

Manaus Letter: Recommendations for the Participatory Monitoring of Biodiversity

Preamble

Whereas local, indigenous and other traditional, natural resource dependent peoples throughout the world monitor biodiversity and natural resources on their lands, either independently or in collaboration with government, academia, and other civil society partners ('participatory monitoring'); and

Whereas many protected areas worldwide are inhabited or traditionally used by local and indigenous peoples and often have objectives related to securing the livelihoods of these stakeholders; and

Whereas the impacts of increasing population pressures and climate change make it more urgent to monitor and manage resource use in these areas; and

Whereas there is a wide range of objectives, arrangements, scales and targets among participatory monitoring initiatives, which will influence their methods and governance structure; and

Whereas participatory monitoring is proven to be capable of providing accurate information at local and regional scales using both scientific, local and traditional knowledge methods; and

Whereas such information has been used as the basis for successful management decisions, implemented either by local people, their organizations or the NGOs and/or government agencies with which they work; and

Whereas it is known that participation by local people in monitoring can lead to effective decision making regarding sustainable resource management, relative to data collected solely in an academic context; and

Whereas remote sensing technologies are important for monitoring land use change but cannot detect and monitor biodiversity status, human behavior and resource use decisions and practices; and

Whereas issues of food security and food sovereignty are of paramount importance to ensure the well-being of rural, traditional and indigenous peoples, and

Whereas local and indigenous peoples have the right to manage the resources on which their livelihoods and cultures depend, for current and future generations; and

Whereas financial constraints often prevent government agencies from hiring and placing sufficient staff in remote regions to monitor and manage forests and other ecosystems both within and outside protected areas; and

Whereas local and national government in multiple countries on all continents have long supported participatory monitoring of biodiversity and natural resources in protected areas, and several more are currently considering the scaling-up of participatory monitoring; and

Whereas in more remote areas of the planet, the only people who can contribute to transformative ecological knowledge over large scales and long time frames are the indigenous, traditional and other local peoples who live and travel in these areas and often intimately know their natural history; and

Whereas in order to ensure resource use rights, continued accumulation of knowledge, and transparency in conservation and development decisions, biodiversity and resource use monitoring must be a participatory process involving all segments of society; and

Whereas one of the functions of the Intergovernmental Platform for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services is to bring the different knowledge systems, including indigenous and local knowledge, into the science-policy interface; and

Whereas countries that have ratified the Convention on Biological Diversity are obliged to respect, preserve and maintain the knowledge of indigenous and local communities while promoting its wider application.

Therefore, a large group of stakeholders from 18 countries committed to participatory monitoring to manage biodiversity and natural resources, including representatives from indigenous and local communities, academia, organized civil society, practitioners from governmental and non-governmental organizations, and government decision makers, gathered in Manaus, Brazil, on 22-26 September 2014 to debate, discuss, and share experiences regarding opportunities, challenges, best practices, and lessons learned (Attachment 1). Everyone shared a common objective of improving the practice of participatory monitoring and accelerating its uptake by government, academic, and civil society stakeholders for use in diverse settings and contexts as appropriate.

As one of the outcomes of this meeting, the gathered stakeholders developed the following recommendations regarding best practices for participatory, community-based monitoring of biodiversity and natural resource use, understanding that their relevance to monitoring initiatives will vary according to the initiatives' objectives and particularities.

Design of monitoring initiatives

- 1 The Initiatives should be constructed from the bottom up, incorporating local as well as academic visions and knowledge.
- 2 Roles, responsibilities and institutional arrangements should be carefully identified via a thorough dialogue with the communities prior to beginning the initiative, considering the communities' capacities, needs and interests.
- 3 Monitoring targets should prioritize resources that are of local subsistence or economic value or in other ways meaningful to local people.
- 4 The methods and instruments used for monitoring should be easy to use, suitable, and appropriate to local practices and culture.
- 5 The designers of a participatory monitoring initiative must evaluate the potential positive and negative impacts associated with its implementation before starting it, keeping in mind that the benefits may not compensate for the associated workload and governance issues and therefore implementation may not be desirable.
- 6 Whenever possible, new initiatives should build on existing local initiatives rather than replacing them.
- 7 Data gathered should contribute to decision making on resource use, territorial management, socio-environmental policies at different scales, or other objectives that are jointly agreed on.
- 8 The monitoring initiative's methods, governance structure, data produced, and use of information for management should be regularly reviewed in order to make any necessary adjustments.

