

NAMATI'S APPROACH TO COMMUNITY LAND PROTECTION: A STEP-BY-STEP OVERVIEW

The various components of Namati's community land protection approach are grouped into the following five "steps." Facilitators should aim to support communities to complete the entire process in six to twelve months of weekly or bi-monthly meetings. Because the process is labor- and time-intensive, facilitators may choose to support no more than five to ten communities through the process at once, depending on community size, local logistics, and the facilitating organization's staffing, time and resource constraints. To improve efficiency and maintain community momentum, it is often best to undertake the by-laws drafting process and the boundary harmonization process concurrently, as they both take significant time and effort to complete. Facilitators should feel free to adapt this suggested process to the local culture, legal context, and to community needs and interests.

STEP 1: Laying the Groundwork. This step creates structures to ensure inclusive community participation throughout the land protection process. It is also designed to raise awareness of the importance of protecting community lands and to motivate community members' participation in all efforts. The *Laying the Groundwork* phase includes the following activities:

- **Community Definition.** Facilitators consult with regional leaders, relevant government officials, and community members about how best to define and determine the level of "community" that will undertake the land protection activities
- **Introduction to the Community Land Protection Process.** Facilitators support community members to understand their land rights and how to use formal procedures to protect their lands, then teach communities about the community land protection process.
- **Community Visioning.** Community members analyze the past and present conditions of their community's natural resources, then begin to plan for a thriving, prosperous future.
- **Establishing Expectations and Terms of Engagement.** Facilitators and communities clarify how the community and the facilitating organization will interact throughout the community land protection process, define specific roles and responsibilities, and establish clear expectations to reduce confusion, inefficiencies and delays.
- **Selection and Training of Community Land Mobilizers and Interim Coordinating Committees.** Communities elect or

select Community Land Mobilizers to work closely with the facilitating organization and help lead all land protection activities. They also elect or select an Interim Coordinating Committee (composed of representatives from key stakeholder groups in the community) responsible for spreading news and updates about the community land protection work throughout their networks, as well as seeking out the ideas, comments and reflections of people in their networks who cannot attend meetings, and reporting what happened at each meeting back to their networks.

- **Valuation of Community Land and Natural Resources.** To appreciate the value of their lands and natural resources, community members use simple math to calculate the monetary value that they are already receiving from natural resources gathered from their common lands, forests and waters.

STEP 2: Strengthening Community Governance of Lands and Natural Resources.

The activities in this step support communities to document their existing rules for land and resource management, then modify and add rules that increase protections for all peoples' rights and lead to community-driven development and prosperity. When well-facilitated, these activities can support communities to: create protections for the rights of women and minority groups; hold their leaders accountable; increase community members' democratic participation in land and natural resource-related decisions; improve natural resource conservation and promote biodiversity; and align customary rules with national laws. The *Strengthening Community Governance of Lands and Natural Resources* phase includes the following activities:

- **Creation of Community By-laws.**
 - Communities collectively brainstorm all existing local rules and all rules followed in the past. (1st Draft)
 - Facilitators provide legal education on national laws and basic human rights.
 - Communities review the 1st Draft of their by-laws, add new rules, delete old rules, and change existing rules to reflect emerging community needs. (2nd Draft)
 - Facilitators, lawyers and/or judges review the 2nd Draft to ensure that it does not contradict the national constitution and other relevant laws.
 - Communities modify any rules that contradict national law and make any final changes. (3rd Draft)

- Communities hold large “by-laws adoption ceremonies,” inviting district and regional leaders, judges, neighbors, and others, at which they review the final draft of the by-laws, then vote to adopt the by-laws by consensus (100% agreement) or supermajority vote (66% agreement).
- **Creation of a Zoning Plan.** Communities make basic zoning plans to connect their by-laws to the physical landscape and to ensure that the community develops according to its future vision.
- **Financial Management Training.** Facilitators train community members in basic principles of good financial management and record keeping to support transparent management of revenue generated from community lands and natural resources.
- **Creation of a “Land Governance Council.”** Communities elect a Land Governance Council, composed of trusted community leaders and members of all local stakeholder groups, including women, youth and marginalized groups, to manage community lands and natural resources according to the adopted by-laws.
- **Ensuring Implementation and Enforcement of the By-laws.** Communities build relationships with relevant leaders and local governments and create systems to ensure that their by-laws are enforced and all agreed boundaries are respected.

STEP 3: Harmonizing Boundaries and Documenting Community Lands. The activities in this step support communities to create participatory sketch maps of their lands, and resolve boundary disputes and land conflicts related to their community lands. Communities then document the agreed boundaries by signing agreements with neighbors, planting boundary trees or other markers, recording measurements of location coordinates. The *Harmonizing Boundaries and Documenting Community Lands* phase includes the following activities:

- **Participatory Community Mapping.** Communities document their lands using sketch maps and satellite imagery.
- **Boundary Harmonization.** Communities meet with their neighbors to negotiate and agree on shared boundaries.
- **Land Conflict Resolution.** Facilitators train community members to resolve land conflicts peacefully and, supported by respected, trusted local leaders, mediate disputes that communities cannot resolve on their own.

- **Documentation of Agreed Boundaries.** Communities hold large ceremonies to draft and sign “memoranda of understanding” with their neighbors to formally document all boundary agreements. They also plant boundary trees or place other locally-accepted markers to indicate the limits of their lands. Facilitators support communities to record measurements of their boundaries using coordinates collected with a Global Positioning System (GPS) device, by using high resolution satellite imagery, or through a land survey completed by a licensed surveyor.

STEP 4: Completing Government Registration Procedures.

During this step, communities follow national legal procedures to formally document and register their lands and receive state documentation of their rights. Facilitators should review relevant national laws to understand how to best support communities to follow national land registration procedures.

STEP 5: Preparing Communities to Prosper. These activities are designed to lead to long-term community growth and prosperity, according to each community’s self-defined plans and intentions. They support community members to pursue a range of livelihoods activities, regenerate local ecosystems, prepare for potential negotiations with investors, and take specific steps towards their shared community vision. The Preparing Communities to Prosper phase includes the following activities:

- **Creation of a Community Action Plan.** Communities articulate clear, specific goals that they want to achieve within a particular timeframe and identify what actions they will take to achieve these goals.
- **Livelihood Diversification Support.** Facilitators help link communities with local organizations and agencies whose mandate is to provide livelihood support, technical skills training, micro-credit lending, and market access.
- **Ecosystem Regeneration Strategies.** Communities receive basic training and support to take action to remedy community-identified aspects of environmental degradation, such as practicing sustainable agriculture, undertaking afforestation activities, improving soil quality, and other efforts necessary to maintain a thriving local natural environment.
- **Preparation for Negotiation with Potential Investors.** Facilitators train community members to assess potential investment requests and negotiate skillfully with potential investors.

A visual representation of the Community Land Protection process can be found on the following page.