

COURSE REPORT

Community and Stakeholder Engagement in the Conservation, Restoration and Management of Tropical Forest Landscapes

July 10 to August 20, 2017

An online course organized by:

The Environmental Leadership and Training Initiative (ELTI)

Background: Successful efforts to conserve, restore, and manage natural resources within tropical forest landscapes require much more than knowledge of ecological factors. The ability to understand and integrate critical socio-cultural and political factors is essential. When people feel excluded from the benefits of a particular strategy or intervention, for example, it is unlikely that project will achieve stated goals. Consequently, strategies aiming to conserve, restore, or manage natural resources must include comprehensive consultation with local communities to determine how they can be incorporated into the design and implementation of a project and obtain meaningful benefits. Even projects that are designed to provide local benefits can generate feelings of exclusion by some community members. It is, therefore, of great importance that decision-makers and practitioners focused on conserving, restoring and managing tropical forest landscapes are aware of these socio-cultural political factors and the strategies employed that effectively address community and stakeholder engagement in different contexts.



Closing meeting during the first phase of a participatory assessment between Brazil nut collectors that works inside a timber concession in Tahuamanu-Madre de Dios, Perú, which was the focus of participant Carla Merediz's final project. Photo credit: Elialdo Motta

ELTI is an initiative of the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental studies and was created with generous support from Arcadia, a charitable fund of Peter Baldwin and Lisbet Rausing (www.arcadiafund.org.uk).



Forest and agricultural landscape around Kibira National Park, Burundi, the focus of course participant, Dieudonné Bizimana's, final project on community and stakeholder engagement. Photo credit: D. Bizimana

This online course was designed to provide participants with an array of principles and case studies on community and stakeholder engagement, to inform practice, and to provide guidance on how to apply this knowledge to the implementation of their own projects. The course included a series of presentations, live discussion sessions, and activities designed to help individuals analyze social aspects of natural resource management projects and apply these concepts to their own work. Additionally, participants exchanged their own experiences and perspectives working on stakeholder and community engagement throughout tropical Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Course Objectives:

- Introduce the principles and methodologies related to participatory research and community-based natural resource management;
- Provide an overview of case studies that employ research-driven and collaborative natural resource management projects;
- Provide guidance on stakeholder engagement and consideration of social factors that may impact the success of conservation, restoration and forest management projects;
- Facilitate the opportunity for participants to analyze the social aspects of natural resource management projects and take a holistic view of project objectives;
- Provide the opportunity for participants to engage in discussion sessions on a weekly basis and connect with a global network of practitioners working in conservation, restoration, and management.



Live session with lead instructors, Dr. Amity Doolittle and Dr. Eva Garen (top left). Live sessions were held using videoconference software, "Zoom", which allowed for dialogue between course participants and invited guest experts.

Format: This six-week course was offered in English and was divided into thematic modules, each one lasting a week. The thematic modules were:

Module 1. Framing the Importance of Community and Stakeholder Engagement

Module 2. Important Socio-political Factors and Considerations

Module 3. Participatory Community-Based Research Methods

Module 4. Case Studies Highlighting Community and Stakeholder Engagement

Module 5. Integration of Livelihoods and Local Interests

Module 6. Course Wrap-Up and Development of a Community Engagement Plan

Educational Tools:

- Pre-recorded guest lectures that depicted the video of the guest speaker, along with the PowerPoint slides;
 - Interactive presentations that provided a synthesis of the core concepts;
 - Suggested readings to complement the presentations;
 - Case studies from Brazil, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Indonesia, Mexico, Myanmar, Nepal, Panama, the Philippines, Rwanda, and Vietnam;
 - Weekly online live discussion sessions with the lead professors and invited guest experts;
 - Weekly discussion forums, during which participants are asked to share their thoughts and questions about the weekly material; and
 - Course project: a plan that outlines an approach to engage with relevant stakeholders and communities in an existing or proposed project. Throughout the course, participants engaged in weekly assignments, answering questions on discussion forums, conducting literature searches, and engaging in peer-to-peer feedback. This work was compiled by the end of the course into a final project, reviewed by course instructors.
- At the end of the course, participants who completed the course requirements received a certificate of participation.
- Participants:** Thirty-two environmental leaders working in tropical Asia, Africa, and Latin America participated in the course. Participants came from 18 different countries and represented a variety of sectors, including local and national governments, non-governmental organizations, private companies, academia, and public-private partnerships.

