



Policy Brief: Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) Public-Private Partnerships for Conservation



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Key Messages

- Community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) has numerous advantages over other forms of conservation, with benefits relating to climate change resilience, biodiversity conservation and sustainable socio-economic development.
- Public-private partnerships (PPPs), whereby state actors form agreements with community-based organisations and/or with private sector businesses, can strengthen CBNRM and create win-win scenarios for people and nature.
- PPPs are successful when they prioritise the needs of local communities and emphasise mutual trust, transparency, and respect for their rights and traditional wisdom, while sharing new technology and expertise.
- Governments should create the enabling policy conditions to allow PPPs to flourish within their jurisdictions, especially in areas where CBNRM is practised.

Bridging for Biodiversity: CBNRM's Climate-Smart Conservation Power

Community-based natural resource management ([CBNRM](#)) recognises the importance of local participation, harnesses traditional knowledge, and aligns conservation efforts with community needs and aspirations. This is a more sustainable and equitable approach to conservation than traditional 'fortress' conservation whereby communities are excluded from participating in or benefiting from state protected areas.

CBNRM yields various benefits for biodiversity conservation, ecosystem restoration, and climate change mitigation, and has shown promising results and gained significance in promoting sustainable resource management in the following ways:

- CBNRM models include efforts tackling **adaptation to climate change** by combining traditional and scientific knowledge, [enhancing climate resilience](#) through sustainable practices. Armed with in-depth knowledge of their ecosystems, communities adopt **climate-resilient practices** that enable them to adapt to changing climate conditions. This dual approach not only supports the protection of ecosystems and biodiversity but also creates a symbiotic relationship between environmental conservation and climate resilience. This is why recognizing the **inherent local knowledge and ownership** [held by communities regarding their natural environment](#), including traditional practices and ecological insights is crucial. The involvement of local communities in resource management not only instils a sense of ownership and responsibility but also contributes to the adoption of more effective and sustainable practices.
- CBNRM facilitates **economic development and poverty alleviation** by offering economic opportunities to local communities through sustainable practices such as eco-tourism, sustainable hunting, agroforestry, or non-timber forest products. This not only [alleviates poverty](#) but also enhances the overall well-being of communities. Simultaneously, efforts are made to create conditions for **community empowerment and social cohesion**. Through active participation in decision-making processes, the

fostering of self-reliance, and the strengthening of social cohesion and community bonds, a robust foundation is laid for [effective collective resource management](#).

- CBNRM plays a pivotal role in conservation by **complementing government-led efforts**. Through the active involvement of local communities, CBNRM enhances the success and [effectiveness of broader conservation initiatives](#). Simultaneously, this approach promotes **sustainable resource use**, as communities are more likely to manage resources in responsible and prudent ways to ensure their long-term availability because [their livelihoods and well-being often directly depend on these resources](#).
- CBNRM **incentivizes conservation and biodiversity protection while reducing conflicts over resources**. When communities are empowered to manage their natural resources, they are more likely to engage in conservation efforts, leading to [greater commitment for biodiversity protection](#), habitat preservation, and the implementation of measures to safeguard endangered species. Additionally, [the involvement of stakeholders in resource management fosters equitable benefit sharing](#), promoting collaboration and preventing disputes. This integrated approach ensures that conservation goals align with community interests, creating a harmonious balance between environmental protection and the resolution of potential conflicts.
- CBNRM's emphasis on **ecosystem and biodiversity protection** indirectly aids climate change mitigation. Intact and healthy ecosystems efficiently sequester carbon and regulate climate patterns. For instance, CBNRM efforts like afforestation, reforestation, and [sustainable forest management](#) aid **carbon sequestration**, curbing greenhouse gas emissions for climate change mitigation. Furthermore, by promoting **sustainable land use practices**, CBNRM contributes to the reduction of deforestation, soil degradation, and land-use change emissions. This comprehensive approach not only diminishes the carbon footprint of local communities but also supports broader [climate mitigation efforts](#), aligning environmental conservation with sustainable land management practices.
- CBNRM can stimulate community-led **renewable energy ventures**, like [community-based solar](#) or [wind farms](#), [diminishing fossil fuel dependency](#) and fostering clean energy alternatives, thus decreasing greenhouse gas emissions. CBNRM programs can also facilitate [carbon-offsetting](#) schemes, where communities earn incentives for sequestering carbon through sustainable practices. Additionally, [payment for ecosystem services \(PES\) models](#) can reward communities for conserving forests or other carbon-rich ecosystems.
- **Community-led advocacy and policy influence:** CBNRM can empower local communities to engage in climate advocacy and policy discussions. On one hand, by voicing their concerns and participating in decision-making processes, [communities can influence policies](#) that back climate change mitigation efforts. On the other hand, by engaging local communities, CBNRM can **enhance environmental monitoring and reporting**, including of carbon emissions and sequestration rates. This data is valuable for assessing the effectiveness of climate change mitigation efforts.

