DATA FOR CONSERVATION

Tools and methods used for citizen empowerment in the Shared Resources Joint Solutions (SRJS) programme

ABOUT THE SRJS PROGRAMME

In partnership with IUCN-NL and the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, WWF Netherlands works on the Shared Resources Joint Solutions (SRJS) programme from 2016 till 2020. Aim is to strengthen the lobby and advocacy capacity of civil society organisations (CSOs) in 16 countries in Africa, Asia and South America. They are working towards sustainably managed landscapes by engaging with the public and private sector. SRJS aims to safeguard biodiverse ecosystems that provide water, food security and climate resilience.

MORE INFORMATION?

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Be one with nature

The importance of data is huge. Data allows governments and donors to allocate their resources purposefully, citizens to hold governments accountable, and it provides greater insight for us all in what's happening in our environment. Well-informed decision-making starts with data gathering and knowledge creation, whereby citizens' knowledge is as important as those of experts.

ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING

Effective lobby and advocacy starts with recent and correct information. That is why so-called environmental monitoring is an important element of the SRJS programme. Environmental monitoring takes place at different levels: from abstract and digital to very concrete and community-based.

Commissioned by WWF NL, a scoping study on emerging technologies and approaches to environmental monitoring by Wageningen University and Research Centre shows that the benefits of these technologies are maximised when integrated with each other.

Drones and smartphone applications are particularly suited to be used by local CSOs, as they are relatively inexpensive and accessible.

Since digital technologies have increased the possibilities to gather data, SRJS uses these to get insights in environmental changes. The programme contributes to citizen empowerment by increasing their access to data.

BIG DATA, SATELLITES AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

In many landscapes, remote sensing with land cover images from the new Sentinel satellites has provided spatial information on land use changes. A local CSO in Uganda which monitors forest cover with satellite images is compensating farmers when they don't cut the trees located on their lands. The CSO receives its income from the carbon credit market and pays out a fair share to the farmers.

In Kalimantan, Indonesia, and in the Chaco Pantanal area in South America, initiatives have been started to detect deforestation in advance. An international team is developing an early warning system based on artificial intelligence and machine learning.

CITIZEN MONITORING

In decision making processes, e.g. on land use matters, local wisdom is as important as expert knowledge. SRJS emphasises the importance of local knowledge and the potential of citizen monitoring. Some examples:

- In the Oueme Delta in Benin, drones have been used to get insight in the spread of illegal fishing activities in a protected area. This resulted in an effective law enforcement and improved protection.
- In the Guianas, drone images have been used to convince gold mining companies of the negative environmental effects that mining has on water ways and natural vegetation. Also, local CSOs were given access to a mobile phone application to monitor the quality of water. They use the data in village decision-making and to advocate for environmental measures in the gold mining industry.
- In Zambia, a mobile phone application has been developed to create a comprehensive open source database about water flows at dams.
- In the Indonesian province of Aceh, local community members have captured changes in natural resources through the lens of their cameras. These pictures will be used in exhibitions to advocate their stories.

- In Myanmar, communities participate in evidence gathering using the TIMBY app, an application which enables local organisations to report to the world what's happening in their backyard.
- Worldwide, Climate Crowd is a crowdsourcing initiative that convenes and supports a network of partners in several countries to gather stories and observations on how climate change is impacting people and nature. This data is used to inform decision makers on the consequences of climate change and influence policies.

INNOVATIVE MONITORING OF PROGRAMME RESULTS

Outcome Harvesting is a participatory monitoring and evaluation methodology for complex programmes to identify, analyse and learn from changes that a programme influences or produces. The evidence is harvested both real time (when change is happening) and afterwards. An app has been developed to facilitate instant entry of results and evidence. In the SRJS programme, we use outcome harvesting to understand (the process of) changes in policies, practices and behaviour, to learn, adjust and improve our interventions. Also, to show evidence of outcomes and the contribution SRJS makes to donors and beneficiaries.