and one’s understanding of the collaboration process is a core characteristic of the action research cycle, which rejects the idea of the researcher as a neutral observer and encourages deliberate and systematic reflection as a way of generating understanding (Bargal, 2008; Herr & Anderson, 2005).

Phase III: Formative Evaluation

Based on the stage model of evaluation (Patton, 1997), the next step in the research process was to conduct a formative evaluation of the draft manual and its implementation during a pilot workshop. Formative evaluation is “intended to improve performance, [and is] most often
conducted during the implementation phase of projects” (OECD, 2010, p. 23). It aims to understand issues and refine projects to make them more effective, efficient, and useful and is beneficial for situations in which the project is new or the approach is novel (Hall & Hall, 2004; Patton, 1997; Tessmer, 1993). This phase responded to the second research sub-question, “What form might a relevant, accessible, and effective conservation-focused conflict sensitivity framework take?” It helped my PDP team collaborators and I understand if the manual, which we revised in response to the needs identified during Phase I, and the workshop based on it were relevant, accessible, and effective for conservation practitioners. We sought to answer questions related to whether the manual and workshop in their current forms sufficiently addressed the needs of conservation practitioners and, if not, what changes should be made so that the manual and any associated workshops would effectively address the needs of the widest variety of practitioners.

Formative evaluation is focused on improvement and thus fits well within the action research approach, which is concerned with action for problem solving as well as the development of participants’ capacities (Boog, 2003). By evaluating the draft manual and pilot implementation workshop, the PDP team and I were simultaneously able to develop the capacities of workshop participants in conflict sensitivity and collect information that we used to “troubleshoot” and refine the manual prior to its finalization and launch (see Chen, 2005). And because my collaborators and I went through this process together—defining evaluation questions; collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the data; and making determinations on how to use the results—the PDP team had opportunities to develop its evaluation capacities.

The steps of formative evaluation vary (Patton, 1997; Tessmer, 1993). Tessmer (1993) lays out a comprehensive process for the formative evaluation of educational products, which I
found useful for guiding this research phase, as the manual and pilot workshop are similar to an educational curriculum for conflict sensitivity. In particular, I incorporated two parts of Tessmer’s process: an expert review and a pilot implementation. Expert reviews assess the accuracy, technical quality, usability, and appeal of the material portions of the project, i.e. the Environmental Peacebuilding Training Manual (Tessmer, 1993). To get the most relevant and useful feedback possible, it is important to seek out experts “who have special knowledge, skill, or experience with regard to the content, features or audience of the [material]” (p. 48). With my CI collaborators, we selected four people to participate as expert reviewers. Due to the short time period in which we needed to conduct the expert reviews (the PDP team faced an institutional deadline for the publication of the manual), experts were purposefully selected based on their skills, expertise, and personal connections. They represented the fields of environmental conservation, conflict sensitivity, evaluation, and training methodology, which were the areas of knowledge most important to us because they covered the key components of the manual.

Each expert reviewer received an electronic copy of the manual to review, after which they participated in semi-structured, in-depth interviews that focused on both the content and structure of the manual. The interview protocol was designed with my PDP collaborators’ feedback. Most reviewers also returned a copy of the manual in Word format with comments and track changes as another form of feedback, which the PDP team and I reviewed. I compiled

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8 Two other people participated in the expert reviews but did not consent for their feedback to be used in this dissertation. Their feedback was used in the final evaluation provided to the PDP team but is not in the discussion here.
9 See Appendix B for the expert reviewer interview protocol.
themes from both the interviews and the hard copies for analysis and discussion. These findings are discussed in further detail in the Chapters 5 and 6.

For the pilot implementation, the PDP team used the manual to outline a workshop in order to understand how the manual would work in practice and whether its implementation was effective, accessible, and relevant for conservation practitioners needs vis-à-vis conflict. Conducting a pilot implementation in the form of a training workshop in the Philippines most closely matched with Tessmer’s (1993) field testing, or a “situated evaluation” process in which “instruction is evaluated in the same environments in which it will be used when it is finished” (p. 137). As Chen (2005) notes, “the key to designing pilot tests is to mimic exactly the program activities and processes planned for the full-scale implementation” (p. 121). The setting for the workshop was chosen by the PDP team based on country programs’ interest in the manual and available resources, so the selection process was likely similar to how future workshop locations might be selected. Over two and a half days in Palawan, Philippines, members of the PDP team, CI Philippines staff, selected partners, and myself covered topics in the manual including environmental peacebuilding concepts, conflict analysis tools, collaborative consensus building, facilitation, conflict-sensitive programming, and monitoring and evaluation for conflict sensitivity.

Keeping with the action research paradigm, the PDP team and I worked together prior to the pilot implementation workshop to develop an interview protocol for a select group of workshop participants who would complete pre- and post-workshop interviews.10 CI Philippines staff and the PDP team then identified four workshop participants that could participate in those interviews to provide a contextualized look at participants, their experiences, any conflict-related

10 See Appendix B for the interview protocols.
challenges they faced as part of their work, their familiarity with conflict sensitivity frameworks, what they hoped to and did get out of the workshop, and how their perceptions and knowledge had changed as a result of the workshop. These people were purposefully selected based on their availability as well as their long-term and varied experiences with CI. None of those selected were interviewed during the needs assessment, so their perspectives provided new information on the conflicts and needs that conservation practitioners face as well as detail that would help the PDP team and I better understand the specific context of the manual’s implementation.

In addition to the interviews, all workshop participants were given pre- and post-tests to assess changes in their knowledge of and self-perceived capacities related to key concepts presented during the workshop. The PDP team and I developed the tests together to address the research questions as well as additional information required by CI (such as participants’ feedback on the workshop location and logistics). I also conducted participant observation throughout the workshop, taking notes on peoples’ reactions, feedback, and questions. These observations provided me with first-hand experience of the workshop process and atmosphere, and I was able to record participants behaviors, statements, and reactions in real-time (see Creswell, 2009). I kept my observations in the form of field notes, careful to distinguished between what happened and my own thoughts, questions, and reflections using different colored pens, styles of writing, and thought bubbles (see Gibbs, 2007). I also had debriefing sessions with my PDP team collaborators when possible, noting their observations and reactions as well.

Using the data collected from the interviews, pre- and post-tests, and my debriefing sessions with the team, I developed an interim evaluation document that constituted the last round of feedback for the Environmental Peacebuilding Training Manual prior to its
The evaluation document provided information and analysis to the PDP team on how a conflict sensitivity framework could be used for environmental conservation and included recommendations for improving the manual based on the feedback from the expert reviewers as well as those who participated in the workshop. The PDP team and I then discussed the document and what final changes would need to be made to the manual. I was responsible for making some of those changes myself, particularly those related to monitoring and evaluation. After the many rounds of iterative feedback based on a cycle of design, implementation, review, the manual was then made available to all CI staff at the end of June 2017.12

**Phase IV: Outcome Evaluation**

The final phase of the research process took the shape of an outcome evaluation with the goal of understanding how, if at all, participants’ knowledge, attitudes, capacities, and/or behaviors had changed as a result of the pilot workshop. Understanding these short-term outcomes was the beginning of an exploration of the research sub-question, “What effect might a conservation-focused conflict sensitivity framework have on the knowledge, attitudes, capacities, and actions of conservation practitioners?”

Outcome evaluation assesses progress toward a project’s outcomes,13 and it considers participants’ reactions to and thoughts about a training after their participation has ended (Wang & Wilcox, 2006). It answers questions about how a project works and can support decision-making about the future of a project and any improvements that need to be made (Patton, 2011; 13 See [https://www.cdc.gov/std/Program/pupestd/Types%20of%20Evaluation.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/std/Program/pupestd/Types%20of%20Evaluation.pdf).
Participants in this phase consisted entirely of those who had taken part in the pilot implementation of the workshop since the purpose was to better understand their response to and thoughts about the workshop. Four months after the workshop, I sent a follow-up, outcome survey to participants asking what they thought of the workshop and if they had or planned to make any changes based off of what they had learned. The Google Forms survey functioned as a self-assessment of participants’ perceived conflict sensitivity capacities as well as of their intentions to use what they had learned (see Bandura, 2005). It is important to note that because participants self-reported their intentions and actions, I had no way to objectively determine if their conflict sensitivity capacities really had increased or if they truly had taken any action based on what they learned during the workshop.

Out of 29 workshop participants (non-PDP team staff), 12 completed the survey. I drafted the survey questions based on Bandura’s (2005) guidance. Bandura encourages differentiating among questions that seek self-assessments of capacity versus intention, and I asked questions that sought to get at both. He also suggests including response scales with more steps: “People usually avoid the extreme positions so a scale with only a few steps may, in actual use, shrink to one or two points” (p. 312). For this reason, I included seven steps in the post-workshop survey Likert scale in order to avoid responses that clustered at the extremes. To avoid response bias, Bandura suggests accepting anonymous answers and explaining “to the respondents the importance of their contribution to the research. Inform them that the knowledge it provides will increase understanding and guide the development of programs” (p. 314). The survey collected anonymous responses, and descriptions of the anonymous collection of information as well as

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14 See Appendix D for the outcome survey instrument.
the value of participants taking the time to respond to the survey were included in the email to workshop participants with the survey link. The survey results are discussed in Chapter 6.

Incorporating the information and analysis from all four research phases, I presented the findings of the multi-phased evaluation to my PDP team collaborators during a presentation as well as in the form of a final evaluation. I then conducted final, debrief interviews with my collaborators to better understand their perceptions of the collaboration process as well as the project as a whole, what they thought about the draft final evaluation report (including what they agreed or disagreed with and what they would change), and what next steps they envisioned for the Environmental Peacebuilding Training Manual and the incorporation of conflict sensitivity into their work more generally. This feedback speaks to the long-term sustainability of adapting conflict sensitivity frameworks for conservation. The process of presenting results and receiving feedback (and, potentially, dissenting opinions) on those results is in line with the reflective nature of action research (Bargal, 2008; Herr & Anderson, 2005). It also constitutes a form of content validity (Fitzner, 2007) or member checking (Creswell, 2009), which is used for assessing the accuracy of findings. I was also able to get feedback on my role as a researcher during these final, debriefing conversations; feedback on how I performed in my role is an essential part of action research reflection (Herr & Anderson, 2005). It was also important to me personally as a mechanism for professional growth.

The Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher in action research projects is an important part of the research process. In their book on action research dissertations, Herr and Anderson (2005) refer to a continuum of positionality, from insider to outsider, with a number of steps in between. My role
best fits within their definition of “outsider(s) in collaboration with insider(s),” which they describe as a position in which the research process is driven largely by the researcher (outsider), with more limited participation by insiders than some of the other forms of action research. Although the PDP team had already started developing the Environmental Peacebuilding Training Manual prior to my involvement, and as a result did not need to be convinced of the value of the research, there was a degree of direction and structure that I added to the work, and the idea to pursue the work as a research project and with a formal evaluation was mine. In addition, there were often times when I took the lead in developing research questions and data collection protocols because the PDP team did not have the time to do so and relied upon me as the evaluation expert. The process of and challenges to our collaboration are discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

There are important ethical questions with regard to my role, particularly because CI compensated me as a consultant for some portions of the research. This gives rise to questions about the degree of freedom I had in my research (Cheek, 2005). In my case, the compensation I received from CI did not come with requests or stipulations that I considered to be obstacles to the research process. In fact, the objectives of the PDP team were so well aligned with my own that I was given a great deal of freedom in my pursuit of information to respond to the research questions. Additionally, my collaborators consistently demonstrated an attitude of openness toward the research process and the feedback I provided, both positive and more critical. Although I did not perceive any significant impacts of my role as a paid consultant on the research process, I have attempted to be reflective of my position throughout this document and provide additional detail as to how decisions were made and information was analyzed where relevant as a way to counter ethical concerns.
Processing the Data

While traditional social science research often ends after information collection, analysis, and interpretation are complete, evaluation continues by using the interpreted information to inform action through recommendations based on the analysis and, in some cases, the implementation of those recommendations. This research project uses participatory and utilization-focused evaluation to answer the research questions, and information processing loosely follows Patton’s (1997) four stages: description and analysis, interpretation, judgement, and recommendations.

During the analysis stage, I used thematic coding to review the interview recordings and notes, the pre- and post-tests, the outcome survey, my written observations, and the hard copy feedback I received from the expert reviewers. Coding is the process by which the researcher labels and categorizes data according to themes (Gibbs, 2007). It involves going through the research materials, line-by-line, developing codes based on the literature, research questions, and themes inductively identified from the materials, and applying those codes to the materials. During each phase of the research, I began by looking for themes similar to and different from the literature on conflict sensitivity. I also engaged in the “constant comparative method,” a means of repeatedly going through the data and comparing it to other sections of data to develop themes (Thomas, 2016). Thus, my codes were both concept-driven and information-driven (Gibbs, 2007).

Next, I created tables to compare the information collected during each phase and apply my codes. For example, during the needs assessment phase, I worked with a member of the PDP team to generate a table with each interview participant as a row and columns labeled according
to the interview question or topic. Gibbs (2007) refers to tables like these as “attributes tables,” in which each row is a “case” (a participant in that research phase) and each column is a particular theme or topic. These tables allowed for cross-“case” comparisons and for my collaborators and me to explore each response, develop and apply codes based on them, compare the similarities and differences between them, and discuss the potential explanations and implications of them. This facilitated feedback from my collaborators, which was an essential part of the action research process (Bargal, 2008). A similar process occurred during the formative evaluation phase.

Interview information was first captured in these attribute tables rather than fully transcribed due to time limitations and the need to provide the PDP team with quick feedback. Additionally, initially coding by hand made my work with the PDP team easier; we shared a password-protected Google Drive folder with the documents so that we could review and code them simultaneously. Keeping with the action research approach, this allowed us to develop new ideas together, which then fed into the manual design and evaluation process (see Gibbs, 2007; Patton, 1997; Patton, 2011). Later, I transcribed and coded key portions of interviews using MaxQDA software to facilitate more systematic coding and in-depth analysis. I also recorded my reflections on the research process, which I analyzed and coded individually, and which are included in the discussions here.

**Analytical Quality**

The findings from each research phase—described in more detail in Chapters 4, 5 and 6—should be judged according to the standards of the action research approach. These standards
relate to validity, reliability, and credibility and are considered different than more traditional, positivist research (Herr & Anderson, 2005).

Validity

Validity describes whether or not the approach to the research and analysis “captures or measures the concept (or thing) it is intended to measure” (Patton, 1997, p. 251). It “is about establishing the truth value, or trustworthiness, of a claim to knowledge” (Whitehead & McNiff, 2006, p. 97). As opposed to more traditional, positivist criteria, Dickens and Watkins (1999) argue that the validity of action research should be judged based on whether or not it was collaborative, reflexive, ethical, promotes the development of capacities, solves problems and contributes knowledge (see, also, Bradbury & Reason, 2003). The validity of action research is also heavily influenced by the relationships the researcher has with participants and other stakeholders (Herr & Anderson, 2005). Herr and Anderson (2005) outline five forms of validity that are appropriate for and relevant to action research:

1. Dialogic and process validity
2. Outcome validity
3. Catalytic validity
4. Democratic validity
5. Process validity

I argue that these are more appropriate measures of the quality of this research project, particularly compared to other assessment criteria like reliability—whether the same results can be achieved across different research projects (Gibbs, 2007)—that are not as relevant for a contextually grounded and participatory research project.
Dialogic validity is the value of the research as assessed by peer reviews (Herr & Anderson, 2005). Within this particular research process, dialogic validity took the shape of the regular dialogue that occurred between my collaborations and myself about the research process, the evidence collected, and next steps based on that evidence. Dialogic validity contributed to a rather uncomplicated collaboration as well as a means for addressing my own biases through triangulation, or “the inclusion of multiple perspectives” (p. 56). Expert reviews of the manual and my discussions with experts about the research project more generally also provided another layer of peer review, which further increased dialogic validity.

Outcome validity refers to whether the research process results in action that resolves the focal problem or issue (Herr & Anderson, 2005). In the case of this research project, the research questions are aimed at addressing the issue of how a conflict sensitivity framework can support conservation practitioners in better responding to conflicts in conservation contexts. While this research contributes to addressing the issue, and indeed addresses the more circumscribed issue of providing the PDP team with the information it needs to better respond to the issue, its outcome validity is capped because the research process stops short of fully evaluating if the conflict sensitivity framework designed and implemented actually effectively addresses the problem of how conservation practitioners can best manage conflicts sustainably over the long-term. To do this, an impact evaluation studying the long-term effects of the manual’s implementation and its sustainability is needed and is a suggestion for future research (see Chapter 7).

Catalytic validity is whether or not the research process results in a deeper understanding of the situation by both the researcher and the practitioners (Herr & Anderson, 2005). After more than two years of working together, I believe that both my PDP team
collaborators and I have a deeper understanding of conflict sensitivity, of conflict sensitivity frameworks, and of relevant evaluation processes. Additionally, based on the results of the outcome evaluation, it appears that participants in the workshop also have a deeper understanding of conflict sensitivity and its importance.

Democratic validity is “the extent to which research is done in collaboration with all parties who have a stake in the problem under investigation” (Herr & Anderson, 2005, p. 56). The degree of democratic validity for this research project depends on the level at which it is assessed; there is both the higher-level issue of dealing with all the conflicts in the larger environmental conservation context as well as the more localized issue of how CI staff can deal with conflict. In both cases, it is impossible to include all of the actors who have a stake in the issue; depending on the level of focus, this could mean hundreds if not thousands of people, which would be an unwieldy amount of research participants. Within the constraints of the research, however, my collaborators and I sought to increase democratic validity as much as possible by involving people with a wide variety of backgrounds and experiences in the research process and by engaging participants multiple times during that process (such as the pre- and post-workshop tests and the final, outcome survey).

Finally, process validity concerns the “ongoing learning” that results from the research project (Herr & Anderson, 2005, p. 55). As a collaborative, action-oriented research process, there was a focus on learning throughout, with my collaborators learning about conflict sensitivity and evaluation, with participants in the workshop learning more about conflict sensitivity, and in terms of my own knowledge development through the adaptation and evaluation of conflict sensitivity frameworks. The results of the pre- and post-tests and the final
survey as well as my debriefing conversations with my PDP team collaborators evidenced this learning, which is discussed throughout the dissertation.

**External validity** or generalizability was not the primary concern of this research. Action research is often weaker in this area as compared to more traditional forms of research due to its “relational perspective” (Bradbury & Reason, 2003, p. 172). The research process is tailored to the context and, as a result, the findings may be less generalizable to other situations. However, it is important to note that the lessons learned during this research project are likely to be applicable to other cases in which conservation practitioners adapt or develop conflict sensitivity frameworks so long as those practitioners reflect upon and adapt the lessons to their own contexts. Herr and Anderson (2005) note that this is the most appropriate way to conceive of external validity for action research, i.e. the public dissemination of the description and outcomes of a collaboration that can then be used, with appropriate adaptations, in other contexts.

**Reliability & Credibility**

**Reliability** in qualitative research often refers to the trustworthiness and consistency of the findings within and across different research projects and researchers (Creswell, 2009; Gibbs, 2007). Procedures to ensure reliability include checking transcripts and confirming codes are used consistently, both of which I did when transcribing and analyzing the information collected. The definition of the codes I used changed over time, and using the MaxQDA software, I re-reviewed my coding prior to finalizing the findings in order to ensure consistency. Other means of establishing reliability, such as through the use of multiple coders and cross-checking, were bolstered by my collaboration with the PDP team and its contributions to and reviews of the analysis.
Credibility, although not necessarily a traditional measure of research quality, is also a strength of action research and participatory, utilization-focused evaluation projects (Patton, 1997). It can be defined as the “perceived accuracy, fairness, and believability” of the research or evaluation (p. 250). Similar to reliability, the researcher can increase credibility through a high degree of involvement of those closest to the context or issue. Additionally, Patton encourages evaluators to ensure the clarity, impartiality, and transparency of the evaluation product to increase the credibility of the research. The researcher should describe the research or evaluation process in detail and justify his or her conclusions with clear evidence. For this research project, I have increased its credibility by providing a complete description of the research process here and, in other chapters, supplying detailed evidence to support my claims. I also provided the PDP team with evaluative documents throughout the research project, which allowed my collaborators to assess and provide feedback on the project’s credibility and how it might be improved.

Ethical Considerations

Gibbs (2007) notes two ethical “principles” that should guide qualitative research, namely “that you should avoid harming your participants and that your research should produce some positive and identifiable benefit” (p. 101). From the standpoint of more traditional qualitative research, the potential to do harm during the research project was limited. I did not ask participants any particularly sensitive questions, they received and signed informed consent forms, and they had the ability to end their participation at any time. However, the ethics of action research pose some unique questions, particularly with regard to the issue of doing harm to participants.
To address the potential to do harm in action research, Williamson and Prosser (2002) outline three ethical questions for action research. The first is related to the protection of participants and concerns the preservation of confidentiality and anonymity. They contend that the collaborative relationship between researcher and participants in action research results in “a greater element of ‘exposure’” for participants than in other research approaches (p. 588). It is far easier in action research to identify participants, and Malone (2003) goes so far as to call the concepts of anonymity and confidentiality in informed consent “disingenuous” because of the localized setting of action research that makes participants more knowable (p. 809).

During and after the research process, I endeavored to protect participants’ identities in a number of ways: I kept interview notes according to a randomly assigned number rather than a name (with the key in a password protected electronic folder available only to me); comments and edits to documents provided by expert reviewers were kept in a file available only to my collaborators and me; and survey instruments did not collect any identifying information. However, the names of the workshop participants were included in an internal CI activity report, an example of the inescapable degree of exposure in action research to which Williamson and Prosser (2002) refer. And although members of the PDP team were happy to be identified with the research, it would have been very difficult if not impossible to maintain any degree of anonymity or confidentiality for them if their preferences had been different.

Another issue related to confidentiality during this research process was the necessity of sharing data with my collaborators in order to support the participatory nature of this action research project. At the beginning of the research process, PDP team members signed confidentiality agreements through which they agreed not to share identifying information about participants outside of our group. When one team member left CI and was replaced, the new
team member also signed the confidentiality agreement. While I am confident of my collaborators’ integrity and have had no indication that there were issues in maintaining participants’ confidentiality, sharing information with others (particularly those that do not have experience conducting research and with the requirements of Institutional Review Boards or IRB) is risky.

The second ethical question Williamson and Prosser (2002) pose in relation to action research concerns the meaning that informed consent can have within the fluid and evolving process of action research: “neither researcher or participants know where the journey will take them in advance, and cannot fully know to what they are consenting” (p. 589). Malone (2003) takes this one step further, depicting in the introduction to her article just how inefficient and incomplete the process of informed consent is as it stands today. In the form of a fictional, “fully informed consent letter,” she describes in detail the actual risks of participating in research, including phrases like, “You will be very aware of my presence and my tape recorder – so much so that you will probably not say things you ordinarily say” and “You are also likely to be seduced by my role of participant-observer into thinking of me as a friend or therapist, and you will end up telling me things you never imagined you would tell anyone” (p. 797).

Yet informed consent continues to be seen as a basic ethical component of social science research founded on voluntary agreement and complete information (Christians, 2005). Participants in this research received informed consent documents, approved by Kennesaw State University’s IRB. I encouraged them to read and review the documents and to ask questions if they had any. The form clearly states that they did not have to participate and could end their participation at any time.15 There was a place on the form where they could confirm if it was ok

15 See Appendix E for an example informed consent document.
to record the interview. Participants were also given the opportunity to have their name and/or organization affiliated with their responses, which I saw as a way of addressing the traditional lack of negotiation about degrees of protection between research and participant, and thus as a means of providing them with a degree of agency (van den Berg, 2001). Many participants opted for one or another option or both.

Was this approach to informed consent sufficient? For the majority of participants, I believe it was. However, for my collaborators, the idea of informed consent necessarily changed over time as the research phases were negotiated and took place in a changing context. As a complicating factor, my collaboration began with a member of the PDP team who subsequently left. I tried to address the fluidity of the research process through ongoing conversations with the PDP team about what I was looking for from the research, what I was going to do with it, why I needed informed consent documents, etc. After each evaluation document that I provided to CI, I also had a conversation with the PDP team about how they felt about the findings included in the document, what they agreed with, what they did not agree with, and what they would change—a form of “member checking” in support of dialogic validity and to provide my collaborators with an additional degree of agency (Herr & Anderson, 2005). Additionally, I had final debrief conversations with each collaborator individually, during which I asked them for their feedback on how our collaboration went and how they wanted their team and the process represented in this document. As an outsider, it was important to be clear that my collaborators had the opportunity to review, accept, or contest anything in my results or reports (Williamson & Prosser, 2002). All of this was also my attempt to ensure that everyone was on the same page about the research and that I truly had their consent.
Williamson and Prosser’s (2002) third question is about how to avoid doing harm in as political a process as action research. This particular concern was not obvious to me at the outset of the research process, as I perceived the research topic to be fairly innocuous. However, there were moments of tension during my partnership with the PDP team that surprised me, and it became clear to me in my final conversations with my collaborators that the research topic was indeed political because it questioned and had implications for organizational policies, practices, and resources. As one member of the PDP team explained to me, our collaboration was a times frustrating because I asked questions about policies and practices that did not have easy answers, either because explaining them to an outsider was difficult or because the answers were not entirely clear to her (J. Edmond, Skype interview, March 6, 2018).

There is another side to the political concerns of conducting action research in an organizational setting, and that is the politics of participation and the implications of relationships of power between participants and between participants and the researcher. In her discussion of the potential ethical dilemmas of informed consent procedures, Malone (2003) digs into the possibility of implicit coercion in a collaborative research project when the researcher and someone in a position of authority (in her case, a professor overseeing graduate students) make a mutual decision to conduct a research project that involves others. Malone observes that in her situation, the professors’ students who were also asked participated in the study “could not have felt free to withhold their consent” (p. 803). She even goes so far as to say they were indeed coerced in some way.

I had similar concerns during my research project with regard to both my PDP team collaborators and those who participated in the Philippines workshop. The leader of the PDP team consented to the research project as a whole, and the CI Philippines Country Director
consented to the workshop. Could others working on these teams feel as though they could 
decline to participate without repercussions? It was, effectively, their job to participate. Although I 
ever had the impression that anyone truly did not want to participate in the process, I did feel 
at times (particularly during the workshop) that people were inconvenienced or perhaps even 
annoyed by participating as it took additional time and effort. They may have felt compelled to 
participate as a requirement of their job, and this could have impacted both their behavior and 
their responses to the interviews, pre- and post-tests, or the outcome survey. For example, 
participants may have felt compelled to respond more positively to the workshop because it was 
mandated by their managers. If the case, this would have been a manifestation of social 
desirability bias, or the tendency for people to present themselves or their feelings in a more 
favorable or socially acceptable manner (King & Bruner, 2000).

