



Top business engagement tips for conservation organisations

A collection of lessons and case studies from landscapes around the world



Ministry of Foreign Affairs



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About this collection

This collection of business engagement tips is for civil society organisations¹ (CSOs) working on frontline conservation issues that want to enhance their engagement with business to encourage increased uptake of sustainable business practice and safeguard our natural environment. These tips have been distilled from a strategic partnership, the Shared Resources, Joint Solutions (SRJS): a five-year programme between the IUCN National Committee of the Netherlands (IUCN NL), WWF Netherlands and the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Since 2016, the programme has worked with almost 200 local and international CSOs across 26 landscapes in 16 low- and middle-income countries across Africa, Asia and Latin America. The objective of SRJS has been to build and strengthen CSO capacities in their engagement with businesses, financial institutions and governments, so that they can effectively lobby for green and inclusive policies and practices. More than 350 desired changes in policies and practices of governments, companies, communities and other actors have been observed across the programme.²

These tips were generated during three virtual learning exchanges held in June 2020 with local SRJS partners. Business engagement was a particular focus for six of these countries that have been showcased in this collection. These sixteen case studies represent a wide spectrum of engagement approaches from collaborative partnerships through to influencing via legal or financial mechanisms.

This collection of top tips and case studies from the SRJS partners includes:

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¹ A civil society organisation is an organisational structure whose members serve the general interest through a democratic process, and which plays the role of mediator between public authorities and citizens. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are a sub-set of CSOs. Other examples of CSOs include social partners such as trade unions and grassroots organisations.

² See the Highlights Report for the SRJS programme for more detail: <https://online.iucn.nl/srjs-highlights/cover>

Why engage with business?

Without a consistent delivery of ecosystem goods and services (e.g. clean water, healthy soils, crop pollination, etc.), the growth and development of many businesses, especially those that are more natural resource reliant, would not be possible. Such goods and services are indeed essential towards the maintenance of successful business operations and functional supply chains (see this IUCN summary³). However, owing to a somewhat limited awareness that still exists among some businesses of the impacts and dependencies that their operations can have on biodiversity, business actions can be one of the key drivers of loss of the very ecosystem goods and services that they rely on.

The private sector's attitude towards social and environmental impact is starting to change, mainly due to increased implementation of environmental regulations and/or financial safeguards, and the fact that safeguarding nature makes good business sense, especially for companies with strong dependencies on nature. Furthermore, the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic has also provided a wake-up call across all sectors to build back better as well as greener, which of course intrinsically includes sustainability as a key foundation to do this, as laid out by many organisations including UN Sustainable Development Network⁴ and the World Economic

Forum⁵. This current context, therefore, provides an enormous business engagement opportunity for conservation organisations to help business reframe their relationship with nature.

In order to accelerate the sustainability transition at the speed and scale required, a concerted collaboration among the conservation community is essential. A number of roles and actions are required to support this change, ranging from: raising the awareness of companies on critical sustainability issues; providing knowledge and support to change their practices; as well as convening business and local organisations to encourage joint action. In some instances, a constructive watchdog role is required that can assist governments in ensuring that companies are held accountable by implementing laws and policies. There is no one-size-fits-all approach; depending on the context, the conservation community has many entry points through which to engage with businesses, whether directly with the company or indirectly through engaging regulators or financial authorities.

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)⁶ call for CSOs to develop new partnerships with businesses, while organisations, such as the Global Environment Facility⁷, emphasise private sector engagement as a way to scale up the change

needed to achieve biodiversity and sustainability goals. There is a real desire and growing appetite among companies – large and small – to engage on environmental issues, and the conservation community must be ready to meet the demand. This collection of tips and illustrative case studies aims to provide inspiration for local conservation organisations to do exactly that.⁸

3 <https://www.iucn.org/sites/dev/files/content/documents/-brochure-iucn-corp-gov-en-july2019-web.pdf>

4 <https://www.unsdsn.org/never-waste-a-good-crisis-for-a-sustainable-recovery-from-covid-19>

5 <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/07/to-build-back-better-we-must-reinvent-capitalism-heres-how/>

6 <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

7 <https://www.thegef.org/topics/private-sector>

8 <https://www.iucn.org/theme/business-and-biodiversity/resources/biobiz-exchange-resource-guide/why-does-influencing-business-matter>

Inspirational examples from around the world

This map provides an overview of 12 case studies on business engagement from the SRJS programme that are drawn upon and highlighted in the business engagement tips section below. Click on the examples for more detailed information, including links to PANORAMA Solutions, where available.



Paraguay

Partnering on sustainable finance to tackle deforestation

To tackle deforestation in Paraguay, the Dutch Development Bank (FMO) worked with local banks and NGOs, including WWF, to set up a roundtable. 16 banks so far have committed to implementing guidelines for financing sustainable land use.

Burkina Faso

Ensuring compliance of mining companies to pay taxes

AGEREF, an NGO in Burkina Faso, evaluated the implementation of the national mining code, which government agencies used to put pressure on mining companies to pay their required taxes to support community development.

Benin

Supporting a cement company's biodiversity actions

Eco-Benin and BEES, two NGOs in Benin, supported Heidelberg Cement Group to scale up their biodiversity actions in Benin and Togo, leading to an agreement to support restoration efforts in a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.

Benin

Creating space to share best sustainability practices

Eco-Benin, a Beninese NGO, holds local meetup events to encourage exchange between businesses and CSOs on best social and environmental practices, which have led to adoption of a State charter on CSR.

Uganda

Using the law to hold an oil & gas multinational accountable

The national NGO, AFIEGO, joined forces with CSOs worldwide to initiate legal action against an oil company in Uganda, which has operations in a protected area.

