



Overseas Development Institute

Conflict Management in Community-Based Natural Resource Projects: Experiences from Fiji and Papua New Guinea

Michael Warner



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form for discussion and critical comment

Working Paper 135

**CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN COMMUNITY-BASED
NATURAL RESOURCE PROJECTS: EXPERIENCES
FROM FIJI AND PAPUA NEW GUINEA**

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Acronyms

BATNA	Best alternative to a negotiated agreement
BCN	Biodiversity Conservation Network
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CBNRM	Community-based natural resource management
CPRs	Common property resources
CWG	Community women's groups
DEC	Department of Environment and Conservation
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
FPCD	Foundation for People and Community Development
FSP	Foundation for the Peoples of the South Pacific
FSPI	Foundation for the Peoples of the South Pacific International
GWG	Guesthouse Women's Group
ICAD	Integrated conservation and development
ICRAF	International Centre for Research in Agroforestry
IHFL	Imeah Himanato Farmers Limited
NFA	National Forestry Association
NFS	Niugini Forestry Supplies
NGO	Non government organisation
NRM	Natural resource management
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PNG	Papua New Guinea
Sida	Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency
UKFSP	UK Foundation for the People's of the South Pacific
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

Summary

This paper discusses the problem of non-violent conflicts and disputes as a constraint to sustainable natural resource management at the community level. Section 1 provides some background to the role of conflict in natural resource management. Section 2 presents a methodology designed to contribute to the removal of conflict as an obstacle to sustainability. The methodology was developed to guide a programme of conflict management within NGO-sponsored community-based natural resource projects in the South Pacific. Examples of the outputs of the methodology are described in Section 3, drawn from conflict management activities undertaken in the Lakekamu Basin Integrated Conservation and Development Project, Papua New Guinea. The overall benefits of conflict management in community-based natural resource projects are described in Section 4, discussed in relation to building social capital and sustaining livelihood security

1. Role of conflict and conflict management in community-based natural resource projects

1.1 Introduction

The word 'conflict' carries negative connotations. It is often thought of as the opposite of co-operation and peace, and is most commonly associated with violence, the threat of violence or disruptive (non-violent) disputes. This view of conflict as negative is not always helpful. In non-violent settings it can often be seen as a force for positive social change, its presence being a visible demonstration of society adapting to a new political, economic or physical environment.

The management of renewable natural resources is an area of international development currently prone to a wide variety of rapidly changing development pressures. The pressure is exerted on individuals and groups in a number of ways, including the introduction of new technologies, commercialisation of common property resources (CPRs), involvement of rural communities in conservation and privatisation of rural public services. Other pressures result from growing consumerism, government policies supportive of community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) and a general decline in the terms-of-trade for agricultural produce.

Conflicts and disputes that arise from these factors are not something that can be avoided or suppressed. Development models therefore are needed which acknowledge conflict as a potential obstacle to sustainable development, that manage its negative excesses and transform the residual into a positive force.

Interest from donors, governments and non government organisations (NGOs) involved in conflict and conflict management in natural resource projects is emerging within three distinct areas of international development: peace-building; poverty reduction; and biodiversity conservation.

Peace-building

The resolution of armed conflict through mediation, followed by programmes of reconciliation and reconstruction, have long been the building blocks of peace-building. More recently, emphasis has been placed on the promotion of strategies for conflict prevention, targeted at the local level, both in post-conflict and pre-conflict situations. Good governance, democratic involvement and strengthening of civil society are common local conflict prevention strategies. Less common, but of increasing relevance is the design and implementation of 'smart' community development projects, particularly in the area of renewable natural resource management (Craig et al., 1998; Ndelu, 1998). This approach capitalises on the need for stakeholder co-operation within renewable natural resource management, with the project providing a pivot to build a 'local constituency for peace' around.

The design of community projects to overtly contribute to resolving conflict and building peace is part of the new strategic thinking of a number of donor agencies, including the Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency (Sida), the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and the World Bank. The approach can also be related to the new 'Framework for Co-operation' between the World Bank and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which argues for conflict resolution strategies that 'bridge humanitarian aid and sustainable development' (World Bank, 1998).

Poverty reduction

The ongoing debate to define sustainable development suggests that conflicts over the utilisation of renewable natural resources can be avoided or reduced through greater stakeholder participation during project planning and management (World Bank, 1995; UNCED, 1992; Winterbottom, 1992). This emphasis on participation is particularly relevant to 'the poor'. Giving greater voice to the poor is not necessarily a conflict-free activity as it raises the possibility of new tensions between project beneficiaries and excluded groups. For example, it is by no means certain that promoting natural resource management (NRM) that make poorer groups economically more secure will reduce inter-group tensions. Resource-based poverty reduction projects which depend for their success upon those excluded from the project's immediate benefits (for example, middlemen who 'own' access to transportation) are potentially vulnerable to such tensions.

Biodiversity conservation

Growing conflicts between wildlife conservation interests and local communities over the utilisation of natural resources are well documented (Jusoff and Majid, 1995; Wells and Brandon, 1992 and 1993; Machlis and Tichnell, 1985). The dominant response to these disputes has been schemes that raise the value of conservation to local people through the distribution of revenues from tourism or trophy hunting, or through community development designed to compensate for loss of access to conservation-worthy resources. However, the effectiveness and reach of these schemes has been limited, and in many conservation and protected areas, conflicts over resources persist (Metcalf, 1995; IIED, 1994).

They persist for a number of reasons: the continuing dominance of conservation goals over the livelihood needs of local people; an emphasis on reducing the dependency of local people on resources of conservation value, rather than increasing their stake in sustainable resource management; introspective community participation planning techniques which omit consideration of external constraints (e.g. the marketing of tourist facilities); and the limited availability of sites where revenue flows from conservation-bound tourism are significant and dependable. The case study presented in Section 3 demonstrates the possible role of conflict management in tackling and preventing conservation-related conflicts.

1.2 Types of conflicts in natural resource management

Different types of conflicts can be categorised in terms of whether they occur at the micro–micro or micro–macro levels, i.e. among community groups or between community groups and outside government, private or civil society organisations (Grimble and Wellard, 1997). Micro–micro conflicts can be further categorised as taking place either within the group directly involved in a particular resource management regime (e.g. a forest user group or ecotourism association), or between this group and those not directly involved (e.g. between the user group and women entering the forest to collect fuelwood) (Conroy et al., 1998). Examples of both intra and inter micro–micro conflicts and micro–macro conflicts are listed in Box 1.

The short-term adverse impact of conflicts can range from a temporary reduction in the efficiency of resource management regimes, to the complete collapse of initiatives or abandonment of government, NGOs or donor-sponsored projects. In extreme cases conflicts over NRM can escalate into physical violence.

Box 1 Types of conflicts arising in NRM

Intra micro–micro conflicts:

- disputes over land and resource ownership, e.g. between private and communal land owners;
- disputes over land boundaries between individuals or groups;
- latent family and relationship disputes;
- disputes due to natural resource projects being captured by élites and/or those who happen to own resources of a higher quality;
- breaking of CPR constitutional or operational rules, such as protection agreements for grazing areas, fish net sizes, forests, or misappropriation of funds, etc.;
- disputes over the unfair distribution of work and profits.

Inter micro–micro conflicts:

- conflict between land-owners and resource users;
- conflict between indigenous CPR groups, and more recent settlers;
- disputes generated by jealousy related to growing wealth disparities;
- lack of co-operation between different community groups;
- disputes over renewal arrangements for leased land;
- internal land ownership disputes ignited by the speculation activities of commercial companies;
- resentment built up due to lack of representation on village committees.

Micro–macro conflicts:

- contradictory natural resource needs and values, e.g. between wildlife habitat protection and local livelihood security;
- cultural conflicts between community groups and outsiders;
- disputes over project management between community groups and outside project-sponsors;
- disputes caused by political influence (national, provincial or local);
- disputes arising from differences between the aspirations of community groups and expectations of NGOs or commercial companies;
- off-site environmental impacts affecting unintended third-parties.

1.3 Causes of non-violent conflict

The causes of non-violent conflicts in CBNRM can be divided into four principal types:

- i. demographic change;
- ii. natural resources competition;
- iii. developmental pressures;
- iv. structural injustices.

The combination of demographic change and the limits to sustainable harvesting of renewable natural resources (forests, water bodies, grazing areas, marine resources, wildlife and agricultural land) are often cited as the underlying cause of conflict over natural resources, both among community groups, and between community groups and outside public and private organisations. These pressures are

complicated by development. Box 2 provides an inventory of common developmental pressures that can fuel conflict over CBNRM.

Box 2 Common development pressures fuelling conflict over CBNRM

- The introduction of productivity enhancing technologies (e.g. synthetic fertilisers, agricultural mechanisation, permanent irrigation, joint management regimes, etc.) if poorly managed can place a strain on the regeneration capacity of renewable natural resources.
- Growing awareness within rural communities and the private sector that commercial value can be attributed to common property resources (wildlife, land, minerals, forests, fish, etc.) and that these benefits can be accessed through the exertion of 'private' property rights.
- Increasing importance of the cash economy to rural people and rising local aspirations for consumer products.
- Lack of incentive for resource users (community groups and private organisations) to prevent environmental and social impacts that adversely affect unintended third parties.
- Declining government public expenditure on essential rural services, e.g. health, education, water and electricity supplies, transportation, etc.
- New conservation policies, e.g. wildlife protection legislation.
- Government policies providing autonomy to communities to manage state-owned natural resources.
- Continuing rural-to-urban migration reducing the available labour for sustainable resource management.
- Changes in rural employment activities resulting from the arrival of rural-based industries, e.g. crop processing, manufacturing, extractive industries, oil and gas, construction projects, etc.

