Capacity, the cornerstone of effective conservation

CAPACITY BUILDING TOOLBOX FOR CONSERVATION IN WEST AFRICA
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This toolbox

This toolbox is intended to provide a comprehensive set of resources for institutions and organizations wishing to enhance their ability to effect change in their environments. It includes tools dealing with the following subjects:

- Introduction: The importance of capacity building
- Organizational capacity building
- Small grant funding
- Workshops as an effective capacity building tool
- Peer learning through facilitating exchanges
- Field-based, hands-on learning
- Capacity building supports and tools
- Environmental education
- Building awareness
The West African coastal and marine environment is composed of upwellings, estuaries, mangrove swamps, mudflats and corals – productive ecosystems offering numerous services and forming rich fishing zones. Local and national economies depend on assets such as shells, minerals, oil, tourism, and the resource that is most important to the food security of coastal populations – fish. However, these ecosystems and their resources have suffered increasing stress due to both natural and human induced changes emanating from a number of sources. Natural threats to these important environmental zones include climate change impacts such as frequent floods and rising coastal erosion. Human activities such as the exploitation of mineral resources or intense pressure on fishing stocks cause pollution, environmental degradation, and the diminution of many unique species. Population growth in coastal areas and the increasing poverty of these populations add more problems to an already difficult situation.

At all levels and by all measures, the context of natural resource management in West Africa is complex. The fact that public policies governing coastal planning and management are often ineffective because they remain unenforced and unaccom-
panied by local solutions is one reason. Another reason is that insufficient technical skills and financial resources weigh heavily on the ability of nations and communities to address these problems. Because of this complexity and the dynamic nature of the situation, solutions demand a substantial and meaningful engagement of a myriad of actors at multiple scales. Critical among stakeholders are the local indigenous populations and local institutions that are in closest contact with these endangered ecosystems.

The West African Regional Coastal and Marine Conservation Program (PRCM) was created in 2003 in response to the conservation challenges discussed above. As a partnership of national and international NGOs, public institutions, and donors it operates under a shared vision and coordinates coastal conservation efforts in the 7-country region including Cape Verde, The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mauritania, Senegal and Sierra Leone. PRCM stakeholders recognized the critical fact that building the human capacity of local actors is key to long-lasting and effective conservation. For that reason, over the life of the program, it supported multitudes of capacity building activities that form the basis of the best practices presented in this tool box.

"If you give a man a fish, you feed him for a day. If you teach a man to fish, you feed him for a lifetime." — Chinese Proverb
Capacity building as a term is not easy to define precisely because of the breadth of areas that it touches. However, at its most basic level, capacity building deals with people, organizations, communities and the process of improving the effectiveness of what everyone does.

Because people are one of the main culprits responsible for biodiversity and habitat loss and are more affected by the conservation of environmental resources, they must be the prime targets for ensuring its protection. Expanding and then channeling human capacity is therefore fundamental to preserving our environment and its diverse ecosystems. In the West African region and beyond, conservation that is effective in the long-term hinges on linking dedicated individuals and institutions that possess the ability and assets to confront the pressures facing our natural world.

Why is capacity building imperative?

Capacity building is also a way of leveling an often lopsided playing field, and ensuring equity in the face of external actors who hold a wealth of resources and knowledge. The old adage holds true – ‘knowledge is power.’ When local populations are empowered with knowledge that enables action, they can then take the lead in conservation efforts. While external interventions can be useful in the short-term, particularly in helping to raise awareness of external pressures that are difficult to perceive at the local level, lasting conservation that is grounded in a new way of regarding the environment and that leads to changed behavior must come from local communities and institutions.

Identifying needs is a critical first step in any capacity building effort

The plethora of methods and techniques for capacity building is directly tied to the diversity of needs for capacity building. At the individual level, developing human capacity may involve helping people acquire a basic understanding of the connections between human actions and environmental impacts to more technical training in the areas of leadership, advocacy, or research skills. At the institutional level, it can encompass providing basic office equipment to improving strategic planning, building strong governance structures, or offering opportunities to acquire financial resources. Therefore, effectively identifying needs is necessary in order to properly target capacity building efforts and ensure that they are well adapted to the needs.
Capacity building helps develop a regional knowledge base

A common response to the lack of local or regional capacity is to bring external experts and consultants into the region at great expense. While it is always important to cast the widest net in the search for knowledge and best practices, calling upon external experts is not always the best solution to really build capacity. Problems can occur when experts lack an understanding of local cultural and social norms or customs and attempt to impose strategies or approaches that are unsuited to these contexts. Another problem is that when the support for external interventions ends, the expertise is withdrawn. Building a regional knowledge base and facilitating knowledge exchange among local and regional experts represents a sustainable solution to the need for continual knowledge transfer and capacity building.

Other general best practice guidelines

When it comes to applying the fundamental capacity building principles, there are no easy solutions; indeed no two solutions are identical. “Distortions” inherent in the development process affect each stage of capacity building in unique and often unpredictable ways. It is therefore appropriate to ask the right questions to ensure the coherence of capacity building efforts. In other words, what is the purpose of capacity building, who are the targets (groups of actors, individuals or organizations) and what types of skills must be developed to achieve the goals?
Other best practice guidelines include:

- To ensure that training and capacity building is relevant, avoids duplication, and enhances synergy and coherence, it is important to align training objectives with organizational or individual objectives and needs.

- Combining small funding grants with training activities that increase the ability of organizations to effectively implement small projects will ensure greater impact.

- Capacity building efforts should have clearly defined objectives and performance measures that can reveal the long-term impact of the knowledge transfer. Investments should yield tangible results.

- Mentoring or coaching systems where young leaders or new organizations are paired with more experienced individuals or institutions to facilitate local knowledge transfer are useful tools in the capacity building arsenal. Networks can help facilitate these connections.

- The promotion of training that can be easily applied to real-world problems encountered by organizations and actors on the ground is crucial. Training workshops should be targeted to actors and concrete issues, preferably in the context of local initiatives.

- Bringing together different nongovernmental and professional organizations to learn about common technical problems can create fertile ground for rich exchanges.