Uganda

Using dialogue and research for sustainable sugar production

Ugandan NGO, Ecotrust, convinced the company Kinyara to engage in more sustainable sugar production by encouraging outgrowers to adopt improved practices. This also led to Kinyara adopting the local catchment management plan.

Ghana

Recognising corporate environmental champions

A Rocha Ghana, a national NGO, collaborated with a prestigious award organisation to establish an award to recognise and incentivise corporate environmental sustainability.

Ghana

Mobilising shea value chain to finance conservation

Building on a community resource management area plan, A Rocha Ghana engaged Savannah Fruit Company to build a shea value chain, aimed at improving livelihoods and funding conservation of the Mole National Park.

Ghana

Inspiring a multinational brewery to invest in water resources

A Rocha Ghana engaged Guinness Ghana on issues of water security by informing and exposing them to best practices, which motivated the company to support restoration efforts and the development of water resource management plans.

Ghana

Educating on pesticide use for sustainable fruit processing

The local NGO, The Development Institute, convinced farmers at Kingdom Fruits in Ghana to reduce pesticide use. This also included setting up an online messaging group to enable businesses to share best practices among each other.

Ghana

Running a network to boost conservation dialogue with business

A Rocha Ghana and IUCN created a business network initially to address plans for bauxite mining in the Atewa landscape. The scope of the network is now expanding to share issues related to biodiversity and business in Ghana.

Indonesia

Empowering communities to engage on extractives

WWF Indonesia and a local NGO empowered people to report illegal activities in the Peusangan watershed. Now, 45 mining companies are extracting legally, ecotourism is raising biodiversity awareness and local livelihoods have improved.



Top tips on how your organisation can engage with business

Top tips on how your organisation can engage with business

Phase One: Getting ready

This section provides tips that can help your organisation get ready and start working towards building a targeted and strategic engagement strategy that can be tailored towards what your organisation is best at, whether that is dialogue, research or campaigning. The three pillars for this approach are represented in figure 1. For a deeper dive, please also refer to IUCN's BioBiz Exchange Resource Guide⁹.

TIP: Understand the business context

Prepare well and do extensive research before starting to engage with businesses. This can help you define the most appropriate strategy or strategies. Thoroughly analyse the type of companies that operate in your targeted landscape and be clear about what changes in various business practices you would like to see which may be having a somewhat of a negative impact. This can include a clear communications strategy

Figure 1: Representation of a business engagement plan – building on solid foundations



with tailored and targeted messages. [A full list of suggested questions can be found in the template at the end of the document \(Table 1\).](#)

Advice for specific questions is provided next.

What is the natural resource governance context?

Just like with any strategic intervention, it is important to understand the environment in which you are operating or trying to influence before deciding what is the best approach to use. For example, in countries with a weak policy framework, national parks and Key Biodiversity Areas are increasingly under pressure from challenges such as encroachment as well as the issuance of logging permits given by governments to companies. These can result in a growing number of conflicts between business sector interests and the conservation of biodiversity, particularly when it comes to mining and logging, as highlighted by Global Witness¹⁰ in 2020. This backdrop creates a more challenging business engagement environment, which means that decision-making needs to be strategic, especially around deciding which sector and company to target. This can help to ensure, in the short-term, that a safe and effective approach is identified and long-term results are achieved and sustained.

⁹ <https://www.iucn.org/theme/business-and-biodiversity/resources/biobiz-exchange-resource-guide>

¹⁰ <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/environmental-activists/defending-tomorrow/#:~:text=Our%20annual%20report%20into%20the.than%20four%20people%20a%20week>

What sectors are present in the targeted landscape and what are their typical impacts and dependencies on nature?

One way to strengthen your case would be to map the impacts and dependencies that the companies you wish to target have on biodiversity and ecosystem services. This exercise would not only help your organisation uncover the company's risks and opportunities but would also allow for your organisation to respond more coherently to the interests of the company in question. See the ENCORE tool¹¹ to give you a starting point to search by sub-sector.

This simple impacts and dependencies exercise was one of the foundations of the CSR Café meetings held in Benin¹² (see next tip for further analysis).

What are the characteristics of the company/sector(s)?

Businesses come in all shapes and sizes. Some categories that can help to differentiate businesses are: size, revenue, scale of operation, etc. There is also a difference between companies that are publicly listed and those that are family owned, meaning that their drivers¹³ for potential organisational change are also different. For example, in smaller companies, these drivers tend to be more internal, whereas globally operating companies often have public sustainability

commitments that can be used as an entry point for action, with local subsidiaries to support them with implementation.

TIP: Tailor your approach... and be prepared to adapt

Lastly, and while financial institutions may not have a direct impact on landscapes per se, they do fund all kinds of projects at different scales and so, through this, they too can be an important entry point for change.

Examples of different business types that are included in this collection:

- **Local business:** Savannah Fruit Company (SFC) in Ghana
- **Small businesses that are part of a larger global conglomerate:** Kinyara Sugar (KSWL) in Uganda that is part of the South African Ilovo
- **Financial Institutions:** NN Investment Partners (NN IP) the asset manager of the NN Group from the Netherlands, or DFCU – a commercial bank in Uganda



©Eco-Benin - Businesses meet with CSOs at CSR Café.

See the IUCN BioBiz Exchange Resource Guide for a more detailed explanation on defining the situation.¹⁴

Now that you have 1) a greater understanding of the context, barriers and opportunities, 2) developed a clearer idea of the changes that you want to see and 3) know which are the right companies to target, it's time to design your approach and engage with the businesses in question¹⁵. This can be either direct, indirect or a mixture of both, depending on the context. The approach may also evolve depending on the changing context.

