**Summary of Cohort 9 Final Reports**

(Information is taken directly from the fellows Final Project Reports)

1. **What collaborative skills or tools did you use to engage with your communities**

* **Workshop**: Conducted a two-day community workshop.

The goals of the workshop were to:

* strengthen the relationships between conservation managers, resource users, local administrators, and scientists;
* share and discuss different visions for the future of the conservation area;
* co-design a monitoring program to better understand the social and ecological causes and consequences of shrub expansion into the conservation grassland, and
* elicited local narratives and maps of environmental change from workshop participants and others outside the workshop, and compared this information to remote sensing analyses and vegetative species distribution models.
* **Conducted semi-structured and questionnaire-based interviews**

“Thesewerefacilitated by our partners’ network of collaborators and a staff member from the community. Most of the semi-structured interviews were also led by the community members, in that we let them tell us what we needed to ask about and know. We felt that the qualitative approach to data collection was most viable for gaining a new understanding of the challenges”.

* **Spatial/Participatory mapping**

Mapping was used to establish boundaries of the working collaborative, the communities within it, land (forest) ownership, local, state, federal, and tribal jurisdictions, and the forest and biomass businesses within the collaborative boundary. The project also used small group/meeting facilitation, and **site visits** to individual forest products businesses to talk about collaboration and biomass entrepreneurship development.

* **Community workshops, key informant interviews, stakeholder consultation and household surveys**

**“**These tools were essential at different stages of our project in building trust, facilitating meaningful dialogue and collecting relevant data. Our community workshops were instrumental in helping us better understand the complex setting, co-developing locally meaningful indicators and building rapport with different community groups and organizations. Our household surveys enabled us to examine the outcomes of the conservation programs across a range of socio-ecological setting”.

* **Community conversations**

“Based on interviews of participants, we found that making space for community conversations – both in small groups and in one large group – was highly desired by local people. Most of their meetings are very structured and run by the local administration, so these meetings may have offered a chance for people to voice new thoughts and ideas freely”.

**2) What new insights do you have about the collaborative process?**

* **Everyone needs to contribute**

“It is even more time consuming than I anticipated, and it simply cannot be rushed. At the workshop, we hit on a topic about halfway through where almost every single person felt a need to weigh in with their opinion to the larger group – even though that opinion was the same as everyone else’s. While it felt like a waste of time to me, I realized that it allowed every group to feel seen and feel as though they contributed to the conversation. Up until that point, the room had been pretty quiet, probably because we were talking about remote sensing and they weren’t comfortable or familiar with it…so when we hit on a topic that they could comment on, everyone wanted to participate! We discussed that at the next workshop, we would start the day with an activity that allowed everyone to share something out loud to the group (a poem or expression about the area), so that we started the workshop with everyone contributing and feeling seen”.

* **People have different levels of investment**

“Levels of investment were differentin different parts of the process. It’s helpful to keep an overarching view of the main objectives so that you don’t get too upset when things don’t go as planned”.

* **Patience** **and community engagement are key**

“Perhaps the most important lesson is that patience is needed. After patience, the next important lesson was being very careful about integrating oneself into an organizational culture. It takes time to build trust and you have to be careful not to upset existing relationships. A final key lesson concerned community engagement. If you are going to take time to ask people questions about their challenges, you have to commit to helping solve them”.

* **Collaboration is time intensive**

“Collaboration remains a time intensive process that can be difficult for realizing full business and stakeholder (member) participation. This time intensive attribute often runs contrary to business participation and contributions, as businesses often need to make decisions on a more accelerated timeline”.

* **Collaboration provides balance**

“It is very apparent that collaboration brings together many different ideas and combines different perspectives, which is important when problem solving. Collaboration brings together individuals from various groups, giving balance to decision-making and encouraging creativity. A major characteristic of a well thought out collaborative is good organization. To know what everyone is currently doing, when things are done, and what is needed to be done is very important. Similarly, good communication plays a key role in the collaborative process”.

* It’s important to craft and sustain meaningful relationships with various actors when collaborating. **Commitment, adaptability, mutual respect, trust and communication** are key elements that sustain a collaborative process in the face of unforeseeable challenges.