Community participation in monitoring initiatives

- 9 Community members involved in monitoring should be selected by the communities themselves supported by their partner organizations considering their responsibility, capacity, commitment and experience.
- 10 The role of community actors in decision making for territorial management and resource use can be enhanced through the promotion of broad community participation in all aspects of monitoring initiatives and implementation of regular community meetings to disseminate, review and value the information produced.

Institutional arrangements and partnerships

- 11 The participation of diverse social actors is necessary for the success of participatory monitoring initiatives; partnerships and multi-institutional arrangements should be formalized before implementation of the initiatives.
- 12 Monitoring initiatives must reconcile and balance the interests and motivations of local, regional and global actors involved in the initiative; mutual trust among these actors is essential for success. Relationships must be transparent, initiative construction and design must include realistic expectations from all partners, and initiative objectives must be clear and consider the interests of all actors.

Data quality and management

- 13 Data quality is fundamental if participatory monitoring of biodiversity is to achieve its objectives; it is therefore essential that data collection be standardized at the necessary scales (among monitors, among communities, and among initiatives if the scale of monitoring is regional or global).
- 14 Data quality can be ensured by several mechanisms, including continuous training of persons involved in data collection, data quality assessment by researchers and community members, effective community involvement in all aspects of monitoring, and collective understanding and social control by the community. Additionally, community leaders participating in the project should be responsible for verifying data integrity.
- 15 When feasible, recognized statistical analysis or data filtering systems should be used to prevent the accumulation of errors in monitoring databases and ensure objectivity and standardization in data quality.
- 16 Data from biodiversity monitoring should be stored in a systematic manner using best practices of data base management.
- 17 Participatory monitoring data should always be available to local communities
- 18 Use and application of monitoring data should respect the characteristics, limitations and restrictions inherent in the data.
- 19 Data interpretation and analysis that are relevant for local management should be carried out as quickly as possible, with the participation of local actors, in order to accelerate and facilitate data use in local decision-making.
- 20 When monitoring initiatives are designed for use at the regional or global scale, they should ensure the return of information and results to participating local

communities. Communication mechanisms must be in place in these larger scale initiatives to guarantee community access to information and transference of knowledge, ensuring that information can and will be in fact returned.

Relationship between monitoring initiatives and public policy

- 21 Public policies on natural resources management, education, and territorial management should be improved by incorporating information derived from participatory monitoring.
- 22 There should be a feedback relationship between participatory monitoring initiatives and public policies: the initiatives should stimulate and promote the use of monitoring results in technical and political decision making, and decision makers should recognize and support processes of participatory natural resource monitoring.
- 23 Non-community decision-makers should respect and use the information generated by communities and the way in which communities use this information for local management.
- 24 Participatory monitoring approaches and information should be disseminated to other enterprises and sectors of society that are not organized into community-based governance systems, such as small and large landowners, the private sector, and agencies involved with environmental impact assessments, thus bringing the benefits of scale, transparency and social control to these other sectors that impact and/or depend on biodiversity and natural resource use.
- 25 Participatory monitoring should be promoted by and applied in programs and policies linked to environmental services.

Recognition of community involvement

- 26 The entities involved in participatory monitoring should recognize the contribution and intellectual property of the community in the publication of materials, for instance through co-authorship in technical-scientific works that are based on or include community efforts, when this is of interest to the community and appropriate for the publication, seeking when possible to shift current publication customs and practices of journals and publishing houses.
- 27 The issue of remuneration for participatory monitoring must be broadly discussed by all stakeholders; community agents involved in monitoring initiatives must be

formally compensated – financially or not – in a fair and appropriate manner agreed to with the participating community.