Conflicts arising from poor enforcement of natural resource management regulations include:

- Private companies avoiding compliance and sanctions by threatening to withdraw their investment or by manipulating the courts.
- A general lack of understanding of environmental laws and regulations by industries, governmental agencies and the general population.
- Non-compliance arising from unrealistic requirements for pollution control technology and poor implementation of environmental impact mitigation plans.
- Failure of the courts to enforce regulations because of prolonged legal processes, with the outcome often unsupported by one or more parties.
- Perverse incentive structures promoted by conventional cost-benefit analysis.

Development pressures may be only a part of the problem – increased competition and conflict over natural resources is sometimes underpinned by deeper structural causes. These include, for example, the inequalities inherent in legal definitions of land ownership, local and regional economic and political inequalities, and ethnic and cultural differences. These structural factors may lie dormant until awakened by the onset of a particular set of development pressures. Box 3 provides an example.

In summary, disputes and conflicts over CBNRM need to be viewed in the context of a complex web of demographic change, sensitive natural environments, new development pressures, structural economic and legal inequalities, personal and ethnic differences, and the multiple interests of different individuals, groups and organisations from both inside and outside rural communities.

Box 3 How development pressures can awaken latent structural conflict

A land title dispute between two community groups arises because an area of communal forest previously used for subsistence acquires a realisable economic value. For six months the two groups compete with each other over the resource, both extracting at unsustainable rates in a climate of hostility. After six months, one of the groups decides to turn to the legal system to resolve the hostilities. The act awakens issues that had not been viewed as a significant obstacle to development prior to the commercialisation of the resource – namely the ambiguity of land ownership. The current land tenure legislation – a remnant from the colonial days – takes no account of the strength of historic claims to land. This structural conflict is awakened when the local court affords legal ownership of a large portion of the communal forest area to one of the two groups. The decision forces the other group to concentrate its activities within the small remaining area of communal land, degrading the forest at still higher rates.

Source: Author's experiences.

1.4 Impetus for conflict management

Resolving structural conflicts over the management of natural resources is a fundamentally more difficult task than resolving conflicts directly attributable to development pressures. Structural conflicts, by definition, can only be resolved at the national or regional level, through short-term policy or legal reform, or longer-term education, wealth creation or peace-building programmes. However, it is not necessarily the case that structural causes have to be resolved in order to remove conflict as an obstacle to sustainable CBNRM. This is the idea of conflict management: a process, which in the above context has two objectives:

- i. to transform or mitigate conflicts brought about by developmental, environmental or demographic pressures; and
- ii. to contain structural conflicts such that they do not impinge on the equitable, efficient and sustainable management of project activities.

The most recent policy statement on conflict from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) supports this approach, asserting that 'helping strengthen the capacity of a society to manage conflict without violence must be seen as a foundation for sustainable development' (OECD, 1998).

2. Conflict management methodology

2.1 Case study

The arguments presented in Section 1 are those that underpin a programme of conflict management currently being implemented across a range of community-based natural resource projects in Fiji and Papua New Guinea (PNG). The programme is managed by the Foundation for the Peoples of the South Pacific International (FSPI) through its NGO affiliates in the Fiji Islands and PNG.¹ Funding is provided by DFID's Department of Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance. The aim of the programme is two-fold: to reduce conflicts and disputes between project stakeholders acting as obstacles to sustainable NRM; and to contribute to wider peace-building and conflict efforts within the project countries. The projects are listed below:

Fiji islands

- Tailevu Community Ecoforestry Project;
- Koroyanitu Ecotourism Project;
- Koroilevuiwai Ecotourism Project (managed by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF));
- Kaba Coral Aquaculture Project;
- Kadavu Marine Management Project (managed by WWF).

Papua New Guinea

- Lakekamu Basin Integrated Conservation and Development (ICAD) Project;
- Milne Bay Ecoforestry Programme.

At the time the programme was conceived, a wide range of conflicts and disputes were adversely affecting the equity, sustainability and effectiveness of these projects. Some of those recorded are summarised in Box 4. The impacts of these conflicts include, *inter alia*:

- withdrawal of co-operation by project beneficiaries;
- negative publicity;
- threatened withdrawal of project donors;
- withdrawal of NGO assistance to project beneficiaries;
- awakening and fuelling existing political tensions;
- resignation of project staff;
- increased time and costs of project operations;
- low staff moral;
- withdrawal of co-operation for other projects in same vicinity;
- postponement to 'scaling-up' of natural resource programmes and projects.

¹ FSPI is an experienced international network of non government agencies, with offices in the USA, UK and Australia, and independent national affiliates in PNG, Fiji, Tonga, Kiribati, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. The core programmes of the FSPI local partners are community-participatory resource planning and management and the building of institutional linkages between resource user groups, communities, governments and other NGOs. The primary community-based natural resource projects of the FSPI affiliates involve enterprise-based biodiversity conservation, coastal/marine resource management, community forestry and environmental awareness and education.

Box 4 Conflicts identified by the FSPI affiliates in the South Pacific as obstacles to the effective and sustainable management of natural resources

Relating to enterprise-based biodiversity conservation:

- lack of involvement of local interested parties in defining strategic livelihood objectives taking protected areas into account;
- conflicts between ecotour operators and local communities over tourist excursions (including routes, profit distribution, local participation, timing of visits, exploitation of culture, etc.);
- conflicts among community groups over involvement in ecotourism enterprises (e.g. portering, crafts, guides, scientific assistance, cooking/cleaning services to tourist lodges, etc.);
- land ownership conflicts over rules for revenue sharing
- conflicts between conservation authorities/environmental NGOs and private enterprises (e.g. logging companies);
- disputes between intermediary NGO and project participants over distribution of enterprise benefits.

Relating to community forestry:

- conflict between communal owners over profit distribution from forest resources;
- imbalance of knowledge in forestry creating imbalance of power and mistrust;
- dominance of commercial interests over fodder and fuelwood needs of women, exclusion of local people from access to forest resources where landowner companies agree exclusive logging concessions to private contractors;
- social tensions following the arrival of portable sawmills in the region;
- misuse and mismanagement of profits from timber resources;
- corruption of custom chiefs and traditional protectors of land influenced by cash value of timber resources.

Relating to coastal/marine planning and management:

- tensions between communities unaware of forestry practices that create environmental degradation and those who are recipients of downstream pollution of streams;
- erosion of power of traditional leaders to impose bans to regenerate forestry stock.

General conflicts identified, including:

- unclear land tenure laws creating land disputes with no expedient legal method to clarify ownership;
- tensions from rapid socio-economic changes due to the shift from subsistence to cash economy;
- political and religious tensions creating family and community divisions;
- growing pressures to find alternative income or subsistence where resources are depleted;
- fear, tension and mistrust over custom beliefs;
- tensions caused by breakdown of traditional leadership structures and systems (i.e. loss of respect for, and power of, leaders without new systems to replace leadership).

2.2 Conflict management methodology

Introduction

The following methodology has been developed explicitly to manage conflicts in the above natural resource projects. The methodology was informed by a scoping mission to Fiji and PNG in 1998. During the mission, the implementing NGO identified the need for a 'basket' of conflict management

strategies rather than one single approach, and for skills training in conflict analysis and multi-stakeholder workshop facilitation. Subsequently, staff from both affiliate NGOs underwent two weeks of dedicated training in conflict management and consensus-building. A guidance manual was also prepared detailing principles, processes and tools for managing conflict in the context of CBNRM projects (UKFSP/ODI, 1998). As the conflict management programme unfolded, some modifications to the overall methodology were made. These changes have been incorporated into the operations of the affiliates and into a revised version of the manual (Warner, 1999).

Conflict management and consensus-building

One of the key strategies promoted by the methodology is consensus-building, an alternative to the inequalities inherent in confrontational/adversarial forms of stakeholder negotiation. Consensus-building seeks to build the capacity of people to develop a dialogue with each other, either directly or indirectly, to find a way forward based on consensus which generates mutual gains for all parties with the minimum of compromise and trade-off. Other descriptions of processes of negotiation based on the same principles of mutual gain (win-win) include: alternative dispute resolution; alternative conflict management; and conflict transformation.

Over the last 15 years, developed countries (in particular the US, Canada and Australia) have experienced an increase in the use of conflict management based on consensus-building to resolve disputes over the allocation of scarce 'environmental' resources (Conroy et al., 1998; ICIMOD, 1996). The standard (North American) model comprises a process of consensual stakeholder negotiation, facilitated by an impartial third-party mediator.