Based on this experience, I encourage other action researchers to put sufficient effort into 
understanding the political nature of their engagement (Williamson & Prosser, 2002), creating 
relationships based on trust and communication, and providing many opportunities for discussion 
during the research process, especially one lasting more than a year as this one did. Researchers 
should also ensure that participants in an action research project fully understood their role and 
options for participation, including the option *not* to participate, and that leaders or managers 
eccho this sentiment to their teams. Signing an informed consent document is not necessarily 
adequate; as Malone (2003) states, “we must actively resist the tendency to be lulled into 
complacency by our compliance with existing IRB regulations regarding informed consent” (p. 
813). While the action research process may be “morally preferable” to other types of research 
(Fluehr-Lobban, 2008, p. 175), it is still fraught with ethical challenges that must be carefully 
examined. Additional recommendations for action researchers can be found in Chapter 7.
CHAPTER 4: UNDERSTANDING ISSUES & NEEDS

What is the purpose of conflict sensitivity? As described in the literature, the need for conflict sensitivity arises from the potential of interventions to have a negative impact on conflict and, assumedly and oppositely, to also have a positive impact. Bush (1998) states in his foundational piece on peace and conflict impact assessment (PCIA), one of the predominant conflict sensitivity frameworks, that conflict sensitivity is necessary because “any development project set in a conflict-prone region will inevitably have an impact on the peace and conflict environment – positive or negative, direct or indirect, intentional or unintentional” (p. 8). De la Haye and Denayer (2003) add, “Many practitioners think they do not have an impact on the conflict dynamics because it is not within their objectives. This is an incorrect assumption. They always have an impact simply because of their presence” (p. 60). Conflict sensitivity frameworks provide a means by which people and organizations can better understand this relationship between the intervention and the conflict context (Bush, 2003; Leonhardt, 2002). With that understanding, those undertaking interventions in settings characterized by conflict can actively pursue approaches that reduce their negative impacts on the conflict context and increase their positive impacts (De la Haye & Denayer, 2003). The overarching purpose of conflict sensitivity is therefore to assess and to guide practitioners toward more positive interactions with the conflict context.

From their inception, conflict sensitivity frameworks have been the purview of humanitarian aid, development, and peacebuilding organizations (Bush, 1998; De la Haye & Denayer, 2003; Leonhardt, 2002). Yet, some have stated that it is the situation in which an intervention takes place rather than the type of intervention that matters (Bush, 1998). Early
descriptions of conflict sensitivity also ascribe its use solely to contexts characterized by violent conflict (Bush, 2003; Lange, 2004). If the use of conflict sensitivity is dependent on the context rather than type of intervention, if we acknowledge that conflict does not necessarily entail violence (Brown et al., 2009), and if the idea is that any intervention has an impact on the conflict context simply as a result of its presence in that context, it seems reasonable to assert that conflict sensitivity is likely to be relevant for environmental conservation interventions as well as interventions of the types already mentioned.

Environmental conservation activities often take place in areas characterized by conflict, violent or otherwise. In the case of violent conflict, Hanson and his colleagues (2009) found that between 1950 and 2000, 80% of armed conflicts occurred within biodiversity hotspots. Look at the list of ongoing projects of major conservation organizations like the Wildlife Conservation Society, the World Wildlife Fund for Nature, and Conservation International, and you will see that these organizations work in countries characterized by persistent socioeconomic and political problems: the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Tanzania and Kenya’s grasslands, contested islands of the Philippines, indigenous reserves in Bolivia and Brazil, and more.

In addition to the conflict contexts within which conservation takes place, conservation itself is inherently conflictual because it involves making decisions about the management of resources on which different groups rely. Conflicts can arise due to a lack of understanding of

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the values or beliefs that drive conservation interventions (Webb & Raffaelli, 2008) or perceived inconsistencies between conservation and development goals (Andrew-Essien & Bisong, 2009). Like development and peacebuilding work, conservation can also create winners and losers. And while it is clear that conservation is related to conflict in a number of ways, it is not clear just how conflict sensitivity frameworks may benefit conservation. To explore the potential benefits of conflict sensitivity frameworks, we must first know what specific conflicts conservation practitioners face and what their needs are vis-à-vis those conflicts.

This chapter responds to the first research sub-question: What conflicts, issues, and needs should a conservation-focused conflict sensitivity framework address? It focuses on the needs assessment phase of the research and begins with a discussion of the findings related to the conflicts (issues or problems) that conservation practitioners face, followed by how those conservation practitioners have dealt with conflicts before and the challenges they have faced in doing so. Next, I discuss conservation practitioners’ needs for better addressing conflicts as determined from the explicitly expressed and perceived needs of the conservation practitioners who participated in Phase I. The chapter ends with a summary of the main findings, which were presented to Conservation International’s (CI) Peace and Development Partnerships (PDP) team in June 2016.
What Conflicts Do Conservation Practitioners Face?

Much of the existing literature on conflict sensitivity focuses on the need to better understand the conflict context, respond appropriately to that context, and evaluate that response. Because each context is different, flexibility is seen as an important feature of conflict sensitivity frameworks, and most frameworks remain general and inconclusive when it comes to specific conflict issues. For example, in response to the question “Where should you ‘do’ PCIA?”, Bush (2008) says that PCIA “should certainly be embedded in initiatives located in areas of militarized violence. However, they should also apply to initiatives in… places where there is a risk that non-violent conflict may turn (or return) to violence” (p. 6). Paffenholz (2005b) describes the “Aid for Peace Approach” as relevant “in situations of latent conflict, manifest violent conflict, or in the aftermath of violent conflict and war” (p. 2). World Vision’s Integrating Peacebuilding
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and Conflict-Sensitivity (IPACS) approach only notes that it “enables better understanding of a specific area where a programme or project will take place.”

While contributing to their flexibility and adaptability to a wide range of contexts, these approaches to conflict sensitivity are ambiguous about the specifics of the conflict contexts for which they are useful. Because the idea behind the Environmental Peacebuilding Training Manual was that it should be tailored for the needs of CI staff, it was important to start by exploring what conflicts CI staff face so that those specific conflicts could be addressed in the manual. This is how my collaboration with the PDP team began in early 2016 when we developed an interview protocol for semi-structured, in-depth interviews to use with CI staff participating in the needs assessment. The protocol also included questions aimed at understanding the interviewees’ backgrounds and work environments and their experiences with conflicts.

When designing the interview protocol, the PDP team and I made the decision to start by asking about “issues” or “problems” rather than “conflicts” because we were concerned about how participants might react if we focused the conversation on conflicts. We felt that interviewees might understand conflict only as violent conflict rather than “a result of two or more parties… having, or perceiving to have, incompatible goals and interests and acting upon these differences” (Ajroud et al., 2007, p. 14). A limited understanding of conflict as violence might impede a discussion of the full range of conflicts that the manual seeks to address. We also anticipated that some participants might hesitate to discuss conflict so explicitly, seeing its

21 See Appendix B for the interview protocol.
management as outside the scope of their work or its discussion as a poor reflection of them and their interventions.

Based on our discussions about the need to include the widest variety of perspectives and experiences as possible during the needs assessment (see Chapter 3), the PDP team purposefully selected CI staff from around the world who represented a range of educational and professional experiences. After several planning calls with the team to refine the interview protocol and discuss how the process would move forward, I conducted interviews with 12 CI staff.\(^{22}\) This included five women and seven men working in nine different countries on five different continents. Their educational backgrounds included the natural and social sciences, and their work focused on anything from sustainable development, deforestation, combatting the illegal wildlife trade, marine conservation, climate change risk reduction, and payments for ecosystem services (PES).

From the information gathered during the interviews, I identified five main categories of conflict-related issues faced by the interviewees, which are outlined in Table 2 below. These categories were developed based on the responses given when I asked participants what types of issues or problems they faced as part of their work. In the case that participants did not feel they had faced any issues, I then asked about their relationships with specific categories of stakeholders, such as community members or government representatives, as a way to encourage discussion. While 12 conservation practitioners obviously do not constitute a representative sample of the entire population of CI staff (much less the worldwide population of conservation

\(^{22}\) As mentioned in Chapter 3, a member of the PDP team also conducted eight additional interviews with CI staff at the organization’s headquarters in Virginia. Because I was not involved with those interviews, the information gathered from them is not included in this dissertation.
practitioners), their experiences provided a useful starting point for understanding the specific conflicts they faced and that the manual should address.

Table 2: Issues Faced by Conservation Practitioners Interviewed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conflict-Related Issue</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th># &amp; % of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trust &amp; Transparency</td>
<td>Difficulty in developing trust with stakeholders or mistrust between stakeholders; misunderstandings, miscommunication or misperceptions among stakeholders; questions about benefit sharing.</td>
<td>10 (83%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policies &amp; Practices</td>
<td>Government policies or practices, specifically issues with land tenure; disagreements over political priorities and top-down management.</td>
<td>7 (58%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Needs</td>
<td>Poverty, a lack access to healthcare and food, and a lack of access to essential resources; an overall lack of resources to meet basic needs.</td>
<td>6 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corruption &amp; Illegal Activities</td>
<td>Corruption on the part of politicians, companies, or other elites; illegal activities including illegal logging and wildlife trading.</td>
<td>4 (33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture &amp; Socioeconomic Behavior</td>
<td>Stakeholders’ economic and social habits; cultural practices (including gender roles).</td>
<td>4 (33%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Trust & Transparency

The most commonly mentioned issues revolved around (a lack of) trust and transparency. For example, participants described misunderstandings between conservation practitioners and the members of communities in which they worked. As one participant working in the Philippines noted, there have been conflicts with communities over a lack of transparency regarding CI’s funding (Participant 7, Skype interview, April 20, 2016). After CI made large purchases, communities assumed that the organization had more resources than it did and came to expect certain benefits from CI. When those benefits did not materialize, there was tension between CI project staff and the communities. In another case, a CI staff person with experience working in Madagascar talked about the mistrust she had observed between government and
indigenous communities, which led to a lack of indigenous participation in conservation processes as well as tension between indigenous communities and conservation practitioners (Participant 10, Skype interview, April 25, 2016).

These issues related to trust and transparency are indicative of one way in which conflicts can develop and manifest. Problems between stakeholders do not develop in a vacuum and are often the result of previous conflicts or problematic social structures (Lederach, 1997). The relationship issues described by interviewees, such as the mistrust between the government and indigenous communities in Madagascar, likely developed over time and as a result of previous conflicts that were not sufficiently addressed. Natural resource management has long been an issue in Madagascar, with indigenous communities, farmers, tourism operators, and conservation organizations failing to come to a consensus about how to best pursue conservation goals (Gezon, 1997; Marie et al., 2009; Mulligan, 1999). Without understanding the historical dynamics of the situation and addressing issues that remain and the mistrust that emerged from them, conflicts will likely continue to exist, posing potential problems for the effectiveness and sustainability of conservation interventions.

**Policies & Practices**

The second most commonly mentioned issue by the interview participants was policies and practices that put environmental conservation stakeholders at odds with one another. Systems of land tenure, competing government policy priorities, the rejection of top-down protected areas management schemes, and difficulties in completely and effectively implementing current policies and regulations were all mentioned by Phase I participants. Like the issue of trust and transparency, these challenges are also rooted in complex histories. One
person, for example, described how issues with land tenure in Timor Leste have resulted in conflicts between groups with competing land ownership claims (Participant 6, Skype interview, April 19, 2016). These issues were made all the more complicated by the occupation of the country, first by the Portuguese and then by Indonesia, which resulted in changes in traditional community practices—including land ownership—that in turn impacted the effectiveness of CI’s conservation projects. In order to undertake effective conservation work, CI will need to respond to these policy and practice issues or otherwise continue to be negatively impacted by them.

**Basic Needs**

The policy and practice issues mentioned by the needs assessment participants are linked to the other issues described, including the lack of resources to meet the basic needs of community members or the perpetuation of crime and corruption (see Table 1). For one CI staff person with experience working in Madagascar, the main challenge to conservation is poverty (Participant 4, Skype interview, April 12, 2016). He described the difficulty of convincing people to undertake conservation projects when they are starving. Because CI does not have a mandate to work on rural development in Madagascar, he felt limited in what he can do to respond to basic needs like healthcare and food security. Another interview participant working in Liberia detailed how some people are incredibly poor and heavily dependent on natural resources (Participant 12, Skype interview, May 12, 2016). For them, conservation agendas can have a big impact on their livelihoods. In these cases, both CI’s policies and the policies of government can impact whether certain groups can fulfill their basic needs with resources leftover to participate in and support conservation work.
**Corruption & Illegal Activities**

Corruption and illegal activities, which often occur in an atmosphere of lax or inadequate policies and practices, were sufficiently mentioned by participants in the needs assessment to qualify for a separate category. One participant described issues with illegal logging and mining due to a lack of enforcement of government policies as well as an atmosphere of corruption that allowed the companies to bribe government officials (Participant 4, Skype interview, April 12, 2016). Corrupt forest service personnel, illegal fishing (sometimes a reaction to conservation policies), the illegal wildlife trade, and even corruption fueled by development funding were all mentioned as problems for conservation efforts (Participant 7, Skype interview, April 20, 2016; Participant 11, Skype interview, May 3, 2016; Participant 12, Skype interview, May 12, 2016). If corruption and associated illegal activities continue, they will undermine the long-term impact of CI’s conservation activities.

**Culture & Socioeconomic Behavior**

About a third of those interviewed also discussed ways that various socioeconomic and cultural practices posed obstacles to achieving conservation objectives. These ranged from people’s engagement in certain agricultural practices such as using slash and burn farming techniques (Participant 4, Skype interview, April 12, 2016), to traditional gender roles that did not align with CI approaches to gender that promote equity (Participant 8, Skype interview, April 21, 2016), to even the loss of traditional cultural practices that would have supported conservation agendas (Participant 6, Skype interview, April 19, 2016). One person based in Ecuador described the difficulties she faced in encouraging women’s participation in CI’s conservation projects (Participant 9, Skype interview, April 22, 2016). Initially, CI held project
meetings at a local Catholic church, and nobody showed up. Eventually project staff realized that
the women they invited to participate were Protestant and did not feel comfortable visiting the
Catholic church. Without attending to these cultural and socioeconomic practices, the impact of
CI’s conservation activities might be limited as they encounter resistance from communities and
others who resist activities that seem unfamiliar or foreign.

**Conclusions About Conflicts**

Note that of all the issues described during the interviews, participants rarely mentioned
conflicts involving violence. Most issues resulted in or from disagreements between different
stakeholders but did not manifest in violence. Two exceptions included one account of an
incident of domestic violence that the victim described as linked to a conservation project that
promoted women’s rights and upset the inter-family balance of power (Participant 9, Skype
interview, April 22, 2016). Another case involved violence between women from two competing
fishing villages (Participant 7, Skype interview, April 20, 2016). This limited mention of violent
conflict demonstrates that there are many issues that conservation practitioners face and manage
that can be characterized as conflicts but do not fall within a situation that some conflict
sensitivity researchers would describe as applicable (Bush, 2003; Lange, 2004), i.e. situations
involving violence. However, the conservation practitioners I spoke with clearly have needs in
responding to conflicts, and their experiences point toward the potential benefits of
reconceptualizing in which cases conflict sensitivity might be valuable.

An examination the various conflicts described by the needs assessment participants and
the examples they provided reveals ways in which the issues I identified are linked. For example,
lax enforcement of policies can contribute to a situation ripe for corruption or illegal activities.
Poor policies and practices can worsen poverty and limit access to basic needs like healthcare. A government’s economic policies aimed at promoting development to address those basic needs can contradict that same government’s environmental policies, putting stakeholders at odds with one another. This interconnection points toward the need to consider the entire context in which conservation takes place, and understanding the context-intervention interaction is one of the central principles of conflict sensitivity (see Chapter 2).

Responding to Conflicts

Confronted with the conflict-related issues described above, those conservation practitioners interviewed for the needs assessment have developed a number of ways to address them, mitigating the conflicts’ impacts on the conservation work at hand and often also impacting those conflicts. In relation to the design of the Environmental Peacebuilding Training Manual, it was important for the PDP team and me to know not only what conflicts conservation practitioners face, but also what had already been done to address them, what sometimes works, and what often does not as a way to identify promising practices to consider including in the manual. Conservation practitioners may already have effective ways of dealing with conflict, and to avoid reinventing the wheel, their experiences and existing approaches could be useful in designing a manual that maximizes effectiveness, relevance, and utility. Therefore, after discussing conflicts, the next step in the interview was to ask: “How have you dealt with these issues in the past? What challenges did you encounter as part of your response? In what ways was your response successful?” I summarize below the responses according to the categories of issues discussed above.
Responding to Basic Needs

One approach to addressing the issue of basic needs, mentioned by slightly less than half of the needs assessment participants, was to build in the provision of those needs as part of the conservation project. Participants talked about the utility of conservation solutions that benefitted communities, such as development projects that provided livelihood opportunities to some community members. The CI project in New Caledonia, for example, has supported sandalwood nurseries as a sustainable development opportunity and, simultaneously, as a way to address conflicts that have arisen when people from one community cut the wood belonging to another community (Participant 5, Skype interview, April 19, 2016). Another participant talked about a former CI project in eastern DRC that trained ex-militants to become rangers, thus providing the ex-militants with economic opportunities that also supported the conservation objectives (Participant 1, Skype interview, March 30, 2016). Similarly, CI-supported project staff have hired community members in Madagascar to patrol protected areas, providing them with jobs and income and the conservation project with additional enforcement capacity (Participant 4, Skype interview, April 12, 2016).

These approaches mirror broader changes in conservation thinking over the last fifty years that have resulted in an increase in community involvement in and support for economic development opportunities as part of conservation activities (Brown, 2002; Campbell & Vainio-Mattila, 2003). Community-based conservation, participatory rural appraisal, ecotourism, environmental education, and other more recent approaches all attempt to reconcile what were once seen to be the competing priorities of environmental protection and economic development by bringing nature and people together through sustainable development interventions (Agrawal & Gibson, 1999; Mulder & Coppolillo, 2005; Reed, 2008; see Chapter 2).
Increasing Stakeholder Engagement

The conservation practitioners interviewed have also responded to the issues they face by increasing opportunities for community involvement as a way to better understand various stakeholders’ beliefs and actions (Peterson et al., 2010) and to develop trust between conservation practitioners and communities (Brown et al., 2002) while simultaneously providing material benefits to those communities. The frequency with which these approaches were mentioned during interviews correlates with the prevalence of relationship-related conflicts mentioned by participants as well as issues related to cultural differences and meeting basic needs (see above). These approaches, therefore, are multi-level conflict responses that address several issues simultaneously.

One such approach mentioned by participants for addressing issues associated with stakeholder engagement was increasing community dialogue. When a staff member in the Philippines noticed that miscommunications was negatively impacting CI’s conservation work there, he sought to engage people within the community in discussion about the project as well as related issues (Participant 7, Skype interview, April 20, 2016). During our interview, he described a dialogue process that took place after a conflict emerged between fishing communities and the government over a planned conservation project. Over the course of a month, he undertook a series of consultations that brought the differences in opinions on the project to light and built trust between stakeholders. Another needs assessment participant working in East Timor described the long process of slowly building trust with stakeholders over time so that stakeholders could eventually communicate directly and have open discussions with one another (Participant 6, Skype interview, April 19, 2016). Still another staff member in
Madagascar credited a general lack of issues to regular coordination meetings between CI project staff, stakeholders in the government, and the communities in which CI works (Participant 3, Skype interview, April 7, 2016).

**Project Transparency**

In addition to engagement approaches that encourage exchanges among stakeholders and develop trust, many of the needs assessment participants also described the importance of information and project transparency. A staff member working in Bolivia talked at length about the importance of understanding stakeholders and sharing information about CI’s conservation objectives with them (Participant 8, Skype interview, April 1, 2016). He described the process by which he and his staff clearly articulate the goals of their conservation projects to local communities. Without clarity on these objectives, he said, conflicts stemming from mismatched expectations will inevitably arise. Transparency about CI’s objectives, another participant added, made it easier to justify CI’s work to communities (Participant 11, Skype interview, May 3, 2016). Sharing information and engaging in discussion are ways of not only building trust but establishing legitimacy as well.

Other strategies for ensuring transparency included actively disseminating information online or through workshops and newsletters, using social media where appropriate (Participant 1, Skype interview, March 30, 2016; Participant 8, Skype interview, April 21, 2016), and translating information into multiple languages or presenting it in non-written ways in areas with low literacy rates to increase its accessibility (Participant 10, Skype interview, April 25, 2016). These strategies help to mediate conflicts between conservation practitioners and stakeholders by
providing stakeholders with sufficient information that results in a better understanding of the conservation work and builds trust and rapport between them (see Gruber, 2010; Tyler 1999).

Some needs assessment participants also mentioned presenting communities with scientific data as a way of being transparent about—and defending—project decision making. One CI staff member working in Bolivia, for example, noted that his team relies on information sharing to respond to attacks on CI project (Participant 8, Skype interview, April 21, 2016). Another participant described presenting communities with the data that a decision was based on as a way to manage conflicts with those communities over the choice of conservation sites, as those living in conservation sites often received certain economic developments (Participant 7, Skype interview, April 20, 2016). However, relying on data or science to justify approaches and mediate conflicts may be challenging or even counterproductive in non-Western contexts in which science is not necessarily cultural relatable or acceptable to the communities affected by conservation work. In some cases, scientific data may do little to persuade them and, thus, to ameliorate existing conflicts. This approach might also alienate stakeholders who come to see conservation practitioners as outside “experts” relying on Western reasoning as opposed to more localized or culturally-rooted, common-sense knowledge.

Cultural Knowledge & Relevance

As a counter to the appearance of conservation practitioners as outsiders and another approach to developing trust and legitimacy, many of those interviewed emphasized the importance of understanding the local context and culture, both individually for project staff and as a built-in part of the project and organization. One way of grounding the project in the context was to have local staff work on the project. An interviewee with experience working in Sri
Lanka described how having local people on staff there made the project seem less like an outsider coming to tell people what to do and resulted in a better initial relationship between project staff and the community (Participant 1, Skype interview, March 30, 2016). With local staff implementing the project, she also noticed less resistance to the project among community members. Local staff can also provide valuable insights into what is contextually relevant and appropriate, she said. Understanding the local culture allows those running the project to ground conservation solutions in cultural beliefs (see Mascia et al., 2003). For example, a CI staff member working in New Caledonia described how his project tapped into traditional cultural beliefs about caring for future generations to highlight communities’ responsibilities vis-à-vis the environment (Participant 5, Skype interview, April 19, 2016). Rooting the idea of conservation in something familiar made it more likely that people would accept and even embrace conservation activities. Shaping interventions to the cultural context in which they take place is also one of the main principles of conflict sensitivity (Abitbol, 2014).

**Conservation Practitioner as Arbiter**

In some cases, need assessments participants described how CI had engendered such a sufficient level of legitimacy and trust among stakeholders as to be called upon to manage disputes. One participant involved in ecosystem services work in Guatemala noted that CI has established grievance mechanisms there to mediate conflicts between stakeholders (Participant 2, Skype interview, March 30, 2016). CI Philippines staff have also been asked to intervene in conflicts between fishing communities and government representatives (Participant 7, Skype interview, April 20, 2016). Similarly, communities and municipalities have asked the New Caledonia and East Timor CI teams to address conflicts by setting up public consultation and
negotiation mechanisms (Participant 5, Skype interview, April 19, 2016; Participant 6, Skype interview, April 19, 2016). In these cases, CI staff have acted as a bridge between stakeholders, fostering dialogue and trust. Conflict sensitivity frameworks could support this work by providing conservation practitioners with a systematic and holistic framework for better understanding the conflicts at hand and the contextual factors that influence how those conflicts play out.

In discussing their roles in managing conflicts, a number of CI staff also described themselves as neutral arbiters in relation to the conflicts. The staff member in East Timor, for example, described how CI was not always considered to be a neutral party because of its advocacy about environmental issues and involvement in politics. This resulted in conflicts with communities who had different beliefs (Participant 6, Skype interview, April 19, 2016). In New Caledonia, the interview participant said, CI has purposefully limited its political and economic involvement, choosing to instead act as an advisor and facilitator on resource-related issues (Participant 5, Skype interview, April 19, 2016).

This perception of CI’s neutrality among a handful of those interviewed may be naïve, however. As conservation practitioners, CI staff advocate for and promote certain policies or actions that guide the use of resources, which is an inherently political exercise (Brechin et al., 2002). Expressing this, and in contradiction to some of his other colleagues, one participant noted that although CI tries not to be a “preacher,” it often ends up acting like one because the projects rely on convincing people to change (Participant 8, Skype interview, April 21, 2016). The political nature of interventions and the impact that they inevitably have on the context is exactly why conflict sensitivity frameworks came into being; in this case, such a framework
could help CI staff examine the nuance of their relationship to and impact on the conflict context and stakeholders.

**Conservation Practitioners’ Needs in Addressing Conflict**

The approaches to resolving conflicts described by the needs assessment participants indicate that stakeholder engagement is one of the primary activities that conservation practitioners undertake in their work and thus any conflict sensitivity framework developed for them should be attentive to the best ways to engage those stakeholders and to address the conflicts with and between them. These approaches also reveal a somewhat *ad hoc* means of dealing with issues, one that is often reactive as opposed to proactive and planned. Based on my discussions with the participants, there does not appear to be any kind of a systematic process for engaging with communities or addressing issues before they become problems. Taken together, participants’ responses to questions about what kinds of conflict-related issues they face and how they are dealing with them produces some preliminary ideas about their needs. However, the PDP team and I also wanted to know how the participants defined their own needs, which would in turn allow us to better ensure that the Environmental Peacebuilding Training Manual was as comprehensive and useful as possible.

The next step therefore was to explicitly ask participants about their needs for better addressing conflicts they face as part of their conservation work. After learning more about the conflicts they face and what they have done so far to manage them, I asked, “What would help you to deal with these issues more effectively in the future?” There is a great deal of emphasis in the literature on conflict sensitivity, and has been from the beginning, on the need for holistic approaches that are more than just *ad hoc* assessments or sporadically applied tools (Bush, 1998;
Paffenholz, 2005a). Conflict sensitivity frameworks promote multi-faceted contextual awareness and holistic stakeholder participation and engagement, both of which are decidedly relevant based on the conflicts expressed by the needs assessment participants. However, the Environmental Peacebuilding Training Manual was designed to meet the specific needs of CI conservation staff, and so the PDP team and I needed to know more about what those specific needs might be.