- Strengthening the capacity of local organizations in the areas of governance, accounting and management as important to successful conservation efforts because it assures that these institutions are better equipped to confront the conservation challenges of both the present and the future.

- All capacity building efforts should include an assessment of their impact that can take the form of qualitative reviews in addition to quantitative evaluations.

- Maintaining new skills and knowledge often requires renewing training modules. This will allow individuals and organizations to deepen their understanding and application of these new skills as opposed to letting them atrophy through lack of use.

- The process of capitalization - the identification of best practices and sharing that knowledge - is an excellent way to build the capacity of others. When done well, the capitalization process adapts what works to each unique context and tailors that knowledge to fit the realities and needs of those contexts. If you implement best practices and build on existing capacity and experience, you can set free latent potential and talents that are waiting to be released.

- When capacity building interventions keep in mind that the supporting organization may for various reasons, abandon its initiative from one day to the next: this precautionary measure will help guide the work through the empowerment of the beneficiaries, which is the ultimate goal of capacity building.
Strengthening organizations: Building the capacity of organizations

Structural reinforcement as a partnership

When discussing the issue of "capacity building", we first think of the abilities and skills of individuals. Most of the time, we therefore focus building the technical capacity of a particular person in relation to his or her field of activity. For example, an agent of an MPA (marine protected area) can benefit from training on how to develop management plans or training on surveillance. But we can also consider the capacity of organizations: in this case one can think of the organization (mainly NGOs and professional organizations) as a separate entity that can be strengthened.

We are talking of “structural reinforcement” when an organization (a “structure”) receives supports not only to improve its own functioning, but also to improve its ability to implement projects and become more independent. In this case, the structural reinforcement of an organization may consist of financial support for organizational operations, or technical support including training and facilities for building the capacity of the institution’s human resources and also its governance.

Facilitate organizational functioning

In the field of coastal conservation in West Africa, very few organizations can boast of sustainable support for their operations. Office expenses (rent, Internet, telephone, computer hardware etc…) as well as staff salaries are linked to the implementation of projects and are generally charged to the budget line “administrative costs” which corresponds to a variable percentage of the total project budget. This mode of operation has the drawback of minimizing an organization’s ability to be flexible and to react to unexpected events. In addition, organizations are sometimes tempted to implement projects only to meet their administrative needs.

Structural reinforcement provided by a funder on behalf of an organization should represent a long-term commitment: it implies a relationship of trust between the two entities who are part of a partnership that must satisfy both sides, and must be formalized in an agreement.
To avoid this pitfall, support for the functioning of an organization should be considered. The organization can benefit from support for salary supplements, for equipment purchases, or to pay a portion of the rent or a subscription to internet etc…

**These supports must be properly “rationed”: the intent is not to make the NGO and its human resources dependent on a funder, but rather to relieve some of the burden on the NGO in terms of its operation and fundraising, all the while working gradually towards autonomy.**

**Facilitate training and staff networking**

During the implementation of activities and successive projects, organizations can come to the realization that they do not have all the required technical capacity. In this case, training or technical support provided by experts within organizations may be essential. It can also be very useful to the staff of organizations to meet and work with other similar organizations. In this case, providing support to participate in exchange visits or in international events can be very relevant and useful.

**Most importantly, support for training, expert advice etc... must be part of a training plan that is discussed jointly between the organization and the funder, and is based on the activities and real needs of the organization.**
The Transco project administered by the Fondation Internationale du Banc d’Arguin (FIBA) (2010-2012) was aimed at reinforcing the structures of 4 NGOs working on the coast so that they could develop greater technical and financial autonomy.

For each NGO, a "structural diagnosis" was conducted early in the project: this allowed the creation of an inventory of the NGO, its structure, its strengths, its weaknesses ... related to various aspects (governance, communication, accounting etc.). Based on this diagnosis, a training plan was developed jointly with FIBA. This plan incorporated the key elements in institutional strengthening for the NGO for the coming year, according to the real needs of that organization. Building on the diagnosis and training plan, a framework partnership agreement was signed between FIBA and each NGO.

The NGO Biosfera is a FIBA partner in the Transco project. It obtained support for its operation (contribution to the costs of rent, telephone and internet subscription, contribution to the salaries of the staff) and also for training. Based on the real needs of the NGO to implement its activities, the Biosfera staff received specific and adapted training (biological monitoring of reptiles, veterinary care of turtles, video editing etc...). Moreover, because of Transco, the staff was able to regularly participate in international events. Transco support has contributed to transforming Biosfera into an effective NGO that is now recognized in Cape Verde and also internationally!

Testimonials of Zé Melo (Chairman of the Cape Verde Biosfera I) and Djibril Diallo (responsible for environmental monitoring of Mauritanian Nature).

"The project Transco has been the engine propelling Biosfera I forward! Through this project, members of Biosfera have strengthened their skills and can work in better conditions. These facilities allow us to focus on our conservation activities. Since we cannot work on all the islands of Cape Verde, we want to transfer our skills to other local NGOs. This will allow us to focus on our main objective: the creation of the MPA of Santa Luzia!"

"By enabling the NGO, Nature Mauritania, to acquire better ways of working (good office location, furniture, Internet subscription), the Transco project had a very positive effect on the quality of our activities. The allocated funds have also helped secure the salaries of several employees, and compensate interns, allowing greater efficiency of the NGO. In addition, I have fully benefited from training on "Project Cycle" and English classes and I can now fully participate in international meetings!"
Show me the money!
Small grants, a powerful tool for building capacity

While capacity building in the form of training workshops, distribution of manuals, institutional building or disseminating best practice is necessary, sometimes small organizations and institutions just need a small infusion of cash to support timely actions. Small grant funding plays a significant role in conservation by allowing organizations to implement projects that let them practice what they have learned. These grants are intended to accomplish a specific set of objectives in a specific area of intervention. When combined with relevant and pertinent training, or other targeted capacity building, these small investments can have a powerful impact.