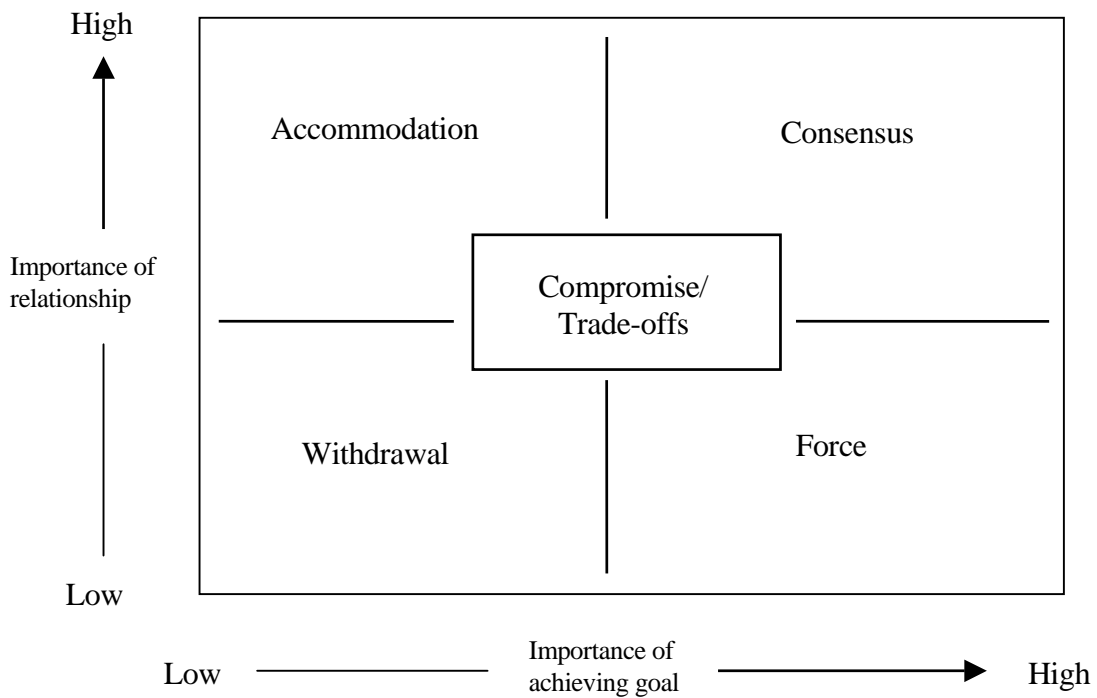
At the same time, the increasing threat of violence in many developing nations has led to the growing use of community-based consensus-building and mediation processes to prevent disputes escalating into armed violence, and to promote the reconciliation and reconstruction of society in post-conflict situations (Ndelu, 1998; O'Reilly, 1997; OECD, 1998; International Alert, 1996; Bush, 1998).

Consensus-building in context

The scoping mission to PNG and Fiji concluded that, although an approach to conflict management based on multi-stakeholder consensus-building has much merit, the process (particularly the North American third-party impartial mediator model) is unlikely to become a workable panacea. Three justifications for this conclusion were identified.

First, the North American model is but one approach to consensus-building. Other models include unfacilitated 'face-to-face' consensual negotiation and partial third-party facilitation. In the latter, the mediator has a vested interest in the conflict situation but has permission from the conflicting parties to facilitate proceedings.

Second, consensus-building is only one of a range of conflict management strategies. There is no perfect strategy for managing conflict in CBNRM. The adopted strategy needs to be one which is most practicable, given the available resources and capabilities of the conflicting parties and local implementing agencies, issues of safety and security, and the availability of viable conflict mitigation options. Figure 1 summarises the key strategies of conflict management. In this diagram the approaches differ depending upon the extent to which a conflicting party values the continuance of good relations with other parties; and the importance each party places on achieving its own goals.

Figure 1 Five conflict management strategies

Source: Original author unknown.

Each strategy is discussed briefly in Box 5. Although consensus-building between multiple stakeholders can lead to mutually acceptable, and therefore more sustainable, outcomes, it may not always be the most viable (Chupp, 1991). Even when it is, it may not be effective on its own, but may require support either concurrently or sequentially from one or more other strategies. The methodology for conflict management presented in this paper therefore centres on the concept of the most practicable strategy – the most desirable and feasible strategy or mix of strategies for managing a particular conflict situation. We found that determining this strategy requires consideration of a range of factors (see Box 6).

Box 5 Strategies for managing conflict

Force

Conflict can be managed through force, where one party has the means and inclination to win regardless of whether the other party loses, and whether or not the process of winning causes damage to personal relationships. Not all parties will be able to use force – its use will largely depend upon the power that one party holds relative to another. Some of the more obvious uses of force in CBNRM include physical violence, threat of physical violence, exertion of economic dominance (including buying-out opponents), corruption of government officials and blackmail. In some cases recourse to the legal system is also a form of force in that one party can use their superior resources to ‘buy’ better advice or raise the stakes (for example, by taking a lost case to an appeal court). Some less obvious but often no less powerful forms of ‘force’ include adversarial (i.e. uncompromising) negotiation tactics, political expediency, manipulation of the electoral system, use of the media to rally public support, public protest, ‘witch hunts’, slander and the threat of withdrawal.

Withdrawal

Withdrawal is an approach to conflict management suited to those parties whose desire to avoid confrontation outweighs the goals they are trying to achieve. The power (either positive or negative) of withdrawal should not be underestimated, not least since it can be used as a threat to force reluctant and sometimes more powerful parties to negotiate in a more consensual fashion. Types of withdrawal include withdrawal of funding; avoidance of volatile locations within a wider project area by NGOs; certain stakeholders opting out of a project or a negotiation process; deployment of delaying tactics; postponing project decisions; temporary boycotts; and strikes (i.e. withdrawal of labour).

Accommodation

There are occasions when one party in a conflict situation values a strong and continuing relationship with one or more of the other parties above the attainment of its own specific goals. In these cases, a party may elect to accommodate the other parties’ goals, conceding to all or most of their demands. Although such outcomes may look as though they have been the result of force, the difference is that rather than losing outright, the accommodating party perceives itself to have gained by way of securing good relations, accompanied perhaps by an element of good will and the option to achieve some greater goal at a future date. Common examples are where an NGO gives in to demands for additional services in order to keep a project from collapsing.

Compromise

Compromise is often confused with consensus. To compromise in a negotiation may sound positive, but it means that at least one of the parties perceives that it has had to forgo something. In planning CBNRM projects, compromise – and in particular the notion of trade-offs – is now prevalent, based on the need to make rational resource allocation decisions. For example, Stakeholder Analysis – an analytical tool often used to help design CBNRM – requires planners to analyse the distributional impacts of a project between the various stakeholder groups. The process identifies where the objectives of the different stakeholders are contradictory and where they share elements. From this, an optimal trade-off is constructed comprising the minimum ‘win-loss’ outcome.

Consensus

Although processes of consensus-building sometimes contain elements of compromise within the final agreement, there are some key differences between the two approaches. Consensus-building explicitly sets out to avoid trade-offs altogether, seeking instead to achieve a ‘win-win’ outcome. In contrast, a compromise approach seeks to minimise what are considered to be inevitable trade-offs. The fundamental principles of consensus-building are to steer conflicting parties away from:

- negotiating over their immediate demands and hostile positions, towards addressing those underlying needs which are the true motivating factors behind the each sides perception of the conflict;
- thinking about only one solution, towards considering the widest possible and most creative range of options for meeting the parties’ underlying needs;
- personalised and often exaggerated demands, towards clarity and precision in describing parties’ ‘underlying needs’ and the range of proposed options.

Source: Adapted from Warner and Jones, 1999.

Box 6 Factors to consider in identifying the most practicable strategy for conflict management

- Whether ‘doing nothing’ is likely to result in the conflict resolving itself without violence, e.g. because some customary process of conflict management is effective, or because the parties lose or divert their interest.
- The time and resources available to those parties interested in co-ordinating the process of conflict management:
- The extent to which ‘structural’ conflicts are:
 - likely to magnify the immediate dispute;
 - able to be resolved or managed.
- The power of the different parties, e.g. to force through their agenda, or to be manipulated during a process of mediation.
- The strength of feeling between the conflicting parties towards each other; and towards achieving their own goals.
- The importance of building or maintaining good relationships between the parties.
- The consequences if the conflict continues, such as its escalation towards violence.
- The effectiveness of the existing customary, institutional and legal approaches to conflict management.
- Those components within the existing customary, institutional or legal approaches that could be readily strengthened using one or more conflict management strategies (force, withdrawal, compromise, accommodation, etc.).
- Consensus-building approaches are to be used, the principal of the best alternative to a negotiated agreement (BATNA) – the fall back position if consensual negotiation is not effective.

Third, while the use of multi-stakeholder consensus-building to environmental disputes is still largely experimental in most developed nations, customary forms of consensus-building have a long history in many developing countries – particularly in rural areas. Customary approaches to consensus-building primarily target family, labour and civil disputes; with environmental disputes the new growth area. Examples include: the *Barangay* Justice System in the Philippines; Sri Lanka’s village level mediation panels; the *Lok Adalats* (People’s Courts) in Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh, India; and the *Taha* system of the Maoris in New Zealand (Moore, 1996).

Customary forms of consensus-building fail when new development pressures generate or awaken conflicts which overwhelm the capability of these mechanisms to cope. In such situations the conflicting parties themselves may try to modify the customary approach or develop completely new dispute management mechanisms. For example, Conroy et al., (1998) recently recorded how groups involved in participatory forest management in India have established new institutions to manage conflicts over forest protection and mismanagement. But there are many cases when this is not possible, or at least not possible within the timescale of the natural resource project in question. It is these cases (i.e. conflicts that overwhelm both the immediate and adaptive capability of community groups to readjust) where modern processes of multi-stakeholder consensus-building may have a potential role to play.

