

Community Planning for Sustainable Development

Maintaining natural and cultural assets

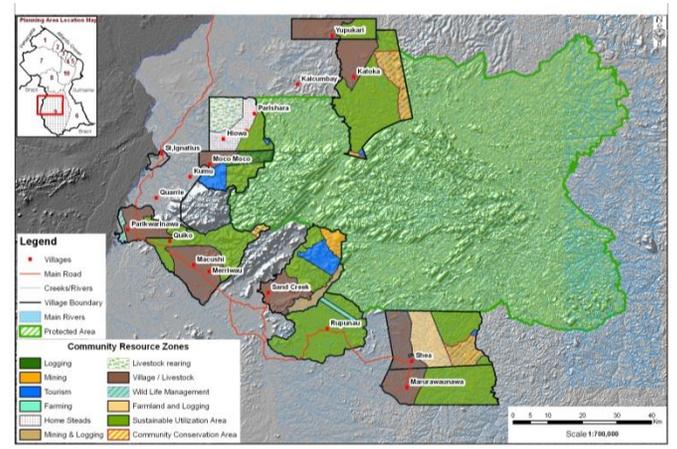
Introduction

Indigenous communities currently own approximately three million hectares of Guyana's landmass (GFC, 2015) and have rights to traditional resource use significantly beyond this. The lands owned and used by communities are some of the most biologically important – they are covered by rear ecosystems, house important species, provide essential goods and services, among other things. The traditional practices of these communities have maintained natural assets over many centuries. The capacity of indigenous communities to continue good stewardship of their land and resources is severely constrained by their limited capacity to create and implement strategic plans for their development. These plans are needed as communities are becoming more integrated into the mainstream cash-based market economy (CI-Guyana, 2012) that introduces many pressures on traditional economy, society, and the environment. These pressures in turn affect the resilience of communities and stymie their sustainable development efforts.

Piloting Tools for Robust Community Planning

Conservation International-Guyana (CI-Guyana) collaborated with the Kanuku Mountains Community Representative Group (KMCRG) to design and test a series of simple tools to assist communities to develop robust Community Development Plans (CDPs). A simple planning process and associated tools were tested with 11 villages surrounding the Kanuku Mountains Protected Area (KMPA) in Administrative Region 9 (see figure 1) (CI-Guyana, 2012). The community-led process (see figure 2) intends to help secure the wellbeing of communities by integrating resource management into community development, build the capacity of the villages to better understand the resources/assets available to them, and plan for the sustainable use of those resources. It also helped communities to step beyond their boundaries and develop integrated

Figure 1: KMPA communities with zoning informed by VRDP process.



approaches to resource management at a watershed or eco-regional level thus reducing inter-community conflicts that could have otherwise resulted.

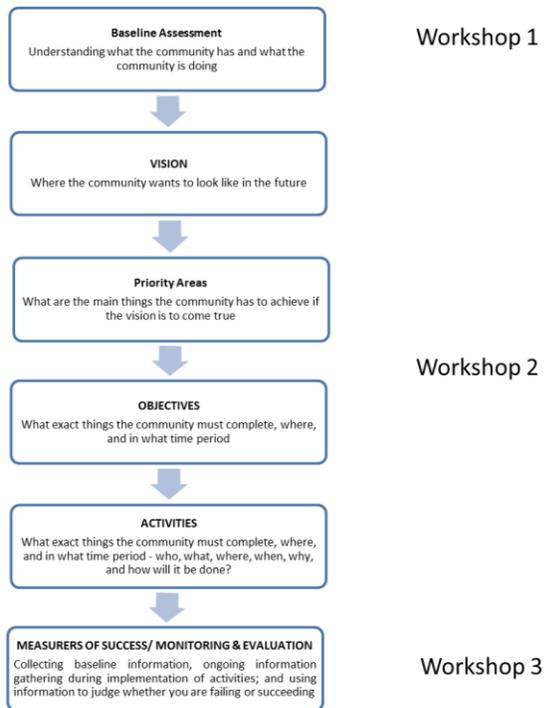
Results/Outputs

This initiative has resulted in the production of a clear and comprehensive “tool kit” for community planning for sustainable development (CI-Guyana, 2012). The development and testing in communities surrounding the KMPA, and with the KMCRG's leadership, also allowed for identification and address of issues of collective resource management. Consequently, a more secure future of the natural wealth of the region, including the KMPA, is more attainable, as is improved management of resources across Guyana. The planning process and tools are currently being further refined and improved towards their use by indigenous communities across Guyana (MoIPA, 2016).

Challenges and Lessons

Initially, gender and age dynamics within the communities were not factored into the manner in

Figure 2: The VRDP process (MoIPA, 2016).



which the planning process was deployed. Creating the enabling space for inclusion of interests and perspectives of women, youth and other vulnerable groups is essential for resilient planning.

The initial deployment of the process in the KMPA communities demonstrated the need for the process and tools to include focus on issues of

climate change, and the preparation of sound annual implementation plans and targets that are clear, simple and measurable by the communities. Revision of the planning process and tools is addressing these needs.

Conclusion

The Community Development Planning tool kit and process designed by CI-Guyana and the KMCRG provides an opportunity to realize improved management of the natural and cultural wealth in more than 14% of Guyana’s land mass.

References

CI-Guyana. (2012). Village Resource Development Planning - Toolkit for communities (Version 1.0) (pp. 44): Conservation International Foundation (Guyana) Inc.

GFC. (2015). Guyana REDD+ Monitoring Reporting and Verification System (MRVS) - Year 5 Interim Measures Report (1 January 2014 to 31 December 2014) (Version 2) (pp. 85). Georgetown, Guyana: Guyana Forestry Commission.

MoIPA. (2016). A Sustainable Development Agreement to Enable Local and Community-driven Development (pp. 6): Ministry of Indigenous Peoples Affairs.