¹¹ <https://encore.naturalcapital.finance/en>

¹² <https://panorama.solutions/en/solution/bringing-business-and-conservation-actors-together-convivial-cafe-space>

¹³ <http://donellameadows.org/archives/leverage-points-places-to-intervene-in-a-system/>

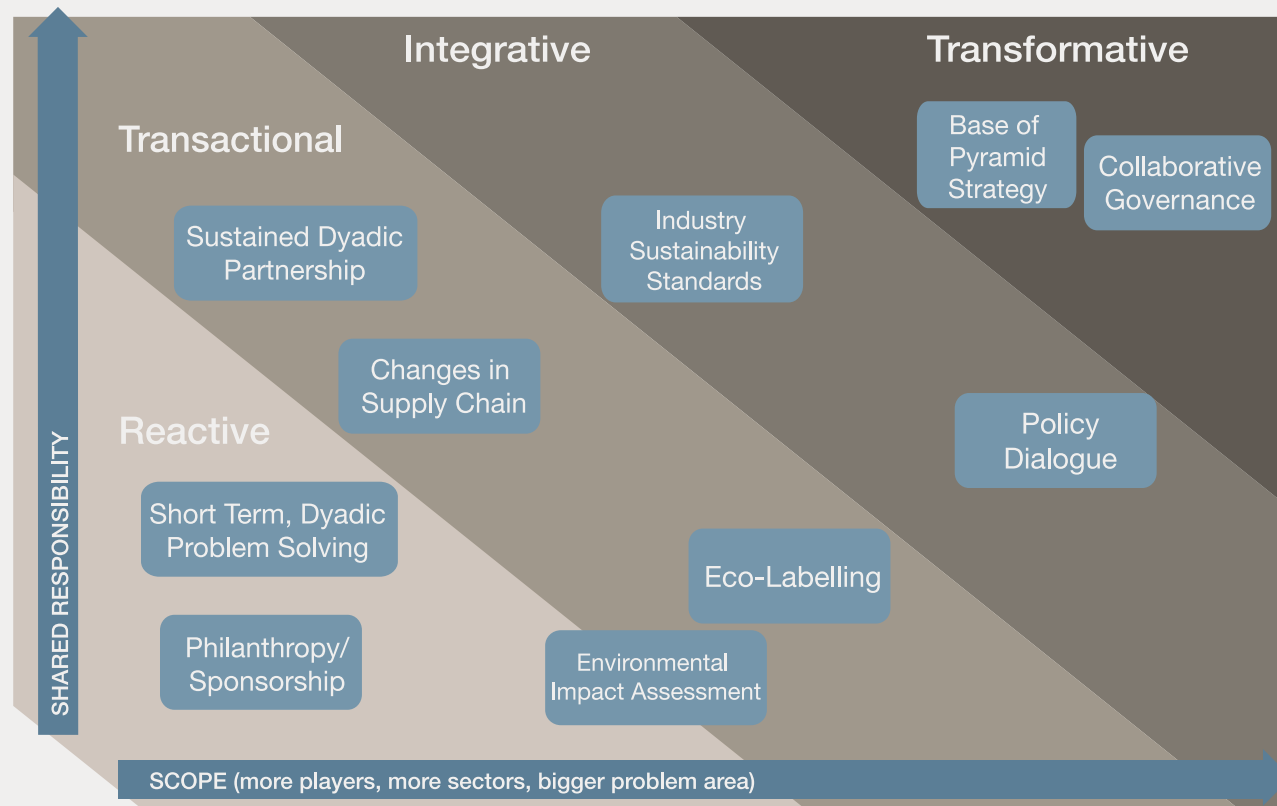
¹⁴ <https://www.iucn.org/theme/business-and-biodiversity/resources/biobiz-exchange-resource-guide/what-your-situation>

¹⁵ <https://www.iucn.org/theme/business-and-biodiversity/resources/biobiz-exchange-resource-guide/how-can-you-design-a-tailored-approach>

Direct business engagement

Direct interaction with a company includes: providing research data or advice; facilitating connections with local communities, or even; working in partnership in landscapes or value chains on shared conservation goals (see Figure 2 below).

Figure 2: Partnerships type by scope and shared responsibility



Source: Network for Business Sustainability (2013)¹⁶

16 Network for Business Sustainability (2013). Sustainability through Partnerships. A Guide for Executives. Available at: <https://www.nbs.net/articles/executive-report-sustainability-through-partnerships>

In **Uganda**, when the company Kinyara Sugar (KSWL) announced plans to double its production, ECOTRUST feared the impact that this would have on the biodiversity in the Albertine Rift. One of the key success factors for ECOTRUST and their engagement with the sugar company was the **RESEARCH** that was done to demonstrate how business-as-usual could threaten both the environment and the business sustainability of the company itself.



©AFIEGO - Ms. Diana Nabiruma of AFIEGO addresses meeting with the EACOP project developers in February 2020.

As a result, instead of looking into expanding land for sugar cane exploitation, KSWL is now focused on adopting better technologies, better transportation, training outgrowers in improved agricultural practices, and ensuring that production efficiency (to maximise production per unit area) in specific areas is achieved. If all stakeholders – including KSWL and collaborating communities – adhere to this plan, it will help KSWL to produce sugarcane in a more sustainable manner.

Another strong success example for **DIALOGUE** is in **Benin**, where SRJS local partners formed the CSR Café¹⁷ to enable CSOs to meet up with businesses in an informal way to share best social and environmental practices (see more on the CSR café in phase two: Time to engage). One of the main results from this exchange is that the CSOs have learned more about the language of the private sector and understanding how to best approach them, which will help with their preparation with future initiatives and engagements with business.