The “Small Grants” program of the PRCM aims to build capacity (human, technical, financial and institutional) of the beneficiary institutions (NGOs and other associations) to enhance their performance. Using the “learning by doing” approach, this program not only gives concrete means to implement actual projects, but it also acts as a way for the PRCM to identify effective local structures who would be good partners for future actions. This is a valuable way of building trust. Lastly, cash infusions in the form of minor grants can help organizations attract other funding.

What makes a small grant useful and effective?
These tools work best when they:

- Build organizational capacity – by helping to increase sustainability (identifying financial resources) or effectiveness (buying equipment or training to implement strategic planning);
- Are used for relevant, timely, short-term investments;
- Support well-defined projects to develop or refine skills and strategies;
- Are accompanied by relevant training that allows the organization to obtain the most benefit from the grant; and
- Are tied to defined goals and strategies that directly achieve those goals.

What is the typical grant size?
Grant sizes vary greatly, ranging from 2,500 to 35,000 euros. Because they are so small, it is important that they be used for very specific investments.
What types of projects are typically supported by small grant funding?

Projects that are typically funded by small grants are varied and can include supporting organizational restructuring and development, strategic planning, equipment purposes, specific campaigns and communication strategies, staff training, community outreach, mission-driven community-based initiatives regarding conservation, habitat restoration or the valuation of natural resources, mobilization and building awareness, research studies, project identification, or evaluation and assessment. The essential lesson is that the project fulfills clearly defined objectives.

How do you select the right organizations for grant support?

Selecting the right organization is an important exercise for funders of small grant programs. The selection process should examine the ability and willingness of a nongovernmental organization to commit to the capacity building project and to work to maximize the impact of the small grant. Some funders evaluate this capacity by visiting the proposed project sites and others insist that organizations demonstrate their commitment by putting up matching in-kind resources or funds for the project.

The PRCM small grant program conducts a preliminary evaluation of selected projects in order to assess the capabilities in the field of NGO recipients. These evaluations examine the existence of a headquarters, personnel, logistics, past activity reports, the coherence of the project in relation to organizational missions and goals, and the feasibility of the project in the field.

Evaluating the impact of the grants

Once a grant is funded, it is important to evaluate its impact on specific project goals—were the immediate objectives of the grant met? Understanding the impact of these small investments on the organization by assessing improvements in the operations of the organization itself is also important. Lastly, evaluating how the project or grant funding has influenced the organization’s overall mission by assessing whether and how it helped the organization to fulfill its mission is critical.
Small Grant program

The PRCM launched small support for local initiatives in 2009. Fourteen projects were selected in a two-year period with a total budget of 399,591 euros. Allocated in 6 of the 7 PRCM countries, these projects supported organizations at varying levels of capacity. Monitoring showed that many of these projects had very good results, according to their level of capacity.

One successful example is the work conducted in Guinea by the PREM (Partenariat Recherches Environnement Médias), a nongovernmental organization that had experience in implementing mangrove conservation efforts by changing the way communities produce salt. With a PRCM grant of about 20,000 euros, four project sites were established and 202 people were trained (including 182 women) in new techniques for draining and drying salt on tarpaulin, a real alternative to boiling water and consuming mangrove wood for that purpose. Using this new process, 63 tons of salt were produced or an average of 17 kg a day, saving an estimated 204 tons of wood and avoiding significant hardships and health problems for the people concerned.

Another example is the project in Guinea Bissau called « Seguimento e conservação de Zonas Húmidas de interesse Nacional e Internacional » (Monitoring and conservation of wetlands of national and international importance) that was implemented by OZDH (Organization for the defense and development of wetlands) with a budget of 33,151 euros. The project’s main objective was to characterize the ecosystem of Suro, supposedly rich in biodiversity, in order to justify its classification area with conservation status by the national institute of protected areas (IBAP).

The activities carried out involved the acquisition of office equipment, signing contracts for proposed studies with NGO partners, the training of youth on bird monitoring methods, environmental education and support for various community development activities. This wide range of activities helped achieve the main objective and also raised the population’s awareness of the need for preserving this ecosystem. Positive results include extensive community involvement in the activities undertaken to characterize Suro; and a greater awareness in the community that predisposes its members to participate effectively in potential conservation activities in the future.

As a result of this project, the community organization has a greater capacity to implement activities and a better knowledge of its environment. Furthermore, the project helped pinpoint organizational capacity gaps and difficulties regarding its limited human resources. This information made the organization aware of the need to form partnerships with other local organizations to better implement future projects.
The workshop – a key capacity building tool

The workshop: whether a dreaded waste of time or a welcome escape from the drudgery of a long day’s work, it is an especially important tool in the arsenal of capacity building and training efforts. Organized inappropriately, they can be a significant waste of time and resources. However, if they’re planned well, they can be incredibly worthwhile for everyone concerned. Workshops are useful for collective thinking, interactive learning, creating connections that lead to enduring relationships between participants, and problem solving. In the area of conservation in West Africa, they are an invaluable resource that can lead to the development of effective solutions to the challenging problem of ecosystem degradation and the loss of biodiversity.

So how do you create a workshop that is not only relevant and productive, but unforgettable? Advanced planning is critical. This tool helps you think through this process to achieve your goal of long-lasting impact through workshops.

Tips for Delivering Effective Workshops

1. Workshops must be relevant and contribute to an organization’s overall strategic goals. For example, the worst thing is to hold a workshop intended to help nongovernmental organizations develop MPA management plans and instead invite communications officers.

2. Workshop learning objectives must be well-defined and targeted to knowledge gaps. A necessary first step is to determine the needs and interests of the people who you are targeting. Being clear about who the workshop is intended to serve is crucial to its success.

3. Exercise-driven workshop activities are often the most successful. They allow workshop participants to focus on their own projects that help them advance their objectives. When a group of people work towards a common goal that is realized at the end of the workshop, this allows of rich exchange and the building of long-lasting relationships.

4. The best workshops facilitate knowledge sharing and exchange among participants. People learn not only from their ‘teachers’ but also from each other. For this reason the areas of expertise and interest of participants must be similar and homogeneous.