CBNRM Public-Private Partnerships

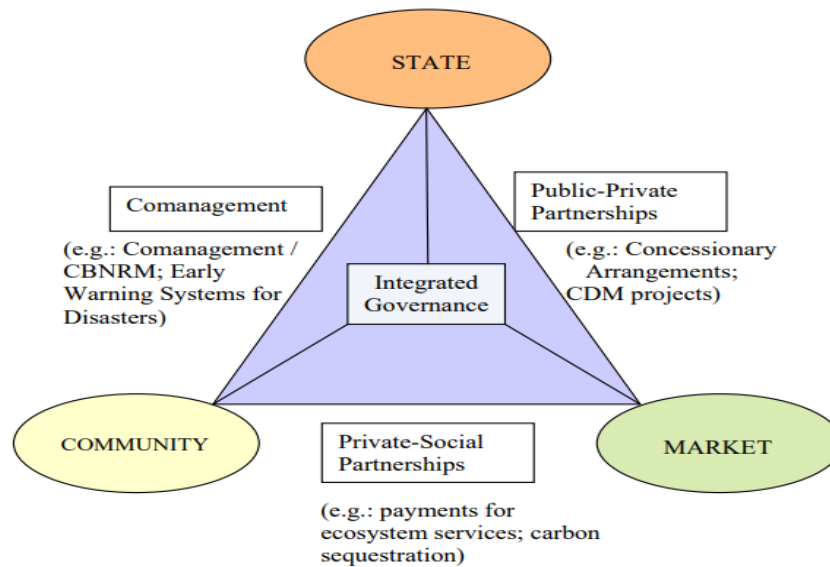


Figure 1. A schema of collaborative institutional arrangements for environmental action in the context of climate change (from [Agrawal and Lemos, 2006](#)).

[Public-private partnerships](#) (PPPs) are collaborative arrangements between public sector entities (government agencies or local authorities) and private sector entities (businesses, NGOs, or community-based organisations) to address specific societal challenges or achieve common goals. In the context of CBNRM, PPPs can bring various benefits and contributions, such as (a) risk-sharing and long-term commitment, (b) increased funding, and (c) innovative solutions.

In PPPs, risks and responsibilities are shared among the partners. This ensures that the commitment to CBNRM is sustained, and the burden is not solely on the community or government. This builds on [shared interests](#) of governments, businesses, and local communities in addressing climate change and biodiversity loss.

PPPs drive innovation, technology transfer and market-driven solutions, while attracting private sector funding and resources to complement government budgets and community contributions towards supporting CBNRM projects and ensuring sustainability.

PPPs can facilitate the implementation of climate-resilient projects that incorporate CBNRM principles, blending private sector expertise and funding with government efforts for infrastructure and sustainable resource management practices. PPPs can be used to develop eco-tourism projects that conserve biodiversity and provide economic opportunities for local communities, prompting sustainable practices among businesses and alignment with climate and biodiversity conservation goals.

When allocating climate financing, funders or investors often prioritise community involvement in projects, and initiatives emphasising indigenous rights, social equity, and community support. CBNRM initiatives are seen as effective and sustainable, making them preferred options for climate funding.

Case Study: Community Markets for Conservation (COMACO)

The Community Markets for Conservation (COMACO) model, established in 2001 through collaboration between the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), the Zambia Wildlife Authority (ZAWA), District Councils, and Community Resources Boards (CRBs), exemplifies a successful CBNRM PPP. Operating in game management areas (GMAs), COMACO engages in business partnerships with local communities committed to sustainable natural resource management.