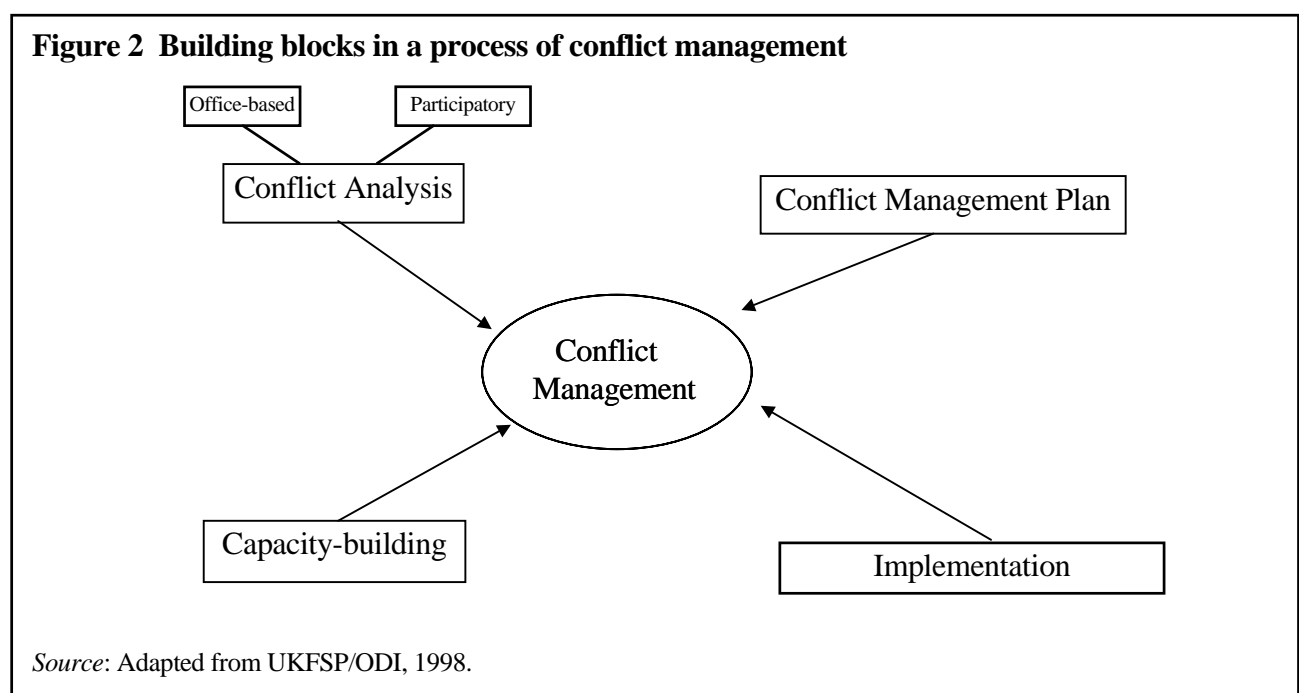
2.3 The process

Overview

There are certain components or ‘building blocks’ that tend to comprise processes of conflict management in CBNRM. This is the case whether the goal is to manage live conflicts arising within existing projects, or to integrate conflict prevention strategies into a project design. The key building blocks of conflict management are shown in Figure 2.

Although the linkages between the components are not strictly linear, there is a noticeable sequence to the process of conflict management. For example, it is appropriate for conflict analysis to be undertaken first and in two stages. First, to analyse the conflict ‘in the office’ on the basis of existing or readily accessed information². The second stage is to analyse the conflict in participation with the relevant stakeholder groups and to use this participatory analysis to revise the conflict management plan. These two activities will need to continue iteratively until a conflict management plan can be agreed. The process will often include some form of capacity building (e.g. mutual understanding of each parties’ objectives, training in negotiation skills, awareness raising of the long-term benefits of sustainable resource management, etc.). With all two activities complete, implementation of the conflict management plan can commence.

Each building block is described in more detail below, accompanied by examples of relevant conflict analysis and other outputs. The examples are drawn from conflict management work undertaken by the Foundation for People and Community Development (FPCD) on the Lakekamu Basin Integrated Conservation and Development Project, PNG (see Boxes 7 to 14).



² And from this to prepare a provisional conflict management plan outlining the most practicable strategy of conflict management, what ‘safe’ steps to take next and what capacity-building to deliver.

Box 7 The Lakekamu Basin Integrated Conservation and Development Project, PNG

The Lakekamu Basin Integrated Conservation and Development Project, PNG is part of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funded Biodiversity Conservation Network (BCN). BCN operates in the Asia–Pacific region, providing grants for community-based enterprises in areas with high biodiversity value. BCN projects integrate enterprise development with community organisations to achieve biodiversity conservation.

The BCN programme is experimental. The enterprises are being developed in remote areas with limited infrastructure and with people who are, in many cases, entering a cash economy for the first time. The new businesses must not only be financially self-sustaining, but ecologically and socially sustainable as well. These are serious challenges and not all projects are expected to make it. To date, BCN has spent \$US13.8m on 20 projects in seven countries. The BCN's Lakekamu Basin Project is one of these. Its objective is to develop community-owned and operated scientific field research and adventure tourism enterprises. The idea is to provide a substantial incentive to conserve the area's biological diversity, and to demonstrate to policy makers at the national level, that community management of ecotourism is an alternative to logging and mining.

The Lakekamu–Kunimaipa Basin is a 2500km² area of unbroken humid forest in the southern watershed of peninsular PNG. The area contains healthy populations of wildlife and plants that are depleted in other areas. The basin has a low human population but is threatened by industrial logging, mining and the replacement of natural forest by monoculture plantations of oil palm. The project is being implemented with the assistance of Conservation International, FPCD and a local research institute, the Wau Ecology Institute.

The project has had its share of difficulties during the scoping exercise for the conflict management programme, as identified by FPCD:

- A local mining company offered cash handouts in direct challenge to the ecotourism ventures.
- The minister responsible for mining issued a press release encouraging small-scale gold mining as a way of promoting rural development and employment.
- Land ownership disputes over large portions of the Lakekamu Basin, leading to conflict over ownership of the tourist guesthouses and scientific research stations.
- Conflicts between women's groups from different ethnic clans over their involvement in the supply of services to the guesthouses and research stations.
- An approach by a major oil palm company to a select group of landowners to lease the right to clear fell within the Lakekamu Basin.
- Complaints from downstream communities over water contamination from upstream mining activities.

Office-based conflict analysis

Office-based conflict analysis involves mapping existing or potential conflicts. This mapping draws on any strategic level conflict analysis already completed, as well as locally-sourced information gathered with minimum intrusion into the conflict situation. The initial analysis is stressed as office-based in that it aims to inform the design of a subsequent process of stakeholder dialogue without raising false expectations, exacerbating tensions or placing project staff at personal risk of harm.

In cases where an existing project is enmeshed in an open conflict or dispute, or where a planned project is to be introduced into a situation of open conflict or tension, this initial conflict analysis should centre on known conflicts. In cases where a project is to be introduced to a situation of latent conflict, the analysis will try to predict conflicts in the same way as one might predict environmental, social or gender impacts.

In either open or latent conflict situations it is also more useful to think, not of project stakeholders, but of conflict stakeholders. Thus, in the methodology of conflict management, conventional stakeholder identification is extended to include groups who might undermine or assist in conflict management.

Possible outputs from a process of office-based conflict analysis are listed below. Particular examples are given in Boxes 8 to 12, drawn from the Lakekamu Basin ICAD Project.

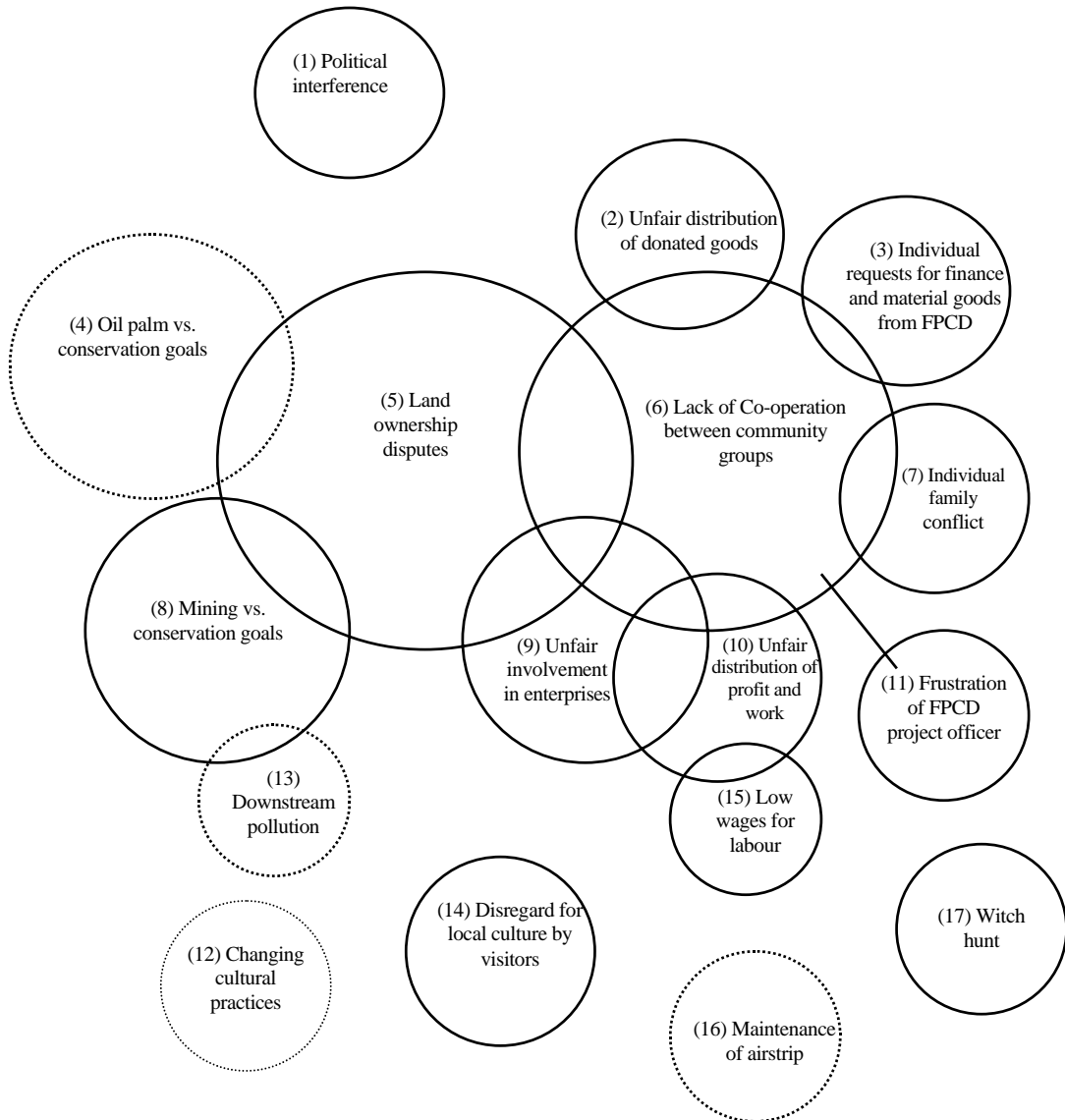
Outputs from office-based conflict analysis can include:

- Initial mapping of the known or predicted conflict or disputes, including their type, scale and any cause–effect relationships (Box 8).
- The historical context of the conflict(s) including:
 - the past and predicted escalation of the conflict(s);
 - the underlying structural causes, if relevant;
 - the part played by local economic grievances;
 - other contributing factors (e.g. demographics, environmental degradation);
 - past efforts at conflict management and why these were ineffective.
- Any conflict management or peace-building initiatives currently planned or on-going – both those utilising local capacities and those seeking to address structural issues.
- For projects currently affected by conflict, the impacts of the conflict on the project schedule, activities, outputs, assets, staff time, beneficiaries, etc.
- The geographical distribution of known or predicted conflicts or disputes (in the form of a sketch-map).
- The temporal distribution of the conflict(s) (where relevant), e.g. seasonality, proximity to local or national elections, etc.
- Prioritisation of the conflict(s) (Box 9) in terms of the:
 - urgency of the need to prevent, manage, resolve or transform the conflict(s);
 - significance of the conflict(s) in undermining the goal and purpose of the project.
- The key stakeholder groups and their prospective representatives for the prioritised conflict(s) (Box 10).
- Initial estimates of the immediate positions and demands of different stakeholder groups, and their deeper underlying values, interests, needs and concerns (Box 11).
- Initial identification of conflict management opportunities, including:
 - areas of common ground or connectors between the stakeholders (e.g. present or past local institutions, common customary approaches to dispute management, common values, motivations, interests, needs or concerns, etc.);
 - cases where the underlying interests of particular stakeholder groups might be met without impinging upon the underlying interests of other stakeholders’ (i.e. mutually exclusive gains);
 - cases where certain stakeholders might accept a compromise or trade-off;
 - cases where the project is willing to concede certain objectives in return for maintaining good relations with certain stakeholders;
 - cases where some type of non-violent force or threat of force might be a viable strategy for the project to achieve its objectives or mitigate its risks (e.g. security patrols, threat of legal action, etc.).

Box 8 Office-based conflict analysis – initial conflict mapping

Method:

- brainstorm current and potential conflicts (potential = dotted lines);
- cluster related conflicts;
- differentiate conflicts by scale (represented by size of circle);
- compile Venn diagram with inter-related conflicts overlapping.



Box 9 Office-based conflict analysis – conflict prioritisation

Method:

- conflicts assessed for their ‘urgency’ and ‘significance’;
- most important conflicts identified (see **highlighted**).

Results:

Conflict	Urgent	Significant
Political interference		
Local level		*
Provincial level	*	**
National	*	***
Unfair distribution of donated goods	***	*
Individual requests for finance and material goods from FPCD	***	**
Oil palm vs conservation goals (see Box 10)	***	***
Land ownership disputes		
Tekadu research station	**	***
Ecotourism project land		**
Tekadu guesthouse		*
Lack of co-operation between community groups		
in community work	***	***
in project related activities	***	**
Individual family disputes	*	***
Mining vs. conservation goals	*	**
Unfair involvement in enterprises	**	***
Unfair distribution of profit and work		
Kakoro Guesthouse (see Box 10)	***	**
Ivimka Guesthouse	***	***
Tekadu Guesthouse	*	**
Okavai Guesthouse		***
Butterfly farming		*
Frustration of FPCD Project Officer		
Changing cultural practices	*	***
Downstream pollution	*	**
Disregard for local culture by visitors		***
Low wages for labour	***	**
Maintenance of airstrip	***	*

Box 10 Prioritised conflicts in the Lakekamu Basin ICAD Project**(i) Oil palm company vs. conservation interests**

In mid 1998 consultants working on behalf of a major oil palm company officially notified the FPCD of the company's proposals for the Lakekamu Basin. The plan was to utilise an estimated 20,000ha of land, an area that covered the same area in which FPCD was promoting conservation and associated ecotourism. The proposal comprised the following:

- 7,000ha of wet land for nature conservation;
- 7,200ha for oil palm;
- 1,200ha for cocoa development;
- 4,600ha for selective logging.

The oil palm and cocoa developments would require clear-felling of the natural forest. The notification ended with a request for consultation to avoid potential conflicts. FPCD had already heard the intentions of the oil palm company and had serious reservations about: (a) the conservation impact of the proposals; and (b) the way in which the company had solicited a select group of local landowners as shareholders in the project to the exclusion of other clans with similar land claims. In essence, the proposals involved clear-felling most of the primary tropical hardwood forest of the Lakekamu Basin. The 8,000ha of wetland for nature conservation was reference to the areas of swampy land within the basin. This land was unlikely to be of economic value to either agricultural or logging interests. The threat posed by the company's proposals would affect all those agencies with conservation interests in the Lakekamu Basin, including FPCD, the Department of Environment and Conservation, Greenpeace International, WWF, the National Forestry Association and Conservation International. It would also undermine the enterprise-based conservation strategy of the BCN. Management of this threat of conflict was viewed by FPCD as a matter of urgency.

(ii) Inter-clan dispute over unfair distribution of profit to Kakoro Tourist Guesthouse

In late 1997, with financial and technical assistance from FPCD, community groups living within the Kakoro region of the Lakekamu Basin ICAD Project area constructed a tourist guesthouse. As tourists and scientists began to arrive, a dispute broke out between two local women's groups over the distribution of profits from the provision of cooking and cleaning services to the guesthouse. By mid 1998, the influx of tourists had ceased, along with the flow of income into the community. The dispute caused FPCD to consider withdrawing from the project. An evaluation report by the project sponsors cited the dispute as evidence that the Lakekamu Basin enterprise-based conservation initiative – of which the guesthouse was a part – was looking increasingly untenable. Effective management of the dispute was viewed by FPCD as a matter of urgency.

Box 11 Office-based conflict analysis – stakeholder identification of conflicts

Oil palm company vs. conservation interests

(ii) Dispute over unfair distribution of profit from the Kakoro Tourist Guesthouse

Method:

Identification of all relevant stakeholder groups, categorised into those:

- causing the conflicts (or being blamed for it);
- affected by the conflict;
- who might assist in managing the conflict;
- who might undermine management of the conflict;
- identification of group representatives.

Results:

(i) Oil palm company vs. conservation interests

Causing/blamed	Affected	Assist	Undermine
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Niugini Forestry Supplies (NFS) Consultant • Imeah Himanato Farmers Limited (IHFL) • FPCD • Oil palm financiers • Some Lakadu landowners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FPCD/ICAD • Kovios people • Biarus people • Kunimaipa people • Moueave people • Kameah people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FPCD • Department of Environment and Conservation • Dr Bruce Beehler • BCN • ICRAF • Wau District Office • Greenpeace • Kurt Mers • WWF 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Forestry Association (NFA) • Lands Department • Conservation International

(ii) Dispute over unfair distribution of profit and services in Kakoro Tourist Guesthouse

Causing/blamed	Affected	Assist	Undermine
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community women's groups (CWG) • Guesthouse women's Group (GWG) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FCPD • Conservation International • Government officers • Kakoro guesthouse owners • remainder of Kakoro population • BCN 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community leaders • Church leaders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women's husbands • BCN

Box 12 Office-based conflict analysis – underlying fears and needs of stakeholders

Method:

- underlying needs and fears of key stakeholder groups identified;
- underlying needs and fears sorted to find areas of common (or mutually exclusive) ground.