5. Making sure that some mechanism exists that will help people practice and retain the skills they learned once the workshop is over is important to success. Workshop training that is appropriate, high quality and delivered in an easy-to-understand manner increase the successful transfer of these skills back to the work place.
How To Make People Active Participants

People are central to workshops. Therefore, the level of participant involvement is the most important barometer to successful workshop sessions. Creating opportunities for active learning through active participation is essential to acquiring knowledge. No one wants to sit in a room for three hours while the presenter lectures! Below you will find ways of engaging attendees to make their workshop experience fun and memorable.

◉ **Ice-breakers** – These are games and exercises intended to make everyone more comfortable and ready to connect and share.

◉ **Fun group exercises** – These can be designed to help everyone realize that they share common goals, visions or problems. It can also be a useful brainstorming technique and are important to keeping people involved and interested.

◉ **Skits** - Establish small groups who will each present, at the start of the day for example, a skit of a few minutes in relation to the theme of the workshop: this creates a climate of collaboration and releases participants’ expressive capabilities.

◉ **Movement!** - Nothing is worse than sitting in one spot for several hours. Incorporating time for people to get up and move around, such as during break time, going out into the field or during structured exercises is also extremely useful in keeping everyone attentive and engaged.

◉ **Modify the group size** – Some people are more comfortable speaking before smaller groups. Dividing into working groups ensures that you solicit the expertise and experience of the maximum number of people.

◉ **Mix people together** - When dividing participants into groups, make sure that you mix different groups of people together. The legislator can learn a lot from a local fisherman and by encouraging people to interact with people from other sectors you help them to appreciate different perspectives.

◉ **Involve participants in roles that impart responsibility** – Notetakers and facilitators are good examples.
Since the first phase of the PRCM, one of the priorities identified involved the increased participation of people living in marine protected areas (MPAs) or in their immediate vicinity.

Local residents are generally the traditional landowners and direct users of natural resources of the area. They have knowledge about the environment, legal rights, and traditional modes of resource management and social structures for their implementation, although these are sometimes abandoned because governments do not take them into consideration. Yet it is often the case when local populations are not implicated in the elaboration of management rules that conflicts and a rejection of such measures arise.

If the participatory approach applied to the establishment, governance and management of MPAs does not necessarily require very high skills, it cannot do without a good quality facilitation and a mastery of certain principles and tools for the leaders and representatives of key stakeholders.

The RAMPAO (Network of Marine in West Africa) project, during the first phase of the PRCM, helped to create a network of resource persons from MPA management structures, NGOs and local people. Trainings were organized for their benefit, with the support of the GP Sirènes project and experts from the Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy (PSARC). Themes covered the principles and tools of participatory management, by encouraging exchanges of experience and mutual learning.

This training cycle was prolonged during the 2nd phase of the PRCM, a particular form of training - action favoring the utility of the lessons and the appropriation of their content by the beneficiaries.

Three regional trainings were held, bringing together representatives of the managers, facilitating NGOs and the populations of a dozen sites. The PSARC experts gave classroom lectures interspersed with practical group work sessions, which allowed the analysis and description of the governance systems of different MPAs. These trainings also involved fieldwork, during which participants, supervised by experts, led situation analyses in the vicinity of MPAs. Their analysis of the management of these areas was based on field visits, interviews with stakeholders and an analysis of management documents. Analysis sheets and proposals for capacity building programs were then developed for the managers’ use.
Several local courses were also organized in response to requests from managers and community representatives, particularly in the National Mangrove Park of Cacheu (Guinea Bissau) and the MPAs in St. Louis and Kayar (Senegal).

A task force consisting of eight trainers capable of working in the main working language and vernacular of the region (French, Portuguese, English, Hassanya, Wolof, Serer, Creole, Susu, Nalu) was established. In the future, this task force can accompany the RAMPAO in strengthening the governance and joint management of its member MPAs.
Beyond classroom style learning: Exchange visits

The picture of bored students whose eyes glaze over as they struggle to focus on a teacher’s lecture is a common one. Replace these students with adults, anxious to obtain knowledge that gives them the power to change their worlds, but unable to make sense of the abstract concepts being presented to them in a workshop. Whether for students or adults, trainers need to invigorate learning by demonstrating how to apply concepts to real world problems. This style of learning is a fundamental step in transforming people from passive listeners to powerful actors in their communities. Two approaches have been implemented by the PRCM that allow for experimentation, mutual exchanges and on-the-ground learning – the exchange visit and field-based learning. This tool discusses the exchange visit.

Exchange visits - When the student becomes the teacher

Unlike “academic” training where learners are the recipients of knowledge coming from a “teacher”, in exchange visits all participants are, in turn, students and teachers. In fact, exchange visits are usually organized to allow peer tutoring. For example, a group of women fish processors from the Saloum will visit a group of women fish processors in Casamance who are developing innovative techniques for fish processing. As a second step, the women processors from Casamance will visit the women processors Saloum who in turn will explain how they structured and operate their economic development group. It is indeed a reciprocal exchange: everyone will benefit from everyone’s skills. The exchange visit is done in a spirit of sharing and free exchange. Unlike other workshops and training, it is accessible to participants who may be illiterate or barely literate.

The exchange visit is a good way to bring about change: we want to change when we see other people doing things differently and that these new ways actually work!

Making exchange visits constructive

An exchange visit can be an excellent tool for building capacity, provided it is well prepared! Four factors are crucial in the preparation of exchange visits: the choice of partners, educational objectives, facilitation and monitoring.
Choose compatible partners!
The success of an exchange visit will depend largely on the "compatibility" of the participants. It is therefore essential that students and teachers alike are concerned with the same issues and can teach each other! Ideally, it is best to bring together participants who already know each other and who have worked together. Moreover, the language - Wolof, creole, English, etc. - used during the exchange visit is very important!

Clear educational objectives
For an exchange visit to allow capacity building and participant learning to occur, it is important that it is structured around clearly defined educational goals! Thus it is essential to properly prepare the exchange visit and list the knowledge and skills that should be mastered. In the absence of clear educational objectives, exchange visits often end up as mere meetings where participants have fun but do not learn anything!