Skills, Tools & Support

In terms of the skills that needs assessment participants felt they needed, the most commonly mentioned were training on conflict management or resolution skills, strategies for community engagement, conducting risk/needs assessment, and cultural sensitivity training. Overlapping both conflict management and community engagement skills, some participants requested training in negotiation and facilitation as a way to develop their skills for handling difficult situations with stakeholders. These requests were unsurprising given the general lack of integration of conflict concepts into conservation discourse. They were also unsurprising given that many of the conflicts conservation practitioners face involve their interactions with other people (stakeholders) who have different priorities, different cultural beliefs, and different ideas about natural resource management.

Requests for skill development were also linked to requests for ongoing learning opportunities. Examples and case studies as well as the ability to exchange information and experiences were mentioned by a number of interview participants. For example, one person described how examples of what to do when implementing a tool (such as CI’s gender or free, prior, and informed consent or FPIC tools) have been extremely useful, helping her to overcome
a lack of formal training on those topics (Participant 2, Skype interview, March 30, 2016). Another talked about the potential benefits of learning from the examples of other field offices that had been successful in addressing conflicts (Participant 9, Skype interview, April 22, 2016). Some staff also requested continuing mentoring from experts in order to put the skills and tools into practice in the right way based on continuous guidance. One person talked about how she and her staff do not learn well by sitting in a workshop and would therefore benefit from ongoing mentoring from headquarters staff, which, she added, might be difficult given her team’s remote location (Participant 6, Skype interview, April 19, 2016). A handful of people also requested tools or trainings that would help them better understand the context of the conservation project. These included needs or risk assessments for a project site and cultural sensitivity training or other mechanisms for facilitating understanding of local stakeholders (Participant 1, Skype interview, March 30, 2016; Participant 2, Skype interview, March 30, 2016).

With regard to the general characteristics of their needs, a number of interview participants noted the need for context-specific tools that provided detailed, step-by-step instructions and addressed the complexity of the situations in which they worked. For example, one person suggested a checklist that could be used to draft a conflict-related score card for a project prior to its start (Participant 2, Skype interview, March 30, 2016). Another participant requested a standardized “toolbox” that could be applied in different situations, such as a reference book that would dictate steps to take depending on the conflict situation (Participant 5, Skype interview, April 19, 2016). However, this same person also recognized that each case is different, and that staff often make decisions instinctively and based on the context. This incongruity mirrors the larger debate as to whether conflict sensitivity should be more or less
defined (see Bush 2003; Hoffman, 2003) and illustrates the difficulty in meeting every need in one single framework.

**Awareness of Existing Skills, Tools, and Frameworks**

Overall, the responses to the question about needs tended to be nebulous. This is not surprising given the limited integration of conflict sensitivity tools within conservation practice generally nor the overarching lack of clarity about what conflict sensitivity as a concept actually means (see Chapter 2). During the needs assessment interviews, one of the final questions I asked participants was, “Are you aware of or have you used any tools for dealing with conflicts in the conservation context?” Most interviewees either had not heard of any tools or frameworks or they had but were not acquainted with them. For example, one person knew that Save the Children and Mercy Corps have conflict management tools, but she was not familiar with them (Participant 6, Skype interview, April 19, 2016). Another person mentioned that they believed the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) had an approach, but she similarly was not familiar with it (Participant 9, Skype interview, April 22, 2016). A third person referenced something that CI was working on and knew that various tools existed but had no personal experience with them (Participant 8, Skype interview, April 21, 2016).

Other participants, when asked this question, responded with specific exercises or activities that are related to conflict sensitivity but do not constitute a holistic framework for dealing with conflict. For instance, some participants mentioned CI’s FPIC guidelines in response to this question (Participant 1, Skype interview, March 30, 2016). The FPIC guidelines are the result of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and are based on a respect for human rights and indigenous peoples’ participation in conservation (Buppert &
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McKeehan, 2013). Like conflict sensitivity frameworks, the FPIC manual promotes contextual understanding, contextualized solutions, and stakeholder engagement through septs to creating a “successful” FPIC process. However, this manual is not set up to support conflict management or peacebuilding directly. Rather, it focuses on a more limited set of activities to incorporate the guidelines into existing processes. Other, specific tools mentioned included alternative dispute resolution (ADR), negotiation, and SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analyses, all of which are useful for managing conflicts but do not entail a holistic or systematic approach for dealing with them.

Presenting the Results of the Needs Assessment

Based on the variety of issues that the conservation practitioners interviewed during the needs assessment described, as well as the challenges they faced in managing them, it was evident that a conflict sensitivity framework could be of use to them. Although traditionally seen as useful for situations of violent conflict (see Chapter 2), conflict sensitivity frameworks can be useful for organizations or staff undertaking interventions in a context characterized by any type of conflict, including disagreements between stakeholders. They are appropriate for organizations and staff who want to better understand their influence on the context and the conflicts. The needs assessment illustrated that conflicts in conservation contexts definitely do exist and that conservation practitioners do want to learn more about how to manage them, recognizing that their work has an impact. The next step then was to take the information gathered and present it to the PDP team prior to translating it into a framework that would address those needs.
In June 2016, a PDP team member and I presented the results of the needs assessment to the larger PDP team and others at CI. The presentation included information collected from a survey sent to all CI staff, PDP team interviews of CI staff working in CI’s Virginia headquarters, and my 12 interviews of CI staff members working in various locations around the world. From our analysis of the information, we worked with other PDP staff to identify three key themes to inform the development of the manual and the pilot workshop. These themes include:

**Engaging Stakeholders.** The needs assessment interviews I conducted suggested the majority of problems that participants face as part of their conservation work stem from their engagement with different stakeholder groups, such as community members, indigenous peoples, government officials, and business representatives (see Table 2). For example, the most common conflict mentioned by interview participants was difficulty in developing trust with stakeholders due to conservation practitioners’ status as outsiders, differences in beliefs and ideas (particularly those related to the environment or cultural norms), and the challenging logistics inherent in doing work in remote areas and with limited budgets. Those interviewed also faced difficulties in dealing with corrupt politicians or companies and community members engaging in illegal activities related to resources use (logging, fishing, mining, etc.). To complicate matters, limited resources (time and money) and competing priorities among stakeholders (poverty alleviation, economic development) posed additional obstacles to conservation work.

Although conservation practitioners regularly faced problems as a result of their engagement with stakeholders, there was not a common understanding among needs assessment

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23 As noted before, this dissertation deals only with data I collected myself; data collected by others was submitted to CI as part of my evaluation consultancy, the outputs of which are included as appendixes.
participants of best practices for stakeholder engagement nor any mention of a systematic way of undertaking that engagement beyond holding meetings or other modes of dialogue. Unsurprisingly, one of the common conflict-related needs expressed by those I interviewed was the need for training on community engagement techniques, and consequently the manual includes concrete stakeholder engagement skills that conservation practitioners can develop in order to identify relevant stakeholders as well as those stakeholders’ positions and needs, and to engage productively with them in the pursuit of conservation goals.

**Contextual Understanding.** The second theme concerned the need for deeper understandings among conservation practitioners of the sociocultural, political, historical, and economic context in which they work. During the needs assessment, interview participants regularly mentioned problems related to misunderstandings or miscommunication between stakeholders and differences between their beliefs about things like the value of nature and gender roles as compared to those held by members of other groups (particularly indigenous communities). These problems were the result of a lack of understanding of the values, needs, and beliefs of different stakeholder groups and, as we identified, a reliance on science and scientific data as a solution. Although interview participants recognized the importance of conservation practitioners understanding the local context and, as a result, being able to ground a conservation project in that context, some felt that their and their colleagues’ understanding was not sufficiently developed. They thus requested ways of increasing their understanding of the context in which they worked, such as cultural sensitivity training.

In presenting the results of the needs assessment, my PDP colleague and I provided examples from interview participants of the ways in which a lack of contextual (particularly cultural) understanding can create conflicts in conservation work. These included issues related
to gender and religion, such as the example in the previous chapter of the women who would not participate in meetings at a Catholic church because they were Protestant. We also discussed the “outsider effect”—or the impact that one’s identity as someone not belonging to the community—can have on the effectiveness of conservation work. Based on our interview discussions, we recommended that there be instruction in the manual on ways in which conservation practitioners could engage stakeholders in a contextually grounded way, addressing cultural particularities such as gender roles, considering socioeconomic classes, thinking about ways of engaging youth, etc. In addition, we also recommended training on cultural sensitivity to accompany the manual.

**Sharing Knowledge & Experiences.** The third theme that surfaced during our presentation of the results of the needs assessment was the importance of developing mechanisms through which conservation practitioners could share their experiences and learn from one another. As noted in the previous chapter, interview participants asked for case study examples and mentoring opportunities when responding to questions about their needs vis-à-vis conflict. These requests imply that people may learn more from each other and from real-world experiences than from a document, manual, or training alone. This feedback mirrors a critique of conflict sensitivity generally, i.e. that it is not easily accessible and that there are not sufficient examples of its implementation (see Ahmed, 2011; Kamatsiko, 2014; Paffenholz, 2016).

Based on this feedback, we recommended that, in addition to the manual and a training, the PDP team develop some sort of mechanism by which conservation practitioners could share their experiences with conflict and with using the manual and the concepts contained within it. Options for such mechanisms include a centralized database of information, writing up case studies of experiences with environmental peacebuilding and managing conflicts, and increased
opportunities for interactions between staff such as conferences or brown bags so that people
could share their experiences directly and, when possible, in person.
After completing the needs assessment, the next phase in the research process and my collaboration with Conservation International’s (CI) Peace and Development Partnerships (PDP) team was to design a framework that addressed the needs identified by conservation practitioners in Phase I while also incorporating general conflict sensitivity elements and responding to the common critiques of conflict sensitivity frameworks. This chapter thus focuses on the second research sub-question: “What form might a relevant, accessible, and effective conflict sensitivity framework for conservation work take?” Answering this question was a two-part process. The first step involved designing a framework that meets the needs of conservation practitioners. The second step involved evaluating the framework’s relevance, accessibility, and effectiveness so that appropriate changes could be made to both the final version of manual and future workshops based on it.

Relevance and effectiveness are two of the main evaluation criteria laid out by the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development’s (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC). They may also be evaluated as part of a formative evaluation (Irmas & Rist, 2009). In its glossary of evaluation terms, OECD (2010) defines relevance as “the extent to which the objectives of a development intervention are consistent with beneficiaries’ requirements” (p. 32). Relevance, in the case of this research project, refers to whether or not the framework is appropriate and responsive to the needs of conservation practitioners as identified during the needs assessment and pilot implementation workshop. Effectiveness is “the extent to which the development intervention’s objectives were achieved, or are expected to be
achieved…” (OECD, 2010, p. 20). The effectiveness of the manual and workshop were based on whether or not they achieved their specific objectives. While OECD (2010) does not define accessibility as one of its primary evaluation concepts, the conflict sensitivity literature points to accessibility as an essential characteristic, albeit one that is regularly missing (see Chapter 2; Abitbol, 2014; Ahmed, 2011; Barasa-Mang’eni, 2014). I define accessibility here as the ease and convenience of use or comprehension by intended users of the manual as well as the ease of comprehension of key concepts contained within it and taught as part of the workshop.

This chapter begins with a description of how the needs identified during the first phase of the research project (and discussed in Chapter 4) were used to develop the Environmental Peacebuilding Training Manual and pilot implementation workshop (Phase II of the research project), which are the two components of what I am calling the conflict sensitivity framework. It continues with a discussion of the results of the formative evaluation (Phase III), specifically as they relate to the relevance, accessibility, and effectiveness of the framework. The chapter ends with a discussion of the key findings from the formative evaluation, building the foundation for Chapter 6, which considers both the short-term outcomes of the pilot implementation as well as questions related to the framework’s long-term impact and sustainability.

**Designing a Framework to Address Conservation Practitioners’ Needs**

Based on the needs identified by conservation practitioners in Chapter 4, what might a conservation-focused conflict sensitivity framework look like?
Though examples of conflict sensitivity frameworks for humanitarian aid, peacebuilding, and development abound, fewer examples of conservation-focused manuals exist (see Chapter 2). Many of these frameworks typify common characteristics, such as a concern with the interaction between the intervention and context, a conscious effort to reduce the intervention’s negative impacts on a conflict while increasing its positive impacts, emphasizing inclusivity and participation, and encouraging reflection and adaptation of the intervention based on results and changes to the context. These characteristics are similar to the needs identified in Chapter 4—including the need to better understand the conflict context and how to manage it, to more effectively engage with stakeholders, and to find ways to share experiences and learn from one another—and the PDP team and I sought to ensure that these characteristics were addressed in the manual.

In addition to what to include in the manual, we also considered what to exclude based on common critiques of conflict sensitivity frameworks. As discussed in Chapter 2, criticisms of conflict sensitivity frameworks include their lack of accessibility (both conceptually and practically), the limited mainstreaming of conflict sensitivity or development of related
capacities, challenges to monitoring and evaluating conflict sensitivity (and, thus, demonstrating its impact), and confusion about the differences between conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding (Woodrow & Chigas, 2009). Scholars of conflict sensitivity (e.g., Leonhardt, 2002), have also pointed out that conflict sensitivity processes generally fall into one of two categories; either they are focused on conflict analysis and project planning at the start of an intervention, or they emphasize monitoring and evaluation at the end of an intervention. In both cases, conflict sensitivity is often not incorporated into the full project cycle. The PDP team and I attempted to proactively address these criticisms through edits to the manual’s content and in considering its implementation through the pilot workshop while simultaneously attending to the needs of conservation practitioners. As noted in this chapter and Chapter 6, these criticisms were not easily addressed, and our struggles with them exemplify why they continue to exist.

Although the final presentation of the needs assessment results and recommendations focused on stakeholder engagement, contextual understanding, and knowledge sharing, changes to the manual’s content were largely limited to addressing stakeholder engagement and ensuring that key concepts like conflict sensitivity were clearly explained. The other two needs assessment themes—contextualization and knowledge sharing—were outside the scope of what could be accomplished within the manual itself and would have to be addressed in the larger framework through the implementation of the manual. In making revisions to the manual, the PDP team and I also chose to address the critiques in the conflict sensitivity literature of frameworks that do not sufficiently deal with monitoring and evaluation (M&E). The process of addressing each of these—conflict sensitivity (as a key concept), stakeholder engagement, and M&E—are discussed in more detail below.
Conflict Sensitivity

When I began working with the PDP team in early 2016, it had developed two modules for the Environmental Peacebuilding Training Manual: an introduction to the concept of environmental peacebuilding and a module on conflict analysis. The team had long been working on developing its idea for environmental peacebuilding, and it had already hosted workshops and other discussions on conflict analysis. This initial focus on conflict analysis is fairly common; in terms of conflict sensitivity frameworks, it is often the primary or only component with which organizations engage (Barbolet et al. 2005; De la Haye & Denayer, 2003). Indeed, Barbolet and his colleagues (2005) note that “the foundation of conflict-sensitive practice is a thorough and regularly updated conflict analysis; it is the base rock to which all project planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation should be linked” (p. 9).

With these initial pieces in place, the PDP team and I sought to develop something more holistic and comprehensive and that would respond to the particular needs of conservation practitioners. Although the PDP team was not thoroughly familiar with the concept of conflict sensitivity, we agreed that there was a need for a module that covered it and its relationship to environmental peacebuilding and that would also provide instructions for manual users to incorporate conflict sensitivity into the entire project cycle. Detailed steps for incorporating
conflict sensitivity into the full program cycle is often missing from conflict sensitivity frameworks (see Chapter 2); some needs assessment participants also requested step-by-step instructions for responding to conflicts. Module 4 of the manual therefore defines conflict sensitivity, describes its objectives, and outlines how to use conflict analysis in a conflict-sensitive project cycle, from analysis to design, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and back to analysis (Ajroud et al., 2007; see Figure 4). The module also introduces manual users to how to use M&E to track, reflect on, and adapt conflict sensitive processes throughout the project cycle.

**Monitoring & Evaluation**

In addition to providing guidance on conflict sensitivity frameworks and process, I also took the lead in incorporating M&E into the manual. As with conflict sensitivity, the PDP team did not specialize in M&E but recognized its importance. The team wanted to include a section on M&E in the manual that balanced simplicity for conservation practitioners who may not be familiar with M&E with a sufficiently in-depth discussion of related concepts and processes that would be relevant for assessing environmental peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity and could be used to put M&E into practice.

With these requirements in mind, I drafted instructions for designing a M&E plan for conflict sensitivity, including key questions to consider, information on developing a theory of change, examples of conflict-related indicators, and encouragement for continually reviewing the monitoring information collected, evaluating it, and using it to make changes to project activities to improve effectiveness. The module’s emphasis on M&E is meant to address critiques of conflict sensitivity frameworks for not giving sufficient attention to the process of monitoring.
and evaluating efforts (Goddard, 2014; Leonhardt, 2002), which in turn limits claims to impact (Ahmed, 2011; Kamatsiko, 2014). These limitations are visible in other conflict sensitivity frameworks. For example, despite its many strengths overall, IISD’s Conflict-Sensitive Conservation Practitioner’s Manual (Hammill et al., 2009) includes a sub-section on designing, implementing, and monitoring projects but stops short of providing concrete instructions for undertaking monitoring or evaluation. Further, it lacks a discussion of indicators, what an evaluation process might look like, or how evaluation results might be used. There are, however, exceptions to the tendency of limited discussions of M&E. Goldwyn and Chigas’ (2013) Monitoring and evaluating conflict sensitivity guidelines and the Resource Pack (Saferworld et al., 2004) both provide guidance on monitoring and evaluating conflict sensitivity, including ways to monitor for unintended impacts.

The discussion of M&E in Module 4 builds off of the resources that do exist as well as Bush’s (2008) idea of development, peace, and conflict indicators. For example, the module describes primary, conservation-related objectives and indicators as well as secondary, conflict- and peace-related objectives and indicators. Primary objectives “are the direct, conservation-related goals or desired impacts of a project,” while secondary objectives “describe what must change in the context in which you work for an intervention to be successful over the long-term” (Ajroud et al., 2017, p. 42). Dividing objectives and indicators in this way encourages conservation practitioners to look more holistically at the implications of their work, broadening their thinking beyond conservation impacts to other types of impacts their work might have, particularly on conflict dynamics and including those that are unanticipated (an important consideration of conflict sensitivity).
In drafting Module 4, I also considered the important conflict sensitivity principles of responsiveness, flexibility, and adaptation (Abitbol, 2014; Bush, 2008) and how conservation practitioners could incorporate M&E to provide regular feedback using ideas from utilization-focused (Patton, 1997) and developmental evaluation (Patton, 2010) as well as results-based monitoring (Imas & Rist, 2009). For example, how could conservation practitioners get regular information on their conflict sensitivity efforts in order to reflect on and make changes to those efforts? Utilization-focused and developmental evaluation both promote iterative, collaborative, and contextually grounded approaches to evaluation that base those approaches off of the needs of evaluation users. Results-based monitoring, or the “continuous process of collecting and analyzing information on key indicators in order to measure progress towards goals” (Imas & Rist, 2009, p. 108), was also instructive in drafting Module 4. As a consequence, the manual presents M&E as “ongoing, flexible, participatory, and comprehensive” (Ajroud et al., 2007, p. 43). It provides questions that users should ask themselves so that they are designing M&E processes that are relevant and appropriate for their own context and needs and that are taking place regularly at each part of the project cycle rather than solely at the middle or end of a project.

**Stakeholder Engagement**

Considering the emphasis that conservation practitioners placed on stakeholder engagement challenges during the needs assessment phase of the research project, the PDP team decided to include additional modules in the Environmental Peacebuilding Training Manual to address those challenges. These include a module devoted entirely to stakeholder engagement as well as one on collaborative consensus building. Module 2, which is devoted to stakeholder
engagement, supports users in understanding “stakeholder engagement as a necessary component of environmental peacebuilding” and helps them in developing the skills to engage stakeholders and encourage participation (Ajroud et al., 2017, p. 17). One objective of the module on collaborative consensus building, or CCB, is that users will “acquire a working knowledge of stakeholder engagement and designing dialogue strategies between diverse and divergent parties” (p. 51). Module 5 defines CCB as “a structured method for facilitating consensual multi-stakeholder dialogues and negotiation processes that allow people with different interests to find common ground and work together to solve the problems they face” (p. 51).

In addition to these modules, efforts were made to reference methods of stakeholder inclusion throughout the Environmental Peacebuilding Training Manual. For example, Module 3 describes ways to include stakeholders in conflict analysis processes like stakeholder mapping and the construction of a conflict tree: “You should also consider whether to conduct a joint analysis with numerous stakeholder groups present… Bringing groups with different perspectives [together] can be a rich source of information and lay the groundwork for improving inter-group understanding” (Ajroud et al., 2007, p. 29). These modules and their contents respond directly to the needs expressed by conservation practitioners in Phase I of the project, providing instructions on best practices for engaging stakeholders and specific skills related to and elements of stakeholder engagement approaches. Various forms of stakeholder engagement also took a prominent place in the pilot workshop, which included sessions on communication techniques and CCB.
A Note on Environmental Peacebuilding & Conflict Sensitivity Frameworks

In Chapter 2, I summarized the argument that conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding are two distinct objectives (see Woodrow & Chigas, 2009). Although the manual is labeled as an Environmental Peacebuilding Training manual, and the pilot workshop was a part of its implementation, I characterize the two together as a conflict sensitivity framework. Frameworks are structures composed of different pieces that support a single concept. The manual and workshop together make up a framework that supports conflict-sensitive conservation. While the manual explains that “well-planned conservation approaches fall within the broader scope of peacebuilding approaches and process” (Ajroud et al., 2017, p. 7), I contend that what the manual really seeks to do is promote conservation processes that are conflict sensitive and, as a result, have an increased chance of contributing to peacebuilding without necessarily requiring conservation to promote peacebuilding as a primary objective. As a result, and for the purposes of this dissertation, I refer to the manual and its implementation through the pilot workshop as a conflict sensitivity framework.
The Formative Evaluation Structure

Figure 5: Phase III - Formative Evaluation

With the first, complete version of the Environmental Peacebuilding Training Manual complete, the next step in the research project was to evaluate both whether the manual and its pilot implementation met the needs expressed by conservation practitioners during the needs assessment (Phase I) as well as how it stood up to some of the general critiques of conflict sensitivity frameworks found in the literature. In particular, the PDP team and I wanted to know if the manual and its implementation were relevant, accessible, and effective with regard to the needs of conservation practitioners and the defined objectives of the manual and workshop. To do this, we conducted a formative evaluation of the project, which included an expert review of the manual and a pilot implementation workshop based on it.

For the expert review, we appealed to people with knowledge of and proficiency in environmental conservation, conflict sensitivity, evaluation, and training or adult learning, the most relevant areas of expertise for evaluation of a conservation-focused conflict sensitivity framework. Four experts participated with experience in environmental peacebuilding,
evaluation, conflict sensitivity, conservation, sustainability, conflict interventions, and designing and implementing training manuals. Each expert reviewer examined a draft of the manual, either in its entirety or only those sections most relevant to his or her experience, and provided feedback during a semi-structured interview. Interview questions covered the reviewers’ assessments of the relevancy or usefulness, accessibility or usability, and effectiveness of the manual as related to its stated objectives and content. Three of the four reviewers also provided feedback in the form of written comments in the manual document itself.

In addition to the expert reviews, the PDP team used the manual as the foundation for a pilot implementation workshop in the Philippines in May 2017, drafting a facilitation guide to cover the main points of the manual such as conflict sensitivity, conflict analysis, collaborative consensus building, and methods of stakeholder engagement. The purpose of the workshop was to increase the participants’ knowledge of key concepts through participatory and experiential learning while also gaining feedback that could improve the Environmental Peacebuilding Training Manual as well as future workshops based on it. Key questions guiding the workshop, including the associated interviews and pre- and post-tests, included:

- What specific conflicts (issues) have the workshop participants faced in their work?
- What knowledge and perspectives did workshop participants bring with them?
- How would workshop participants’ understanding of key concepts change from before the workshop to after?
- What might participants do with what they learned?

Excluding PDP team members and myself, 30 people participated in the workshop. The participants included CI staff as well as staff from other nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)

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24 See Appendix B for the expert reviewer interview protocol.
active in conservation-related projects in the Philippines. Using pre- and post-tests, changes in
the knowledge and attitudes of participants—measures of the workshop’s effectiveness—were
assessed through short answer and Likert scale questions.\textsuperscript{25} Five of the workshop participants
also participated in interviews before and/or after the workshop. Along with my observation of
the workshop, these interviews added to my understanding of the specific needs of participants
as well as their views on the workshop, its relevance to their work, its accessibility in terms of
whether concepts covered during the workshop were easy to understand, and the effectiveness of
the workshop in conveying the key concepts. Two workshop participants also reviewed the
manual and provided written feedback.

In line with the action research orientation of this research project, and like the needs
assessment phase, I developed the formative evaluation phase in collaboration with the PDP
team to ensure that the interview and survey questions responded to what we all needed to know
about the workshop, from logistics and participants’ satisfaction in things like the meals as well
as the overarching evaluation questions. The PDP team and I worked together using Google
Docs to write and edit the interview protocol and survey instrument following discussions about
the formative evaluation process and purpose. We also discussed the possibility of the PDP team
taking its own participant observation notes throughout the workshop that could we could review
together at the end of every day of the workshop, but this proved to be unfeasible with the
workload. Working together to develop the process and questions improved the relevance of the
evaluation results for the PDP team by responding to the questions the team itself deemed to be
useful for its work. Our collaboration also contributed to the development of the team members’
capacities in evaluation as they became more familiar with evaluation types and methods during

\textsuperscript{25} See Appendix B for the pre- and post-workshop survey instruments.
our discussions of the purpose of and process for interviews and surveys. The results of these surveys and interviews, as well as their implications for the Environmental Peacebuilding Training Manual and future workshops, are discussed below according to the evaluative concepts of relevance, accessibility, and effectiveness.

Evaluating Relevance

Relevance, usefulness, or pertinence refers to whether the framework (the manual and its implementation) meets conservation practitioners’ needs. The ability of the framework to meet those needs—and conservation practitioners’ recognition of that ability—are key to ensuring the effectiveness, impact, and sustainability of the framework. As one expert reviewer noted, “If you can demonstrate to a field office why this is important and how to use it, I think that’s the true test of making this applicable to conservation” (Participant 17, Skype interview, May 17, 2017). Another expert reviewer echoed this feeling, stating that a true test of the manual would be an affirmative answer to the question, “Have we convinced them that this is an absolute must?” (S. Nanthikesan, Skype interview, June 5, 2017).