**3) Total Cohort 9 Project Collaborators**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Type** | **Number of People** | **Affiliation** | **Role** |
| Community Members | 445 |  | Informally advised on research design, interview and survey respondents, provided local knowledge, receivers of training |
| NGOs | 70 | Frankfurt Zoological Society, Born Free Foundation, Big Life Foundation, Lion Guardians, Envision-Chaffee County, American Forest Foundation, DWARF-Dolores Forest Collaborative, RVCC-Rural Voices Collaborative, Forbes Park Landowner Association, Forest Utilization Network, Rocky Mountain Restoration Initiative (RMRI), Colorado Wildfire Mitigation Fund, Connecting for Conservation, Farm Africa, Konjo Coffee, National Federation of Pasture User Groups | Staff members shared data and advised on project design and provided community contacts  The2-3-2 Fellows Team partnerships with NGOs led directly to a competitive award of $3 million dollars to the 2-3-2 collaborative. This money was then used to help the National Wild Turkey Federation, the American Forest Foundation and others to participate in the collaborative. |
| Faculty/Researcher | 20 | Addis Ababa University (Ethiopia), University of Oxford (England),  Department of Forestry and Rangelands at CSU, Hoover Treated Wood Products, Oregon State University, USFS Pacific Northwest Research Station, Farm Africa, National University of Mongolia, Nutag Action Research Center | Helped design projects, provided data, collected data |
| Students | 22 | Addis Ababa University (Ethiopia), Colorado State University, U. of Nairobi- Kenya, Fort Lewis College, CO, Mada Wallabu University,  Wondo Genet College of Forestry and Natural Resources, National University of Mongolia | Collected data, wrote reports, created videos and social media, worked on maps, etc. |
| Government Organizations | 78 | Woreda Administration Office, Culture and Tourism Office and Agricultural Office (Ethiopia); Guassa Conservation Office (Ethiopia), USDA-NIFA, Utah State University Extension, Colorado Outdoor  Recreation Office, Oregon Department of Forestry, Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority,  Bale Mountains National Park, Oromia Forest and Wildlife Enterprise | Provided permits, data, and field help; provided community contacts |
| Private Sector | 29 | Bihn Communications LLC, Light Hawk Flights, Timber Age Builders, Quality Wood Products, Conceptual Dynamics LLC, Blanca Biofuels LLC, Source Verified Good Wood, TrollWorks LLC, Blanca Forestry Products, Ironwood LLC, Konjo Coffee,  Ethiopian Rift Valley Safaris,  Rocky Valley Safaris | Transportation, mapping, advice, ideas, interview participants, field trips for collaboratives |
| Pastoralists | 43 | Maasaii herders and farmers,  Mongolian herders | Interview participants on herding practices, learn local knowledge, provide input to the project |
| **TOTAL** | **707** |  |  |

**4) What where some of the challenges or obstacles you encountered?**

* **Unreliable communications**

“When people can meet face to face, things move pretty smoothly and organically. When we have to rely on email and phone/skype calls, particularly in Ethiopia where connection is entirely unreliable, our carefully designed plans fall apart very quickly. Our timelines also do not match up – our academic calendars do not align, our best times for phone calls are not the same, and we do not devote similar amounts of time to the project”.

* **Translation issues**

“You can get left out of many conversations because everyone catches up and forgets to translate for you. Some information did not get translated because it was too technical for the translator to convey accurately”.

* **Not meeting our goal**

”While there was agreement expressed by our 2-3-2 forest products business community on the need to participate and affect the forest collaborative process, this recognition did not express itself in their increased participation and adoption of collaborative entrepreneurial tools developed by the USFS Pacific Northwest Research Station. As a result, no measures of business participation and development (job creation, wages, profitability etc.) could be seen as resulting from our Fellows Team project which was our main goal. But despite these shortcomings, our Fellows Team met with several small business biomass utilization entrepreneurs and provided them with opportunities to participate and benefit from the collaborative processes of the 2-3-2. Two biofuels startups that met with our Team and Collaborative as a whole continue to seek out specific individuals and organizations within the 23-2 for information on biomass feedstock supply, economic and financial resources and infrastructure, and community acceptance for investing and locating their new technologies and facilities”.

* **Changing projects midway**

“The first project with Konjo Coffee did not work out because the business was temporarily closing down due to the challenges in finding sufficient sales for its coffee product. However, this was also a valuable lesson on the need to have flexibility as well as the benefits of having broader networks and contextual understanding beyond the focus on a particular project. This enabled us to move on and proceed with our collaboration with another project with a similar focus of promoting conservation and sustainable livelihoods”.

* **Time and geography**

“The time intensive nature of the collaborative process limited both participation of several of our Fellow’s Team members and some of the biomass business community itself. The large geography also presented challenges to Team member participation and business engagement in the 2-3-2 collaborative processes. Rather than representing a benefit, as some of our original thinking believed, the large landscape may have represented a barrier to collaboration by our biomass small business community”.

* **Political unrest**

“Another challenge we encountered was the political unrest that was sweeping through most of the Oromia region including our specific research sites. That has had considerable impact in our ability to visit some of the sites, the timing of travel and in making arrangements for workshops with some of the communities we were working with”.

**5) How did you deal with challenges and/or surprises?**

* **Communication**

Keep trying and be persistent and patient. Make sure everyone knows and agrees to meeting times, scheduling, dates, etc. Be adaptable and open to completely reworking your schedule if need be- sometimes this can work out better than the original plan.