Guided tours
Quality animation is essential: it is what will give the exchange visit its educational and fun character. Thus the host of the visit will focus discussions and activities around specific learning objectives, will stimulate the dialogue, spur debates, and encourage participation. Exchange visits can also be augmented with games or recreational activities that create a better group dynamic and ultimately better learning.

And after the visit?
From a pedagogical perspective, the impacts of an exchange visit will be all the more important if it is followed by other activities. Thus it is often useful to provide participants with the opportunity to participate in other exchanges or training sessions. Indeed, it is strongly recommended that when participants return home they report back to their peers. This report-back requires that the participants remember what they experienced and observed and make an effort to synthesize all that has been learned during the visit. Ideally, the exchange visit should be combined with other training activities (e.g., workshop) or another exchange visit. In this case, it is always good to remind participants of the lessons learned during the previous exchange visit.

Equally important is the need for participants to continue to share after the visit, by exchanging information, and also photos ... this lets people look back upon their experience with fond memories of the fun they had!

More tips for achieving a quality exchange visit:

- Gather a list of the specific expectations that participants have before or at the beginning of the visit: this allows you orient the visit to the wishes of the participants.
- Throughout the visit, provide a summary of the main lessons learned.
- Ensure reliable logistics (accommodation, food, transportation ...), this element is essential to ensuring a positive mood and the efficiency of the group.
- Capitalize on new knowledge to guide future activities.
In 2011, as part of the FIBA’s “Creating marine protected areas” project funded by the PRCM, an exchange visit took place in Casamance, between community members of the Petit Kassa who traveled with the Association of Fishermen of the Rural Community of Mangagoulak. The purpose of the visit was clear: To discuss the process that led to the creation of the Aboriginal Heritage Area Community in Kawawana. Participants got along well: they came from the same area, lived the same reality and were motivated by the same convictions. The number of participants was small, allowing the successful realization of the visit. During the exchange visit, discussions were videotaped. A short film was developed and presented in the villages of Petit Kassa for all who could not attend the visit. This report helped galvanize further discussions ... far beyond the exchange visit!
Beyond classroom style learning: Field-based learning

The picture of bored students whose eyes glaze over as they struggle to focus on a teacher’s lecture is a common one. Replace these students with adults, anxious to obtain knowledge that gives them the power to change their worlds, but unable to make sense of the abstract concepts being presented to them in a workshop. Whether for students or adults, trainers need to invigorate learning by demonstrating how to apply concepts to real world problems. This style of learning is a fundamental step in transforming people from passive listeners to powerful actors in their communities. Two approaches have been implemented by the PRCM that allow for experimentation, mutual exchanges and on-the-ground learning – the exchange visit and field-based learning. This tool discusses field-based learning.

Getting your hands dirty! – The utility of field-based learning

A common tool in academic higher education programs, field-based learning is a requirement that must be fulfilled after years of classroom based study. But because conservation efforts sometimes require that engaged local populations master technical skills, this technique is equally applicable to non-academic training initiatives. It is not enough to do a workshop explaining the usefulness and necessity of tracking manatees or dolphins with GPS devices. You have to teach this skill on the open seas, in a boat, with the local surveillance monitor actually holding and operating the device. It is the only way that such a skill can be acquired. Capacity building that allows information to be learned and applied at the same time in the field where it is most needed is the best way to ensure that skills are transferred and employed.

Examples of field-based learning subjects include data collection on endangered species to monitor the health of their population, learning how to operate a telescope, and learning how to survey local populations, etc. Also, building the capacity of targeted groups, like young researchers in the region, responds to the necessity for deepening the regional knowledge base on conservation problems and solutions. Combining the exchange visit with field-based learning so that regional knowledge is transferred is another effective field learning strategy.

But like all capacity building approaches, it is easy to mess up. Ensuring that this alternative learning strategy allows learners to build their own knowledge, understanding and skills requires four key elements: preparation, pertinence, effective participation and follow-up.
• **Be prepared!**
Logistical details, the preparation of the local population, timing and scheduling, checking that equipment is functional, and even understanding local weather and climate conditions are all crucial to making a successful field mission. Furthermore, assuring that there is enough time to cover the learning objectives are all part of good preparation. Ignoring important details such as the timing of the rainy season can derail the most relevant and useful field experience. Preparing written and visual tools and supports for distribution during this learning experience is a useful way to map out and explain the skills that are being transferred.

• **Finding the right fit**
Without understanding community priorities, trainers risk spending a lot of time and resources to no effect. Trainers must be able to answer the following questions as they plan their field learning experience. What does the community (or the group) want to accomplish? Does the field learning exercise respond to a need identified in the community? Are the learning objectives directly related to the identified needs? Is the training targeted at the right group of people who have the ability, desire, capacity and need for the skill being transferred? Is the composition of the group homogenous in terms of its skills, expectations, languages used?

• **Effective participation – no wall flowers should apply!**
The most important value of field based learning is the ability to practice a skill to solve real problems. Whoever attends such a training session should be able to use the skill when they return home. If they do not have the chance to practice and learn through trial and error, using the equipment or techniques that are being taught, they won't be able to implement them in their communities. Therefore, when developing a field learning exercise, trainers should take care to make it as participative as possible. Here again, it is the search for autonomy that comes first!

• **Leaving something behind**
The follow-up stage of a field learning experience is as important as the preparative phase. Assessing how the training went and creating mechanisms for those who are trained to practice the skill once the trainers leave is the next step. Some of these mechanisms include donating equipment and maintaining an open line of communication between trainees so that they can continue to exchange experiences and the problems they encounter as well as the solutions they may have developed.
In the summer of 2011, Wetlands International and the World Wildlife Fund put in place methods formerly used in the Gambia, to investigate cetacean abundance, their distribution and conservation status in the Saloum Delta region. This project took place in the Saloum Delta National Park, a 76,000-hectare national park situated within the delta of the Sine and Saloum rivers in Senegal.

Considered an area of great importance for numerous bird species, is also known to provide habitat for several species of cetacean, including the Atlantic humpback dolphin (*Sousa teuszii*), which is classified as ‘vulnerable’. The need to understand the status of these species was clearly defined. Teaching monitoring and management techniques for cetaceans were determined as the training objectives of the field learning experience.