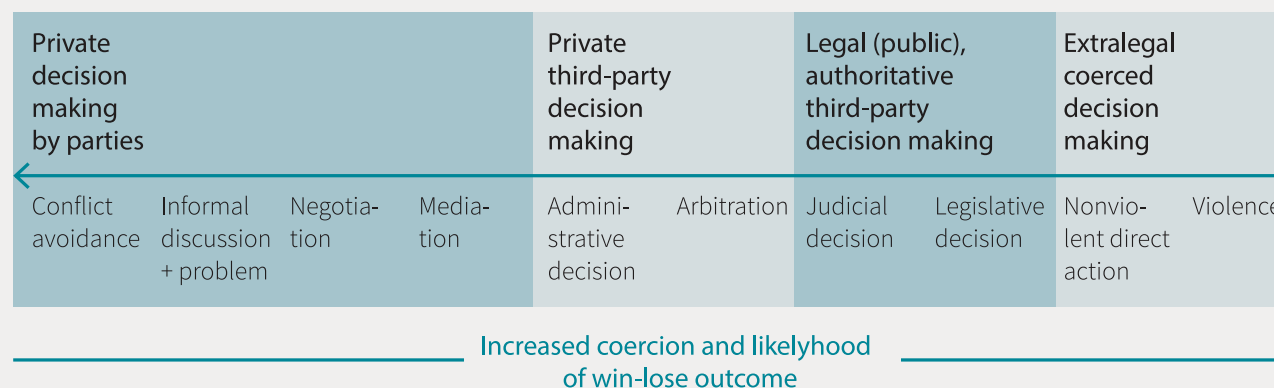
Indirect business engagement

Engaging business is only possible if the operational space for civil society enables such interactions to take place. Unfortunately, in many parts of the world, this is becoming increasingly dangerous due to the political environment. Every week, more than three people are killed because they stand up for nature. Conflicts over mining were the number one cause of killings, with the highest increase in deaths

due to forestry and illegal logging (Global Witness, 2018).

However, civil society can also influence companies indirectly, for example by helping regulators design effective legal levers or playing a “watchdog” role to support implementation of laws or financial safeguards. See figure 3 for a full range of indirect engagement options.

Figure 3: Continuum of conflict management and resolution approaches



Source: Brouwer and Woodhill (2016)¹⁸

Media attention alone can put pressure on governments and companies to stop activities that degrade the environment and livelihoods. In **Burkina Faso**¹⁹, since the adoption of the new mining code in 2015, mining companies have refused to pay certain taxes applicable in-country, notably the Burkina Faso *mining fund for local development* (FMDL) tax and the *financial contribution for water* (CFE) tax.

17 <https://www.iucn.nl/en/updates/the-csr-cafe-where-business-meets-civil-society>

18 Brouwer, Herman and Woodhill, Jim, with Hemmati, Minu, Verhoosel, Karèn and van Vugt, Simone (2016) The MSP Guide, How to design and facilitate multi-stakeholder partnerships, Wageningen: Wageningen University and Research, CDI, and Rugby, UK: Practical Action Publishing, <http://dx.doi.org/10.3362/9781780446691>

19 <https://panorama.solutions/en/node/5828>

Through the SRJS programme, local CSO partners and peers were equipped to design advocacy and lobbying strategies to enable better engagement with the private sector. As a result, CSOs were then able to support the government to put pressure on the mining companies, which then began paying these taxes in 2019. This is another example that demonstrates that building CSO capacity can be an effective strategy to indirectly influence mining companies and encourage increased compliance with host country laws and regulations.

Legal action can be used as a last resort when dialogue is not achieving change. A number of governments have developed laws that open the door to legal action by CSOs either in the country where the impact has taken place, or in the country where the responsible company is registered.²⁰

CSO partners in **Ghana** illustrate an evolution in their engagement approach. For example, A Rocha Ghana initially established the BESNet²¹ group of companies (see Top Tip: Use effective engagement channel in phase 2) as part of several strategies to create support for protecting the Atewa Range Forest from bauxite developments.

Though the campaign has engaged broadly with stakeholders and received a lot of national and international media attention, the government still intends to mine Atewa for bauxite. In response, in January 2020, a coalition of NGOs and private citizens filed a Civil Action at the High Court of General Jurisdiction against the Government of Ghana stating the Atewa plans are in violation of the right to a safe and healthy environment.²² The State Attorney has denied all the allegations in the plaintiffs' statement of claim under the Civil Action and recommended that the case be dismissed. A ruling on the case is expected in 2021. The campaign is now shifting again towards international actions, such as submitting the Atewa Motion 103²³ to the IUCN Members' Assembly. This is in addition to CSO engagement with top global mining transparency, accountability and sustainability standards which aim to ensure that Atewa Range Forest is secure, now and for the future, and its water provisioning, biodiversity security and climate amelioration services are protected.



©Wya Adama - A public conference on the FMDL in Burkina Faso in 2018.

20 See this overview from Change in Context, Government policy to stimulate international responsible business conduct, 2018, <https://media.business-humanrights.org/media/documents/files/government-policy-to-stimulate-international-responsible-business-conduct.pdf>

21 BESNet or Business and Environmental Stewardship is a network of businesses in Ghana engaged in the promotion of and support for the mainstreaming of the natural capital in business value chains and production. See <https://ghana.arocha.org/besnet/>

22 <https://www.iucn.nl/en/updates/ngos-file-complaint-plans-to-mine-bauxite-in-atewa-range-forest-violate-right-to-a-safe-and>

23 <https://www.iucncongress2020.org/motion/103>

In Uganda, the Civil Society Coalition on Oil (CSCO) provided a mechanism where oil companies could meet with CSOs. However, progress on key issues was slow, and this resulted in four national organisations and two international organisations initiating legal action with one of the companies. This action is still ongoing at publication.

“Without collaboration the court case would not have been filed, and companies and CSOs in Uganda wouldn’t be engaging regularly.” - Representative from AFIEGO.