The screenshot shows a slide from an interactive presentation. At the top left, there is a logo for 'Design and Methods for Community-Based Participatory Research'. To the right is the 'elti' logo (Environmental Leadership & Training Initiative). The main title of the slide is 'Design and Methods for Community-Based Participatory Research'. Below the title is a photograph of three people in a field of banana plants; one person is taking a photo with a camera, another is looking through binoculars, and a third is holding a document. Below the photo, it says 'Written by: Dr. Amity Doolittle, Yale University, School of Forestry and Environmental Studies' and 'Adapted by: Karin Bucht, Environmental Leadership & Training Initiative, Yale University, USA'. At the bottom of the slide, there is a navigation bar with buttons for 'Menu', 'References', 'Glossary', and a search icon, along with 'Page 1 of 19' and a close button 'x'. Below the slide, there is a caption: 'Interactive Presentation on design and methods for community-based participatory research, developed by lead instructor Dr. Amity Doolittle.'

The screenshot shows a slide from a recorded video presentation. At the top left, there is a logo for 'elti ONLINE TRAINING PROGRAM' and 'Yale SCHOOL OF FORESTRY & ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES'. On the left side, there is a small video inset showing a woman, Eva Garen, Ph.D., speaking. Below the video inset, it says 'Eva Garen, Ph.D.' and 'Director, Environmental Leadership & Training Initiative, Yale University'. The main title of the slide is 'Integrating trees and cattle ranching?'. Below the title is a photograph of a green, hilly landscape with a fence line. Text on the slide reads: '27% of the land in Panama is classified as "dry and degraded", primarily due to overgrazing by cattle (FAO 2014)'. Below the photo, it says 'Small-scale systems of commercial cattle ranching, Panama'. At the bottom of the slide, there is a caption: 'Recorded video presentation on the importance of social research, with a case study on cattle ranching systems in Panama, presented by lead instructor Dr. Eva Garen.'

Instructors and Coordinators: **Dr. Amity Doolittle**, Senior Lecturer at the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies (F&ES), and **Dr. Eva Garen**, ELTI's Director, served as the lead professors for this course. They participated in weekly live sessions and provided feedback on course projects. **Karin Bucht**, ELTI's Online Training Program Associate, facilitated the delivery and management of the course, with teaching assistance from **Gillian Bloomfield**, ELTI's Online Training Program Coordinator, and **Asha Bertsch**, Master's candidate at Yale F&ES.

Guest experts provided pre-recorded video lectures and/or participated in live video conferences, including:

- **Dominique Bikaba**, Strong Roots Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo
- **Marlito Bande**, Visayas State University, Institute of Tropical Ecology, Philippines
- **Zoraida Calle**, CIPAV, Environmental Leadership and Training Initiative, Colombia
- **Marcelo de Andrade**, Pro Natura International, Brazil
- **Amity Doolittle**, Yale University, School of Forestry & Environmental Studies, United States
- **Eva Garen**, Environmental Leadership and Training Initiative at Yale University, United States
- **Ange Imanishimwe**, BIOCOOP Rwanda
- **Carol Kinsey**, SeedTree, United States
- **Gary Dunning**, The Forests Dialogue at Yale University, United States
- **Pamela McElwee**, Rutgers University, United States
- **Chuck Peters**, New York Botanical Garden, United States
- **Jimmy Pogosa**, Visayas State University, Institute of Tropical Ecology, Philippines
- **Jacob Slusser**, Environmental Leadership and Training Initiative at Yale University, Panama
- **Amy Vedder**, Yale University, School of Forestry & Environmental Studies, United States
- **Bill Weber**, Yale University, School of Forestry & Environmental Studies, United States

Outcomes and Follow-up: The majority of participants were actively engaged throughout the course, benefited from the feedback they received from the instructors and their peers, and successfully completed their final projects articulating their plans for community and stakeholder engagement in a specific location site. In the months following the course, ELTI will follow up with participants to see how the course has influenced their professional development and the involvement of communities and other stakeholders in the implementation of projects.

For more information: Please contact Karin Bucht, ELTI Online Training Program Associate (Karin.Bucht@yale.edu)