This project aimed to collect baseline information on the diversity, abundance and distribution of cetaceans in the coastal waters of the Saloum Delta region, and to build local capacity to continue this monitoring work in the long-term. Collecting baseline data is crucial. Low cost strategies like surveys of artisanal fishermen can be effective in assessing the amount of bycatch of threatened species. Such a method is ideal for regions like West Africa where research and conservation funds are limited, and where the involvement of local community members can greatly assist longer-term conservation and monitoring goals.

A two-week long classroom and practical training was provided to 14 national park ecoguards who would be able to apply the skills they obtained in their jobs back home. Discussion sessions and practical experiences with tools and techniques were incorporated wherever possible to encourage participation. Lastly, mechanisms of cooperation and partnership were created to ensure continued follow-up with the local community.
Educational materials and technical manuals

Through the various projects under the second phase of the Regional program for coastal and marine conservation in West Africa (PRCM), many documents were produced and distributed to the regional stakeholders in coastal management. The focus here is on the documents used for educational and training purposes; the “tools” designed to bring knowledge and expertise that can be used directly by the stakeholders in his or her field of competence. Institutions and NGOs often have the desire to produce materials (especially to gain visibility), however, it is important to respect a number of rules if they want to produce truly useful and practical tools that benefit conservation actors.

Specific tools, adapted ... and educational!

The temptation is often great to want to reach as broad an audience as possible (comprised of the public, technicians, policy makers and others.) to meet multiple needs and exert greater influence. But like any quality tool, a manual must be specific and responsive (a good screwdriver is not used to hammer nails ...). Before initiating the development of a teaching tool or a technical manual, certain questions should be addressed: To whom is it targeted? What specific need is being addressed? If these questions seem obvious ... we can find plenty of examples of documents that are not sufficiently adapted to their target audiences and often do not meet their goal.

Questions of purpose and audience will determine the structure of the manual, its substance and its form. The aim will determine the layout of the book, which must be designed to reflect a logical sequence of ideas that are well-defined and related to each other. Indeed, an educational tool or technical manual must follow the simplest and most educational path possible. Backtracking, repetition and unnecessary digressions should be avoided at all costs! A simple reading of the table of contents should enable the reader to understand the specific purpose of the manual ... and make him or her want to use it.

The form is also essential ... and a manual will not have the same impact depending on whether it is illustrated with pictures (pretty and appropriate), technical illustrations or drawings or comics. Vocabulary and phrasing used are also very important: the use of a vocabulary that is too technical may discourage the reader who often prefers simple words and ideas. It is good, whenever possible to involve stakeholders in the writing or revision of the document. They will contribute their vision and experience, and the document will have a greater chance of being appropriated by the intended users.

Be teachers

- Use clear ideas, linked together by a clear logic
- Use simple language, understandable to all!
- Take examples that speak to the reader ... that are close to his or her situation and daily life.
Give the product life by disseminating it!

The development of a book is not an end in itself and, once finished, printed and available ... the most difficult part still has not been confronted! Indeed, it is obviously essential that the work be distributed to its target audience! Dissemination of the product must be well thought out (and budgeted for!) well before it is available. In order to give the product every chance of reaching its audience, nothing takes the place of conducting an active and targeted promotion strategy. The organization of workshops, training, and distribution during an international event ... can often be effectively and intelligently used to distribute your product! A workshop will bring together the recipients of a manual to receive it (in person), to explain its use, and to demonstrate its use through concrete examples.

After a few years, a manual must be updated often; it may be useful (and not necessarily very expensive) to take a little part of the product and diffuse it.

**Diffusion = Anticipation**

Plan for dissemination as early as possible. Take the time to organize events that will permit the best distribution and use of the work. Dissemination often has a cost: it is therefore necessary to budget for this cost! Do not wait until a project has ended to disseminate the project's products ... it is already too late!
List of some technical support manuals produced by PRCM partners

Methods for the evaluating the impact of fishing agreements, by SRFC, FIBA, IUCN

Methodological guide for developing management plans for Marine Protected Areas in West Africa, by FIBA

Practical Guide for agents responsible for marine surveillance in Marine Protected Areas, by FIBA

Knowledge Handbook: Discovering the coastal and marine environment in West Africa, by IUCN

Teaching Guide: Learning to become a citizen of the coastline, by IUCN

Mining & Sustainable Development: Best practice guide for offshore oil and gas development in the West African Marine Eco-region, by WWF

Extractive Industries and Sustainable Development: Best practice fact sheets for offshore oil and gas development in the West African Marine Eco-region, by WWF

In shared governance!: A practical guide for marine protected areas in West Africa, by IUCN

Learn more about the West African Manatee Trichechus senegalensis. (School book), by WIA

Training Manual on methods and techniques to track manatees, by WIA
VII. FICHE (D) DE DONNÉES DU LAMANTIN SOURCES DE NOURRITURE ET LES SITES LAMANTIN

Les prédations des dauphins et des phoques font des lamantins des animaux d'exception, protégés par la loi. Les lamantins sont donc présents dans plusieurs parcs nationaux marins et dans les zones dites "Zones Économiques Étendues". Leur comportement est également très intéressant pour la recherche, notamment en ce qui concerne les interactions avec d'autres espèces aquatiques. Les lamantins sont des animaux sociaux et passent beaucoup de temps en groupe.

Méthodes et techniques de suivi du lamantin

Les lamantins sont des animaux sociaux et passent beaucoup de temps en groupe. Les discussions sont fréquentes, notamment au cours des pauses entre les repas. Les lamantins sont également très mobiles et peuvent passer de longues périodes en pleine mer sans être capables de nourrir les carnivores qui les poursuivent.