©Romie Goedicke - SRJS training in Ghana.

AFIEGO notes that this step would not have been possible to do on their own.²⁴ (See TIP: [Join forces with organisations that have similar goals.](#))

TIP: Consult with and gain mandate from the local communities

Getting buy-in and support from local communities, that surround the project site and/or will be or are being directly affected, is absolutely essential, not just to follow international best practice for development projects but especially to have lasting impact. There are a few ways that community support can be secured.

In Mole National park in **Ghana**²⁵, for example, communities depend on the land for food and income. Hunting game species and collecting wood for charcoal production had negative impacts on the Park. To mobilise communities around the sustainable management of resources, in 2008, A Rocha Ghana and IUCN NL Committee supported the establishment of Community Resource Management Area (CREMA), a governance and management framework created by the Wildlife Division of the Forestry Commission. The CREMA designed a shared plan for the landscape that simultaneously addresses conservation and socio-economic wellbeing, including building a shea value chain.

A Rocha Ghana developed a relationship with the Savannah Fruit Company (SFC), leading to SFC partnering with the CREMA, which assisted in the creation of a fund to support conservation action in the community. SFC specifically worked with the CREMA’s women’s groups that are responsible for the collection of shea nuts. The shea value chain was strengthened, formalised and transformed through organic certification, leading to greater finance flowing into communities and conservation.

In **Indonesia**²⁶, buy-in and support with the Peusangan Watershed Forum (FDKP)²⁷ was cultivated with the assistance of WWF Indonesia, which was functioning as a local mediator with strong national and international networks and leverage. WWF Indonesia works with the Forum to help safeguard the Peusangan watershed; a natural resource rich area which supports the livelihoods of more than 180,000 local communities. However, with several extraction activities (which are sometimes illegal) happening along the Krueng Peusangan River by sand and gravel extraction businesses, this natural resource rich area was threatened. Deterioration of the watershed led to frequent flooding, severe riverbank damages and a decrease of water quality.

24 <https://www.iucn.nl/en/updates/joining-forces-to-protect-eco-sensitive-regions-from-oil-companies>

25 <https://panorama.solutions/en/solution/mobilising-finance-shea-value-chain>

26 <https://panorama.solutions/en/solution/ensuring-responsible-natural-resource-extraction-through-community-participation-and>

27 <http://daspeusangan.org/>



©Zainudin, customary leader - Huge sand and gravel business along the river.

After raising the awareness of customary leaders about mining regulations, WWF Indonesia trained local communities on how to report cases of illegal extraction through citizen journalism. Building on this local wisdom, the communities now work closely with the government and local businesses, including sand and gravel mining, a fertiliser company and a local water company, to ensure the maintenance of a fresh water supply, which also includes their participation in a payment for ecosystem services scheme that is managed by the Watershed Forum. As more community members reported on the situation, the government has since improved law enforcement and revised district spatial plans where there will be a specific zonation for sustainable sand and gravel extraction. With zoning, it is easier to monitor illegal activities and



©FDKP - Peusangan Watershed Forum (FDKP) in a meeting with district government to revise a spatial plan for sand and gravel zonation.

ensure that legal business owners comply with their license. Already 45 mining companies have met the recommendations to ensure sustainable extraction.

TIP: Join forces with organisations that have similar goals

The challenges that CSOs face are often too large to be faced alone. By joining forces with organisations with the same goal, bigger tasks can be confronted. Such organisations can be other CSOs, whether local, national or international, but they can also be from other sectors too such as government, business and financial institutions.

By working together there is more combined knowledge, more resources, a larger network and a larger audience leading to increased power. But collaboration isn't always easy. How can you overcome the challenges that come with uniting different approaches?

A good example of joint action is in **Uganda**, where SRJS partners supported members of the Civil Society Coalition on Oil (CSCO) to develop a joint strategy and action plan, enabling them to start submitting joint responses to environmental and social impact assessment (ESIA)²⁸ consultations. Having a common agenda enabled the Ugandan CSOs to accomplish more on both a national and international level (see previous Tip: Tailor your approach).

Networks can be highly valuable in achieving CSOs' goals and the building of administrative alliances can help with this.

“For most civil society organisations in Benin, it's not easy to influence government bodies without having what we call ‘our (wo)man inside’. People in government want to separate civil society from law making. But recently, things have started to change for us.”²⁹
- Representative of the Benin Environment and Education Society (BEES)

28 See this guide from SRJS international partner, Netherlands Commission for Environmental Assessment [https://www.eia.nl/en/countries/netherlands+\(the\)/esia-profile](https://www.eia.nl/en/countries/netherlands+(the)/esia-profile)

29 <https://www.iucn.nl/en/updates/the-value-of-your-network-whos-your-inside-woman>

To ensure maximum impact, it is strategic to not only establish who your potential opponents are and how to mitigate their inhibiting actions, but, equally, how to identify your allies and strengthen your collaboration with them.

For example, Guinness **Ghana** Breweries PLC (Diageo) faced a water pollution crisis and was interested in securing water resources and ecosystems in the Densu basin. A Rocha Ghana proactively engaged with Guinness Ghana, provided information on water security issues and also arranged for their participation in a study tour to Ecuador so that they could learn more about state-of-the-art water security solutions that are



©A Rocha Ghana - Some community members uprooting seedlings from the nursery to be transported to the planting site.

being developed by local Ecuadorian NGOs. This engagement helped to create champions within the company through a personal buy-in process. Thanks to this intervention, Guinness Ghana started to support the restoration of riverine vegetation in the Densu River Basin, on the boundaries of Atewa Range Forest Reserve, through participating in the development and implementation of Community Water Resource Management Plans.

