In December, the IUCN BioBiz Exchange initiative hosted its last webinar in a series that featured Panorama Solutions on business engagement. This webinar, in English, French and Spanish, discussed steps for setting up effective multi-stakeholder partnerships (MSP) in achieving conservation goals, which were illustrated by examples from Peru and the Mediterranean region.

Herman Brouwer, Senior advisor on Multi-stakeholder Processes in Food Security at Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation advised participants to go beyond stereotypes of various stakeholders (whether NGO, government or business) in order to build genuine partnerships. Herman presented 7 principles for effective MSPs as featured in the Multi-stakeholder Partnerships Guide, which is available in English, French and Spanish:

1. **Embrace systemic change**: analyze the whole system first, then zoom in to direct actions; this means trying different things, learning fast and adapting.
2. **Transform institutions**: target the institutions that block the MSP goals and/or use them to support the MSP efforts
3. **Work with power**: Be aware of power dynamics, and empower vulnerable stakeholders so that they can also participate
4. **Deal with conflict**: Assume that there will be conflict so understand, surface and mediate it.
5. **Enable effective (internal and external) communication**: Understand and speak the other stakeholders’ language and cultural habits to ensure good coordination
6. **Promote collaborative leadership**: Share responsibilities to build ownership and bring more leadership resources for the success of the MSP
7. **Foster participatory learning**: Encourage strong and participatory learning processes to value all contributions and create agenda for action and innovation

Two MSPs were presented to put this framing into practice.

This first MSP case study was presented by Jaimer Nalvarte Armas, Director of the Association for Research and Integral Development (AIDER): Public-private partnership managing model: An alternative to recover
degraded areas and biodiversity conservation for protected natural areas. After a chance overheard conversation at an airport, AIDER ended up creating an alliance with the company Bosques Amazonicos (BAM), the regional government of Ucayali (GOREU), and the Fund of Americas (FONDAM), to help BAM recover and reforest the degraded portion of its owned forest area while maintaining profits.

Through this co-financing model, they sold future production on the stock market, and used the cashflow to guarantee the sustainability of the forest; a merger later added a carbon commercializing element, which incentivized surrounding communities to better manage natural forest resources. Jaimer attributes the success of the project to four “building blocks”, including strategic alliances, scalability, replicability and being able to understand and deal with markets. He further stressed that NGOs should not be scared to engage with business, but should rather establish clear cut rules of involvement when doing so. Find out more about AIDER’s REDD project, and about the carbon project here (in Spanish) and here (in English).

The second MSP case study was presented by Carla Danelutti from the IUCN Mediterranean office who presented the Mediterranean Experience of Ecotourism (MEET) network. Mediterranean protected areas lack resources and capacity to work in tourism development, and tourism businesses lack the guidelines and tools to meet quality and sustainability expectations. In response, the MEET network, a participatory group of protected areas and of local tourism operators was established to work together to safeguard nature by developing nature-friendly ecotourism opportunities and ways to manage and monitor their impact. MEET’s products are based in and around protected areas, include only local providers to benefit conservation directly in that area, reduce ecological footprint, improve tourist behavior, and develop models of cooperative tourism.

Like Jaimer, Carla emphasized working with local communities and valuing their input for active participation in the protection of these areas. Success factors include having a clear product with tangible goals that is market-oriented and attractive to local private actors, defining clear business plans with shared responsibilities for leadership, coordinate with authorities, ensure a holistic vision and focus on the ultimate goal: conservation.

During the Q&A, on responding to a question about establishing clarify of roles and key responsibilities in a partnership, Jaimer said that “There is a key word in the world with business. It is TRUST”; project benefits require a long time before showing fruitfulness, so trust is the indispensable element to overcome bottlenecks and come up with agreements to carry the work forward.

Participants then had the opportunity to reflect on the main lessons they had learned and how they would apply them to their context, and further connect in break out rooms. One group reiterated the importance of strategic alliances with the private sector and having clear ideas and demands from the onset like social inclusion equality and equal access to benefits; in addition, some participants agreed to share knowledge as they were working on similar issues.

Listen to the full webinar recording here, and find out more about previous webinars here.

If you would like to share your own experiences on using biodiversity and business platforms to influence business, or on other issues, please upload your own PANORAMA story using this link.