VII. FICHE (E) DE DONNÉES DU LAMANTIN : DONNÉES SUR L'ORIENTATION DES LAMANTINS, LA DETECTABILITÉ ET LA REPARTITION

1. DONNÉES SUR LES ÉVÉNEMENTS DE PÊCHE

1.1. Présence de lamantins dans la zone de péche, en ordre du nom
1.2. Détectabilité des lamantins et le statut d'équipes
1.3. Localisation du pécheur
1.4. Conditions météorologiques
1.5. Types d'angora et d'équipement observés

Les lamantins sont des animaux sociaux et passent beaucoup de temps en groupe. Les discussions sont fréquentes, notamment au cours des pauses entre les repas. Les lamantins sont également très mobiles et peuvent passer de longues périodes en pleine mer sans être capables de nourrir les carnivores qui les poursuivent.
Environmental Education - Children: Our hope! Our Future!

Human society is doomed without healthy ecosystems and natural resources that are available for our use. Yet we are fast approaching a world where the resources that were once abundant are becoming more and more rare.

Building awareness and communicating about environmental challenges does not have to start with adults but can start among the youngest members of our society – children. This is the only hope of saving our planet, its resources and ultimately ourselves. There is no better way to create long-lasting changes in behavior, in perceptions and in habits than by teaching children to proactively begin to protect the environment that they will inherit. Environmental education institutions and structures should be up to the challenge of transmitting to young generations a deep understanding of what is at stake regarding the conservation of West African coastal zone assets.

The Regional program for coastal and marine conservation in West Africa (PRCM) responded to this challenge by supporting the creation of a regional environmental education program in 2008 (PREE) covering seven countries of West Africa: Mauritania, Cape Verde, Senegal, The Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, the Republic of Guinea (Conakry) and Sierra Leone. This unique program combined the expertise and experiences of educators and stakeholders at the regional level to arrive at high quality pedagogical tools and supports, and to develop an informal network operating at the national level.

Through the convening of meetings and training workshops, the creation of a knowledge handbook and a teaching guide, schools in the region could transfer knowledge, skills, and values that will transform the next generation into one that is conscious of the environmental problems in the region and that acts to change them. To implement a similarly successful program in your region or country, several steps are required.

Define clear objectives

As in all other campaigns or capacity building initiatives, defining clear objectives is a critical first step. They should be relevant and related to the environmental problems that children and their families in your area confront on a daily basis. Developing an environmental unit that discusses life in a desert for children living in rain-soaked Congo is interesting but would not allow the kids to get out into the field and discover how desert creatures survive in the heat.
Objectives can be general or specifically geared towards a certain pedagogical goal. Examples include:

- To raise awareness of the causes and consequences of human activities on the environment;
- To identify and understand the factors contributing to a better environment; or
- To encourage participation in activities and initiatives of mitigation and adaptation.

Specific pedagogical objectives can span: teaching how to observe, question, conduct research, formulate hypotheses and take actions to change the situation.

Facilitate exchanges and networking

The highlight of all workshops, training conferences and other events is the learning that occurs through connections between people and informal conversations that take place during training sessions. Formalizing such exchanges by transforming participants into both students and teachers so that they are able to teach each other further enriches these interactions.

Develop relevant tools and supports

While training allows for face-to-face contacts and exchanges, high quality tools and supports are equally important for ensuring continued learning and application of new techniques back home and in the classroom. Creating networks that permit the free exchange of ideas and tools created by educators is also very useful way to distribute relevant resources.

In the classroom - Make it fun and interesting

Teaching environmental education is a great way of having fun, of exploring the environment around us and of empowering youth to understand the power that they have over the environment. Using role-play, doing scientific experiments, linking literature to environmental themes, doing group projects, promoting environmentally friendly innovations, incorporating the element of art, doing surveys and mapping – all of these are great ways to animate the topics.

When we are able to creatively transmit environmental awareness and an understanding of how humans can hurt this environment, we automatically create future leaders who can work tirelessly to change the people around them – such as their families. This is capacity building at its very basic level.
Get out and do something! Field based learning

A wonderful way of involving students and going from the abstract to the concrete is to get outside! Exploring the world around us is a terrific way of opening their eyes, and giving students a new outlook and perspective on the world that they may see every day but that they do not really notice.

A common tool in academic programs, field-based learning simply means traveling to a site and learning about an abstract concept through the concrete application of these concepts on the ground. A walk on the beach to observe and understand the elements of the coastline and discover tide pools for example is a fantastic way of identifying the different elements of the coast both natural (beach or estuary), and manmade (fishing boats and fish smoking facilities). Students can answer a myriad of questions on what they observe, what types of waste is visible, the wildlife that inhabits the environment and how their habitats are transformed by the tides. They can collect specimens which will allow them to continue their explorations in the classroom. These rich experiences effectively alter the way they look at and interact with their environment in the future.

Capacity building that allows information to be learned and applied at the same time in the field where it is most needed is the best way to ensure that skills are transferred and employed. Whether it is teachers participating in a workshop that teaches how to conduct outdoor classes, or students who are practicing how to collect data on water salinity, field based learning is an essential element of successful environmental education initiatives.
Using a participative process, PREE actively facilitated the development of broad and specific objectives for the incorporation of environmental education in the classroom and into national curricula. Over the past 4 years, their tireless work has achieved positive results. Not only have they succeeded in creating two useful tools (*Discovering the Coastal and Marine Environment of West Africa: A Knowledge Handbook* and *the Pedagogical Guide: Learning how to become a coastal citizen*), they brought environmental education to the forefront of the national education debate in certain countries.

A comprehensive analysis of the region’s educational systems in the seven countries allowed the identification of needs and opportunities for introducing coastal heritage and conservation into national educational curricula. As of 2012, all the PRCM countries demonstrate a commitment and interest in environmental education and some are currently revising their curricula to include environmental issues. In fact, in 2010 legislators in Guinea Bissau succeeded in passing a law to revise the national curriculum and to explicitly integrate environmental education concepts.

The PREE also facilitated many encounters between educators and stakeholders through training sessions. Nearly 8,000 adults and children were made aware of the environmental issues facing their communities. Another 225 professionals, stakeholders, teachers learned active pedagogical methods and how to maximize the use of the knowledge handbook at national and regional workshops organized by PREE.
Building awareness means communicating... for change!