It is also possible to align with non-civil society partners. For example, financial institutions, whether local banks, international development banks or asset managers, can be also be an important lever for change.³⁰ While increasing numbers of financial institutions are becoming aware of the impact of their investments on people and nature and are increasingly committed to reducing these risks, they often lack access to reliable information on specific companies (see also the forthcoming guide by VBDO, IUCN NL Committee and WWF NL on financial sector engagement for CSOs.)

In **Paraguay**, the Dutch Development Bank, FMO, local banks and NGOs worked together to reduce illegal deforestation in the Chaco region. This vast area consists of various ecosystems such as the Dry Chaco and the Pantanal. In the 24 million hectares of the Paraguayan territory, the Dry Chaco covers 11.7 million hectares. On average 230,000 hectares of forest have been cut down each year for the past ten years for large-scale livestock farming.³¹ These

farmlands are, for a large part, financed by local banks and often backed by international banks.

As laws do exist, but implementation is often lacking, WWF Paraguay worked with FMO and four local banks to develop guidelines for sustainable financing of cattle, agriculture and agri-industry sectors. A level playing field has been created as the majority of banks in the area – currently 16 banks – have voluntarily committed to sustainable financing at the Roundtable *Mesa de Finanzas Sostenible*.³² CSOs supported the process by maintaining pressure on the Roundtable as well as providing satellite data and analysis access as well as capacity building for bank employees.³³

30 <https://www.iucn.nl/en/updates/nature-organisations-and-asset-managers-working-together-on-sustainable-production>

31 <http://guyra.org.py/informe-deforestacion/>

32 <http://www.mfs.org.py/es/>

33 <https://www.iucn.nl/en/updates/tackling-deforestation-in-paraguay-an-unlikely-partnership>

Check list: Getting ready

- ✓ Understand the context and operational space that you are working in.
 - ✓ Know the problem thoroughly at hand and what needs to be done to address it.
 - ✓ Know your stakeholders. Leveraging on existing contacts and networks is very beneficial.
 - ✓ The creation of a clear stakeholder communications strategy is essential.
 - ✓ Pay attention to having correct facts and credible information.
 - ✓ Aim to work in a coalition where possible. This enables CSOs to pool resources and confront bigger tasks together.
 - ✓ Get backup from the central government officials. This legitimises the implementation of local projects and helps them succeed.
 - ✓ Use the leverage of a large international party or an investor to mobilise the local financial or business sector.
 - ✓ Ensure that you have a flexible strategy in place to allow you and your stakeholders to adapt to on-going contextual changes. Remember that this is an iterative process.
 - ✓ Be patient. Business engagement is a process that takes a long time and many efforts.
-

Phase Two: Time to engage

Once the initial set up has been established, your engagement plan has been drawn up, contextual information gathered to help equip you in your cause, potential coalitions created and community buy in sought, you're ready to start engaging with your target businesses.

TIP: Identify a champion in the company

Look at the business organisational structure to know exactly who to talk to, either their management or dedicated and motivated personnel that work on the frontline. This makes it easier to get the company to listen.

In the case of Heidelberg Cement Africa in **Benin**, having a highly motivated person inside the company, who was willing to carry the work forward between local NGOs, was fundamental. In this case, the champion was the coordinator for biodiversity conservation, biodiversity information and landscape restoration projects at the cement company.

TIP: Use effective dialogue and good communications channels to build trust

This is an essential starting point when it comes to actual engagement with the company, and also good practice to maintain along your engagement journey to ensure a smooth process and the most impactful results.

In **Benin**, the creation of the CSR Café enabled CSOs to meet up with businesses in an informal way to share best social and environmental practices.

“The idea for the CSR Café originated during a training that we took as part of the SRJS programme with the support of IUCN NL. It is a training focused on how civil society organisations can collaborate with businesses to protect biodiversity.” - Representative from Eco-Benin

The aim of the Café has been to encourage and motivate companies to take action and become more aware of their social and environmental responsibility. It invites these companies to present their activities and good practices to the participants, while at the same time allowing for discussion and strategic feedback of their



©IUCN - Nadine McCormick visiting CimBenin head office, Cotonou.

programmes and operations. Participation is voluntary, free of charge and companies can join, or leave, at any time. Participants feel there is a win-win situation for everyone involved, including for the people in the communities and for the environment. This is because when companies and CSOs collaborate on developing more effective CSR programmes, they will have more impact on the ground. More than 20 companies have so far participated in one of the CSR Café sessions and, as a result, the Beninese State has adopted a CSR charter, as well as a self-assessment tool for business, which CSOs can use to support them.

In the case of **Ghana**, A Rocha Ghana, in partnership with the IUCN Ghana project office, adopted a strategy for companies to learn more together about natural resource management³⁴, and that biodiversity issues are not just part of a national

34 BESNet or Business and Environmental Stewardship is a network of businesses in Ghana engaged in the promotion of and support for the mainstreaming of the natural capital in business value chains and production. See <https://ghana.arocha.org/besnet/>

conversation but also an international one. Through a series of events and visits, companies discussed investment opportunities and engaged in a conservation dialogue that showed them how they can benefit from considering biodiversity factors. The dialogue was supplemented by using dedicated social media channels. The initial goal was focused around the Atewa Forest Reserve, which was [threatened by bauxite extraction](#). Now, the group is being expanded from a landscape initiative to a national network, and has grown from 8 to 12 companies in the last year. As mentioned by one member company, Greening Commodities Ltd, they are “keen to join a growing network of businesses



© the Development Institute - Daniel Akoto, the DI project coordinator for SRJS with Joseph Ahiajebey, farm manager of Kingdom Fruits.

adopting sustainability principles and to learn and share best practices, lessons and experiences in green business”.