Results:

(i) Oil palm company vs. conservation interests

Stakeholder group	Underlying needs	Underlying fears
FPCD	meet conservation objectives meet enterprise/community development objectives	loss of reputation failure of ICAD project
BCN	test hypothesis of enterprise-based conservation conservation of globally significant biodiversity	ICAD project not successful grants not used effectively no reliable monitoring information
Conservation International	viable research station fame access to grants	loose relationship with FPCD
Oil palm company	adequate scale of economies return on investment maximise profit agreement of landowners	media publicity power of FPCD
Consultant to company	continued income fame	loss of contract with IHFL loss of landowners support
Project financiers	viable revenue stream opportunities for project expansion	social and political risk to investment
Department for Environment and Conservation	promote conservation enforce government conservation policy	failure to protect valued biodiversity
Biarus people	hunting grounds areas for gardening cash income continued use of gold panning sites education better health	loss of land ownership being 'taken for a ride' by oil company
Kameah people	cash income land ownership claim settled education better health	loss of land ownership. missing out on greater income benefits aggressiveness of Kovios people
Kovios people	income hunting grounds education better health	loss of image/self-esteem loss of hunting lands water pollution affecting health loss of profit from fishing
Kunimaipa people	cash income hunting grounds	exclusion from tourist income earning opportunities Kovios people involved in secret deal

Box 12 *continued***(ii) Dispute over unfair distribution of profit and services in Kakoro Tourist Guesthouse**

Stakeholder group	Underlying needs	Underlying fears
FPCD/Conservation International	enterprise to provide sustainable income to community promote equal distribution of work and profit within community resolve current conflicts meet conservation objectives	local stakeholders losing interest in enterprise conservation objectives failing loss of local jobs reputation of FPCD damaged
Donors (BCN/USAID)	accurate project monitoring data meeting of conservation/biodiversity goals	funds not wasted negative results of testing BCN hypothesis that community-based enterprise supports conservation
Local government officers	peaceful, co-operative community Peace Corp volunteers continue skills training for community co-operatives	increased disharmony in community collapse of co-operatives
Community and church leaders	promote income generating opportunities prevent out-migration help meet basic needs	wasting time trying to resolve marital conflicts disharmony and hostility in the community violence erupting
Kakoro Guesthouse owners	cash income improve standard of living higher status within community promote conservation	guesthouse fails to generate income project discontinued by FPCD unable to meet maintenance costs with profit
Remainder of Kakoro population	share of income from Guesthouse acknowledgement of 'voices' by land owners respect of privacy provision of basic services	exclusion from project (in terms of income and learning new skills) influence of outsiders on local culture
CWGs	cash income put craft-making skills into practice to be recognised and respected by their husbands opportunities to meet people (especially men)	not learning new skills GWG looking down at them
GWG	cash income put cooking and cleaning skills into practice to be recognised and respected by their husbands	guesthouse services being taken over by CWG
Women's husbands	honesty of wives with their husbands wives to be acknowledged as part of guesthouse project transparency of women's involvement	women's status increasing to the point where it undermines the husband, position in community promiscuity of wives their wife in particular being excluded from involvement in project

Participatory conflict analysis

The outputs of the office-based analysis informs entry into a process of participatory analysis based on engaging stakeholders in dialogue. This subsequent analysis is as much about beginning to develop trust and understanding between the conflicting parties as it is about verifying the accuracy of results from the office-based analysis. The dialogue may take many weeks or months, and may be based on one-to-one interviews (i.e. facilitator-to-stakeholder), or undertaken in groups. It is generally not something that can be completed in a single workshop.

Towards the end of the process – when sufficient trust and rapport has developed – it may be possible to begin to share the different underlying needs and fears of the various stakeholders with each other. Not only is this important in building an understanding of each others' viewpoint, but it encourages an initial exploration of areas of common (or mutually exclusive) ground.

Some of the outputs of a process of participatory conflict analysis are:

- verification/modification of the information used in the office-based analysis and the initial findings;
- development of effective forms of communication between stakeholders;
- shared knowledge between stakeholders about each others' underlying motivations, needs, fears, cultures and values;
- clarification of detail concerning the conflict situation (e.g. location, timing, gains, losses, resource requirements, etc.);
- stakeholder involvement in the refinement of initial office-based ideas for conflict management; and
- identification of new conflict management options.

Conflict management plan

The conflict management plan describes the overall strategy for managing the conflict, combined with the proposed process of consensus-building and an initial set of conflict mitigation or prevention options. In the case of the Lakekamu Basin IAD Project, an initial conflict management plan was prepared at the end of the office-based conflict analysis, and was revised after a process of participatory conflict analysis.

The components of a conflict management plan will vary with each situation. They are, however, likely to share the same broad components:

- the most practicable conflict management strategy (or combination of strategies);
- a description of the proposed process of participatory conflict analysis (if the plan is being prepared at the office stage);
- a description of the capacity-building measures (communication skills, leadership training, awareness raising about the process of consensus-building, etc.) required to implement the process of consensus-building or to action conflict mitigation/prevention options; and
- the conflict mitigation or prevention options proposed.

Examples of two conflict management plans are presented in Box 13. The first of these – designed to manage the emerging conflict between the oil palm company and conservation interests in the Lakekamu Basin – is an initial plan informed only by an office-based analysis. The second – designed to manage the dispute between two women's groups over profit and work distribution in the Kakoro guesthouse – is the result of an office-based analysis and the subsequent process of participatory analysis.

Capacity building

Capacity building is integral to developing a level-playing field, so less powerful stakeholders can participate equitably in a process of consensual negotiation. Increasingly in the future, CBRNM projects introduced in conflict-prone areas are likely to include training in negotiation, facilitation and mediation for both project staff and the project's primary and secondary stakeholders. Some capacity building options for consensual negotiation are described in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Some capacity-building options for promoting more equitable processes of consensual negotiation

Capacity building	Stakeholders			
	Community leaders (formal and informal)	Project staff	Government extension staff and regulators	Legal representatives (e.g. village magistrates, land mediators)
Conflict analysis skills		✓	✓	
Communication skills	✓	✓	✓	
Negotiation skills	✓	✓	✓	
Facilitation skills	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mediation skills	✓	✓	✓	✓

One example of capacity-building is that undertaken in the Lakekamu Basin ICAD Project to enable conflicting community groups to resolve the dispute over the Kakoro Tourist Guesthouse profits. The format for the training is described in the conflict management plan in Box 13. Some of the benefits of this type training were alluded to in the monitoring report prepared by FPCD following the training sessions (see Box 14).

Box 13 Two examples of conflict management plans	
Oil palm company vs. conservation interests	Kakoro Tourist Guesthouse
<p>Most practicable strategy – consensus/force Begin process of consensus-building with oil palm company as pathway to preparing a land-use management plan for Lakekamu Basin. At the same time join forces with the DEC and international conservation agencies in their efforts to promote the Lakekamu Basin as an area of internationally valuable biodiversity. If necessary engage the domestic and international media and relevant campaign groups. BATNA – if consensus not reached, resort to the threat of withdrawing financial and logistical support for the Lakekamu Basin which is likely to turn many local people against the oil palm company.</p>	<p>Most practicable strategy – consensus Customary conflict management practices mean that an internal negotiation model is preferred to an external, third-party, mediator model, therefore the strategy involves strengthening the facilitation and consensual negotiation skills of local groups so that they are able to manage the conflict themselves. As project sponsor, FPCD to remain a party to the consensus-building process, acting as facilitator if the process begins to stagnate. BATNA – if consensus not reached, FPCD to resort to the threat of withdrawing financial and logistical support for the guesthouse.</p>
<p>Participatory conflict analysis</p> <p>With community groups: Verify full range of stakeholder groups (including individuals where necessary). Hold separate consultations with all land owning groups. Verify legitimate representatives of all stakeholder groups. Verify underlying needs and fears of each stakeholder group. Begin to explain to stakeholder groups the potential benefits and process of consensus-building (e.g. in avoiding or revisiting legal system).</p> <p>With government agencies and private organisations: Explore possibility of alternative sites and/or smaller scale of oil palm operations. Identify government's conservation policy towards the Basin. Determine economic viability of oil palm proposal, including potential income/fees for local landowners. Determine possibility of revisiting court decisions over land ownership within the Lakekamu Basin.</p>	<p>Participatory conflict analysis</p> <p>Completed.</p>
<p>Capacity building Obtain court rulings on recent land claims. If court decisions over land ownership can be revisited, train independent land mediators in consensual (win-win) negotiation skills. Consult with Lands Office for possible candidates (consider mediators outside of Lakekamu Basin). Raise the awareness of all stakeholders in the Lakekamu Basin of the area's importance in terms of global biodiversity.</p>	<p>Capacity building PEACE Foundation (local NGO) contracted to train stakeholders in: People's skills training (one week workshop) in Tekadu – with aim of improving the negotiation skills of the key stakeholder representatives; conflict resolution training (two week workshop) in Kakoro – with aim of imparting skills to enable self-management of guesthouse dispute. Assuming immediate dispute is settled, FPCD to bolster agreement by providing training in book keeping skills for relevant groups; and training in guesthouse hospitality.</p>

Box 13 <i>Continued</i>	
<p>Conflict management actions/process FPCD to offer to act as facilitator in preparing land use management for Lakekamu Basin. Settle all outstanding disputes (including research station and land claims) through consensus-building processes similar to that for the Kakoro Guesthouse. Identify and develop additional community-based enterprises additional to provide incentives for local groups not to sell-out entirely to oil palm company</p>	<p>Conflict management actions/process Informal community-based discussions to: introduce the idea of local stakeholders managing the conflict without outside mediation; clarify some misconceptions that local people have over the role of FPCD in the development of the local economy; deliver training in people-skills and consensual negotiation. All parties to be invited to train together to: begin to build relationships and reduce suspicion; analyse the conflict situation together; ensure community groups can manage their own disputes (with FPCD as ad hoc facilitator).</p>

Implementation

As the extract in Box 14 shows, capacity building in the form of training in consensus building can sometimes begin to mitigate a conflict ahead of a formal process of consensual negotiation. Arguably, conflict mitigation can start even earlier. For example, during a process of participatory conflict analysis, the conflicting parties often begin to understand each other's interests and try to identify areas of possible common ground. However, there will be many components of a conflict mitigation or prevention strategy that will not be able to be identified at the time that an initial conflict management plan is prepared. These are the ideas and actions that arise 'during' a process of multi-stakeholder consensus-building. Box 15 summarises the settlement agreed by all parties to manage the dispute over the distribution of profit at the Kakoro Tourist Guesthouse. Most of the actions proposed could not have been foreseen at the time the initial conflict management plan was prepared.

Box 14 Extract from FPCD monitoring report of consensus-building training in the Lakekamu Basin

‘This quarter saw the need to train the local people in people-skills and conflict resolution techniques, so that the those involved in the conflicts are able to manage the conflict themselves. In doing so, they are beginning to have a fair idea of the conflict management methods and some of it builds onto their traditional ways of solving disputes...’