* **Geography**

“Videoconferencing and travel supported by external funding helped overcome challenges represented by the large geography of the 2-3-2 collaborative and our Fellows Team project. Expanding our Fellows Team outreach outside of the original boundaries allowed for an additional location specific collaboration to form”.

* **Changing the project midway**

“Our ability to quickly overcome the challenge of losing Konjo Coffee as a partner was a result of our broad established network and the versatility of the project. If we have learned anything from our daily experiences out in the field, it is that often times, nothing ever goes as planned and thus having a plan B and C is a must”.

* **Political unrest**

“Our local contacts on the ground including our collaborators played invaluable roles in continually keeping us updated with the latest events, and facilitating our logistics such as finding key gate keepers. We made changes as circumstances on the ground required us to. Some of the changes included changing research sites and establishing rapport with the new communities”.

**6) What are the major lessons you learned from the project?**

* **What makes collaboration successful**

Flexibility, patience, and compromise are essential components of successful collaboration

* **Iterative conversations are helpful**

“Iterative conversations were so helpful because we brought up a topic, allowed people to share initial ideas, then they had time to reflect on it, and we talked about it again later. This helped us iron out contradictions or inconsistencies in what people were saying and get a really clear picture**”.**

* **Generation gap results in loss of traditional knowledge**

“In terms of research, we learned that there is a generational gap in herding knowledge- existing traditional knowledge is not being passed from the current generation of elders to the next. We are working to fill that gap in the hopes that it won’t be lost, and that subsequent generations will be interested!”

* **Reduce expectations**

“Reduce expectations on the level of biomass entrepreneur small business participation. Prioritization at an individual business or entrepreneurial level might be a more effective method to gain participation in the collaborative process”.

* **Building relationships is key**

“A major lesson is the importance of meaningful relationships and building trust in any collaborative endeavor. Building these relationships across culture, age, language and other differences required commitment, as well as investment in resources and time, but it is certainly worth it”.

**7) What would you do differently, what worked really well?**

* **Formalize an action plan**

“One thing that I would do differently is to better formalize an action plan, with who will do what by when, within the organization, in the hopes of moving things more quickly. However, with the organization cultural issues we ran into, this could backfire. Another thing I would do is ask how the organization would like the information delivered. Among the staff there were different expectations, with some wanting very prescriptive recommendations and others wanting to be more collaborative about deciding what to do. This created a bit of tension”.

* **Work with a credible community-based organization**

“The whole process was ultimately very smooth, and I attribute this largely to the organization we worked with. So, what went well is that I was lucky to work with a community-based organization with tons of local credibility that was staffed largely by locals!”

* **Narrow the focus of the project**

“Narrow the focus and outreach to the few businesses able to make the commitment to collaborative participation, rather than trying to get all of them to come to the table. Experiment with compensating one or two selected businesses/entrepreneurs for the time spent participating in the collaborative process. Select areas with more abundant biomass business community. The 2-3-2 area is not as populated with forest products businesses as some other areas in Colorado and New Mexico”.

* **Communicate much better with collaborators**

“We learned upfront communication about roles, responsibilities, expectations and timelines is very necessary throughout the progression of collaborative works. We have had to learn some of these the hard way. In our project with Konjo Coffee, it was not until the very last step that we knew about their plans of ending the project. That affected our ability to proactively plan for other alternatives. If we could do things differently, we would regularly check with our collaborator in a timely manner to make sure we are on the same page when it comes to the goals of our project, its timeline and where it is heading”.

**8) Beneficiaries and Benefits**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Type** | **Number of People** | **How They Benefited** |
| Community Members | 2000 | * Through the design of more inclusive and equitable conservation programs which incorporated their feedback |
| NGOs | 88 | * Received direct guidance and consultations on biomass utilization and market opportunities, and updates on biomass related projects * Received inputs vital in informing their decision making and improved their relationship with partners and community groups |
| Faculty/Researcher | 7 | * Got an opportunity to learn from the community and design experimental studies that met their needs * Built relationships with local people * Opportunities to provide their research findings and receive feedback |
| Students | 18 | * Developed a Ph.D. project idea * Built relationships with local people * New insights into community conservation * Learned new methods for studying social-ecological systems * International field experience * Practical data collection, networking and communication and facilitation skills |
| Government Organizations | 168 | * Local administrators got a better idea of what research can do for their objectives * Built relationships with local people, scientists, partners and community groups * Improved their own outreach materials * Received inputs vital in informing their decision making |
| Private Sector | 20 | * Direct technical, business, and marketing assistance from the Fellows Project * Were introduced and engaged in collaborative organizations * Opportunities to participate in and benefit from the collaborative process |
| Pastoralists/rancher/farmer | 67 | * Provided input into a scientific project to ensure it meets their needs * Built relationships that they can use to request future research assistance in the conservation area * Learned something significant about managing their livestock, or thought about it in a new way that affected their management |
| **Total** | **2,368** |  |

**9) Describe the conservation impacts of your project**

* **Laying a foundation for developing community accepted management actions**

“The primary impact of the project was laying a foundation for developing scientifically informed and community accepted management actions for the conservation area. We expect that with better conservation of the Guassa area, there will be increased water retention and thus more perennial streams. Because the conservation area is closed during the rainy season (when guassa grass seeds), the local participants had not realized the grasses had seeds. When we explained that cutting the grasses too often (i.e., every 2 years) might be causing a reduction in seed production, this was a very important issue they wanted studied’.