Also in **Ghana**, Kingdom Fruits, a fruit processing company, had been using an unhealthy dose of pesticides on its fields for weed control. The Development Institute, a local NGO, engaged with the company to help reduce their use of these pesticides. The NGO did this by interacting with its labourers to inform them of the dangerous effects of pesticide application. Kingdom Fruits has now adopted sustainable production methods: they only use pesticides on young mango trees and no longer on mango or citrus trees. They also use live mulching as an alternative to herbicides. The NGO has set up a WhatsApp group in which some Ghanaian businesses exchange information on best agronomic practices, organic pesticide and the costs of planting material.

TIP: Demonstrate the benefits to business

All companies, to a greater or lesser extent, impact and depend on natural resources. By demonstrating the importance of biodiversity to business, particularly through the maintenance of essential ecosystem services that many businesses rely on, the easier it will be to engage and get them on your side.

“If you are able to demonstrate how ecosystem degradation can negatively impact a certain business, it becomes easier to ally with them to make their operations more sustainable.” - Representative of the Africa Institute for Energy Governance (AFIEGO)

In **Uganda**, the sugar company, KSWL, faced two risks to their production: 1) potentially insufficient water resources for day-to-day production, and 2) the risk of fires that could encroach onto their sugarcane estate. These fires were mostly started by adjacent local communities while they were preparing their land for cultivation. ECOTRUST was able to make clear that the threat to the sustainability of KSWL’s value chain, which highly depends on the Kiiha catchment, was beyond the actions that could take place on the nucleus estate. ECOTRUST therefore suggested to KSWL a range of approaches that could incentivise the local communities to stop wetland encroachment and reduce fires, through the development of alternative livelihoods. In particular, Kinyara has contributed to the capitalisation of Savings and Loans Associations³⁵ that has, in turn, supported small businesses, including mobile money businesses, livestock keeping, tree planting and various, mainly agro-based small businesses. Kinyara has stated to ECOTRUST that the rates at which sugarcane was being lost to fires has reduced to almost zero.

35 <https://www.vsla.net/>

Check list: Time to engage

- ✓ Leverage your network. Identify a contact or champion that can help you get in touch with the right people.
 - ✓ Break down perceptions and create trust through continuous, open and transparent dialogue both online and in-person.
 - ✓ Create informal, voluntary opportunities to connect with business, such as the CSR Café format, which helps to make company representatives feel more comfortable sharing with CSOs.
 - ✓ Make businesses aware of their impacts - it's easier to convince them.
 - ✓ Engagement needs to be activity driven. Most companies want to do something concrete at the end.
 - ✓ Continuously develop skills to show business that you are professional, competent and trustworthy, especially when it comes to a company investing resources in a joint project.
-

Phase Three: Scaling up

Once you have set the foundations and engaged with the businesses in question and progress is being made, it might be time to consolidate and scale up. Here are some tips that can help you.

TIP: Institutionalise your agreement

Institutionalising your connection through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). An MoU can help to consolidate and formalise relationships beyond individual relationships. This means that if your contact inside leaves office, the collaboration and joint work can still continue.

When CSO leaders met with the subsidiary of Heidelberg Cement, **CimBenin**, they realised that the staff had the willingness to take more action around biodiversity conservation, but they needed support and guidance to go further. An agreement was signed in December 2019 between two subsidiaries of Heidelberg Cement Group and seven CSOs³⁶ to support the restoration of a nearby reserve. Even though the company champion, the internal coordinator for biodiversity, has since left, the remaining colleagues are still as engaged.

TIP: Celebrate success to inspire further action

If your business engagement has been successful, it is always a good idea to promote it, not only to publicly recognise the good work that has been achieved, but also to inspire others to follow suit.

In **Ghana**, the “Exclusive Men of the Year” award recognises actions and projects that have greatly contributed towards developments in society or industries. However, there was no category for business promoting environmental sustainability and biodiversity conservation. This changed in 2017 when A Rocha Ghana partnered with the organisers of the event to introduce a new award category. So far three companies have been recognised, including their partner company, [Guinness Ghana, in 2019](#). Such awards also act as an incentive for other companies who want to contribute to environmental sustainability. Many businesses appreciate this type of recognition, since it boosts their positive image.

Companies can also offer recognition to CSOs. For example, Heidelberg Cement Group has run the “Quarry Life Awards” to reward innovative scientific and community projects that raise awareness and educate quarry actors about biodiversity issues, and help the company connect with its local stakeholders. In 2018, Heidelberg’s Benin subsidiary launched the national Quarry Life Award. It was

within this framework that CSOs and the cement company met and started their engagement journey.

TIP: Capture and integrate best practices to ensure longevity

In order to improve future performance and scale-up successes, both within the engagement and to inspire others to learn from and build on your experience, it is important to share knowledge and recommendations. Specifically, this means ensuring moments to reflect together on the engagement, to capture lessons learned and integrate them into future engagements, both in terms of raising the level of ambition to move towards sustainability, as well as considering long-term financing options. One suggested format for gathering experiences is the template in [PANORAMA Solutions³⁷](#), which provides an opportunity to reflect on challenges, impact and “building blocks” which can be replicated by others.

36 CDAC, COSOL, Agbozegue, and laboratoire d'écologie et Ecotoxicologie and laboratoire de recherche forestière de l'Université de Lomé, as well as BEES and Eco-Benin.

37 Further information about a number of the case studies can be found on [PANORAMA Solutions](#), a partnership initiative of GIZ, IUCN, UN Environment, UN Development Programme (UNDP) and others that finds and promotes examples of inspiring, replicable solutions across a range of conservation and development topics, including business engagement.