To understand the relevance of the manual and the pilot workshop, expert reviewers and workshop participants responded to questions about whether they believed the manual was useful for conservation work and their own specific needs as well as whether, after participating in the workshop, they intended to put the framework into practice. Participant observation of the workshop itself also shed light on the question of relevance, as I learned more about the types of conflicts conservation practitioners face and was able to observe their reactions to the concepts discussed and activities that took place during the workshop sessions. Overall, participants and expert reviewers pronounced the manual and workshop to be highly relevant to conservation
work, first and foremost because environmental conservation work inherently involves conflict. In addition, the manual and workshop contain a great deal of information on stakeholder engagement, which responds to a significant need of conservation practitioners, the majority of whose challenges seem to stem from that engagement (as determined during the needs assessment; see Chapter 4). However, there was a notable barrier to relevancy related to the limited contextualization of the workshop concepts and activities.

**The Conflicts of Conservation Work**

Conflict sensitivity and environmental peacebuilding are relevant only if the objectives and processes they prescribe meet the needs of the intended users relating to their encounters with and management of conflict. While the 12 people I interviewed during the needs assessment (Phase I) described a variety of conflicts that demonstrated a need for conflict sensitivity (see Table 2), it was important that expert reviewers and workshop participants also perceived the manual and workshop as relevant. Pre-workshop interviews with participants provided initial evidence that the workshop would be relevant, as participants recounted similar problems or conflicts to those who had participated in the needs assessment. One of those interview participants, for example, described mediating a conflict between resort owners who refused to pay fees to the indigenous communities that collected those fees for tourists to enter their land:

There were times that we tried to talk to them and to be a bridge to getting tourism establishments to work with indigenous people’s organizations, and we tried to get them to develop a partnership in protecting their areas rather than approaching it from a confrontational standpoint. (E. Lorenzo, Skype interview, May 3, 2017)
In another example of conflicts faced during conservation work, a CI staff member working in a different part of the Philippines described violent insurgescies perpetrated by rebels as well as “corruption in the local government” that led politicians to ask for incentives from conservation organizations (I. Talosig, Skype interview, May 5, 2017). Another workshop participant told me during our post-workshop interview about conflicts between the Philippines and its neighbors China and Malaysia over territorial boundaries (Participant 7, Skype interview, June 7, 2017).

Throughout the workshop itself, the participants detailed additional conflicts, including those between government representatives and fishermen over fishing rights, mining or other extractive companies and indigenous communities over land use, law enforcement and those involved in illegal logging or fishing activities, and violent clashes between the military groups and rebel factions. As one participant noted in our pre-workshop interview,

There’s a wide range of conflicts that we encounter because we do a lot of conservation work. And normally that conflict arises from the access to natural resources because we try and facilitate access for marginalized fisher folk or marginalized farmers or marginalized upland dwellers. That is where conflict arises. (Interview Participant 15, Skype interview, May 6, 2017)

Because they are involved in changing the status quo through a redistribution or reclassification of natural resources, conservation practitioners regularly encounter conflicts. The conflicts mentioned by workshop participants were simply a foregone conclusion of doing conservation work. As a result, they need “tools that will help [them] facilitate more effectively conflict management” (Participant 15, Skype interview, May 6, 2017).
Despite the commonly held opinion among workshop participants that the manual and workshop were relevant to the work of conservation practitioners—with one person noting that “people who do community-level engagement should undergo this as part of their orientation” (E. Lorenzo, Skype interview, June 12, 2017), and another participant stating during our post-workshop interview that “local NGOs who are really embedded in communities in far flung areas and are experiencing conflicts day-to-day… I would like them to use this manual” (Participant 7, Skype interview, June 7, 2017)—many participants also felt that much of the workshop content was not new for them.

For example, in our post-workshop interview, one participant told me, “To be honest with you, we’ve been using participatory tools for quite some time now in the Philippines. [The workshop] was sort of like a review for us of the tools that we have already been using and for the work that we’ve been doing” (Participant 15, Skype interview, June 5, 2017). As additional support for this claim, another participant noted that many people during the workshop seemed to be thinking that they were not learning anything new, just rehashing concepts like stakeholder analysis with which they were already familiar (Participant 7, Skype interview, June 7, 2017). By labeling some of the workshop concepts as helpful for other countries or people that were not familiar with “socioeconomic, participatory tools,” such as those that “are more on the technical, biological conservation side of the work,” (Participant 15, Skype Interview, June 15, 2017), some participants indicated that the workshop was not effective in explaining how familiar tools can be used in different ways to specifically address conflict-related concerns.

Participants, however, did come to see these familiar tools as part of a holistic approach that the manual and workshop provided. As one person put it, “Some of those [activities] we’ve been doing in the past, but it was put into one, full picture, so I can now see the process and the
linkages of those approaches, principles, and methods” (I. Talosig, Skype interview, June 2, 2017). Another person stated similarly, “What is useful is… looking at it through a different lens, so using the peacebuilding lens… It’s sort of like a review of what [we] already knew but looking at it from a different lens” (Participant 15, Skype interview, June 5, 2017). An expert reviewer also positively emphasized that the manual captured key ideas about conflict in a “systematic way” (S. Nanthikesan, Skype interview, June 5, 2017).

This feedback indicates that although the workshop may not have sufficiently clarified why and in what circumstances the tools and activities covered could be used for specific, conflict-related benefits, participants and expert reviewers did appreciate the manual and workshop’s value in putting these approaches into a systematic framework. Taken together, this information supports the idea of the manual and workshop as relevant while also pointing to the need for additional explanation or clarification of exactly why and when it is relevant. The idea of clarifying concepts and their purpose vis-à-vis conservation practitioners is explored in more detail in Chapter 6.

**Stakeholder Engagement**

The challenges of engaging with stakeholder groups as identified during the needs assessment (see Chapter 4) were echoed by the workshop participants. In a pre-workshop interview, for example, one participant explained that government officials “are trying to get some incentives from [his] project. But of course, in the project, it’s not really budgeted” (I. Talosig, Skype interview, May 5, 2017). Another participant described the challenges of getting businesses, resort establishments, and other groups to work together, oftentimes relying on legal regulations as motivation, with mixed success (E. Lorenzo, Skype interview, June 12, 2017). He
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summarized, “I do enforcement work. You’d be surprised when it comes to enforcement how much we mediate between government agencies.” Another person described a large portion of her work as involving public consultations, awareness raising, and otherwise bringing conflicting parties together for discussions, with CI serving as a facilitator (Interview Participant 15, Skype interview, May 6, 2017). She explained, “In some cases, the conflict is not easily resolved, but [these discussions] actually eases the tension between the two groups”. A fourth participant interviewed prior to the workshop described assisting other organizations and communities as they face off with extractive companies (Participant 16, personal interview, May 9, 2017).

Similar to another participants’ reliance on legalities, she labeled science as the best “weapon” in conflicts with stakeholders, as CI has data on which it can base its decisions and explain itself (this reflects some of the responses of needs assessment participants as well). There were also many instances during the workshop when participants discussed the different ways in which CI staff acted as mediators, conveners, and negotiators between groups in conflict.

Since much of the workshop participants’ day-to-day work involves engaging with stakeholders, and because these interactions are often challenging, it is no surprise that many of the workshop participants found the sessions on stakeholder engagement techniques like facilitation and CCB to be the most useful for them. As one person noted, “… when we did the role play and the facilitation portion, I think that was where many of the participants appreciated as well as I did because it was an exercise to practice our listening and summarizing skills” (Participant 16, Skype interview, June 10, 2017). She added later in our conversation that the CCB module of the manual was the one she liked the most, calling it “very useful for our project sites where there are existing conflicts already.”
Others echoed these sentiments in the post-workshop survey (see Figure 6). Stakeholder engagement techniques like facilitation, mediation, and CCB were the most common response to the question, “What was the most effective session or component of the workshop?” Participants also commonly mentioned role playing, which took place during those sessions focused on stakeholder engagement. In response to other questions, some participants requested more instruction on these topics. In our post-workshop discussion, one participant noted that he would have liked more on “how to ask questions. Should you be asking open ended questions? Should you be asking nonjudgmental questions? … I was looking forward to getting more advice on how to be a mediator in terms of the questions portion…” (E. Lorenzo, Skype interview, June 12, 2017). This consistent feedback on the importance of stakeholder engagement indicates both its importance to conservation practitioners and their work as well as the need for any conflict sensitivity framework to provide sufficient guidance on best practices.
Contextual Relevance

The primary obstacle to relevancy mentioned by participants following the workshop was a lack of contextualization of the situations and examples used in the workshop presentations and activities. As mentioned in Chapter 4, one of the conflict-related needs of conservation practitioners is to have contextually appropriate ways of managing conflicts and to have opportunities to learn more about the cultural context in which they work. Because the manual was designed to be useful for conservation practitioners operating in various contexts, the concepts and activities contained within it are discussed at a high level. It is during the implementation of the manual, such as in the form of a workshop similar to the one that took place in the Philippines, that the manual is made relevant to the specific situation of the learners through effective facilitation and customization.

Prior to the workshop, I asked four of the participants what tools, resources, or capacities they would like to have in order to better deal with the conflicts they counter as part of their work. Although they did not describe anything particular, one participant did emphasize that any potential solutions have to be contextually relevant: “There always has to be a local approach if it’s a local issue. So, we’re going to have to have a local approach in trying to see things, in trying to get different groups to work together” (E. Lorenzo, Skype interview, May 3, 2017). And although the PDP team and I intended to tailor the workshop to the work of Philippines CI, some workshop participants felt that the activities were not always relevant to their culture. During our post-workshop interview, for example, one participant noted that the workshop should have be done “in the context of our culture” (I. Talosig, Skype interview, June 2, 2017). Another person echoed this sentiment, stating that he would have appreciated if the examples...
and exercises had been contextualized to the Filipino context (E. Lorenzo, Skype interview, June 12, 2017). He explained:

I know [the examples are] based on cases in other countries where maybe CI was involved, and these are all based on real facts, but I think it would have been nicer to tweak it to something local because, when I was doing the simulation on conflict resolution, I always had to take into consideration that the country setting was South America. How would I approach it based on their culture and not from a Filipino standpoint or Filipino perspective?

Other workshop participants I interviewed agreed. Also discussing the example situations used for activities, one noted, “If you’re doing the practice and doing case studies for role play, it would be better if you use a local context. So, before the workshop you got the information from the host country or the host office so that it would be more real to them” (Participant 15, Skype interview, June 5, 2017).

It is also necessary to consider how key terms, such as conflict, are understood in the specific cultural context. On the second day of the workshop, one participant pointed out that the word “conflict” in the Philippines refers almost exclusively to political or armed conflict and is not usually used in other contexts. Thus, by using the word conflict, the PDP team facilitators may have started the workshop by giving participants the feeling that it was not relevant to them because they are not directly involved in armed or violent conflicts. Other problems related to the contextual relevance of the workshop mentioned by participants in the workshop post-test included:

- “[The need for] interaction with local people.”
“Could use actual field/local cases the participants are dealing with in the role playing…”

“The facilitator must be aware and knowledgeable of the situation at hand.”

“Examples should be for a 3rd world reality.”

In total, of the 28 participants who completed the post-test, eight (~29%) commented in one form or another that the workshop could be improved through more contextually situated and relevant activities or examples.

The PDP team members and I all agreed during our post-workshop discussions that we could have done more to tailor the examples and exercises to the work done by the Philippines team and to its cultural realities. One expert reviewer anticipated this issue, commenting that it is up to the facilitator to properly tailor the manual to the context (E. Abitbol, Skype interview, May 19, 2017). Unfortunately, however, the limited time available to the PDP team and I to prepare for the workshop hindered the degree to which we could make adaptations for the Filipino context. Practical constraints like limited time and staff resources are part of why conflict sensitivity frameworks have been criticized for their disconnection with local realities (Ahmed, 2011; Barasa-Mang’eni, 2014). But finding the resources to make them contextually relevant is essential. As one participant noted in our post-workshop interview, conflict sensitivity is about “localized approaches” (E. Lorenzo, Skype interview, June 12, 2017).

**Evaluating Accessibility**

Accessibility or usability can be defined as the ease and convenience of use or comprehension by intended users of the manual as well as the ease of comprehension of key concepts contained within it and taught as part of the workshop. As noted above, a lack of
accessibility is a major criticism of conflict sensitivity frameworks generally. They are often seen as the purview of experts because they require time, expertise, and monetary resources that organizations and their staff do not often have. Intended users may often perceive conflict sensitivity frameworks as difficult to adapt to the context in which they are supposed to be used (Abitbol, 2014; Ahmed, 2011; Barbolet et al., 2005). It was therefore important that the Environmental Peacebuilding Training Manual and the workshop be made as accessible to conservation practitioners as possible, without complicated academic jargon or overly complex concepts or processes. Accessibility is also a crucial factor in securing impact and sustainability; if the framework is not easily accessible to intended users, they will struggle to use it appropriately, and it will likely not have the intended impact or be used over the long-term. As one expert reviewer noted, you have to convince people of a framework’s feasibility if they are to use it (S. Nanthikesan, Skype interview, June 5, 2017).

To evaluate the manual and workshop’s accessibility, I asked interview participants whether the manual and workshop were easy to understand and follow, whether the concepts included in them were clear, and whether they believed that the exercises contained within would be sufficiently straightforward to put into practice. During the workshop, I also observed whether participants appeared to understand the key concepts and skills presented, whether they were catching on to ideas as conveyed during activities, and whether the environmental peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity seemed to make sense to them. The post-workshop surveys also included questions about what steps participants might take based on the workshop, which would have indicated their interest in and capacities related to conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding, as well as what parts of the workshop could be improved.
Language Accessibility

Similar to the challenges associated with a lack of contextual relevance outlined above, the use of English in running the workshop served as an obstacle to the workshop’s accessibility. Although English is one of the Philippine’s official languages, some participants that I spoke to after the workshop’s end felt that conducting the sessions in English created barriers to the full comprehension of concepts and full participation. As one person noted,

English is our second language. And even if you speak it… I have to process everything in Tagalog and then translate it into English. And I think a lot of people do it that way. So, they hesitate if they have to explain a particular concept or share a particular experience in English. (Participant 15, Skype Interview, June 5, 2017)

Another person provided a different but similar perspective, noting that using Filipino during the workshop would make it “more exciting” and would address what she characterized as low energy levels during some of the workshop sessions (Participant 16, Skype Interview, June 10, 2017). She described how, when participants worked in smaller groups, “it was more comfortable for many of us, because… we were using the Filipino language, and we were not speaking English anymore.”

Participants also suggested that the manual itself be translated into local languages so that someone from the area in which it was being implemented could conduct the training “in a vernacular way,” which would in turn make the workshop “better” (I. Talosig, Skype interview, June 2, 2017). An expert reviewer with experience designing and implementing similar manuals supported this position, noting that the translation of the manual would increase its accessibility (Participant 17, Skype interview, May 17, 2017). While some participants with more developed English skills did not see language as a barrier, the feedback received points toward the
importance of considering the language skills of participants when deciding how to implement a workshop based on the manual. This is particularly the case when working with a large group with mixed language skill levels, as we did in the Philippines. While some may have felt comfortable using English, based on my observations and the feedback I received from participants, others did not. This made the level of accessibility of the workshop different for different people, and also impacted its effectiveness (since you cannot learn if you cannot understand what is being discussed).

Conceptual Accessibility

Another challenge to accessibility was the initial, low level of familiarity of workshop participants with some of the manual’s central concepts such as conflict, peacebuilding, and evaluation. This likely made some of the exercises difficult, particularly those in which participants had to think differently about an activity (like the conflict tree; see Figure 7) with which they were already familiar but within a different context. Using the conflict tree as an example, some groups drafted outlines that had at their core (trunk) issues that were not necessarily conflicts and may have been better described as either root causes or manifestations of conflicts. For example, one

![Image of the Conflict Tree](image_url)
group had as its conflict “Communities living in highly vulnerable areas” (see Figure 8). This is not a conflict, but it could be a cause or result of a conflict. The results of this exercise indicated that the concept of the conflict tree may not have been sufficiently explained and/or differentiated from other activities with which workshop participants were already familiar.

Results from the workshop post-test also indicated that participants struggled with understanding and defining some of the central concepts discussed during the workshop. For example, when asked “How would you define environmental peacebuilding?”, answers varied widely but often did not reflect the definition of environmental peacebuilding in the manual, or the incorporation of “the value of natural capital and its related benefits into security, humanitarian and development objectives in order to prevent conflict and promote peace.” Some response to this question include:

- “Determining first the root causes of conflict and working from there to resolve the conflict.”
- “It is an approach in nature conservation at achieving peace and development.”
- “It is a process of resolving conflicts.”
- “It is an approach that puts a conflict sensitive lens to the project development and management process thereby reducing or preventing tensions and promoting peace.”

Figure 8: A Conflict Tree
“Synonymous to conflict resolution.”
“Using different forms of conflict management tools to address conflicting resource access issues of parties.”

These results may be a symptom of other challenges discussed in this chapter, such as some participants’ difficulty in understanding English, a lack of culturally relevant examples used in the workshop for illustrating those concepts, or insufficiently unclear instruction or presentation of the concepts and associated exercises during the workshop itself. The lack of accessibility of these concepts warrants additional investigation if the manual and its implementation (the framework) are to be effective.

The theory that some concepts were not covered sufficiently during the workshop was supported by responses to the workshop post-test question about what parts of the workshop could have been improved. In response to the question, “What session or workshop components could be improved? How?”, six out of 28 participants (~21%) mentioned challenges related to the comprehension of environmental peacebuilding, conflict, and M&E concepts. One person, for example, noted that “It would be more helpful if… participants would have basic apprehension/understanding of [peacebuilding]. A separate session on M&E and conflict resolution could also be helpful for participants.” Two other participants suggested that the workshop include more time to review the basics of peacebuilding and other key concepts. In contradiction to this, however, one person commented that the facilitators should have assumed “that participants have a little knowledge of the process to avoid basics.”

These responses indicate the challenge of ensuring that participants fully comprehend key concepts. The methods employed during the workshop—a mix of presentations and activities—did not fully meet the objectives of improving participants’ knowledge of environmental
peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity. The dissenting response noted above also suggests that participants’ variable knowledge of those key concepts should be assessed prior to outlining a workshop. This would allow facilitators to tailor the workshop to meet the learning needs of participants’, spending more or less time on those concepts with which participants were unfamiliar or already acquainted.

Some participants made suggestions for improving the accessibility of concepts. During our post-workshop interview, one participant encouraged the PDP team to use more participatory and interactive activities to introduce concepts in a simpler way before diving into the technical details (Participant 15, Skype interview, June 5, 2017). In explaining her suggestion, she noted that she and other people are kinetic learners and can more fully comprehend complicated concepts by moving around and interacting with one another as opposed to simply watching presentations. Indeed, interactive activities did seem to make certain concepts more accessible to participants. Role playing was the activity most often cited by participants when asked what part of the workshop was most effective (see Figure 6). Visuals and graphical representations of concepts also seemed to help, with expert reviewers observing that concepts like the conflict curve were made more accessible to manual users through illustrations (see Figure 9). One reviewer, for example, noted that he liked the problem tree, describing how “it works as a visual and allows people to speak to… different issues” (E. Abitbol, Skype interview, May 19, 2017). Another
expert reviewer wrote in response to what would make the manual better, “Graphics! I would encourage using more if that’s possible. They’re very helpful” (Participant 17, Email communication, April 30, 2017).

The manual section on M&E was another part of the manual that seemed to have limited accessibility as assessed by the reviewers (see Ajroud et al., 2007, Module 4). As one expert reviewer noted, the instructions provided were not sufficient for those who did not have experience with M&E previously (E. Abitbol, Email communication, May 1, 2017). Unlike other modules that provided step-by-step instructions for putting concepts into practice, the reviewer commented that “there is detailed work involved here, and the manual (as a training tool) does not create a process for doing the work” A workshop participant who had reviewed the manual by the time of our post-workshop interview also commented on the M&E section, saying, “I think if there would be more to say about this, what the theory of change is, that would be more helpful, especially to those who are just beginning to understand what it is or who have not encountered what it is” (Participant 16, Skype Interview, June 10, 2017). Based on these comments, both the manual and its implementation could benefit from an in-depth discussion of M&E that provides users and learners with more concrete instructions for putting the concepts discussed into practice (more concrete recommendations are provided in Chapter 7).

The Use of Practical Examples

Linked to issues of conceptual clarity and a lack of contextualization, the use of real-world, practical examples in a workshop is one way in which to clarify how certain concepts or processes play out in real life. When discussing the workshop and what would have made it more comprehensible to him, one participant noted that it would have been helpful to “have a chance
to do a real-world situation, something like experiencing dealing with real conflict” (I. Talosig, Skype interview, June 2, 2017). Another person also felt that practical examples would have been helpful:

Maybe more community members next time to help guide us [on] why certain approaches failed in their situation, and what worked for their areas. I think more community members who went through conflict resolution could tell us what worked and what didn’t just through contextualizing the setting of the manual, how we could apply it locally. (E. Lorenzo, Skype interview, June 12, 2017)

A third participant expressed in our post-workshop discussion that it would have been beneficial for people to learn the concepts through a discussion of their own experiences (Participant 7, Skype Interview, June 7, 2017). During our conversation, he explicitly mentioned that he “liked the exchanges when participants are able to tell their stories.”

These messages from workshop participants reflect the idea that they would like to see more contextualization of the topics discussed during the workshop, but they also indicate that participants would like to do more to see and put into place some of the concepts they learned. I observed that some of the most engaging times during the workshop were when people were sharing their experiences and other workshop participants were able to ask questions in order to learn from one another. Workshop participants expressed this in the post-test, with three participants citing the sharing of examples as the most effective part of the workshop and seven noting role playing (see Figure 7). As one participant wrote, “Sharing of experiences from participants… facilitated a deeper appreciation of the tools and steps employed.” Another person pointed specifically to a session in which participants who worked for another organization shared their experiences with M&E frameworks. Asked what recommendations for follow-up
actions they had, three of the 28 participants who responded to the post-test asked for the development and dissemination of case studies that put the concepts they learned into practice. It is thus worth considering how both the manual and future workshops (the framework) can encourage more opportunities for peer-to-peer and situated learning in order to increase the accessibility of key concepts.

**Using the Manual**

Overall, the expert reviewers and the workshop participants who had reviewed the manual felt that it flowed well, proceeded logically from topic to topic, was not overly complicated, and would be relatively easy to use. As one workshop participant put it, “I like the way [the manual] is structured, and for me it’s an easy read” (Participant 7, Skype interview, June 7, 2017). However, just because the manual flows well does not mean it is accessible. During our final discussion on the project, a former PDP team member noted that, in his experience, out of all the many manuals that exist, the ones that are used are of “high quality,” are easy to interpret, and help you find specific answers to specific questions (D. Pavitt, WhatsApp interview, April 1, 2017). An expert reviewer also commented on ways to increase the use of the manual, noting that coupling it with a workshop can help “overcome” challenges to accessibility (Participant 17, Skype interview, May 17, 2017).

This feedback on how the manual is and should be interpreted and implemented gives rise to questions related to just how this manual should be used. When I asked an expert reviewer about the accessibility of the manual, he responded, “I don’t know that the manuals themselves should be used as the methodology for a particular workshop so much as the manuals should be used to then inform the way in which a methodology for a workshop is designed, that is
specifically tailored to groups of people. I think that’s important to keep in mind” (E. Abitbol, Skype interview, May 19, 2017). He went on to add that he believed the manual’s primary method of use should be for a trainer or facilitator, not as a workshop tool or handout. Using the manual as a foundation for but not a template of a training would allow a facilitator to make important adaptations for the context, develop instructions that were more useful for specific learners, and provide overall guidance to him or her in developing ideas related to how to implement the main concepts and activities (E. Abitbol, Email Communication, May 1, 2017). This idea of increasing the accessibility (and relevancy and effectiveness) through its implementation is considered in more detail in Chapter 6.

Evaluating Effectiveness

Effectiveness refers to whether or not the framework—composed of the Environmental Peacebuilding Training Manual and pilot workshop—achieved its objectives. The manual’s objective is “to increase the awareness, knowledge and skills of conflict-sensitive environmental peacebuilding approaches among conservation practitioners and organizations working in areas affected by conflict or where conservation efforts could potentially impact conflict” (Ajroud et al., 2017, p. 4). Similarly, the workshop objectives included raising awareness and improving knowledge among participants about peacebuilding, conflict analysis and conflict sensitivity, as well as increasing participants’ capacities to design and implement environmental peacebuilding approaches. For both, the objectives concentrate on changes in knowledge, attitudes, skills, and practices related to environmental peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity.

To evaluate the manual and workshop’s effectiveness, expert reviewers responded to questions about whether the manual achieved the objectives listed above. I also asked them how
they might practically evaluate the manual’s effectiveness. Also with regard to evaluating effectiveness, workshop participants answered questions on the pre-test that provided information about their baseline knowledge of key concepts, which could in turn be compared to their knowledge of those concepts after the workshop ended using responses to the post-test. The workshop participants I interviewed answered similar questions and described how their knowledge of and attitudes toward environmental peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity had changed. Since one of the objectives of the manual and workshop is for people to put the skills developed into practice, participants also noted whether or not they planned to take actions based on what they learned during the workshop. While nearly every interview participant responded on the post-test that the workshop objectives had been met, the level of the manual and workshop’s effectiveness are less certain.

Knowledge of Key Concepts

As one of the objectives of the manual and workshop was to increase participants’ awareness, knowledge of, and skills in environmental peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity, the workshop pre- and post-tests asked participants to define environmental peacebuilding, note steps of a conflict analysis process and CCB process, and to respond to whether they felt they understood and were capable of engaging with conflict, conflict analysis, and stakeholders. Between the pre- and the post-tests, participants demonstrated a modest average increase in knowledge of environmental peacebuilding and the steps of a conflict analysis. Pre-test descriptions of environmental peacebuilding were often vague, with some workshop participants defining it as a “process on conflict management” or “reaching [a] solution to conflicts that is positive for the environment.” However, in the post-survey, more participants provided in-depth,
descriptive answers, such as “environmental peacebuilding includes prevention, mitigation, resolution of conflicts related to environmental conservation.” These more articulate responses in the post-test indicate that participants had higher levels of awareness and deeper knowledge of key concepts covered in the workshop.