It is sometimes difficult to distinguish what is mere communication from activities to raise awareness. We can say that communication is intended to transmit information, while building awareness is intended to create a change in behavior. For example, if one educates fishermen in West Africa to the adverse effects of nylon nets, it is in order to change their practices so that they choose to use cotton nets instead.

Strategic awareness building

If it's easy to inform the public, it is much harder to get them to change their behavior! In order to be effective, an awareness campaign must be conducted according to a well-thought out strategy that is executed according to specific stages.

Définir la situation: First of all, we must define (and document) the problem that we wish to address. What is the current situation? Why is it import to tackle this problem?

Establish the purpose and objectives: As in any project that is being implemented, an awareness campaign must work towards a long-term goal that is achieved by meeting short- and medium-term objectives. Thus, if the ultimate goal is the eradication of nylon nets in countries in West Africa, we can try to achieve results in the medium term such as "In five years, fishermen will use two times less nylon nets", of "In five years, each country will set up a tax incentive to encourage the use of cotton nets", or "In 10 years, four countries will have banned the importation of nylon nets."

Define the target audiences: We tend to want to educate the "general public", as if the general public is homogeneous and equally concerned about the issue! A suitable knowledge of the situation and clear goals will help to determine the target audience. In general, we are dealing with a specific target group (eg. artisanal fishermen) and policymakers (parliamentarians, ministers, heads of state, but also local authorities). It is often very useful to define the different partners of the initiative (civil society, opinion leaders, entertainers and sports figures...) who can influence decision makers. Once this is done, we can outline a "map of influence" that shows how different target audiences are connected to decision-makers. Sometimes, it may be necessary to go through intermediate targets to achieve your goal: for example, beginning with raising the awareness of children who then bring the message to their families who in turn may influence local elected officials.

Develop key messages to convey to the audience: Clear messages must be conveyed to their targets! Each message must "speak" to its target audience and be suitable and convincing enough to bring about change. Remember, the change we expect from the
fisherman is not the same as what we expect from the decision-maker. Take care to measure the “acceptability” of the message in terms of culture or of actual ability (including economic) of the target group to bring about change.

**Develop and implement an awareness campaign plan:** The methods for delivering a message are numerous and the success of an awareness campaign will very much depend on the choice of method: TV campaign, radio, internet, mail, distribution of t-shirts, posters, organization of guided sessions, cinema-debates etc. Again, the choice of media will depend on the target audience and its environment. The use of “messengers” who are well-known to the general public (such as famous singers or athletes) can also be a great way of getting the message across!

**Monitoring and Evaluation:** As in any project, it is essential to monitor the impact of activities to eventually readjust the plan based on the lessons learned. Regarding the objectives that have been set, it is easy to see whether they were achieved or not. An evaluation will be much easier and more interesting if indicators have been established beforehand.

**A campaign requires resources**

Conservation efforts may require the implementation of small campaigns, targeted at a limited audience, such as village school children. In this case, according to the activities being performed, costs may be limited. However, an awareness campaign on a national or regional scale (such as the eradication of nylon netting or plastic bags) requires significant resources that must be budgeted over many years.

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**Some tips for a successful campaign (BOX)**

- Study the target audiences and their environments (whether they have access to television, internet etc.)
- Understand and document the mechanisms to influence the object of the intervention (who makes monofilament nets, who imports them, why are they so popular, why are they harmful).
- Work on the clarity of the message that you want to get across!
- Analyze the cultural or socio-economic acceptability of the message.
- Involve relevant stakeholders in the advocacy process.
- Be aware of belief systems: it is always easier to build on what the public knows or believes.
- Religious leaders can be powerful messengers, as well as artists and intellectuals: envision the possibility of forming an advocacy group combining these different levers.
- Arouse the interest of the media (print, TV, radio, Internet) that can have a significant impact on all audiences.
The PRCM’s regional awareness campaign on plastic waste was launched in 2010 with the identification of national partners. Nongovernmental organizations in Mauritania (GRET) and Cape Verde (ADAD - l’Association pour la Défense de l’Environnement et le Développement) received funding for the implementation of activities including the strengthening of national legislation, raising awareness, recycling and the creation of alternatives to the use of plastic bags. Both groups conducted studies to better define the problem and the target audiences. In Cape Verde, the NGO ADAD started by surveying shop owners on their tendency to distribute plastic bags, and collecting data on the amount of waste in the natural environment. The message – “Cabo Verde sem plástico” or Cape Verde without plastic – was created. This was followed with a large scale communication and awareness building campaign including television spots, sports competitions, and conferences. Lastly, the development and sale of alternatives to plastic bags helped plant the seeds for a behavioral change in the population.

To better target its communication campaign, the Mauritanian NGO GRET also conducted surveys of the population’s perceptions related to plastic waste in general and plastic bags in particular. In conjunction with this diagnosis, the project team implemented a communication plan that increased awareness of plastic pollution. They then proposed solutions to promote the collection and recycling of plastic waste (cans, basins, buckets, water bottles) and encouraged people to reduce or limit their use of non-recyclable plastics (plastic bags). They developed multilingual supports, engaged partners, and raised awareness by training local leaders who then informed their own community members. Lastly, they worked to build institutional capacity to implement recycling measures to reuse plastic waste.
The coastal zone stands out more than ever before as an area of strategic importance for the African countries. Coastal zone management zone presents a complex equation given the heavy dependence of its populations on natural resources from an economic and food security standpoint. These states need to be able to benefit optimally from the development opportunities that the coastal zone offers while at the same time considering future outlooks such as population density, which could triple along the coast by 2050, as well as the impacts of climate change.

The West African Marine and Coastal Conservation Program – PRCM, was founded in 2003 precisely to respond to these challenges with the aim of building together with the main stakeholders in the region, i.e. Mauritania, Cape Verde, Senegal, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea and Sierra Leone, an environmental governance system for the West African marine and coastal zone.

This document seeks to make available essential tools for building the capacity of local actors and institutions for a more sustainable conservation. The synthesis presented herein is not intended to cover all of the multitudes of capacity building activities conducted by partners within the framework of the PRCM. Instead it is intended to highlight a small subset of the best practices identified and present them in the form of useful tools for conservation actors.