- 28 National and international research institutions should recognize the current and potential value of information generated by well designed and implemented participatory monitoring and should more often establish and promote partnerships for participatory monitoring.
- 29 The funding agencies for conservation, research, technological innovation and education should promote and support participatory monitoring as a mechanism to enhance biodiversity conservation and community empowerment.

Institutional and community strengthening

- 30 Recognizing that participatory monitoring is one mechanism for community strengthening, participatory monitoring initiatives should promote the reduction of local social inequalities, in particular stimulating the involvement of women and youth and other marginalized groups when appropriate to the local culture and when prioritized by the communities.
- 31 In order to guarantee grassroots participation, participatory monitoring initiatives should stimulate and support the development and strengthening of community and social organization, ensuring social cohesion and effective participation in the initiatives.
- 32 Local community monitoring groups should be strengthened to enhance their role in discussions of information and decision making based on participatory monitoring results.

Capacity building

- 33 A Capacity building for community involvement in participatory monitoring must be included in formal education programs. Such capacity building should address the needs of the diverse social actors that participate individually and collectively (including community organizations) in monitoring and management, emphasizing the relationship of monitoring to environmental and territorial management and to the development and social control of public policies.
- 34 Education processes should address improvements in critical thinking for all actors involved in participatory monitoring; such education is as important as technical training to ensure the quality of the information generated by participatory monitoring.

- 35 The social-environmental issues addressed by participatory monitoring initiatives should be included as crosscutting themes in local public schools.
- 36 When designing for support of monitoring activities, actions that respond to community concerns should be prioritized, foreseeing the need for continuous support to increase the sustainability of the initiatives in the medium and long term and enable adaptive management.
- 37 The financial support of participatory monitoring initiatives should consider financial arrangements and mechanisms of implementation appropriate to local realities of participatory monitoring activities.

Systematization, dissemination and communication

- 38 Methodologies and materials for participatory monitoring, including species identification guides, information management systems and best practices in monitoring and management should be made broadly available.
- 39 All stages and results of monitoring initiatives should be disseminated among communities, in the press, in scientific meetings, and through social networks.
- 40 Local, traditional and indigenous knowledge used in and produced by biodiversity monitoring should be systematized and made publicly available, ensuring that there is consent among the knowledge holders.

Brasília, 1st June 2015

Editorial Committee of the Manaus Letter and the Participatory Monitoring and Management Partnership

PMMP

Annex 1

The International Seminar on Participatory Monitoring for the Management of Biodiversity and Natural Resources took place from the 22nd until the 26th of September 2014 in Manaus/Brazil and gathered more than 220 participants from Australia, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Denmark, East Timor, Ecuador, England, Germany, Greenland, Guatemala, Indonesia, Madagascar, Mexico, Peru, Philippines, Sweden, the United States of America and Venezuela. Throughout the seminar, the participants shared and discussed their experiences, especially with regards to opportunities and challenges as well as best practices and lessons learnt – all with the common objective of improving participatory monitoring practices and accelerating the appropriation by governments, academia and civil society to apply these practices in an appropriate manner, considering different contexts and circumstances.

The seminar was organized by the Brazilian Ministry for the Environment (MMA), the Chico Mendes Institute for Biodiversity Conservation (ICMBio) with support from the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, acting on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (BMUB) in the framework of the Brazilian-German technical cooperation, the "ARPA" Programme, the Project "Manguezais do Brasil", the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), the Institute for Ecological Research (IPE), the Secretariat for the Environment and Sustainable Development of the State of Amazonia (SDS-AM), the Avina Foundation, the Nordisk Fond for Miljø og Udvikling (NORDECO) and the Secretariat of the Convention for Biological Diversity (CDB). Within the context of this seminar, the Participatory Monitoring and Management Partnership (PMMP) was established to promote the dialogue between all parties involved in monitoring and managing natural resources in order to fine-tune and improve their initiatives.

The participants of this seminar, who collaborated on developing this letter, are enlisted below:

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