Despite the more thorough and articulate answers to the post-test on average, there were still a number of vague responses to many of the questions that indicated a lack of in-depth understanding of concepts like conflict analysis and CCB. For example, one workshop participant responded to the post-workshop question of “What are some of the steps of conflict analysis?” with “Ask questions [about] why are the conflicts occurring.” Conflict analysis steps include root cause analysis, stakeholder analysis, and the peacebuilding architecture analysis (which was not covered in the workshop). Another person confused conflict analysis with conflict resolution styles.

The responses given by these participant and others speak to the workshop’s limited effectiveness in developing an in-depth understanding of conflict analysis processes. Other post-test responses provide additional evidence for the workshop’s limited success in supporting a comprehensive knowledge among participants of key concepts. Participants sometimes interchangeably used conflict resolution, conflict management, and peacebuilding to describe similar processes of responding to conflict, for example. As mentioned above, few participants were able to articulately define environmental peacebuilding in the post-test. In addition, of the 28 responses to the question “What is one of the steps of the collaborative consensus building approach?”, only slightly more than half of the participants (15 participants; ~54%) listed one of the five steps (opening statement, uncovering the story, framing and listing issues, developing solutions, and reaching an agreement; see Ajroud et al., 2007, p. 61). Taken together, the post-
test data indicates that more should be done during a workshop to ensure that it is effective and that participants do generate real knowledge of the concepts covered.

**Capacity to Implement Environmental Peacebuilding & Conflict Sensitive Approaches**

Workshop participants were asked in the post-test if they felt more comfortable with environmental peacebuilding, conflict sensitivity, and conflict analysis and if they would now plan to incorporate what they learned into their work. In response to the statement “I understand the conflicts that occur in my work context well,” 81% of participants (13 people) either agreed or absolutely agreed on the pre-test. Responding to the same question on the post-test, 100% of participants (28 people) either agreed or absolutely agreed. This increase in participant’s self-assessment of their understanding of conflicts may be a result of understanding conflicts in a different way, i.e. not simply thinking of conflict as violent conflict like one workshop participant mentioned is the traditional Filipino understanding. It could also indicate that participants had now given more thought to the conflicts they encounter during their work as a result of their participation in activities like the conflict tree and stakeholder analysis that were practiced during the workshop.

Participants were also asked to respond to the statement, “I feel comfortable engaging various stakeholders as part of my work.” On the pre-test, 94% of participants (15 people) agreed or absolutely agreed with the statement. Similar to the statement about understanding conflicts, 100% of participants (28 people) agreed or absolutely agreed on the post-test. This too indicates that the workshop was effective in providing participants with additional skills in stakeholder engagement, one of the primary needs identified during the needs assessment and echoed by workshop participants themselves.
Interestingly, however, a smaller percentage of workshop participants absolutely agreed with the statement “I feel that I can address conflicts as part of my work” on the post-test as compared to the pre-test (13% or 2 people on the pre-test and 7% or 2 people on the post-test). Although it is not clear why this may be, a number of participants noted on the post-test that they would like to have additional resources or trainings provided to them following the workshop. This may indicate that participants, now having a better understanding of conflicts and how to engage stakeholders, were more aware of limitations in their knowledge of this topic and/or the obstacles to managing conflicts. Now aware of this limitation and with an expanded awareness of conflict and its impact on their work, they may have requested additional training or resources to address it. Responses to the statement “I feel comfortable conducting a conflict analysis” seem to support this hypothesis. While 86% of participants (13 people) either agreed or absolutely agreed on the pre-test, there was only a slight increase to 89% (25 people) who agreed or absolutely agreed on the post-test.

As another, indirect measure of capacity to implement change, some participants communicated changes in their interest in or self-assessed capacity to implement environmental peacebuilding or conflict sensitive processes by stating during post-workshop interviews that they would now consider or incorporate some of the skills the workshop covered, such as seeking out win-win solutions, pursuing CCB processes, and conducting stakeholder analysis to better understand underlying conflict causes (E. Lorenzo, Skype interview, June 12, 2017; I. Talosig, Skype interview, June 2, 2017). Some also communicated that they were now more familiar with what environmental peacebuilding means. For example, one participant noted that, “The term environmental peacebuilding, I never heard about it actually. But the principles, we have been doing some of those things” (I. Talosig, Skype interview, June 2, 2017). He added that
he felt “more confident” about pursuing peacebuilding because of the workshop and the
guidelines included in the manual. Another participant also felt “better prepared” to deal with
conflicts using new or modified tools discussed during the workshop, although he did not find
much of the workshop to be new (E. Lorenzo, Skype interview, June 12, 2017). While this is
promising, evaluating the real impact of the manual and workshop on people’s capacities
requires long-term follow-up and observation of actions taken. Conflict sensitivity capacity
development is further discussed in Chapter 6.

Key Formative Evaluation Findings

Following the completion of the expert reviews and pilot implementation workshop, I
completed an interim evaluation report for the PDP team, which it used to then finalize the
Environmental Peacebuilding Training Manual for internal publication at the end of June 2017.
Although the interim evaluation document provided to the PDP team focused more on the
manual and what could reasonably be done to refine it in the span of a month’s time, there are
other key findings from the formative evaluation that are worth outlining briefly here.

- Conservation practitioners can benefit from conflict sensitivity frameworks because they
  face conflicts. Although I pointed toward the utility of conflict sensitivity frameworks for
  conservation work in Chapter 4 based on information collected during the needs
  assessment, the experiences of workshop participants and the opinions of expert
  reviewers further reinforced the idea that conflict sensitivity can play a role in supporting
  conservation work. However, ensuring that conservation practitioners have an in-depth

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26 See Appendix C for the interim evaluation.
understanding of concepts like conflict sensitivity and environmental peacebuilding is not easily done, and continuous follow-up with learners to ensure comprehension is important.

- Effective ways of engaging stakeholders continues to be a primary need and preoccupation of conservation practitioners. Identified in the needs assessment and again through the pilot implementation, conservation practitioners both need and appreciate resources for effectively engaging stakeholders in order to ameliorate conflicts and pursue conservation efforts.

- As the literature on conflict sensitivity points out (see Chapter 2) and this research confirms, contextualizing conflict sensitivity frameworks to make them relevant for users is tricky. Because a manual designed to be applicable to a wide audience must be general enough to apply to a variety of situations, ensuring contextual relevance will largely need to occur during the manual’s implementation. But just how is a manual best implemented? This issue is discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

- Echoing the broader literature on conflict sensitivity (see Chapter 2), adequately addressing issues related to M&E also remains challenging. While the Environmental Peacebuilding Training Manual contains more information on M&E than many other conflict sensitivity frameworks, it is still likely to be insufficient for some users (as noted by expert reviewers and participants). However, there is a balancing act between sufficient detail and information overload to consider. The question of just how to do this is particularly relevant for conservation practitioners, who often have less experience with M&E frameworks than those in other fields that are more used to monitoring and evaluating social criteria.
These findings are essential to fully responding to the research question, “How might conflict sensitivity frameworks support conservation?” They form the foundation for a more broadly conceived discussion in Chapter 6 on how this framework (the manual and its implementation) can support environmental conservation over the long-term in a way that is both impactful and sustainable.
CHAPTER 6: OUTCOMES, IMPACT & SUSTAINABILITY

After completing Phase III of the research project, the formative evaluation, the next step in the research process was to conduct an evaluation of the short-term outcomes of the pilot implementation workshop. This phase is the first step in evaluating how the framework, in its current form, can support conservation work. As Bush (2003b) notes in his discussion of the PCIA framework, one of the predominant conflict sensitivity frameworks, “its utility will become evident (or not) only in its application” (p. 42).

This chapter explores the third research sub-question “What effect might a conflict sensitivity framework for environmental conservation have on the knowledge, attitudes, capacities, and actions of conservation practitioners?” by evaluating the short-term outcomes of the Philippines workshop. OECD (2010) defines outcomes as “the likely or achieved short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention’s outputs” (p. 28). The outcomes of the workshop are evaluated here based on a post-workshop, outcome survey of the participants. This survey
collected information from participants about their attitudes about, intentions to use, and self-assessed skills related to environmental peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity.

This chapter also begins to respond to the overarching research question “How might conflict sensitivity frameworks be adapted to support conservation work?” with a discussion of the potential for impact and the sustainability of this conservation-focused conflict sensitivity framework. Impact refers to the “positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by [an] intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended” (OECD, 2010, p. 24), and sustainability is the continuation of positive outcomes from an intervention or process (p. 36). Although it was impossible to actually evaluate impact and sustainability within the duration of this research project due to the time and resource constraints facing the PDP team and me, I consider here the issues of clarity of purpose, conceptual clarity, and conflict sensitivity capacity development and mainstreaming as a way to anticipate the framework’s potential for impact and sustainability. I focus on these three issues because, through the information collected and themes identified during the four research phases, it became evident that these three issues are the central challenges to (and, therefore, opportunities for) the framework’s effective support of conservation work. Without ensuring that the framework’s purpose and the concepts it teaches are clear, and without supporting its sustained use in developing conservation practitioners’ and organizations’ capacities in environmental peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity, the positive contributions of the framework will likely be limited. CI, and the PDP team specifically, have made the crucial, first steps toward an effective framework, but more is needed in terms of revisions and implementation efforts so that this framework avoids the pitfalls of so many other conflict sensitivity frameworks (see Chapter 2).
The chapter begins with an overview of the results of the outcome survey sent to participants after the Philippines workshop. I discuss the attitudes, skills, and (intended) actions reported by those who responded to the survey, and I comment on what this information might mean in terms of the successes and shortcomings of the workshop. Next, I discuss the three main challenges to sustainability and impact faced by this framework as identified through the research: the need for additional conceptual clarity, the need to clarify the framework’s purpose, and the need for sustained efforts to support capacity development and mainstreaming. I summarize the feedback received from research participants and my collaborators that revealed these issues and describe how each creates barriers to impact and sustainability. This chapter provides evidence for the recommendations that follow in Chapter 7.

**Workshop Outcomes**

In September 2017, four months after the pilot implementation workshop in the Philippines, I sent an outcome survey to all workshop participants in order to gauge their attitudes toward and self-assessed capacities related to conflict sensitivity and environmental peacebuilding and whether they had taken or planned to take any action to incorporate these processes into their work. Since the objectives of both the manual and the workshop refer to the development of awareness of and skills related to environmental peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity for the purpose of effectively pursuing these processes, collecting information on participants’ confidence in their capacities as well as what they have done initially with what they learned is an important step toward evaluating progress toward those objectives. Phase IV

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27 The outcome survey instrument is available as Appendix D.
of this research project also responds to critiques regarding “the failure to systematically evaluate” conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding initiatives (Bush, 2003b, p. 46), as I collected information on the short-term outcomes of the framework’s implementation.

Of the 30 workshop participants, not including my PDP team collaborators or myself, 12 responded to the outcome survey. The instrument captured information in three areas: (1) the participants’ attitudes toward environmental peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity, (2) their self-assessed skills related to both, and (3) their applications, or planned applications, of those skills. Based on the participants’ responses, while the workshop may have resulted in more positive opinions on the importance of conflict sensitivity and environmental peacebuilding as well as increased confidence in related capacities, participants need additional training and other follow-up opportunities in order to fully implement what they have learned in a way that achieves the framework’s objectives, has impact, and is sustainable.

**Attitudes Toward Conflict Sensitivity & Environmental Peacebuilding**

The first set of questions solicited feedback from the participants about their attitudes toward conflict sensitivity and environmental peacebuilding. Using Likert scale questions, I asked the workshop participants whether they thought conflict sensitivity and environmental peacebuilding are important to my work.

![Figure 11: Outcome Survey, Question 4](image)
were important to their work (see Figure 11). The majority (10 of 12 participants) strongly agreed, and two respondents neither agreed or disagreed, although there is no indication in the rest of their responses as to why that might be.

This sentiment was reflected in the responses to the question, “Have you incorporated or do you plan to incorporate any elements of conflict sensitivity or environmental peacebuilding into your work?” All 12 of the participants selected “Yes.” Of course, there is potential for some survey bias, particularly social desirability bias (King & Bruner, 2000) as participants may have wanted to reply with the “right” answer. However, by making the survey anonymous and noting in the instructions that responses cannot be traced back to the person who submits them, I attempted to mitigate the potential for this bias as much as possible (see Bandura, 2005). Taken together, these two questions indicate that workshop participants found value in both the workshop and the concepts of environmental peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity.

Skills in Conflict Sensitivity & Environmental Peacebuilding

The PDP team and I also wanted to know if, in addition to finding value in the workshop and these concepts, participants felt prepared by what they had learned to incorporate these concepts into their work. An additional Likert scale question asked participants whether they felt they had the skills, resources, and support needed to integrate conflict sensitivity into their work (see Figure 12). While the previously discussed questions illustrated participants’ attitudes about conflict sensitivity and environmental peacebuilding’s relevance to their work, this question was about understanding whether participants felt they had the capacity to actually do the work.
Responses to this question were more mixed. Most participants felt positively about their capacities but were less confident in their skills than they seemed to be in the value of conflict sensitivity and environmental peacebuilding for their work. These mixed responses may be a result of poor question design, as participants may have felt positively about their skills but not about the support they had received or vice versa. While the intent was to assess their feelings about their capacities generally, in hindsight, I could have phrased the question in a less confusing way.

However, the responses do parallel participants’ responses on the workshop post-test with regard to whether they felt that they can address conflicts as part of their work or were comfortable in conducting a conflict analysis. As noted in Chapter 5, for both of those questions, the number of people who absolutely agreed decreased from the pre-test to the post-test. Considered together, the responses from both the workshop post-test and the outcome survey indicate an opportunity for further engagement whereby workshop participants can receive additional support to further develop their capacities as well as their confidence in them. Capacity development over the long-term will influence the level of impact and sustainability of the framework as those without capacity are not likely to use the framework or may use it in a way that is incorrect and ineffective.
Action Related to Conflict Sensitivity & Environmental Peacebuilding

As mentioned above, all of those who responded to the outcome survey stated that they either plan to incorporate or have incorporated elements of conflict sensitivity and environmental peacebuilding into their work. However, none of those who responded listed any challenges that they have faced as part of a process of incorporation. This suggests that participants have either not yet incorporated conflict sensitivity and environmental peacebuilding elements into their conservation work or, if they have, they may have done so in a more limited way, which in turn might have presented fewer challenges. Responses to the question “What elements of conflict sensitivity or environmental peacebuilding did you or do you plan to incorporate into your work?” support this hypothesis, with four out of the 12 participants (33%) using language in their responses that suggest some future actions that they would take. For example:

- “Should there be any conflict/misunderstanding on the [site] of experimental areas of [future projects]… I will try to apply what I have learned in conflict resolutions (positive negotiations)… I have not been so far confronted with a situation where I have to apply what I have learned”
- “I plan to do a conflict analysis first in every endeavor, as well as analyzing the stakeholders”
- “Elements like understanding and reflecting on existing or potential conflicts, promoting dialogue, inclusivity and do no harm actions should always be present and streamlined in all processes. This could be done by integrating all those elements in project approaches”

With the focus in these responses on future possibilities, they suggest that the workshop was unsuccessful in its coverage of the principles of environmental peacebuilding, the situations in which conflict sensitivity is useful, and/or the relevancy of either for the work of participants.
Environmental peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity are relevant not only when undertaking a new intervention or when there is an obvious conflict in the conservation setting. Nevertheless, these responses suggest that the workshop did not make that relevance sufficiently clear to participants, many of whom were unfamiliar with these topics and indicated in workshop post-tests that they would have liked more information on them (see Chapter 5).

More should therefore be done to convey to participants that both conflict sensitivity and environmental peacebuilding can inform projects taking place in any setting in which stakeholders have disagreements with one another, experience misunderstandings or differences of opinion, etc., not just in cases of overt or violent conflict. Most workshop participants have at some point dealt (and, in fact, continue to regularly deal) with conflicts in their conservation work settings, such as those between communities or between communities and government or businesses, or even between themselves and those groups. Therefore, conflict-sensitive and environmental peacebuilding approaches should be immediately relevant. It is possible that participants continue to see conflict as narrowly defined and, correspondingly, do not see a place for conflict sensitivity or environmental peacebuilding. Future iterations of the workshop should ensure that participants get sufficient time to cover and digest the foundational concepts, such as when conflict sensitivity is relevant and useful (see Chapter 7 for more recommendations).

In addition to suggesting that the workshop did not result in a sufficient understanding of the “what” and “why” of key concepts among participants, the outcome survey responses also contribute to concerns related to capacity development. If participants are not using what they learned during the workshop soon afterward, they risk forgetting those concepts and skills. The validity of this concern was illustrated by my post-workshop interviews, which took place around one month after the workshop, and during which some participants already found it
difficult to remember the topics covered and activities that took place during the workshop. Without additional support to promote the use of conflict sensitivity and environmental peacebuilding processes by participants, developing real capacities in those areas will be difficult. As Goddard (2014) notes, developing capacity must go beyond training; if CI does not promote conflict sensitivity as the responsibility of all staff, capacity will not be developed, and true mainstreaming cannot be achieved.

Despite evidence of a lack of use or implementation, some outcome survey responses indicated that participants were truly interested in pursuing the conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding processes discussed during the workshop, particularly those related to stakeholder engagement. Responding to the question of what elements of conflict sensitivity or environmental peacebuilding participants plan to incorporate in their work, one person highlighted inclusivity and encouraging stakeholder participation and consultation. Another said that meetings and dialogue were on the agenda for his or her protected areas management projects. Another person mentioned stakeholder analysis and collaborative consensus building in forest land-use planning as a next step. In fact, the majority of responses to this question (ten of 12 people, or ~83%) indicated that workshop participants were most interested in engagement, with a focus on collaborative, participatory processes. This is not surprising given how many of the workshop participants highlighted activities related to stakeholder engagement as the most effective workshop sessions in the workshop post-test (see Chapter 5) as well as how many of the people with whom I spoke during the needs assessment related issues with stakeholder engagement (see Chapter 4).

How can these intentions be transformed into action? Responding to the question “What other skills, resources, and support do you need to further integrate conflict sensitivity into your
conservation work?”, almost all of the participants requested additional skill development, trainings, and support (11 of 12 people or ~92%; one person responded “none”).

The most often requested skills were negotiation, mediation, or other stakeholder communication skills (seven out of the 15 responses on skills). Again, this is not surprising given that, on the workshop post-test, a number of people mentioned facilitation and other stakeholder engagement techniques as the most effective workshop component. Participants in the needs assessment phase were also focused on different ways of engaging stakeholders. Additionally, on the workshop post-test, many participants mentioned role playing opportunities as the most effective, and this desire for real-world experience is reflected in the outcome survey in that more than a quarter of the responses participants gave (four out of the 15 responses on skills) referred to additional, situated opportunities to practice the skills covered during the workshop. More than a quarter (again, four out of the 15 responses on skills) also requested ways of sharing knowledge, such as case studies, making documents like the Environmental Peacebuilding

Figure 13: Outcome Survey, Skills & Support Requested by Survey Participants
Training Manual available, and establishing a knowledge sharing platform. These responses also parallel the responses of needs assessment participants, many of whom requested opportunities to learn from one another.

**Challenges to Conflict Sensitivity Impact & Capacity Development**

Based on the results presented above as well as those summarized in Chapters 4 and 5, I now discuss the three main challenges to ensuring the positive impact and sustainability of conflict sensitivity frameworks for environmental conservation work. These three challenges have implications for addressing the overall research question guiding this project because they are not only challenges to but also opportunities for better supporting conservation work. By reflecting on how to respond to these challenges, the PDP team, CI, and indeed all conservation practitioners can respond to them, attend to the broader critiques of conflict sensitivity frameworks, and become innovators in conflict sensitivity, using it to inform more impactful, and sustainable interventions.

**Conceptual Clarity**

As described in the review of the literature (see Chapter 2), conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding are often unfamiliar concepts for environmental conservation practitioners. Although they have informed development, humanitarian aid, and peacebuilding interventions since the early 1990s (Abitbol, 2014; Paffenholz, 2016), conservation organizations like IISD and CI have only recently begun to examine their relevance for environmental conservation projects. Because of this novelty, it was expected that many if not most of the conservation practitioners who participated in this research project would be unfamiliar with peacebuilding
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and conflict sensitivity and that any framework designed to increase their knowledge and skills in these areas would have to begin with an explanation of those concepts and what they mean in relation to conservation work.

In Chapter 4, I describe how most of those I interviewed during the needs assessment were either unaware or had only a vague awareness of conflict sensitivity and associated frameworks or tools. This likely stemmed from the idea, as one need assessment participant put it, that conflict is not part of their job (Participant 9, Skype interview, April 22, 2016). Similarly, participants in the Philippines workshop also had a limited understanding of conflict sensitivity and environmental peacebuilding. When asked to define environmental peacebuilding on the workshop pre-test, most participants linked conflict management or peacebuilding with conservation activities without providing any substantial detail that would indicate an in-depth understanding (see Chapter 5). For example, one participant responded, “A process of addressing conflicts related [to the] use of environment and natural resources in certain communities.” Another person defined environmental peacebuilding as simply a “process on conflict management.”

The four participants I interviewed prior to the workshop had comparably little exposure to conflict sensitivity and environmental peacebuilding. One responded to my question about what environmental peacebuilding means to him by saying, “Actually, this is the first time [I have heard of] this concept” (I. Talosig, Skype interview, May 5, 2017). Another workshop participant also had not heard of environmental peacebuilding, responding, “I’m not so familiar with that term, environmental peacebuilding, but I know about the term peacebuilding in the context of peace, for example, between people. Like, establishing a more positive relationship amongst each other” (Participant 15, Skype interview, May 6, 2017). Only one of the only
participants responded at length, likening environmental peacebuilding to “social justice in terms of resource access” and a balancing act between conservation and development that simultaneous encourages “ownership by the local community” (E. Lorenzo, Skype interview, May 3, 2017).

When asked about conflict sensitivity, the participants I interviewed prior to the workshop tended to have more understanding of that concept. One person even demonstrated a high degree of familiarity with the term, defining it as:

Being more aware if a possible or eminent conflict is arising. So, a person needs to be more aware to look at or to realize if a particular activity or a particular action would result in a conflict between parties or between groups. (Participant 15, Skype interview May 6, 2017)

Another person defined conflict sensitivity as “localized approaches… You may have a conflict, let’s say, in one province and the same conflict in another province, but you can’t have one approach… You have to have a cultural approach to solve it” (E. Lorenzo, Skype interview, May 3, 2017). A third participant styled conflict sensitivity as “being able to identify the causes, forces, and implications of the conflict” (Participant 16, Personal Interview, May 9, 2017). These responses indicate that participants in the Philippines workshop likely have, on average, more awareness of conflict and its relationship to their work than the people I interviewed during the needs assessment (see Chapter 4).

So how much did workshop participants learn about these and other key concepts during those three days in Palawan, Philippines? Did the facilitators sufficiently and clearly convey the key concepts to generate knowledge among the participants? This is important because the objectives of the workshop and manual are that learners understand environmental peacebuilding and conflict-related terminology so that they can in turn “identify applications within [their]
work” (Ajroud et al., 2017, p. 5). To achieve these objectives, my PDP collaborators covered the key concepts of environmental peacebuilding (as something that happens before, during, and after a conflict), positive and negative peace, the conflict curve, etc. during the morning of the first day of the workshop. They presented on conflict sensitivity on the third day. Overall, around four hours were spent on these foundational concepts (although they were referenced during other sessions, such as those on collaborative consensus building or CCB, conflict analysis group work, and the session on monitoring and evaluation or M&E).

The limited time spent on these concepts is likely one reason why many participants had difficulty conveying a specific and articulate understanding of environmental peacebuilding or conflict sensitivity in the post-test, outcome survey, and post-workshop interviews. Responding to the workshop post-test question “How would you define environmental peacebuilding?” responses ranged from copies of the definition according to the Environmental Peacebuilding Training Manual to vague or otherwise incorrect definitions like “being aware of known conflicts” and “synonymous to conflict resolution.” Participants also had difficulty in describing and distinguishing between other methods discussed like CCB and conflict analysis. For example, when asked what one of the steps of CCB is, one participant wrote, “conflict analysis.” Another wrote “conflict resolution.” From the workshop post-tests collected, it was clear that some people had either learned more or had a higher baseline level of knowledge than others, but that the majority needed additional support to really absorb what was covered during the workshop.

28 The five steps of CCB are defined in the manual as “opening statement,” “uncovering the story,” “framing and listing issues,” “developing solutions,” and “reaching an agreement” (Ajroud et al., 2017, p. 61).
The same imprecision about these concepts also characterized my post-workshop interviews with participants. Although the participants conveyed a new sense of familiarity with the concepts—as one person said, “I realized during the workshop that... the principles, we have been doing some of those things” (I. Talosig, Skype Interview, June 2, 2017)—and while this is a promising first step, they were not articulating exactly what environmental peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity mean as discussed during the workshop. When I asked one participant in our post-workshop interview if she now felt capable of doing environmental peacebuilding activities, she discussed environmental peacebuilding as equal to managing conflicts, such as “conflicts between two different organizations or two municipalities who have conflicts on boundaries or jurisdiction, for example” (Participant 15, Skype Interview, June 5, 2017).

While environmental peacebuilding does involve conflict management, it is more than just responding to problems as they arise while trying to achieve conservation objectives; as the manual describes it, environmental peacebuilding is a conscious and direct effort to promote peace by directly addressing conflicts and their root causes (see Ajroud et al., 2017, p. 7-8). Another example that illustrates that the difference between environmental peacebuilding and conflict management may not have been clearly conveyed during the workshop came when I asked one participant during our post-workshop interview what environmental peacebuilding will mean for her work after having taken part in the workshop. She responded, “Unconsciously we know that there would come a point that we have to do conflict management... but this [workshop] helps us see, because it sort of has reminded us that these [tools] are available…” (Participant 15, Skype Interview, June 5, 2017).

Participants difficulty in articulating and differentiating between the key concepts after the workshop indicates the inadequacy of the workshop as it took place in promoting true
understanding. One-time trainings are likely insufficient to develop true knowledge and capacities on these complicated topics (see Handschin, 2016), and real institutional capacities are only ensured through policies and other holistic systems (Conflict Sensitivity Consortium, 2012). This brings to mind some of the criticisms of conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding initiatives, namely that they are either reduced to box checking or tool-focused exercises (Bush, 2003b).