‘... The conflict resolution training helped in bringing together traditional enemies to participate in what they are beginning to see as a community project. This training was a major ice-breaking point. The main characters fuelling the conflicts (elderly men) did not turn up, but those who came – including a majority of the young people – were very eager to learn from us. Due to the absence of those important elders, we were not able to get direct agreement on the research [station] boundaries. However, with our assistance, they identified ways to solve the lack of community co-operation within each respective village [over the Kakoro Tourist Guesthouse].’

‘A learning point from the workshops is that the people’s self esteem was boosted when we assisted them to actually analyse their own conflicts and find their own solutions. Most participants expressed their pleasure at learning very essential tools they can use in their own clan circle. They left with the task of conveying this message to their elders for a future meeting on research boundaries negotiation.’

Katherine Yuave
Project Co-ordinator, Conflict Management Project, FPCD
Monitoring Report, January 1999

Box 15 Settlement of the dispute over distribution of profits and work in the Kakoro Guesthouse, Lakekamu Basin

The process

Using simple office-based analytical tools, staff from FPCD mapped out the causes of the dispute, the stakeholders involved, each stakeholder’s immediate concerns and their underlying motivations. The information was then verified with the stakeholders. This month-long process also served to build the degree of trust necessary for FPCD to act as a broker/facilitator in settling the dispute. Following a series of focus group discussions, a meeting was held at which a settlement was negotiated. The format of the final negotiations was designed to be familiar to the participants in terms of its location, eligibility to contribute ideas, style of dialogue and type of decision-making.

The settlement

By creating awareness of their own and each others’ underlying motivations, focusing discussion on areas of common interest and soliciting fresh ideas, FPCD was able to facilitate a settlement. The process revealed that both sides shared a strong desire to see the dispute resolved so that tourists would return and income would once again flow to individuals and the community. It also became clear that the parties’ true motivations had less to do with access to profits from the guesthouse *per se*, and more with being involved ‘in some way’ in earning income from the tourists. Through free and open discussion, and with FPCD clarifying the economic and technical viability of various ideas, it was agreed that one of the groups – the CWG – would voluntarily leave the guesthouse services to the other – the GWG. In return, the CNG would provide portaging services for the guesthouse, and make and sell handicrafts. CWG would also assume responsibility for collecting and selling Kunai grasses to help construct a proposed FPCD field staff accommodation unit, and develop a small kerosene-trading business from earlier guesthouse profits. Lastly, CWG were granted sole responsibility for providing cooking and cleaning services to the field staff accommodation once completed. The overall settlement was tested for its social acceptability with the men and leaders of the communities. Six weeks later field observations suggest that the settlement was holding.

3. Impacts and outcomes

3.1 Impact of conflict management in the Lakekamu Basin ICAD Project

In the Lakekamu Basin ICAD Project, the most immediate impact of applying the conflict management methodology described in Section 2, has been the cessation of local hostilities over the Kakoro Tourist Guesthouse. In terms of local development, this cessation has allowed tourists to return to the area and income to be generated. With regard to conservation, the generation of local income from ecotourism increases the likelihood that local people will view conservation as an economically viable activity. Management of the Kakoro Tourist Guesthouse dispute has therefore contributed, in part, to the project goal of ensuring effective enterprise-based conservation.

There has also been an observable link between the above process of conflict management and the future of the oil palm proposal; providing a non-conflictual environment within which community-based ecotourism has been shown to be viable and has reduced the likelihood that landowners will accede to the oil palm proposals. It is yet to be seen whether FPCD's Conflict Management Plan for managing the oil palm threat is successful. In the meantime, the component of the plan that involves settling disputes over land ownership and profit distribution continues.

3.2 Overall impact of the South Pacific conflict management program

The impacts outlined above form part of the outputs of the wider conflict management programme directed at seven projects in Fiji and PNG. To make sense of these impacts the remainder of this paper adopts an analytical framework based on the concept of sustainable livelihoods.

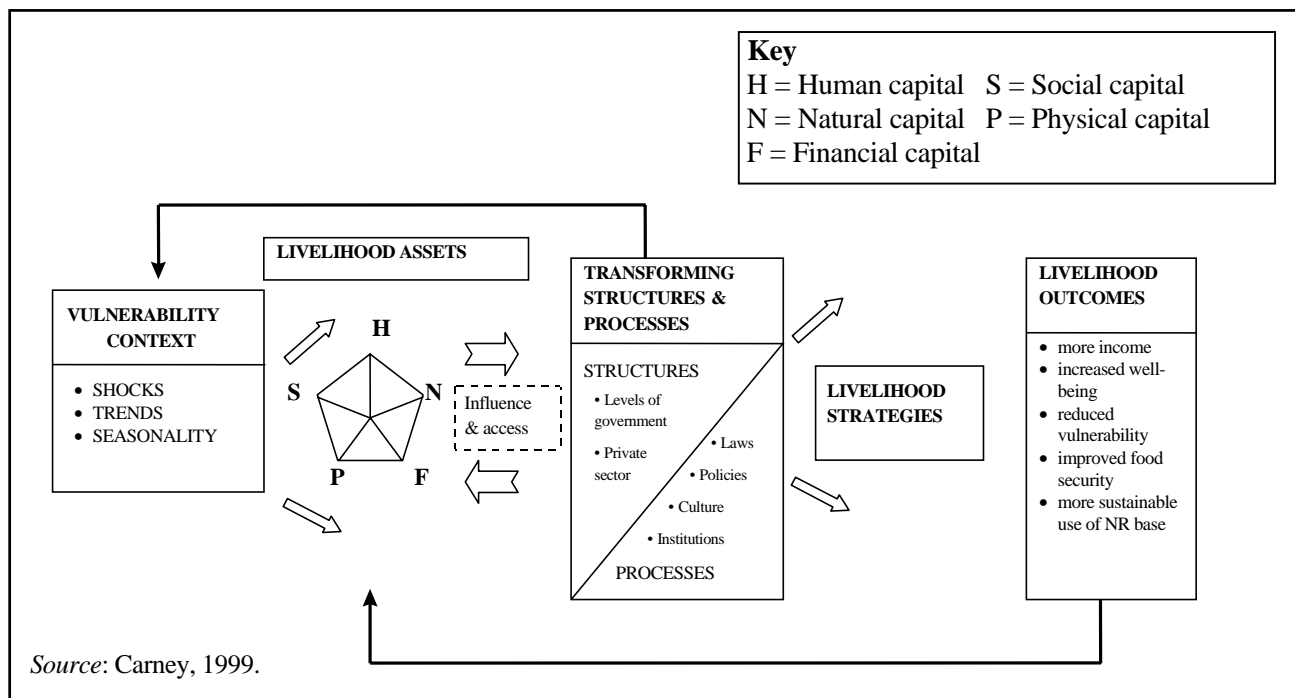
3.2.1 Sustainable livelihoods

A sustainable rural livelihoods approach to development is about removing constraints and exploiting opportunities to realise positive livelihood outcomes at the community level. The approach aims to protect and build critical material and social assets at the community level, and strengthen the abilities of individuals, groups and institutions to cope with vulnerability and transform assets into benefits. 'A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base' (Carney, 1999).

The approach seeks to reorient development thinking in a manner which places people within the context of their wider social, physical and institutional environments. Achieving sustainable livelihoods requires consideration of the effects of 'external' structures (levels of government, private sector, etc.) and processes (policies, institutions, law, etc.) on the way in which livelihood assets are accessed and capabilities employed. It also involves an understanding of the impact on livelihoods of external events and trends (economic, climatic, natural environment, violent conflict, etc.). The relative livelihood significance of 'internal' access to, and ownership of, different forms of capital assets (financial, social, human, natural and physical), as well as how these assets are, or are not, transformed by internal and external structures and processes into viable livelihood strategies are also considered. The approach aims to avoid the weaknesses of past integrated rural development approaches, which though desirable, were not always technically or financially feasible and often failed to see macro-level political and institutional factors as major constraints.

The sustainable livelihoods framework (see Figure 3) has been developed to help understand the concept. By simplifying the complexity of rural life, the framework can be used to facilitate identification of desirable and feasible interventions.

Figure 3 Sustainable livelihoods framework



3.2.2 Role of conflict management and consensus-building in sustainable rural livelihoods

A tenant of this paper is that operationalising the concept of sustainable livelihoods will inevitably require a range of conflict management and consensus-building skills. Three key areas of application are:

- to protect and build all five types of capital assets – particularly social and human;
- to renegotiate the role of government and private structures in transforming livelihood assets into benefits; and
- to manage contested processes of stakeholder participation within civil society, and between civil society and external actors.

In part, the effectiveness of the conflict management programme in Fiji and PNG can be measured by the extent to which it has contributed to these objectives.

Protecting and building capital assets

In themselves, conflict management and consensus-building skills are a form of human capital. For example, skills that enable local leaders to negotiate with conservation authorities, NGOs, public water authorities or private logging companies are empowering in their own right. Yet conflict management and consensus-building skills provide more than this. They offer a rapid and cost effective means to protect and enhance social capital³ – and it is human and social capital which together provide the capacity for protecting and enhancing natural, physical and financial assets.

³ Social capital can be defined as 'features of social organisation, such as networks, norms and trust, which facilitate co-ordination and co-operation for mutual benefit'. It is argued that 'working together is easier in a community blessed with a substantial stock of social capital' and that social capital provides the basis for effective government and economic development (Putman, 1993).

For example, the experiences in the Lakekamu Basin ICAD Project demonstrate the role of conflict management in protecting natural capital. First, natural capital was protected by managing the threat of clear-felling from a commercial company. Second, the case study shows how even minor disputes in conservation-worthy areas, if not properly managed, can escalate to the point where international conservation interests withdraw their funding and support.