* **Reduction in lost livestock and lion killing**

“As of now, none that are measurable, but we will be measuring this as we implement the intervention in the coming year(s) and will report to CCC. We expect direct impacts in the next two years. Measuring impact is very important to Lion Guardians so are designing the herding interventions so we can measure the conservation impacts, including reductions in lost livestock, predations of livestock by lions, and ultimately, reductions in lion killing”.

* **Improved watershed and forest health**

“Conservation impacts were secondary under the assumption that profitable biomass harvesting and manufacturing businesses contribute to overall improved watershed and forest health and therefore achieve on an indirect basis, a wide range of conservation values. The 2-3-2 as a whole achieved increases in cross jurisdiction forest treatments, including prescribed fire that addressed overall watershed and forest health. Reduced wildfire frequency and severity as well as more resilient and redundant ecological processes are anticipated as long-term conservation impacts (improved climate, rainfall patterns, clean water)”.

* **Developing a management plan**

“Our project findings will inform a current management plan being developed by Frankfurt Zoological Society and Oromia Forest and Wildlife Enterprise”.

**10) Indirect/Future Impacts**

* “Not less than five collaborative organizations in southwest Colorado are supporting biomass utilization capacity and entrepreneurial development as a primary purpose of their collaborative efforts. The Fellows Team and other support provided to existing biomass infrastructure was a key factor in awarding > $3 million dollars from the Rocky Mountain Restoration Initiative to the southwestern Colorado collaboratives”.
* “Future impacts include 1) increased employment, wages, and safety in the forest product business community, 2) capacity to increase the amount and volume of forest biomass resulting from consensus driven forest management activities, 3) reduced cost for forest and hazardous fuels reduction treatments, and 4) increased amount of acres brought under a forest management regime”.

**11) How were (or will) people’s livelihoods be impacted by your project, both short term and long term?**

* Gender issues

“Ensured women received financial benefits (everyone was paid to attend the workshops) and also had a chance to share their perspectives. The project helped grow within-group support for stronger women voices in Guassa management. This should increase the capacity and decision-making power of women on conservation and development”.

* Education

“The project will increase knowledge about herding practices through informal outreach and (potentially) formal training and workshops. Improved herding practices will lead to higher livestock productivity and better pasture management. We are planning to begin an in-school education program related to the science of herding. A major goal is to help to preserve the traditional knowledge related to herding, a crucial part of Maasai traditional culture”.

“There are increased opportunities to formally evaluate outcomes of the adoption of collaborative biomass entrepreneurial tools, research, and education”.

* Economics

“Increased awareness/inclusion by collaboratives of the biomass business and entrepreneurial community has the potential to increase in the number of full time jobs, wages, and opportunities in forest products and biomass businesses in rural communities. Collaborative(s) are adopting formal biomass business support strategies. Over $3 million dollars were awarded to southwestern Colorado Collaborative(s) as a result of the fellows’ project”.

**12) What still needs to be done at your project site that another fellow could follow up on for their project?**

**Guassa Conservation Area, Ethiopia**

* Farmers and conservation officers want to know what the impacts of grazing and fire might be on guassa grass and nachillo shrubs as potential management actions.
* They want to know what diseases guassa grasses are susceptible to and how they can prevent them.
* They are interested in improving alternative livelihoods in the communities around Guassa to reduce the pressure on the area for resources.
* The members of the culture and tourism and conservation offices are interested in working to improve their tourism communications and management, including things like bolstering their internet presence and establishing a second lodge in the northern end of the conservation area.

**Biomass Businesses, Colorado**

* Future opportunities for achieving greater biomass business participation in collaborative initiatives increased during our 18-month project period. Additional funding support is being received to support these ongoing efforts. The population or pool of forest products businesses and entrepreneur’s potentially interested in contributing to collaborative processes has increased across the landscape.
* Additionally, spatial industry mapping can serve to prioritize and improve engagement efforts by the collaboratives and set up formal participatory agreements with industry as well as protocols and metrics for monitoring and evaluating forest and business health.

**General**

* Longitudinal assessment of the environment and social outcomes of past fellows’ projects are needed, and could build upon existing networks and partnerships that have been established.