However, the results of the workshop also indicate an opportunity for follow-up and ongoing learning opportunities that can solidify that understanding. As the idea of the manual is that it builds true capacity and that the components of environmental peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity are integrated into the conservation project cycle, the responses from participants encourage a consideration of how better to teach those key concepts and provide support for their integration into conservation work more generally. This might include more time spent on the concepts during a workshop—explaining, discussing, and providing real-world examples—as well as follow-up conversations and on the ground activities that further solidify what these concepts mean within the scope of conservation work. This recommendation is discussed further in Chapter 7.

Issues of conceptual clarity also extend to the difference between peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity within the manual. While both terms are defined and discussed in the manual (see Ajroud et al., 2017, p. 7 and p. 23), there is not an explicit discussion of how they relate to one another and what the differences between them are. Without this discussion, the manual and any training based on it runs the risk of further conflating the two (see Woodrow & Chigas, 2009). This lack of demarcation was one of the expert reviewer’s primary points of feedback. During our interview, he noted, “Clearly they are not the same thing, right? I think they’re part of an overlapping tradition, but not the same thing in the way I understand it” (E. Abitbol, Skype
interview, May 19, 2017). He went on to note that conflict sensitivity depends on the vantage point of the person considering it, and that there is a spectrum between taking measures “to ensure that risks to the project or program as it’s being deployed are minimized” and an intentional [perspective] about being sensitive to the conflict actors, context, and the aspirations of the program. And for that to be much more intentional about seeking to contribute to, if you will, a peacebuilding agenda and a set of peacebuilding priorities, which are, in a sense, beyond the particularities of the program.

The responses of and my discussions with workshop participants and expert reviewers on the clarity (or lack thereof) of key concepts indicate that users of the framework need more exposure than a single training can provide to fully internalize and feel comfortable with environmental peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity as concepts. As one participant stated when asked during our follow-up interview what he thought of the concepts covered during the workshop, “I’m still internalizing these things” (I. Talosig, Skype interview, June 2, 2017).

Participants’ responses also suggest that the manual itself could be tweaked to make these concepts—and the differences between them—clearer to users.

Without providing for a precise and in-depth understanding of these concepts, capacity development and mainstreaming of environmental peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity become impossible. However, there are also important questions about the degree of understanding that conservation practitioners can realistically be expected to have. One expert reviewer’s recommendation for the manual was to dig deeper into the discourses and narratives that perpetuate conflict (E. Abitbol, Skype interview, May 19, 2017). While understanding the discourses that drive conflict would undoubtedly help people to better understand and respond to conflict, is it too much too soon for conservation practitioners? As one of the workshop
facilitators explained to participants, “We do not expect you to be experts.” These questions about why, when, and how much should be clarified; one way of doing so is in clarifying the framework’s purpose.

**Clarity of Purpose**

Issues with the clarity of the framework’s key concepts—how they are defined, described, portrayed, and exemplified in both the manual and any workshops based on it—have implications for and are affected by the framework’s clarity of purpose. Although the manual introduces the objective of increasing “the awareness, knowledge and skills of conflict-sensitivity environmental peacebuilding approaches among conservation practitioners and organizations” (Ajroud et al., 2017, p. 4), what does this mean in practice? In a feedback email following his review of the manual, one expert reviewer wrote:

> Is the purpose of the manual to ensure that, through conflict sensitivity training, CI projects are designed and able to navigate conflict environments and ensure that conflicts do not derail the projects? Is the purpose of the manual and training to ensure that CI projects do not heighten conflicts (as an aside, these conflicts many or may not have any impact on the CI projects specifically), i.e. Do no harm? Is the purpose to train people to intervene through CI projects with the express intention of pursuing environmental peacebuilding, i.e. Peacebuilding through/via environmental interventions/initiatives/projects? It could very well be all three, and I believe that it probably is, generally speaking, but this is also likely to change from one context / environment to the next. (E. Abitbol, Email communication, May 1, 2017)
Similar to this feedback, I commented in an early version of the manual, “Is the goal to design [peacebuilding] interventions? Or just to identify where projects can be helpful/changed/revised to bolster peace?” In other words, what does environmental peacebuilding and being conflict sensitive signify within the boundaries of the framework? Although the objectives of the manual are defined in the document, the objectives alone do not provide a clear picture of how and when the manual should be used. This lack of clarity has implications for things like how impact and sustainability are defined and measured, the depth of understanding of those concepts that conservation practitioners are expected to have, for who and in what circumstances the framework is relevant, and more.
There are a few ways in which the purpose of the framework can be clarified both in the manual and as part of a workshop. One of these is through the manual’s implementation by making clear the linkages between the main concepts and the activities like those that took place during the workshop. As noted in Chapter 5, a lack of precision as to why and for what end a tool like the conflict tree or stakeholder analysis was being used posed challenges to the effectiveness of the workshop. Although, as workshop participants commented, some of these tools are used in other contexts, they are incorporated into the manual and were used during the workshop to serve a specific function related explicitly to conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding processes.

For example, the conflict tree had been used by participants in other settings to identify a key conservation-related problem. However, as a tool for environmental peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity, the manual refers to the activity as a conflict tree because it is used to explore a conflict occurring within the context in which conservation work is happening. Whereas a conservation problem may be deforestation, a conflict that relates to this problem may be a disagreement between two communities as to how best use a certain area of forest or competing land rights over a forest that in turn encouraged unsustainable use of its resources (see Figure 14).
Because the connection between the tools and activities and the important concepts covered during the workshop were not always clear, tools like the conflict tree sometimes produced results that were different than intended, something my PDP team collaborators and I noticed during some of the workshop sessions. This issue was foreshadowed during my pre-workshop interview with one of the participants. When I asked her what she expected from the workshop, she responded by asking in return,

> Are there specific tools that would apply to environmental peacebuilding? Or is it the same peacebuilding tools being used by humanitarian organizations that are implemented in conflict areas? Are there general tools that even though you’re implementing in different [environments], you can actually use those tools? (Participant 15, Skype interview, May 6, 2017)

She wanted to know if some of the tools that were already available would be used in different ways to achieve different purposes.

This same person was also one of the participants who felt that she did not learn much from the parts of the workshop that covered tools with which she was already familiar. Another interview participant I spoke with after the workshop noticed that this feeling of reviewing things that they already knew was common among participants (Participant 7, Skype Interview, June 7, 2017). He recommended contextualizing the concepts and activities more, explaining to participants just how they can be used in their own work environments and for the specific goals of environmental peacebuilding and conflict management. As an example, he noted, “Of course we [already] know stakeholder analysis, but how do you put this in context in terms of addressing conflicts and doing peacebuilding work in many of the areas where we work?” While the workshop did repurpose some existing tools and activities, it did not always seem clear to
participants that their purpose was different. This had a marked and limiting effect on the workshop because the concepts were not put into action in a meaningful way for the participants. Future trainings and experiential activities should therefore ensure the fidelity of the activity to the stricter conflict sensitivity or environmental peacebuilding meaning. For example, workshop facilitators should provide additional instruction on the process of conducting a stakeholder analysis related to a specific conflict and illustrate this process with specific examples suggested by the learners.

Another challenge related to the manual’s purpose or the aims of the concepts contained therein is the lack of clarity regarding in what situations the processes described by the manual—engaging stakeholders, conducting an analysis of conflicts and their root causes, pursuing CCB processes—should be used. This challenge is linked to the difficulties, illustrated above by the responses to the outcome survey, in developing in-depth understanding among participants of the utility of the manual. On the outcome survey, some participants implied that they had not yet encountered a situation in which the tools and processes they learned were relevant. With the myriad of problems that participants described facing as part of their conservation work during the various workshop sessions, it seems unlikely that this is the case. Even on the workshop post-test, the majority of participants responded to the question “What are one or two next steps that you may take based on what you learned during the workshop?” with different ways they might engage stakeholders or conduct a conflict analysis. One person, for example, mentioned replicating the activities conducted during the workshop. Another person wrote, “I [will] make sure I take more time to ask why an understand root causes of problems and conflicts.” What is more likely is that the workshop sessions did not clearly articulate when environmental
peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity processes can and should be used, leaving participants ill equipped to pursue their integration independently.

Although some participants expressed their belief in the utility of these processes—as one person told me, “Just like the rights-based approach that CI has, this peacebuilding manual should also guide the project staff at CI in… conceptualizing the project, in preparing a project proposal, in implementing a project, and in monitoring the project” (Participant 16, Skype interview, June 10, 2017)—the outcome survey calls into question those expressions by hinting at a lack of implementation. One expert reviewer hints at why implementation of conflict sensitivity may be a challenge. During our interview, he suggested that mapping out the various types of conflicts that are relevant to natural resource management and which would be appropriate for the manual would help identify the manual’s limitations and allow more precision about its purpose (S. Nanthikesan, Skype interview, June 5, 2017). He added, “I would think, to start with, you have to have a clear understanding of where the manual would be most relevant.” For the framework, the situations in which it is intended to be useful should be made clearer in both the manual and in its implementation.

In addition to clarifying the framework’s purpose with regard to when it should be used, there is also a question of how it should be used. One participant made this point to me during our post-workshop discussion when he brought up the problem of connecting activities like the stakeholder analysis to the overarching objectives and concepts of the workshop: “It’s a facilitation challenge: bringing it back to [the workshop objectives], why we’re discussing this. It’s because we’re talking about peacebuilding” (Participant 7, Skype interview, June 7, 2017). In other words, who is and should be using the manual and in what way?
One answer to the question is that the framework should be used in a way that is contextually relevant. When I asked one of the workshop participants if he might use a manual like the Environmental Peacebuilding Training Manual, he stated:

Manuals always help, but at the end of the day, it’s how you tailor your approach using your theoretical knowledge of what a manual would provide, and at the same time being aware of what the colloquial dynamics are. [You] can’t pigeon hole your approach just based on the manual without taking into consideration the local knowledge. The manual can always help. But it has to be in conjunction with a person’s knowledge of the local dynamics. (E. Lorenzo, Skype interview, June 12, 2017)

Besides ensuring contextual relevancy, it is also important to clarify how the framework can be used going forward. The suggested method of using the framework was not clear following the Philippines workshop. During a post-workshop interview, one participant asked me how the PDP team planned to use the manual going forward. After I stated that I was not sure, he replied:

I find the manual useful. And it doesn’t have to necessarily be that CI would be running the training. We could do training of trainers, and this could be used by other NGOs. Either they could get us as facilitators… or if they see it as useful, and there’s a training-of-trainers that’s one of the modules of the manual, then they could run this themselves.

(Participant 7, Skype interview, June 7, 2017)

He went on to say that the manual could also be used in smaller groups, for CI staff, for other conservation organizations, or for a “mixed group” like the one we had in the Philippines, which was comprised of both CI and non-CI staff who worked on different conservation projects.

Reinforcing this idea, one expert reviewer stated during our interview that he “could see it being
used for workshops for a whole lot of organizations” (E. Abitbol, Skype interview, May 19, 2017).

How should the framework be used with those various groups? As someone who has conducted trainings on conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding, one expert reviewer was strongly in support of using the manual as a tool for facilitating other processes rather than as a textbook or reference guide for all conservation practitioners (E. Abitbol, Skype Interview, May 19, 2017). During our interview, he described how he would use the manual’s key concepts and apply them in the best way possible to meet the needs of a specific group, asking questions like, “How does using the concepts in the manual and the tools in the manual get adapted to the specific framing of the workshop I want to run?” With regard to the manual’s role, he added “I don’t know that I would give everyone who’s a participant the manual, because I don’t know what everyone’s going to want to work with. It will definitely work for me as a trainer… As a trainer, I would work with this.”

Others agreed with the idea of the manual as a facilitation tool. An expert reviewer commented that coupling the manual with a training would make it more likely to be used and more easily accessible to the intended users (Participant 17, Skype interview, May 17, 2017). A workshop participant who reviewed the manual described it as containing “all the substance that could help facilitate discussion for the trainees” (Participant 7, Skype interview, June 7, 2017). After going through the pilot workshop, the lead member of the PDP team also felt that the manual could be used as a facilitative tool in a training-of-trainers format.

Despite this common sentiment among those who provided feedback, the manual itself does not contain clear instructions for its use. That is why some reviewers recommended things like “a specific chapter for the trainer of the manual” that would provide “some bits of points to
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the trainer…” (Participant 7, Skype interview, June 7, 2017). Prior to the Philippines workshop, the idea was to draft a facilitation guide that would accompany the manual, listing step-by-step instructions for different sessions and activities. While the PDP team developed a facilitation guide for the Philippines workshop, there is not (to the best of my knowledge) a public version of one currently available. At the time of our most recent conversations in September 2017 and March 2018, the PDP team members told me they are using the manual as guidance for workshops with country offices on specific components of it, like conflict analysis. While the manual is meant to be adapted to the needs of users, this approach of taking pieces of the it and working with specific country offices does not capture the spirit of its design, which was to develop a holistic framework for conservation practitioners to incorporate all the components of environmental peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity into their work.

Clarifying the purpose of the manual and making recommendations for the framework’s implementation within the manual itself would contribute to ensuring that it is used as intended. During my discussion with one expert reviewer following his review of the manual, he told me that “it is important that when we engage with [stakeholders], we clarify what our role is and what expectations can be” (S. Nanthikesan, Skype interview, June 5, 2017). That is because, without clarity, stakeholders might assume certain intervention outcomes, which can in turn lead to conflict due to mismatched or unmet assumptions about those outcomes. The purpose of the manual should be clear to ensure that it is used as intended and that users understand what it can and cannot do. Clear expectations, in turn, will contribute to the framework’s effectiveness, which can only be ensured through appropriate adoption, as well as the development of real and realistic capacities. Without clear expectations of what can be accomplished with the
framework’s use and what is involved in implementing it, stakeholder use and buy-in of conflict sensitivity frameworks like these may be limited (see, for example, Ahmed, 2011).

**Capacity Development & Mainstreaming**

Both conceptual clarity and clarity of purpose have implications for the development of individual conflict sensitivity capacity development as well as organizational mainstreaming of environmental peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity processes. These processes are challenging yet necessary to ensure positive impact and the sustainability of that impact (Lange, 2004; Paffenholz, 2016). However, one of the critiques of conflict sensitivity frameworks—and one that has important implications for its ability to generate sustained, positive impact for any intervention or field in which it is used—is the inadequacy of long-term capacity development or mainstreaming efforts and results (Goddard, 2014; Paffenholz, 2016).

While I did not have the opportunity to evaluate the development of workshop participants’ capacity or how other users of the manual might develop their capacities over the long-term, the feedback the PDP team and I received from the expert reviewers and workshop participants during the formative and outcome evaluation phases of this research project provided a starting point for exploring how capacity development and mainstreaming might take place within the field of conservation and more broadly as well as what the obstacles might be. The information gathered, including during my final discussions with PDP team members, indicate challenges similar to those noted in the broader literature on conflict sensitivity (see Paffenholz, 2016). In addition to the challenges of clarity noted above, which can confuse potential users or interfere with effectiveness, both capacity development and mainstreaming are
hindered in this case by a lack of resources. These include staff time, financial resources to pay for workshops and project implementation, and staff expertise.

**Capacity Development**

What is capacity development and why does it matter for conflict sensitivity? OECD (2006) defines capacity development “as the process whereby people, organisations and society as a whole unleash, strengthen, create, adapt and maintain capacity over time,” with capacity being “the ability of people, organisations and society as a whole to manage their affairs successfully” (p. 12). In the case of conflict sensitivity, I define capacity development as the strengthening and maintenance of an individual or organization’s sufficient comprehension of and ability to effectively put into place the principles of conflict sensitivity. Capacity development is important for conflict sensitivity because without it, conflict sensitivity becomes just another box checking exercise, a donor requirement, a burden (Ahmed, 2011; Paffenholz, 2016), which in turn makes it less likely to be systematically implemented, and therefore less effective.

How do you develop conflict sensitivity capacity? Training alone is not sufficient (Goddard, 2014; Potter & Brough, 2004). The evolution of in-depth understanding and real, effective skills generally requires more time and practice than a single training can provide. My follow-up interviews with and survey of workshop participants demonstrated this. In our post-workshop interview, for example, one person told me, “Those things we discussed in the workshop, I still have to master… I’m still internalizing those things” (I. Talosig, Skype interview, June 2, 2017). Echoing the same sentiment in her own post-workshop interview, and in response to my question about whether she felt more able to deal with the conflicts she
mentioned during our pre-workshop interview after attending the workshop, another participant stated, “I couldn’t say that I have completely learned how to deal with those conflicts” (Participant 16, Skype interview, June 10, 2017). Still another said that participants may need “a little more time… to internalize” the concepts and skills discussed in the workshop (Participant 7, Skype Interview, June 7, 2017). One workshop participant, who later reviewed the manual, summed it up as, “What the trainees need, maybe, is a longer time to internalize the processes and inputs so that the peacebuilding lens becomes an integral part of all development initiatives.” These comments indicate that the workshop by itself was not sufficient to generate real capacity among participants and that more opportunities to learn and digest the information presented during the workshop are necessary.

In addition to workshops, the PDP team and others looking to cultivate conflict sensitivity should support capacity development through real-world, immersive practice or otherwise providing space for learners to engage with the concepts they are learning (Lange, 2004). This could include something akin to Reich’s (2012) “learning sites,” which involve the provision of time and space for learners to engage with the topics at hand, to discuss any issues they may have with them, and to ask clarifying questions. One participant suggested something similar in our post-workshop interview (Participant 7, Skype interview, June 7, 2017). He noted that providing workshop participants with more time to really engage with the topics by discussing how they might be relevant for their own work, any experiences they might have already had with them, and any questions that arise would help participants to better learn and relate the concepts to their work.

It was clear from workshop participants that interactive and participatory engagement with concepts was helpful and should be expanded. As mentioned previously, when asked which
sessions were the most effective, many participants referred to role playing or other exercises in which they were able to put concepts into practice through dialoguing with one another, moving about the room, or acting out different situations (see Figure 7). Sessions that employed these techniques often covered topics or skills with which the participants were less familiar. During the facilitation session, for example, participants commented that the activity was difficult because they have not been trained in facilitation or mediation, and it takes time to master. And those skills were the ones that many people asked for more support on following the end of the workshop, which demonstrates both that they value them and that they need additional training or other resources to develop them.

While it is clear that capacity development requires ongoing support, practice, and learning, it is also important to know whether the approach you take is effective (Lange, 2004). That is why it is essential to develop a process for monitoring and evaluating capacity development. Simister and Smith’s (2010) approach for monitoring and evaluating capacity development initiatives encourages organizations to begin with a theory of change that outlines its capacity development objectives and how it intends to achieve them, which then guides what monitoring information to collect and how. In addition, they distinguish between evaluating the immediate effects of capacity development initiatives (measuring capacity) versus long-term changes (what people do with that capacity). Chapter 7 contains recommendations to this point. Additionally, the PDP team has demonstrated interest in gathering baseline information on staff knowledge and skills related to environmental peacbuilding and conflict sensitivity in order to evaluate the outcomes of their work, and a process like Simister and Smith’s may be a useful reference for the team as they move forward as well as anyone else who is interested in evaluating conflict sensitivity and environmental peacbuilding capacities.
However, the PDP team has limited time, staffing, and financial resources. Without dedicated funding, it relies on interest from field offices to determine where to implement the manual next. And because this framework is not the primary focus of the PDP team’s work, there are competing priorities that make it difficult to follow-up and provide ongoing support to workshop participants. As one member of the PDP team mentioned in post-workshop interview, “It’s about following back [up] with them and continuing to make them champions. So, I’ll just have to think about what would be the most effective and least time intensive way of doing that” (L. Cardona, Skype interview, March 1, 2018). Identifying innovative ways to ensure ongoing support and to monitor and evaluate the effects of that support, even in the face of limited resources, will be essential to ensuring true capacity is developed.

**Mainstreaming**

While capacity development is about having the knowledge and skills to effectively do something, mainstreaming is “the long-term process of incorporating a methodology, concept or practice into all aspects of an organizations programming and practice (p. 3). Similar to capacity development, mainstreaming requires a great deal of effort and resources over a long period of time. Within an organization, it requires institutional changes in policies, practices, and procedures (Kamtsiko, 2014, p. 40).

In an ideal world, every organization would be able to successfully mainstream the approaches, like conflict sensitivity, that are important to them. As the PDP team leader described it in our end of project interview, “The goal would be to get it into every program, everywhere we work. To get conflict sensitivity as one of the things that they think about when they go to design a project. As they say with our rights-based approach, getting into the DNA of
CI” (J. Edmond, Skype interview, March 6, 2018). However, funding constraints, the urgency of different issues and competing priorities, and a lack of buy-in can hamper mainstreaming efforts (Leonhardt, 2002). An organization’s priorities or the lack of articulation of the importance of a particular process or approach by institutional leadership or in policies can also serve as barriers to effective mainstreaming (Goddard, 2014; Uitto, 2014). The same is true of CI. As one PDP team member noted, “Unfortunately, we don’t have the dedicated money to do the peace stuff. That’s the problem that we have” (J. Edmond, Skype interview, March 6, 2018). Another PDP staff person echoed this: “In my mind, I would love for [the manual] to be a living thing, and I’ve definitely seen areas where it can be improved and would love for it to be an iterative process, but I also don’t see that being very realistic necessarily because of time and financial constraints” (L. Cardona, Skype interview, March 1, 2018).

These obstacles can make attempts to mainstream concepts like conflict sensitivity and environmental peacebuilding frustrating. While PDP team members described pushing out the ideas through blogs, webinars, and calls with field offices, and some staff in those offices have shown real interest, the lack of progress has been challenging. One PDP team member expressed to me:

That’s kind of where I’m finding the challenge in the team is that we all have these conversations, and people are like, ‘Yes, this seems very relevant and interesting. And we want to learn more about it.’ And then if we’re lucky, we do a workshop or something like that. But I don’t know what the process is of mainstreaming this, and there’s only three of us on this team (L. Cardona, Skype interview, March 1, 2018)

Despite the challenges that it faces, the PDP team has continued to use the manual in its work, hosting workshops based on some of its components for different projects around the
world and “selling” pieces of it to different offices. The PDP team lead described how the team now has tools that could be adapted, and this would be one of the primary services that PDP staff provide (J. Edmond, Skype interview, March 6, 2018). This is a start, and the PDP team is working with the resources they have. However, mainstreaming will continue to be difficult so long as efforts to incorporate environmental peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity are focused on one-off training with country offices and expertise on conflict sensitivity and environmental peacebuilding is maintained entirely within the PDP team. Trainings like the one that took place in the Philippines, in order to promote mainstreaming, must be supported “through policy changes and changes in organizational practice” (Goddard, 2014, p. 4). They also cannot be relegated one department or team, as this kind of “departmentalizing” can limit impact (p. 5; see, also, Lange, 2004). Additionally, it remains to be seen what kind of support the PDP team has from the larger institution.

**Implications for Impact & Sustainability**

As described here, the PDP team’s framework (the manual and its continued implementation) faces many of the same challenges that other conflict sensitivity frameworks face with regard to capacity development and mainstreaming. The information gathered during this research project points to many of the same solutions as well, including ongoing mentorship and guidance, additional training opportunities, and opportunities for putting skills and concepts into practice in order to deepen understanding. Feedback from the PDP team itself also points to the need for a strategy for mainstreaming over the long-term that addresses challenges like limited funding and time.
In addition, without addressing the challenges mentioned above with regard to conceptual clarity, clarity of purpose, and capacity building and mainstreaming, the impact of the manual and the framework for its implementation will be limited. Users of the framework need support to sufficiently understand the key concepts of environmental peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity (and the differences between them) as well as to know when to implement them and how. The framework also will not be sustainable, as the evidence of this research demonstrates, if it relies on one-off trainings, which are insufficient for developing capacity. To ensure impact and sustainability, therefore, the PDP team should clarify the purpose of and concepts within the manual, what the framework for its implementation should look like, and provide ongoing support for users as they develop their capacities. Additionally, any other organization or group wishing to develop a similar conflict sensitivity model should confirm that the concepts and their intended use are clear. These recommendations are discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.
In this dissertation, I explore how a conflict sensitivity framework might support environmental conservation work through an action research evaluation project conducted in collaboration with Conservation International’s (CI) Peace and Development Partnerships (PDP) team. Throughout each phase of the research project, my PDP collaborators and I learned more about the types of conflicts conservation practitioners around the world encounter as part of their work, the current methods they employ in addressing them, their needs to better manage them, and just how a conflict sensitivity framework might positively and effectively support their work. This dissertation therefore contains groundbreaking research. Because the number of conflict sensitivity frameworks for environmental conservation are thus far limited (see Chapter 2), descriptions of how they were developed, or case studies and evaluations of their use are all but absent.

However, this research project also revealed that conflict sensitivity frameworks for conservation practitioners face many of the same questions and challenges as frameworks used in the fields of development, humanitarian aid, and peacebuilding. I begin this chapter by presenting some of those challenges along with my other key findings, providing both insights and recommendations. These include recommendations for both the PDP team as well as for research on and the application of conflict sensitivity more broadly. Next, I outline the research project’s limitations, followed by a discussion of the challenges and opportunities for action research. The chapter ends with some overarching conclusions about this research project and its broader value.
Key Research Findings & Recommendations

This research project has implications for the PDP team as well as the broader study and implementation of conflict sensitivity. It signals that conflict sensitivity remains a relevant concept for those involved in interventions occurring in conflict contexts. As such, in addition to outlining the key findings, I note a number of recommendations both for the PDP team as well as for those who study, have implemented, or plan to implement conflict sensitivity, no matter the field.

A Need for Conflict Sensitivity

This research project provides evidence in support of the potential utility of conflict sensitivity for conservation practitioners. From the needs assessment to the workshop participants, conservation practitioners described regularly encountering conflicts stemming from problematic relationships with stakeholders, unmet basic needs, challenging government policies and practices, corruption and other illegal activities, and differences in cultural beliefs and practices among stakeholders. To deal with these conflicts, conservation practitioners need training on conflict management techniques, strategies for better and more proactive stakeholder engagement, methods for developing a deeper understanding of and better responding to the contexts in which they work, and mechanisms for learning from the experiences of others (see Chapter 4). Depending on their design and how they are used, conflict sensitivity frameworks can address these needs. Conflict sensitivity frameworks can also raise awareness among conservation practitioners of the political nature of their work, of their inevitable impact on the
social contexts in which they work, and of the need to consider those things when designing, implementing, and evaluating conservation projects.