Beyond conservation projects, we already understand that productive CPR regimes require robust CPR institutions (Hobley and Shah, 1996), and that robust CPR institutions will not emerge without human skills that enable members to agree:

- the institution's constitutional rules with the formal (or informal) regulating authorities;
- the rules of competition and resource management between group members; and
- access to alternative income opportunities for those excluded from the group or who lack viable assets.

For example, neither roads (physical capital) nor credit (financial capital) will be accessible without the capacity of local groups or representative NGOs to negotiate access to transportation services or affordable terms of loan repayments (cash, in-kind or otherwise).

A consensus-building approach to conflict management has a particular role to play in protecting and enhancing social and human capital, both within rural populations and between community groups and external actors. Given that jealousies, tensions, disputes and violence can undermine co-ordination and co-operation between parties at both the micro–micro and macro–micro levels, it is tenable that conflict management capacities (in particular skills to build consensus between parties) are a means to protect and build this co-ordination and co-operation.

Table 2 below shows some of the ways in which a consensus approach to conflict management can contribute to building different types of social and human capital.

Table 2 Role of consensus-building in strengthening the social capital component of livelihoods – examples from the Fiji/PNG Conflict Management Project

Form of social capital	Example
Family and kinship connections	NGO mediation of family disputes such as domestic violence, drunkenness and attempted rape.
Horizontal social networks, 'associational life', networks of civic engagement	Building consensus between stakeholders over rules for harvesting forest resources, profit distribution and project membership by developing the facilitation skills of village chiefs and <i>mataqali</i> (landowners). NGO-based brokering in a conservation and livelihood project over multiple land claims. The goal here is for disputing parties to agree to proportional access to future revenue streams (e.g. from logging, oil palm or tourists) as an alternative to the delineation of land ownership boundaries which is the source of tensions.
Horizontal trust, norms and rules independent of existing linkages between civil society organisations	Third-party facilitation by an NGO in the disputes over tourist revenue distribution. Agreement reached on separating out responsibilities for different service activities. No new associations were created, but horizontal social capital was built in so that the parties co-operated in new, mutually beneficial, arrangements for engaging with tourists. Employing third-party facilitation skills to formulate rules for project participation, for example, the formulation of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in a coral aquaculture project, which sets out the expected benefits and responsibilities of each party, as well as individual 'deeds of agreement' between each participating household and the project sponsor. In a community forestry project, NGO facilitation to strengthen customary approaches to dispute management, aimed at increasing the representation of disenfranchised groups (e.g. those without forest resources) in formulating rules for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • resource access (e.g. receiving revenues for allowing their land to be crossed); • alternative project participation (e.g. involvement in wood processing and marketing activities for those with no access to, or ownership of, forest resources).

Renegotiating the transformational role of external actors

A sustainable livelihoods approach attempts to separate the ubiquitous link between 'rural' and 'agriculture', and to widen the scope of rural development to other sectors – health, education and training, infrastructure, financial services, etc. As such it involves new associations between the intended project beneficiaries and external structures (government regulators, local authorities, policies, laws, cultures, private companies and non-target local stakeholders).

Recent thinking on social capital argues that vertical, macro–micro, associations are a prerequisite to strong horizontal associations in civil society, since the former is seen as facilitating effective local representation, participation and institutional accountability (Harriss and de Renzio, 1998). Evidence from the South Pacific Conflict Management Programme suggests that the dependency on macro-level institutions to provide the enabling environment for a stronger civil society participation may be overstated, i.e. that a one-dimensional focus on civil society may not be as misplaced as current thinking would suggest. This is because in CBNRM many of the disputes and tensions (and even some violent conflicts) are underpinned as much by localised competition over power, resource distribution and access to limited economic opportunities, as by structural injustices such as land ownership and political expediency. In short, it may not always be necessary to address structural injustices in society in order to strengthen civil society. The South Pacific Conflict Management Project demonstrates that processes of consensus-building, which emphasises new and creative medium-term solutions, can help build co-operation and capital assets, and reduce tensions, within civil society without assistance from government institutions and without the resolution of the dispute's root cause (see Table 2).

Furthermore, the South Pacific programme provides evidence that some ‘locally-initiated’ processes of consensus-building (those aimed at the macro–micro disputes) can actually contribute to stronger co-ordination and co-operation between civil society and external transforming structures (private companies, central and local government and regulatory institutions). In other words, that the perceived wisdom on cause-and-effect in building social capital between civil society and external actors works in both directions. Table 3 shows how consensus-building skills at the local can help renegotiate the role of macro-level institutions in transforming livelihood assets.

Table 3 Role of local-level consensus-building in renegotiating the roles of macro-level institutions – examples from Fiji and PNG

Form of social capital	Example
Cross-sectoral (vertical) linkages, e.g. partnerships between civil society and external private sector or government agencies	<p>Training community-based organisations and NGOs to negotiate with private companies more effectively, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to remove the threat of large-scale clear-felling by a private oil palm company in the Lakekamu Basin; • to overcome landowner roadblocks with revenue sharing arrangements between private logging companies and local land owners; • to reach agreement on profit distribution and tourist trail routes between community leaders and tour operators.
Macro-level social capital (those constitutions, regulations, laws, statutory institutions and policies which define the formal relationships between state and civil society)	<p>Strengthening formal (government related) institutional processes of conflict management at the local level so that they are better able to mediate disputes. For example, the training of local land mediators, village magistrates and local officers from the government Lands Department – the aim in each case being to facilitate the resolution of land ownership disputes.</p> <p>Training in consensual negotiation and mediation skills for staff from the Departments of Environment and Lands to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • help reduce delays in the approval of infrastructure projects; • bring the process of land claim arbitration closer to the local level.

Managing contested processes of participation

By design, the sustainable livelihoods framework provides a basis for identifying desirable and feasible projects and interventions that reduce rural poverty. However, a focus only on poverty raises the possibility of new tensions between project beneficiaries and excluded groups. This understanding of civil society as a ‘contested’ space runs counter to the notion of civil society as a single entity with the different organisations working towards common objectives of democratic governance. This point is forcibly put by McIlwaine, (1998) in the context of El Salvador, she argues that: ‘... civil society and the social relations that underpin it are not, by their nature, inherently democratic or participatory. Nor does strengthening civil society organisations automatically engender democratisation. Indeed, it may actually undermine it’ (McIlwaine, 1998: 656).

Conflict management principles and tools can be applied to defuse the inevitable disputes that arise between various parties and individuals within civil society. In the first instance, they can be applied to identify the priority needs for strengthening customary approaches to conflict management. Where customary approaches are demonstrably failing to resolve disputes, modern conflict management tools can be used to construct new or ‘hybrid’ (customary/modern) approaches to managing conflict. The manual on conflict management designed for the South Pacific project identified simple tools for modelling customary approaches to conflict management and for identifying when and how to construct hybrid mechanisms (Warner, 1999).

4. Conclusions

Analysing the Lakekamu Basin ICAD Project from a sustainable livelihoods perspective provides evidence of a link between the principles and tools of ‘modern’ conflict management and the protection and creation of social capital. The theory of social capital, and its application to natural resource management in developing countries, is now well advanced. Less developed are the ‘tools of the trade’ – ways in which horizontal social capital within and between community groups, and vertical social capital between community groups and external actors can be protected from overwhelming development pressures, reinstated when lost, or built where none currently exists.

Tables 2 and 3 show how a consensual approach to conflict management can build social capital and thereby reduce disputes and conflict as obstacles to sustainable livelihoods. For example, with regard to potentially overwhelming development pressures, a conflict analysis exercise undertaken by a local NGO working in the Lakekamu Basin led to the design of a process by which NGOs, government agencies and the private sector might negotiate to remove the threat to biodiversity conservation from a proposed oil palm project. With respect to social capital being reinstated or built, conflict management training conducted with groups competing over profit distribution from a tourist guesthouse led to renewed trust between the conflicting parties and new forms of co-operation in relation to income earning opportunities.

Evidence of the positive effects of consensual approaches to conflict management in CBNRM projects is beginning to accumulate, and a new discipline is slowly taking shape⁴. At present, the principles and tools of this discipline draw heavily on the North American model of dispute resolution – a model founded on consensus-building through impartial third-party mediation. Unfortunately, this model overlooks some essential differences between dispute management in North America and that associated with many community-based natural resource projects in developing countries. The latter is often characterised by extreme power imbalances between the disputing parties, widely different cultural values, and different perceptions of what constitutes an acceptable process of dialogue or settlement. In this context, a monocultural, impartial third-party mediator model of conflict management is limiting (Chupp, 1991; Lederach, 1996).

Another further factor is the importance of customary approaches to conflict management in many rural areas of developing countries. In the conflict management programmes in Fiji and PNG impartial third-party mediation was proposed only when two prior conditions were met:

- the available customary approaches to conflict management had demonstrably failed, and
- it was impracticable to try to strengthen the customary approaches within the required timeframe.

Interestingly, the need for such methodological adaptation raises questions over conventional wisdom on social capital. Recent experiences in the Lakekamu Basin seem to run counter both to the popular assertion that building social capital within civil society will be ineffective in the absence of strong macro political structures, and that a necessary prerequisite to effective local dispute management is to resolve the conflict’s structural causes. The advantage of adopting a consensual approach to address disputes in CBNRM is that the process offers medium-term solutions independent of the above constraints.

⁴ See for example Buckles, D. (ed.) (1999), which explores the role of conflict management in community-based natural resource projects: http://www.idrc.ca/minga/conflict/cases_e.html

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