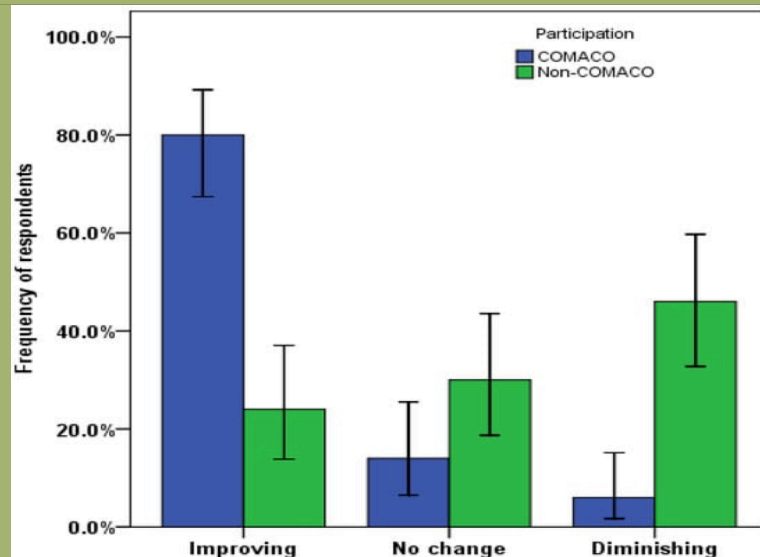


Figure 2. Local communities' perceptions of long-term changes in soil fertility under PPP (blue) and non-PPP (green) scenarios (from Nshimbi and Vinya, 2014).

Its primary objective is to enhance food security and boost household incomes for communities residing near wildlife and forest protected areas, thereby mitigating harmful human practices on the environment. The model achieves this by processing and marketing organic, high-value products cultivated by participating communities. The core of COMACO's business model revolves around the understanding that urban-based consumers serve as a vital economic catalyst, fostering improved rural incomes and heightened food security.

The findings presented above stem from a study evaluating the impact of PPPs on local livelihoods and natural resource dynamics. The study focused on five key crops (maize, groundnuts, soya beans, rice, and beans). Over a decade, results indicate that more than three-quarters of respondents engaged in the COMACO PPP in their GMA, Lupande, witnessed a significant increase in soil fertility status and crop yields (Independent-samples t-test, $p < 0.05$). In contrast, non-PPP farmers experienced a notable reduction in both variables during the same period.

Further potential for public-private partnerships

Successful PPPs in CBNRM prioritise the needs of local communities and emphasise mutual trust, transparency, and respect for their rights and traditional wisdom. When designed thoughtfully, these partnerships can strongly support sustainable resource management, biodiversity conservation, and community empowerment. Successful PPP's can:

- Offer access to **technical expertise and share knowledge** for CBNRM initiatives, contributing insights on sustainable resource management practices, technology adoption, and efficient project implementation strategies.
- Facilitate **capacity building and training** programs for local communities, equipping them with various skills in resource management, conservation, and sustainable livelihoods.
- Introduce **innovative technologies** (e.g. remote sensing, data analytics) and approaches (e.g. coaching, transformational leadership) for enhanced community-based management.
- Establish [market connections](#) for community-produced goods and services, thus enhancing **local livelihoods opportunities** and making conservation more appealing, viable and sustainable.
- Boost **coordination and collaboration** between various stakeholders (government, NGOs, private firms, and communities), thus fostering an integrated and holistic resource management and conservation strategy.
- Private sector partners can assist communities in policy [advocacy and engagement with policy makers](#), leveraging their experience to promote favourable policies and regulations for sustainable resource management and community-driven conservation.
- Successful PPP models in CBNRM can be **scaled up or replicated** in various areas, resulting in wider-reaching benefits for biodiversity conservation and sustainable resource management.

Conclusion

Involving communities in natural resource management through CBNRM programmes holds great promise for tackling three interlinked global problems: climate change, biodiversity loss and poverty. Governments can strengthen national CBNRM programmes by encouraging PPPs whereby private companies join hands with state institutions and community-based organisations to create mutually beneficial and respectful relationships. Since each national situation is different, each government needs to understand the current status of PPPs in their country and investigate what policies or practices need to be changed to promote more partnerships. At the international level, CBNRM must be promoted to potential donors and investors that are seeking to invest in sustainable development, climate change and biodiversity conservation initiatives.