Check list: Scaling up

- ✓ Make sure you institutionalise your collaboration, for example, through a Memorandum of Understanding. In this way, when your contact inside leaves the organisation, you can continue to work with his or her successor.
 - ✓ Think about how to recognise companies to encourage them to continue to take action; CSOs can highlight these efforts through their communication channels, award schemes, new platforms, etc.
 - ✓ Connect businesses together that are working constructively to implement more sustainable practices. This peer-to-peer learning can harness inspiration and learning.
 - ✓ Capture lessons learned to build into future engagements.
-



Your next steps on business engagement

Your next steps on business engagement

This collection of top tips and case studies draws on the real-life lessons from the Shared Resources, Joint Solutions partners that have undertaken action to engage with business, with the intention to facilitate the journey for other CSOs interested in transforming business practices. By following the top tips outlined in this publication, a business engagement plan will start to emerge. The template of guiding questions (included in the Annex) aims to help you undertake this process.

It is critical to take time to research the broader situation before beginning your engagement with business. Being clear on the change you want to see and by whom, based on a thorough analysis of the context of the landscape, as well as the businesses involved and a reflection of your own organisation's strengths and capabilities, is needed in order to support an effective business engagement plan.

Then, building on this research and analysis, tailoring your approach and being prepared to adapt your plan to reflect what you learn from reaching out to other stakeholders is key. Local communities should not be overlooked; seeking their input may take extra time but it can also help strengthen your mandate. Joining forces with like-minded or complementary organisations that share your goals can also leverage your respective influence and resources.

Once you are ready to engage, identifying a potential ally or champion can help get the ball rolling...and keep it rolling! Once you have an "open door" to the business, ensuring there is a constructive dialogue and maintaining good communication channels can help build trust. In this way, you can also demonstrate the benefits of engagement to the business.

This may lead to opportunities for formal or informal agreements, which can take many forms – from providing technical guidance on a specific issue to promoting knowledge sharing among their industry peers. In most cases, businesses prefer engaging around specific actions, and celebrating progress or successes can inspire further actions as well as other companies to engage with CSOs. Furthermore, capturing and integrating any lessons and best practices into your business engagement plan will ensure a more robust framework for future partnerships with business.

In conclusion, the role of CSOs to engage with business is increasingly recognised as an essential lever for safeguarding biodiversity, and advancing national and international goals on sustainable development. We look forward to hearing that more CSOs are engaging with business on this journey, and we encourage you to join the [IUCN BioBiz Exchange Workplace Group](#) to share your experiences with other CSOs along the way.

Annex: Template for business engagement plan

Complete this table in discussion with relevant colleagues/organisations

PART 1: UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT AND BUSINESS		
Overall goal for the target region/landscape: Overall objectives for the region/landscape:		
Which businesses are active in the target region/landscape?	What are the impacts and dependencies of the businesses on natural capital in the landscapes	Which practices would you like to change and how can business play a role
<i>Sectors, types of ownership, financing etc.</i>	<i>Impacts (negative and positive) – see ENCORE <u>Negative</u></i>	<i>What needs to change to minimise the impacts or turn. How can business play a role?</i> <i>How can the company(ies) play a role in this?</i>
	<i>Dependencies</i>	<i>What capacities does the company(ies) have that could be used for change?</i>

PART 2: KNOW YOUR ORGANISATION/COALITION

Mandate (theory of change)

How could engaging business help the organisation to reach its goals

Culture and norms

Which forms of business engagement (direct partnership and project support, or indirect such as campaign, etc.) would suit the culture and norms of your organisation?

Expertise and capacity

What expertise does your organisation possess to influence business? What would you need to learn? What capacities does your organisation have to influence business (people, time, resources)?

Expertise:

Capacity:

Gaps:

Internal support

How willing are your organisation's leaders and colleagues to the possibility of engaging with business?

Unique selling point

What do you have to offer to business (skills, contacts, expertise etc.)?

External support

Who could you partner with to get what you need (skills, contacts, etc.)?

What are the key risks of the potential engagement(s)? <i>Are there any red flag issues for your organisation?)</i>	What drivers could trigger change?
<p><i>Major issues identified in a business engagement risks and opportunity assessment</i></p>	<p><i>Consider potential legal, financial, operational, reputational or market risks or opportunities?</i></p>
Where could you find more information?	What type of business engagement could lead to change? How could you stimulate business to get involved?
<p><i>Company website, news, other NGOs, branch organisations etc.</i></p>	<p><i>By which means could you accelerate change (through campaign, dialogue etc.)? Through clients/ suppliers/ consumers/ reputation, need for new market etc.</i></p>

PART 3: FIRST ACTIONS FOR YOUR ENGAGEMENT PLAN

The first steps towards your action plan – what two tiny actions can you take now?
Big enough to make a difference, small enough to achieve.

Action 1	Action 2
Write down Action 1. (Make it SMART)	Write down Action 2. (Make it SMART)
By when should this action be completed and by who?	By when should this action be completed and by who?
What will be needed for this action and where will you get from?	What will be needed for this action and where will you get from?



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“If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.” – African proverb

Nadine McCormick
IUCN Global Business and Biodiversity Programme

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38 <https://www.africanforumongreeneconomy.com/>



IUCN

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IUCN National Committee of the Netherlands

IUCN NL is the Dutch national committee of the International Union for Conservation of Nature. In the Netherlands, IUCN NL forms the platform of the 38 Dutch IUCN member organisations, including large and small nature and environmental organisations, the Dutch government, and knowledge institutions. IUCN NL collaborates with and supports local organisations in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, together with IUCN Member organisations and other parts of IUCN, to safeguard important nature and biodiversity in these regions. Together we develop international collaborative programmes and acquire funds from different donors.

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©ECOTRUST- Kinyara has planted over 300ha of native tree species within their estate, including along the roads.