The Importance of Responsiveness

It first became clear during the formative evaluation phase of the research that for any conflict sensitivity framework to be relevant, effective, and accessible, it must be tailored to the context in which it is used and to the needs of the users. This means considering the wording that is used in a training and ensuring that it makes sense to learners (e.g., does conflict mean the same thing in one culture or language as another?); conducting trainings in the local language when necessary; using example scenarios that are embedded in the political, social, and economic context of the learners; and presenting information in formats that are easy to understand and meet the needs of learners (e.g. using more interactive exercises rather than relying heavily on presentations). Any conflict sensitivity curriculum should be structured in such a way that the information and concepts it contains can be customized appropriately. Without specific attention to its customizability, the impact of a framework on the knowledge, attitudes, and skills of learners will be limited. Therefore, I recommend:

- That any organization seeking to implement a framework for conflict sensitivity and related capacity building ensure that there are mechanisms for tailoring it to the specific needs of users. For smaller and more localized organizations or groups of learners, conflict sensitivity frameworks can include more concrete steps and recommendations that suit the social context in which the organization or group works. For larger or more internationally represented organizations, conflict sensitivity frameworks should be developed in such a way that the resources for tailoring their integration to the context are
sufficiently allocated. Steps might include pre-workshop discussions with project staff attending the training to assess their familiarity with the key concepts, to understand what they are hoping to get out of the workshop, and to develop examples and scenarios for use during the workshop that will make the most sense to workshop participants.

- For Conservation International (CI), if the decision is made to continue with workshops like the one held in the Philippines, the PDP team should build in preparatory steps aimed at understanding the context in which the workshop will be implemented and tailoring it to that context.

**Ensuring Clarity**

Because concepts like conflict sensitivity and environmental peacebuilding are often unfamiliar to conservation practitioners, it is important that efforts to develop knowledge and skills related to these topics are extremely clear about the definitions of key terms as well as how conservation practitioners should use the knowledge and skills they develop. The lack of complete and in-depth understanding of workshop participants was revealed in the post-test and outcome survey. Participants, for example, did not fully comprehend conflict sensitivity or environmental peacebuilding as concepts, and some were not able to discuss the steps of collaborative consensus building (CCB). These results indicate that more must be done to help participants assimilate key concepts and processes in order to ensure the long-term impact of the framework. Recommendations regarding clarity of concepts include:

- The PDP team should ensure that future efforts to implement the Environmental Peacebuilding Training Manual reinforce the definition and objectives of environmental peacebuilding and the distinction between it and conflict sensitivity. Peacebuilding is a
proactive approach to working on conflict with a primary objective of contributing to peace (Woodrow & Chigas, 2009). Conflict sensitivity is different, and conflict-sensitive conservation interventions would not necessarily have a contribution to peace as their primary objectives. Instead, these interventions seek to work in the conflict context to reduce their negative and increase their positive impacts on that conflict. Based on her study of organizations seeking to do conflict-sensitive peacebuilding work, Lange (2004) argues that “clarity on the purpose of a conflict-sensitive approach is the basis for building cross organisational commitment and moving the mainstreaming process forward” (p. 27). This distinction, and the types of projects that the PDP team intends to promote, should thus be made clearer going forward in order to promote the framework’s effectiveness as well as long-term capacity development and mainstreaming (discussed below).

- Similarly, any organization looking to implement a conflict sensitivity framework or develop peacebuilding projects should be clear on the differences between the two and make those differences known in their project objectives, processes, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E). Organizations explicitly undertaking environmental peacebuilding projects should do what they can to ensure that they are also being conflict sensitive, as peacebuilding does not necessarily equate with conflict sensitivity (Woodrow & Chigas, 2003).

In addition to being clear about concepts, there is also a need to be clear about purpose. What can a conflict sensitivity framework do? What can it not do? When and how should it be used? As discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, there is a lack of clarity regarding just how and when the manual should be used, and this will likely limit its impact and sustainability. Referring to
conflict sensitivity’s use in development projects, Ahmed (2011) also describes the problems that come along with not being clear about conflict sensitivity, its use, and purpose. Therefore, I recommend:

- After clarifying the primary objectives of its framework, the PDP team should work with leadership at CI to develop an overarching plan for implementation, including a theory of change that clarifies any assumptions and the means by which the plan will achieve its objectives. An overarching plan would consider elements such as whether environmental peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity should be mainstreamed across all CI projects; who or what department will manage this process; and how the process will be monitored and evaluated.

- As part of this process, the PDP team should spell out how the manual can and should be used, in what types of interventions and conflict contexts, and through what methods (e.g. as a facilitation tool for experienced trainers). Based on the feedback received from expert reviewers and workshop participants, I recommend that the manual be used as a facilitation guide as part of a more holistic implementation framework, to include trainings like the one held by the PDP team in the Philippines as well as a process for continuous engagement, such as mentorship in developing an environmental peacebuilding process or incorporating conflict sensitivity into the entire project cycle.

- Other organizations interested in implementing conflict sensitivity frameworks should similarly develop an overarching plan, including a theory of change, and clearly communicate that plan to staff and other relevant stakeholders. It should be clear to staff and stakeholders what implementing the framework intends to accomplish and how, what
the risks are, and how the implementation will be monitored and evaluated (see below). This plan should ensure responsiveness and adaptability to the context.

Support for Capacity Development

The post-workshop survey and outcome evaluation highlighted the fact that a single training is not sufficient in developing learner’s capacities related to conflict sensitivity and environmental peacebuilding. Additional opportunities to develop a familiarity with those concepts and to practice related skills is necessary if the framework is to have a sustainable impact. These findings mirror the general literature on conflict sensitivity, which calls into question the efficacy of one-off trainings (Goddard, 2014). However, follow-up requires time and money that are often not available, and this lack of resources is a major obstacle to ensuring that real and sustained capacity is developed.

- If possible, the PDP team should identify ways to provide follow-up support to the CI Philippines workshop and to build similar support into future efforts to implement the Environmental Peacebuilding Training Manual. This could include a range of activities, from follow-up workshops (which may require significant resources) to mentoring and guidance provided at a distance (which would require very few resources). Without following up with CI staff that are trained on the manual, the findings from this research indicate that impact and sustainability will be limited.

- Similarly, other organizations interested in developing the capacities of staff to incorporate conflict sensitivity into their projects should devote sufficient time and resources into developing that capacity, and these should be determined from the start of the work. As this experience demonstrates, and in accordance with others who have
studied capacity development and mainstreaming (Lange, 2004; Goddard, 2014; Paffenholz, 2016), one-off trainings are insufficient. If the value of conflict sensitivity is to be truly understood, organizations must develop holistic plans for implementation and integration, dedicate ample resources (time, money, and staff) to carrying out the plan.

The Need for Demonstrating Impact

The lack of evidence demonstrating conflict sensitivity’s impact is one of its main critiques (Ahmed, 2011). While this research project is an important contribution to understanding how evaluation can be used in designing and implementing a conflict sensitivity framework, I was unable to continue it to its logical end of an evaluation of impact. To encourage expanded use of conflict sensitivity frameworks, it is important for potential users to have evidence of its effects. Monitoring and evaluating conflict sensitivity can also result in important lessons learned that can increase its effectiveness. Therefore, I recommend:

▪ Once CI has developed a systematic plan for what environmental peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity will mean for its work, it should then create a comprehensive M&E framework for monitoring the implementation of that plan and evaluating the results. A variety of information sources is particularly important for conservation-related interventions, which combine social and physical systems (Rowe, 2012), and thus require more robust accounts of impact. Depending on its objectives, the PDP team should explore existing resources such as documents like Guidance on Evaluating Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities (OECD, 2008). A standard set of indicators applicable to all CI projects should also be developed, as these would allow CI to
compare what works and what does not across projects, identifying lessons learned for increasing effectiveness.

- Those studying conflict sensitivity and implementing its associated frameworks should devote more resources to developing M&E processes whereby conflict sensitivity and its outcomes are systematically, regularly, and rigorously monitored and evaluated. They should follow many of the recommendations listed for PDP above, including developing a standard set of indicators if possible. These indicators should incorporate quantitative as well as qualitative information sources so as to ensure that impacts on both primary and secondary objectives are understood and any unintended consequences are adequately captured.

- Those looking to conduct evaluations with organizations in the process of integrating conflict sensitivity into their projects should consider ways to ensure the effective participation of stakeholders in that process. As noted in Chapter 3, the objectives and methods of participatory and utilization-focused evaluation are similar in many ways to conflict sensitivity; participation, responsiveness, capacity development, and problem solving are important elements and should be a priority for the evaluator. For the benefit of other organizations looking to do something as well as within the field of evaluation more generally, evaluators should document their process, what worked and what did not, and seek to share that with a wide audience.

In addition to M&E systems, impact can also be demonstrated through the development of case studies and sharing of lessons learned. A lack of lessons learned available to others hoping to implement conflict sensitivity processes is detrimental to the effective use of conflict
sensitivity frameworks and the pursuit of peacebuilding objectives; CI could help fill that gap. I recommend:

- The PDP team should consider how it can contribute to the general knowledge on conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding. I recommend that the team develop case studies based on its work, noting specifics about its approach, what worked, what did not, and how the approach was evaluated. These cases should be publicly available and shared with those interested in peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity during conferences or other forums. The team should also consider how it can create knowledge sharing mechanisms internal to CI. This could be a database of case studies, resources, and other information or conferences and workshops that provide opportunities for in-person dialogue and discussion on these issues.

- The recommendations for the PDP team extend to other organizations that are implementing conflict sensitivity frameworks. These organizations should produce case study reports or develop other mechanisms for sharing lessons learned from experiences and evaluations, no matter the outcome of the intervention. They could also benefit from developing some sort of sharing mechanism like those listed above. Those incorporating conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding into their work should be more willing to share with one another what works and, more importantly, what does not work so that others can learn from and improve upon their interventions. This is the only way to ensure that conflict sensitivity continues to be relevant and has its intended, positive impact on interventions occurring in conflict contexts. While organizations implementing conflict sensitivity projects may be worried about “airing their dirty laundry” and not wanting to communicate what may be perceived as failures due to the intense competition for
resources among nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), by encouraging a culture of learning, these organizations can pioneer innovative processes that result in more effective and sustainable projects.

**Study Limitations**

Particularly because it was an action research evaluation, this research project was an imperfect process full of real-world constraints indicative of its relationship to and treatment of real-world problems. One key limitation of the research project is that it does not evaluate the impact of the workshop over a longer timeframe. Adaptation and implementation of conflict sensitivity is a long-term, iterative process that requires continuous monitoring (Hammill et al., 2009). Further research should seek to address this shortcoming by including a long-term impact evaluation of the process of implementing a conflict sensitivity framework. This would involve repeated follow-up with workshop participants to explore how those participants’ understanding of and attitudes toward conflict sensitivity and environmental peacebuilding changed over time and whether and how they implemented the concepts or skills learned during the workshop (and, if not, why). To address this limitation in this research project, I have included recommendations for the PDP team to continue to monitor and evaluate the outcomes of the workshop and other initiatives that it may undertake using the Environmental Peacebuilding Training Manual.

An additional limitation pertains to external validity. As with any small-sample research project, this dissertation cannot ensure generalizability of the findings. The sample of conservation practitioners who participated in this project is small compared to the population of conservation practitioners. However, participants were purposefully chosen to represent a wide variety of experiences for the needs assessment and the expertise essential for the formative
evaluation phase. Additionally, the PDP team selected the workshop location and participants based on which CI offices were interested in participating, and this selection process mirrored how any organization might practically select a project implementation site. These limitations are common in action research projects and do influence their generalizability. However, this research project resulted in useful lessons learned and recommendations that are likely to be applicable in and useful to other conservation and non-conservation interventions seeking to implement a conflict sensitivity framework. There is, consequently, some measure of transferability (see Herr & Anderson, 2005).

A Note on Action Research

One of the goals of this research project was to contribute to conservation practitioners’ abilities to manage conflict in their work by collaborating with a conservation organization to identify solutions. Action research is an appropriate methodology because it seeks to solve problems through an iterative cycle of defining those problems, collecting information on them, analyzing that information, using the results to develop action-oriented solutions, and then evaluating or reflecting upon the efficacy of those solutions (Bargal, 2008; Bhana, 2006; Elden & Chisholm, 1993; Herr & Anderson, 2005; Stringer, 1996). However, action research projects are rarely straightforward or simple (Elden & Chisholm, 1993). More so than traditional research methodologies, they involve reflection on the role of the researcher, navigating sometimes tricky relationships with collaborators and other stakeholders, and responding to practical constraints on the researcher’s access and control of the process. My experiences with these issues as well as recommendations to future action researchers are below.
The Role of the Researcher

In action research, the researcher often acts more like a facilitator, guiding collaborators and other stakeholders in the generation of knowledge and what to do with that knowledge (Stringer, 1996). At the start of this research project, I had planned to take on the role of facilitator to the PDP team, working as an equal partner with its members to develop the research process, identify evaluation questions, and analyze the information collected. Changes in PDP team staff and the sometimes-limited availability of team members to engage in this process (environmental peacebuilding is only one aspect of the PDP team’s portfolio), however, resulted in my assuming the majority of information collection and analysis.

This experience made clear to me the importance of setting expectations with collaborators and periodically reviewing those expectations as part of the research process (see Coghlan & Shani, 2005). While my initial point of contact on the PDP team shared my vision for a highly collaborative research project, staffing changes meant that I later worked with a different set of people who had not been involved from the beginning and did not always share my expectations. My role also was not clear to some of the other research participants, particularly those people who participated in the Philippines workshop. Two of the four people I spoke with during pre-workshop interviews asked me what my role was in relation to CI and expressed confusion about my objectives. Clarifying roles and expectations is the researcher’s responsibility. Based on this experience, I would encourage those considering an action research project to plan for initial as well as frequent conversations with all stakeholders to regularly review and clarify expectations of the roles and responsibilities of everyone who is involved. In the case that there are changes to who you are collaborating with, I recommend having a
conversation as soon as possible to explain how the project began, what your expectations are, and how those expectations may need to be reframed based on the experiences and expectations of your new collaborators.

**Relationships with Collaborators**

In his discussion of community-based action research projects, Stringer (1996) notes as necessary the development of positive working relationships between the researcher (as facilitator) and the co-researchers (research participants and collaborators). He encourages trust in communication, developing understanding, and fostering a participatory environment. Positive relationships are essential if an action research project is going to work; without them, the researcher will likely not be able to interact with the people or gather the information that he or she needs (Bradbury & Reason, 2003; Fleuhr-Lobban, 2008; Malone, 2003).

From the beginning, I sought to cultivate a positive relationship with the PDP team through open and regular communication and by providing team members frequent opportunities for input into the research process. However, my role as “outsider in collaboration with insiders” (Herr & Anderson, 2005, p. 38) was not without difficulties. The geographic distance between the PDP team in Virginia and me in Georgia made communication more difficult than it would otherwise have been if I was able to visit the CI office. I was also unfamiliar with the policies and practices of CI and did not have existing rapport with the PDP team prior to the start of the research. This made for some tense conversations with the team members, such as when I unknowingly made suggestions to the PDP team members that contradicted CI practices or I asked them to put in more work than was feasible given their other obligations.
In our concluding conversations, some PDP team members acknowledged these tensions while adding that I handled them well. When engaging in action research, balancing the needs of the research with the needs of maintaining a positive relationship can be difficult. Action researchers should be careful to consider both, to be diplomatic when required, and to engage collaborators in honest conversation when there are challenges to the relationship. Sharing the rationale behind why the researcher chose one course of action or made a specific recommendation can also provide clarity to collaborators and initiate a dialogue that promotes understanding.

Flexibility & Adaptability

Because the project is not entirely within the researcher’s control, action research projects require flexibility and adaptability. For example, the fourth day of the pilot implementation workshop in the Philippines was cut short due to events that were outside my control. While this was disappointing and meant there would be less time to cover the key concepts, events like these are not uncommon when working with other people who have their own needs and priorities. The researcher must be prepared to adapt his or her strategy to any unexpected changes to the research process that may occur. In the event that a change has a significant and negative impact on the research process or information collected, the researcher should also be prepared to have a frank conversation with his or her collaborators and be flexible in developing solutions together.
Conclusion

This action research evaluation dissertation makes the case that there is a need among conservation practitioners for frameworks to help them better manage the conflicts they encounter as part of their work, but that more research and evaluation are needed in order to best understand how to support those needs. During the four phases of the research—from the needs assessment, to the manual design, the formative evaluation, and the outcome evaluation—the information I collected from conservation practitioners reiterated time and again that conflict sensitivity has the potential to positively impact conservation work and the conflicts that affect it. That is because conservation practitioners face a myriad of conflicts that can negatively impact their ability to do good conservation work. Many of these revolve around their interactions with stakeholder groups such as communities, government, and businesses.

However, for conflict sensitivity to have a positive impact on conservation work, it must be relevant, accessible, and effective. Issues like whether or not the framework is responsive to the context and needs of its users, whether the concepts and processes it prescribes are clear to those users, and whether it promotes long-term learning and capacity development all affect whether conflict sensitivity has a positive and sustainable impact. To address these issues, and considering the information gathered during the research process, I make recommendations in this chapter for both the PDP team and others interested in conflict sensitivity. These include recommendations for tailoring conflict sensitivity frameworks to the context and needs of users, clearly defining conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding (and the difference between them), clarifying the objectives of any conflict sensitivity framework (including what it can and cannot
do), ensuring that organizations develop a plan for capacity development and mainstreaming, and considering how to evaluate impact and share the results with others.

In addition to the results of the research project, the process by which it was completed is a testament to the genuine and exciting opportunities that exist for those in academia to collaborate with practitioners and produce meaningful, useful knowledge and outcomes that are also academically valid. Although action research presents a unique set of challenges, the rewards are potentially manifold. Both action research and conflict sensitivity can play a role in promoting effective, impactful, and sustainable conservation work.
EVALUATING CONFLICT SENSITIVITY & CONSERVATION

REFERENCES


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Evaluating Conflict Sensitivity & Conservation


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Final Evaluation

Introduction
In 2012, Conservation International (CI) launched the Policy Center for Environment and Peace (the Center) with a commitment to demonstrate and foster nature’s role in conflict prevention and mitigation through an environmental peacebuilding approach. The Peace and Development Partnerships (PDP) Program within the Center promotes best practices in environmental peacebuilding through technical assistance and capacity development. Since 2014, the Center has sought to increase the understanding of linkages between the environment, conflict, and peacebuilding through brown bags, panel discussions, workshops, reports, and case studies.

The Environmental Peacebuilding Training Manual is a major output of the PDP team’s work. It is a tool that captures the lessons learned by the team and from the broader field of conflict sensitivity in the form of a comprehensive manual for conservation professionals around the world. The objective of the manual is “to increase the awareness, knowledge and skills of conflict-sensitive environmental peacebuilding approaches among conservation practitioners and organizations working in areas affected by conflict or where conservation efforts could potentially impact conflict.”

For the pilot implementation of the manual, the objectives were to increase awareness and knowledge of CI staff related to environmental peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity; to increase CI staff capacity to design and implement environmental peacebuilding approaches; and to test and improve the manual.

This final evaluation report on the development and pilot implementation of the Environmental Peacebuilding Training Manual serves as a review of the PDP team’s progress toward the manual and pilot workshop’s objectives listed above. It is, first and foremost, a tool for learning, transparency, and accountability. The report begins with an overview of the evaluation approach, presents key findings, and then makes concrete recommendations based on those findings.

A Note on the Evaluator
The evaluator, Amanda Woomer, recently completed her PhD at Kennesaw State University in the School of Conflict Management, Peacebuilding, and Development. This evaluation serves as the foundation for her dissertation. From March 1 to June 15, 2016 and February 15 to June 30, 2017, the evaluator was also employed as a consultant by CI to work with the PDP team to conduct the work described here. In particular, her assigned tasks included preparing for and conducting a needs assessment and expert review; providing comments and technical content for the manual and its revision; providing input for the pilot workshop agenda; assisting in the workshop implementation; providing final comments and technical content for the manual; and completing this final evaluation. The evaluator was compensated for these tasks.

Evaluation Approach

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This evaluation report covers the development of the Environmental Peacebuilding Training Manual and its pilot implementation, covering the period from March 2016 to September 2017. A timeline of activities is listed below.

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<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
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<tr>
<td>Manual Development</td>
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<td>Needs Assessment</td>
<td>March to May 2016</td>
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<td>Presentation of Needs Assessment Results</td>
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<tr>
<td>Expert Reviews</td>
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<td>Pilot Implementation</td>
<td>May 9-12, 2017</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Internal Launch of the Manual</td>
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<td>Outcome Survey</td>
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<td>External Launch of the Manual</td>
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<tr>
<td>Completion of Final Evaluation Report</td>
<td>January 2018</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The evaluation, covering an almost two-year period, seeks to provide a better understanding of the experiences of conservation professionals vis-à-vis conflict, their needs in managing those conflicts and promoting peace, and how this manual and associated trainings can address those needs. This evaluation took place over several stages, which are listed below along with corresponding evaluation questions, the number of people who participated in this stage (excluding the PDP team and evaluator), and the data collection method.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation Stage</th>
<th>Evaluation Question(s)</th>
<th># of Part.</th>
<th>Data Collection Methods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Needs Assessment</td>
<td>What conflicts (issues) do conservation professionals face as part of their work?</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Survey and Interviews of CI Staff (Headquarters &amp; Worldwide)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What do conservation professionals need to better manage conflicts as part of their work?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What do conservation professionals already know about conflict sensitivity and environmental peacebuilding?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formative Evaluation</td>
<td>What changes can be made so that the Environmental Peacebuilding Training Manual better addresses needs of conservation professionals vis-à-vis conflict and peacebuilding?</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Pre-and Post-Tests, Interviews, and Participant Observation (Expert Reviewers &amp; Pilot Workshop Participants)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

31 Annex 1 includes a list of steps for conducting a needs assessment, formative evaluation, and summative or impact evaluation. Annex 2 includes a draft logic model of the evaluation and project.
32 Note that there may be some overlap in who participated in surveys and interviews throughout the evaluation. The numbers presented represent each individual survey response or interview.
33 The protocols for each data collection method are included as annexes.
Table 1: Evaluation Stages

Each stage of the evaluation was influenced by the principles of utilization-focused evaluation, which focuses on ensuring the usefulness of an evaluation for learning and project improvement. Utilization-focused evaluation is collaborative, situational, and encourages input from the primary intended users of the evaluation. Following these principles, the evaluator sought to work closely with the PDP team in order to understand the team’s evaluation needs, collaboratively develop evaluation questions and processes when possible, and together analyze the information gathered during each phase.34

Findings
Detailed findings are presented below, organized by evaluation question.

What conflicts (issues) do conservation professionals face as part of their work?

During the needs assessment phase of the evaluation, the evaluator and CI intern Danny Pavitt conducted a total of 20 interviews with CI staff at headquarters and those working on projects around the world. These interviews complemented the results of a survey sent to all CI staff (see below). Participants were asked about the kinds of issues that they encountered during their conservation work as a way to better understand what issues the Environmental Peacebuilding Training Manual and pilot workshop would need to cover in order to be the most relevant and useful. The decision was made to ask participants about “issues” rather than “conflicts” because conservation professionals often define conflict narrowly as overt or violent.

Table 2: Conservation Issues

34 For more information on the utilization-focused evaluation approach, see Michael Quinn Patton’s Utilization Focused Evaluation.
conflict. Participants described many issues encountered as part of their work. From these, the evaluator identified several themes, the top six of which are listed by frequency in Table 2.

Particular issues mentioned included: difficulty in adapting projects to local cultural—and, in particular, gender—contexts; complaints from local communities that the benefits from conservation projects had not been equally or fairly distributed; government corruption that diverts conservation resources for local elites; difficulty in developing trust between CI staff and local community members, which can limit conservation project buy-in; conflicts between local fishing groups or over issues like land tenure, which can pose challenges to project implementation; and a lack of economic development that can lead to conflict and a lack of interest in conservation.

These responses indicate a significant need for conflict sensitivity and environmental peacebuilding frameworks that support conservation professionals in managing a wide variety of conflicts as part of their work. They also indicate the need for tools that can assist conservation professionals in better understanding and responding to the contextual realities in which they work. For example, if conservation professionals thoroughly understand the relationships between and within local communities, they are better able to respond to and even anticipate conflicts such as in the case that conservation projects come with community-specific benefits like employment training. The PDP team and evaluator took these findings into account when revising the Environmental Peacebuilding Training Manual.

What do conservation professionals already know about conflict sensitivity and environmental peacebuilding?

Also during the needs assessment phase, interview participants and survey respondents were asked about their awareness of environmental peacebuilding and existing conflict sensitivity frameworks. Survey respondents were also asked to what extent they felt comfortable including peacebuilding activities in their conservation work or adapting their projects to conflict situations. The purpose of these questions was to ascertain the general level of understanding conservation professionals have with conflict sensitivity and environmental peacebuilding as concepts or tools as well as to identify what gaps in understanding the manual and pilot workshop may need to address.

Key findings from the interviews and survey include:

- 75% of interview participants had little to no familiarity with conflict sensitivity frameworks.
- Survey respondents often only vaguely described the concept of environmental peacebuilding, although a majority did outline some relationship between conflict, conflict resolution or peace, and sustainable conservation.
- 39.4% of survey respondents felt somewhat or very comfortable including peacebuilding activities in their work. 33.3% felt somewhat prepared to adapt their work to conflict situations, and no respondents felt very prepared.
- 30.3% of survey respondents felt somewhat or very prepared to analyze stakeholder relationships in conflict contexts. 33.3% felt somewhat or very comfortable analyzing the underlying causes and conditions of conflicts.
40% of survey respondents have not used conflict analysis techniques or could not describe specific techniques.

The information collected from the survey and interviews indicate that there is a real need for an environmental peacebuilding framework. In particular, the data demonstrates that conservation professionals need (1) to deepen their knowledge of environmental peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity as concepts because that knowledge is currently minimal and largely conceptual, and (2) to have specific tools and practices available that they can draw on and effectively incorporate into their work. Again, these findings were used to improve the Environmental Peacebuilding Training Manual.

What do conservation professionals need to better manage conflicts as part of their work? Finally, the needs assessment sought to gather information on conservation professionals’ perspectives on what they need to better manage conflicts (issues) encountered during their work. Interview participants were asked how they deal with the issues they face as well as what would help them manage issues better in the future. Related survey questions included “What are some challenges to adapting your work to conflict situations?” and “What other skills, resources, and support do you need to further integrate conflict sensitivity into your work?”

Again, the evaluator grouped the responses into themes, of which the top four are ranked according to frequency in Table 3. The two most commonly expressed themes were training/skill development and information sharing. Specific skills identified include conflict management, negotiation, and facilitation. Some mentioned the desire for a specific set of steps they could take. With regard to information sharing, suggestions included case studies, forums or workshops for sharing experiences, and briefs or score cards that staff could review prior to working in a particular area. Related to information sharing, but included here under a separate theme, is the need for analysis or assessment prior to beginning a project in order to understand the conflicts as well as whether the project is even likely to be effective.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Needs Theme</th>
<th>Percentage of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Training/Skill Development: Training on stakeholder engagement, mediation, negotiation</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Information Sharing: Case studies, platforms for sharing experiences</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Risk Assessment/Analysis: Assessments of the conflict context given to practitioners</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Cultural Sensitivity Training</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Conflict Management Needs

These results once again support the acute need for the manual and trainings. Capacity development occurs over time and with guidance and mentoring; trainings that accompany the manual are thus important to ensure genuine conflict sensitivity and environmental peacebuilding capacities are developed and used. In addition, the request for information sharing conforms with the literature on conflict sensitivity more generally, which indicates that people are eager to learn from concrete examples of a framework’s implementation. As with other questions associated with the needs assessment phase of the evaluation, these results were used to improve the manual and pilot workshop.
How well does the Environmental Peacebuilding Training Manual and associated workshop address those needs?

Information for the final evaluation question was collected through expert reviews and the pre- and post-tests, surveys, interviews, and participant observation that took place before, during, and after the pilot implementation workshop (the formative and outcome evaluation stages). With the Environmental Peacebuilding Training Manual in hand, the PDP team and evaluator sought to understand to which degree the near-final product and the associated workshop addressed the needs of conservation professionals as understood from the needs assessment.

Expert reviewers were asked if they found the manual to be important and useful for conservation professionals, if the objectives were relevant to their work (if they were conservation professionals), and what they liked and disliked about the manual. Many also provided written comments in the manual document. Key findings from the expert reviews include:

- Expert reviewers uniformly agreed that the manual is important for and relevant to conservation work. They also agreed that the manual flows well and is easy to use.
- Some expert reviewers indicated a need to clarify the intended users as well as some of the terms and concepts included in the manual. For example, one expert reviewer commented that it would be useful if the main explicitly stated for which kinds of conflict situations it should be used. Another expert reviewer noted that the manual should be used as a facilitation guide for a facilitator and not by learners directly. This same reviewer noted that the difference between conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding should be clearer.
- Additionally, some expert reviewers advised that additional information be included in the manual for the development and practical application of skills, particularly related to monitoring and evaluation (M&E). They saw M&E as potentially more challenging for learners and an area of the manual that would require more guidance to be effective.

Workshop participants also completed pre- and post-tests to gauge their base level of understanding of environmental peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity frameworks as well as to determine changes in knowledge resulting from the workshop. Key findings include:

- Many of the workshop participants started with a higher level of familiarity with conflict sensitivity frameworks than the broader group of CI staff who participated in the needs assessment.
- On the pre-test, 81% of participants agreed or absolutely agreed that they understand conflicts that occur in their work context well. On the post-test, 100% agreed or absolutely agreed.
- On the pre-test, 69% of participants agreed or absolutely agreed that they feel they can address conflicts as part of their work. On the post-test, 92% agreed or absolutely agreed. However, the percentage of “Absolutely Agree” responses dropped from 13% to 7%.
- Comparisons between the pre- and post-tests revealed that many workshop participants still had difficulty in describing key concepts, terms, and tools discussed during the workshop. For example, many participants confounded tools or conflict sensitivity processes with the definition for environmental peacebuilding or conflict sensitivity.
Some workshop participants indicated that they would like more information on the fundamentals of environmental peacebuilding and monitoring and evaluation. On the other hand, a few felt the workshop was too basic. Many workshop participants indicated a desire for more experiential activities and more practice exercises. Several participants found the role-playing activities to be one of the most effective session.

Following the workshop, a final survey was sent to participants to determine whether they experienced any change in attitude toward using environmental peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity as part of their work. Of the 12 survey respondents:

- 100% indicated they have or plan to incorporate elements of conflict sensitivity or environmental peacebuilding into their work.
- 83.3% felt that conflict sensitivity and environmental peacebuilding are important.
- Although 75% of survey respondents agreed that they have the skills, resources, and support they need to integrate conflict sensitivity into their work, only 8.3% strongly agreed.
- When asked what other skills, resources, and support they needed in order to integrate conflict sensitivity into their conservation work, respondents asked for contextually-based support and continued mentoring, case studies, and assistance in further developing mediation, negotiating, and facilitation skills.

Taken from various sources and viewed together, this information continues to underline the importance of a tool like the Environmental Peacebuilding Training Manual for conservation professionals. It also indicates an opportunity to make adjustments to the manual and the workshop to better address the needs of conservation professionals, particularly of their individual working environments, as well as the need for continued training and follow-up. See below for specific recommendations developed on the basis of the information collected during the evaluation.

**Recommendations**

The Environmental Peacebuilding Training Manual and pilot implementation have been largely successful in obtaining their objectives, and it is clear that this tool is both groundbreaking and essential. However, there are key areas of follow-up that will help to ensure the sustainability of the manual’s objectives through the continued development of the manual, associated implementation approaches, and of conflict sensitivity and environmental peacebuilding skills among CI’s staff and conservation professionals more generally. Based on the above findings, the evaluator suggests the below recommendations, which are divided into primary (more important or immediately valuable recommendations) and secondary (intended to provoke discussion and thought) categories.

**Primary Recommendations**

- First and foremost, the PDP team should continue its work on environmental peacebuilding. The evaluation indicated that many participants and respondents, from the needs assessment to the pilot implementation, found the Environmental Peacebuilding Training Manual useful and would like additional training, mentoring, and resources to be available. Capacity development is an iterative process that necessitates ongoing,
learning-by-doing skill building. Based on this, and if resources allow, the PDP team should consider developing a long-term approach to developing CI’s environmental peacebuilding capacity that includes additional training and/or mentoring as well as the development of a knowledge sharing platform (see below).

- Related to the first recommendation, the PDP team should consider developing comprehensive case studies from its environmental peacebuilding work, documenting the process from start to finish, and including evaluations. This information was requested by many participants and respondents and would address a gap in information available on practical implementation in the conflict sensitivity field more broadly. CI has a unique opportunity to be a leader in this effort.

- In response to the demonstrated difficulty workshop participants had in describing environmental peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity after the workshop’s end, the PDP team should set aside more time in future workshops to discuss the fundamentals. This will allow participants to form a stronger conceptual foundation that they can then take back to their projects, sharing key concepts with their project partners.

- The PDP team should also set aside more time when conducting future workshops to better understand the cultural context in which the workshop will take place as well as the base level of knowledge of participants on the key concepts. This will aid in planning for the most effective workshop possible.

Secondary Recommendations

- The PDP team should consider continuing the evaluation process as it implements additional workshops, to include developing a theory of change and logic model (a draft of which is attached as Annex 2), a summative or impact evaluation of results over time using common indicators to evaluate multiple environmental peacebuilding projects (if applicable), and a participatory evaluation approach that develops the team’s capacity to conduct collaborative evaluations with CI staff around the world who are using the Environmental Peacebuilding Training Manual. The theory of change would demonstrate how the PDP team believes it can achieve its results, from activities to outputs to outcomes to objectives, and through what methods. It would also allow the team to explicitly note its assumptions and develop a unified vision for how it will achieve its objectives. For example, the theory of change would demonstrate the role that training or mentoring would have in developing and implementing environmental peacebuilding projects. This would also provide for much needed documentation on evaluating conflict sensitivity frameworks, information that is conspicuously absent from the larger field, and for which CI could be a leader.

- The PDP team should discuss how it can refine future versions of the manual to provide for additional instruction on practical skills without significantly increasing the length of the manual to the point that it is unwieldy. Points to consider include: clarifying key terms and concepts (like environmental peacebuilding versus conflict sensitivity); clarifying the manual’s intended users (i.e. in which conflict situations should the manual apply); providing instruction for how to use the manual; addressing gender-specific challenges; and providing additional background and instruction or resources for basic monitoring and evaluation processes.
APPENDIX B

Needs Assessment - Interview Protocol

1. Could you please tell me about your conservation project? What is the objective of your work? What kinds of activities do you undertake as part of your work?
2. Could you briefly describe your background, including your education and previous work experience, and any previous experiences with conservation in particular?
3. What kinds of issues have you encountered as part of your interactions with the communities in which you work as well as other stakeholders? Other stakeholders might include government officials, business or industry representatives, or other nonprofit or civil society organizations.
4. How have you dealt with these issues in the past? What actions did you take?
   a. What was the outcome?
   b. What challenges did you encounter as part of your response?
   c. In what ways was your response successful?
5. What would help you to deal with these issues more effectively in the future?
   a. What particular topics or skills would you like to learn more about?
   b. What types of tools would help you address these issues?
6. Are you aware of/have you used any tools for dealing with conflicts within the conservation context?
   a. If not, what has prevented or would prevent you from utilizing these tools?
   b. If yes, what do you think are the strengths, weaknesses, and challenges associated with using these tools?
7. What haven’t we covered during this interview that you think is important?
8. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Expert Reviewer – Interview Protocol

1. Do you believe the manual material is important, appropriate, useful, and/or relevant for conservation professionals? Would it be useful to you and your team?
   a. What would make the manual more appropriate, useful, and/or relevant for you?
2. Are the manual objectives relevant to your work?
3. Does the manual achieve its objectives? If not, why?
   a. How could the manual better achieve its objectives?
4. How would you know if the manual was effective?
5. Are there any parts of the manual that you found difficult to understand or confusing?
   How could those parts be improved?
6. What is your favorite part of the manual? Why?
7. What is your least favorite part of the manual? Why?
   a. How could this part of the manual be improved?
EVALUATING CONFLICT SENSITIVITY & CONSERVATION

1. Do you think the manual will be easy for learners to understand?
2. Does the manual flow well? If not, what could be improved?
3. Is the manual easy to use? If not, what could be improved?
4. Do you think the exercises included in the manual are useful, effective, relevant, and/or appropriate? If not, what could be improved?
Pre-Workshop Survey

Conservation International Philippines
Workshop to Pilot the
CI Environmental Peacebuilding Training Manual
May 9-13, 2017

Pre-Workshop Survey

Please fill out the below form to the best of your ability. Do not write your name on the form. Your responses will be kept confidential and will not be graded. They will be used to assess the effectiveness of the Environmental Peacebuilding Training Manual.

1. How would you define environmental peacebuilding?

2. What are some of the steps of conflict analysis?

3. What is one of the steps of the collaborative consensus building (CCB) approach?

4. Please tell us, according to the following scale, how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Absolutely Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree or Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Absolutely Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I understand the conflicts that occur in my work context well.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel comfortable engaging various stakeholders as part of my work.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that I can address conflicts as part of my work.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel comfortable conducting a conflict analysis.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Post-Workshop Survey

Conservation International Philippines
Workshop to Pilot the
CI Environmental Peacebuilding Training Manual
May 9-13, 2017

Post-Workshop Evaluation Form

The workshop organizers request constructive feedback on the Environmental Peacebuilding Training Manual Pilot Workshop design, presentations and progress toward meeting the overall workshop objectives. Please complete the questions below and return to Janet Edmond, Lydia Cardona or Amanda Woomer by the 12 pm on Saturday, May 13. Do not write your name on the form. Your responses will be kept confidential and will not be graded. Thanks!

1. How would you define environmental peacebuilding?

2. What are some of the steps of conflict analysis?

3. What is one of the steps of the collaborative consensus building (CCB) approach?

4. Please tell us, according to the following scale, how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Absolutely Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree or Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Absolutely Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I understand the conflicts that occur in my work context well.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>I feel comfortable engaging various stakeholders as part of my work.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that I can address conflicts as part of my work.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>I feel comfortable conducting a conflict analysis.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. What are one or two next steps that you may take based on what you learned during the workshop?

6. In your opinion, were the workshop objectives met? What was the most effective session or component of the workshop?

7. What sessions or workshop components could be improved? How? Please suggest constructive recommendations if appropriate.

8. What recommendations for follow up actions in the next 3 to 6 months would you suggest?

9. Please rate the following workshop logistical aspects.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Awful</th>
<th>Could Be Improved</th>
<th>Okay</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meeting facilities – conference room, break out rooms</td>
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<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facilitators meeting management</td>
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<td>Meeting materials in folder</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other:</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Please use the remaining space for any additional comments you may have.
APPENDIX C

Interim Evaluation

Introduction
This draft assessment of the Environmental Peacebuilding Training Manual is based on feedback from expert reviewers with knowledge of conservation, peacebuilding, and conflict sensitivity; feedback received during and following a pilot workshop based on the manual, which took place in the Philippines from May 10-12, 2017; and a comprehensive review of the literature on conflict sensitivity frameworks.

Within the literature on conflict sensitivity frameworks, the primary critique is limited accessibility. Accessibility is defined in a number of ways. Conflict sensitivity frameworks must be concrete enough so that practitioners can easily implement them without being conflict experts or requiring significant additional resources. They must be flexible enough to be relevant to and useful for the practitioners’ work and the context in which they work. And they must be user friendly in terms of presentation and organization.

Based on this, the feedback received during interviews, via email, and as part of comments and edits to the manual itself were coded based on the following four themes:

- **Purpose & Intended Audience**: Comments coded yellow in the documents.
- **Conceptual Clarity & Definitions**: Comments coded pink in the documents.
- **Usefulness, Appropriateness, & Relevance**: Comments coded blue in the documents.
- **Flow, Layout, & Organization**: Comments coded green in the documents.

Two documents are provided:

1. **CI_Environmental Peacebuilding Training Manual_NAZ-AW_Edits**: This document includes Nathalie and my edits and comments. Please use this version if making changes to the document itself, as formatting errors, typos, etc. have been addressed.

2. **CI_Environmental Peacebuilding Training Manual_COMBINED***: This document is a combination of all other edits (Brittany, Glen, Todd, and Eric) and my responses to them.

*Please note that Carl’s edits and the email feedback have not been entirely integrated into this interim report due to time constraints.

Overarching feedback on each of the four themes is listed below. See documents for in-depth, contextualized information.

**Purpose/Intended Audience**

While the reviewers and workshop participants indicated the necessity of the manual for conservation practitioners, several comments were made that indicated the need for additional clarity about the intended users of the manual. For example, Nathalie noted on page 8 that “A clearer distinction should be made for your staff about the types of volatile environments CI is willing to work in…” On page 9, the manual notes that the manual is focused on concepts “that are relevant across the breadth of CI’s conservation work.” In the following paragraph, however, the manual is described as relevant to “conservation practitioners and organizations working in areas affected by conflict or where conservation efforts could
potentially drive conflict.” On page 10, the manual notes that it is for “the busy conservation practitioner” to adapt “to the local context of your country, or region and project.”

Key questions to ask based on this feedback include:

• Who is this manual for? CI staff only? All CI staff? All conservation practitioners?
• Will the intended audience change? Will it be offered beyond CI at some point?

Edits need to be made based on the answers to these questions.

**Recommendations**

**Version 1.0**

- Add information, *to the extent possible*, on the intended audience for the manual. This could be in the foreword, the introduction, etc.). This should include information on:
  - For whom and under what circumstances the manual was created (i.e., what gaps in the field does this manual seek to address).
  - For whom and under what circumstances the manual should be used (i.e., what level of conservation practitioner, what kinds of conflicts, what kinds of contexts, etc.).
  - Will the manual either explicitly or implicitly endorse working in active conflict contexts (for example, by listing strategies of engagement in conflict settings, page 17)?

**Version 2.0**

- Most people I spoke with believed the manual would be extremely useful for all conservation practitioners. They described it as useful, appropriate, relevant, and timely. Consider making the manual available outside of CI.
- Several people I spoke with explicitly articulated how useful the manual would be at the start or design phase of conservation projects. Consider testing this and/or targeting messaging about the manual to push for use in the design phase.
- Consider expanding intended uses of the manual to reflect issues like climate change and natural disasters (which are mentioned on page 14).

**Conceptual Clarity & Definitions**

Overall, reviewers felt that the concepts presented in the manual were clear and important. However, this theme had by far the most comments, edits, and suggestions. Many of the reviewers made direct edits to the manual document to add *clarity* and *context* for some of the key terms, ideas, and concepts included in the manual (particularly Nathalie). Other comments ask for small additions. The most challenging comments refer to the lack of clarity on key concepts or concepts that are used throughout the manual. For example:

- “Values,” “interests,” “needs,” “concerns,” etc. are used often throughout the manual and seemingly interchangeably.
- “Problem” and “conflict” are sometimes used interchangeably. The experience of the Philippines workshop indicated that there are important conceptual differences in the words, however, and using the appropriate one is key to encouraging the user to change perspectives from a conservation “problem” (such as incursion into a protected area) to a conservation “conflict” (disagreement in resource use policy between an indigenous
community and government agency). I made edits several edits based on this, including streamlining all names to “Conflict Tree.”

See the manual document for individual comments on concepts and conceptual clarity. I have commented on areas that I think would be quick fixes, that should be prioritized, or may be better left for Version 2.0. More information is below.

**Recommendations**

**Version 1.0**

Addressing this theme’s comments will take the most time. I recommend prioritizing areas that require quick, short explanatory sentences or relate to important concepts that may be confusing for conservation practitioners and limit the manual’s accessibility. For example:

- Adding clarity to definitions or explanations. Some examples:
  - Defining “policies” on page 9.
  - Clarifying the pieces of Figure 2 on page 9.
  - Define “existing” on page 10.
  - Avoid two definitions of environmental peacebuilding as well (also page 13).
  - Clarifying the definitions of positive and negative peace (page 12). I made some edits already.
  - Clarify the definition of stakeholders (see page 23).
  - Describing “equitable social structures” on page 42.
  - Define “conflict lens” (see page 45).

- Reviewers found the *conflict curve* to be confusing (page 13-15). Some of the language did not seem appropriate to conservationists, and the curve did not always match the explanatory text below it. I recommend an overhaul that may involve designing our own tool (see comments in the document).

- In terms of the conflict analysis tools, the *peacebuilding matrix* was the most confusing for reviewers. I attempted to add clarity, but I believe it requires a holistic review by the team.

- There were also a few comments on the lack of clarity on the relationships between conflict sensitivity, stakeholder engagement, environmental peacebuilding, and collaborative consensus building. See comments in the document. This may require an additional discussion, or I could suggest text.

**Version 2.0**

- Expand the definition on and information about *peacebuilding* (see Nathalie’s comments on page 12). This would also include defining peacebuilding and contrasting to environmental peacebuilding (see page 13).

- Consider feedback from reviewers on broader concepts such as “caring for a common resource for a common future” (Glen, page 7), the role of communities (Glen, page 8), hurting stalemates (Nathalie, page 16), stakeholder narratives (Eric, page 31), conflict analysis as an essential peacebuilding tool (Eric, page 31), systems mapping (Nathalie, page 35), adaptive management (throughout), and addressing trauma (page 77). Many of these concepts require a great deal of thought about the basis for the manual or may be too academic for conservation practitioners but are worth exploring later.
• Provide more information on adaptive management, which is mentioned briefly in the manual (see page 32) but is not explored in-depth. A further discussion of the concept could, in turn, enhance its use for conservation practitioners.
• The connections between actions and outcomes is not always clear and should be addressed in version 2.0 of the manual. For example, it may not be clear how including a community in the design and implementation of a project helps them understand sources of tension (see Nathalie’s edits, page 8). However, overall, I believe there is sufficient information in this version of the manual for conservation practitioners to understand the linkages.
• Asking the questions “how” and “why” for the examples included throughout the manual will result in additional conceptual clarity and concreteness for the user, making the drawing of connections to their own work easier.

Usefulness, Appropriateness, & Relevance
Overall, expert reviewers and workshop participants interviewed felt that the manual is extremely useful and relevant for conservation practitioners. There are a few, key areas that require revision, however.
There is a tendency in the manual to focus on relationships to and conflicts with communities. Based on the Philippines workshop, however, a significant number of conflicts also involve government entities or companies (like mining companies). Where possible, I made edits to the document to focus on a broader basket of stakeholders, referring to “relevant actors” or “stakeholders” instead of “communities.”
The main critique was on the lack of practical skills in Module 4. This module was originally designed on the assumption that people know about monitoring and evaluation or have access to other researchers. However, most reviewers believed the information contained within is not sufficient or as skill-based as the other modules.

Recommendations
Version 1.0
• Update language to broaden the focus beyond communities. I attempted to do this where possible.
• Related to the above comments on the conflict curve, update strategies to be more relevant to conservation practitioners (pages 15-16).
• Add “Key Questions to Consider” for each of the “Elements of Stakeholder Engagement Approaches” (starting on page 23). These sections were noted as very useful by multiple reviewers, and they requested that every element include a “Questions” section.
• Provide additional links to outside resources, where possible. See, for example, Theresa’s comments on page 25 and 30.
• Provide additional, skills-based information in Module 4 regarding project design, monitoring, and evaluation. I believe this should be my focus, as it has a major impact on the manual’s accessibility. Potential steps include:
  o Adding a graphic on page 45 to outline the conflict sensitive project cycle.
  o Integrating additional information on conflict-sensitive indicators of success in other modules to build the cohesiveness of the manual.
I suggest that the addition of a section on designing a theory of change be left for Version 2.0, as this will require substantial time and should be subject to expert review.

Version 2.0
- Provide more detailed, practical instructions and divide explanatory text from instructional/applied text (also related to layout; see below).
- Include more case studies.
- Add more complex M&E tools (see Brittany’s comment on page 51).

Flow, Layout, & Organization
Overall, reviewers noted that the manual is well organized, flows well, was easy to read, and that there are very few grammar or spelling mistakes. Reviewers complimented the graphics, figures, and call out boxes. However, there are several formatting issues that require streamlining between the modules. These include streamlining:
- When words or (bulleted) sentences are capitalized;
- When words are **bold**, *italicized*, or *underlined*;
- When items or sections are placed in boxes;
- What bullets are used and what types;
- Etc.

There were also several critiques regarding the length of the manual. This may or may not be too important depending on how the manual is used. Regardless, I tried to remove duplicative or “fluffy” text where possible. Several people praised the graphics included in the manual, and some suggested increasing the use of graphics. This is also something to consider.

Recommendations
Version 1.0
- I have attempted, where possible, to make edits to reduce the length of the document without sacrificing content or clarity. Additional efforts should be made to ensure that the manual is as concise as possible.
- Address how words are presented, including “consensus-building” versus “consensus building,” conflict-sensitive” versus “conflict sensitive,” etc.
- Ensure that all words that are meant to be defined (for example, if they are in bold) are defined at the end of the module and at the end of the manual.
- Define a standard for when you use footnotes versus citations.
- Confirm numbering of sections and sub-section is correct.

Version 2.0
- Review explanatory sections and make more concise where possible. Separate out explanatory and instructive sections with different formats, such as the “Key Questions to Ask” boxes (see above). See, for example, comment from Nathalie on page 46.
APPENDIX D

Outcome Survey Instrument

1. Have you incorporated or do you plan to incorporate any elements of conflict sensitivity or environmental peacebuilding into your work?
2. What elements of conflict sensitivity or environmental peacebuilding did you or do you plan to incorporate into your work? How?
3. What challenges have you faced in incorporating elements of conflict sensitivity or environmental peacebuilding into your work?
4. I feel that conflict sensitivity and environmental peacebuilding are important to my work.
5. I have the skills, resources, and support I need to integrate conflict sensitivity into my work.
6. What other skills, resources, and support do you need to further integrate conflict sensitivity into your conservation work?
7. Is there anything else you would like to add about the workshop or what you learned?
APPENDIX E

Informed Consent

Title of Research Study: Assessing Conflict-Sensitive Conservation Frameworks

Researcher’s Contact Information:
Amanda Woomer
(404) 606-6274
amanda.woomer@gmail.com

Introduction
You are being invited to take part in a research study conducted by Amanda Woomer, a doctoral student at Kennesaw State University, supported in part by Conservation International’s (CI) Policy Center for Environmental Peacebuilding. Before you decide to participate in this study, you should read this form and ask questions about anything that you do not understand.

Description of Project
The purpose of the study is to better understand conservation work in conflict and post-conflict settings, including how frameworks for conflict sensitivity can support the work of conservation organizations in these contexts and the extent to which these frameworks are already in use.

Explanation of Procedures
You will be asked to answer a series of open-ended questions about your work in the field of conservation. This interview will take approximately one hour, depending entirely on your availability and level of comfort. Interviews will take place either in person, on the phone, or via Skype, depending on your availability, and will be recorded with your consent.

Risks or Discomforts
This study does not present any more risks than you would encounter in your everyday life. You may choose to end the recording or your participation in this study at any time. There will not be any negative consequences if you decide to end the recording or your participation.

Benefits
Participation in this study may or may not benefit you personally. You may feel that you benefit from sharing your experiences with the Researcher and are helping others to understand your ideas or opinions. Overall, this study will lead to a better understanding of conservation work in conflict or post-conflict settings and of the ways in which frameworks for conflict sensitivity can benefit that work.
Confidentiality
Physical interview notes will be kept in a secure location. Electronic notes will be kept in a password-protected folder accessible only by the Researcher and the Policy Center for Environmental Peacebuilding team. Audio recordings and consent forms will be kept in a separate password-protected folder accessible only by the Researcher. Your name, affiliation, and responses will be kept confidential unless your express consent is given. Please indicate below whether your organization’s name and your personal identity may be publicly identified in association with your responses in presentations of this research.

Organization’s Name
☐ I give permission for my organization’s name to be publicly associated with my interview responses.

Your Own Name and Title
☐ I give permission for my own name and title to be associated with my responses.

To ensure that important information provided by you during your interview is not missed, the Researcher would like to record the interview. This recording will be used only for the purposes of the research and will be transcribed. Please indicate below whether you consent to this recording.

☐ I give permission for this interview to be audio-recorded.

Inclusion Criteria for Participation
You are invited to take part in this study because you are involved in conservation work in conflict or post-conflict settings. You must be over the age of 18 to participate in this study.

Signed Consent
I agree and give my consent to participate in this research project. I understand that participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw my consent at any time without penalty.

__________________________________________________
Signature of Participant or Authorized Representative, Date

__________________________________________________
Signature of Investigator, Date

PLEASE SIGN BOTH COPIES OF THIS FORM, KEEP ONE AND RETURN THE OTHER TO THE INVESTIGATOR
Research at Kennesaw State University that involves human participants is carried out under the oversight of an Institutional Review Board. Questions or problems regarding these activities should be addressed to the Institutional Review Board, Kennesaw State University, 585 Cobb Avenue, KH3403, Kennesaw, GA 30144-5591, (470) 578-2268.