



LEADERSHIP IN FOCUS

# Enhanced Corporate Social and Environmental Performance through an Integrated Approach

CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL  
RESPONSIBLE MINING + ENERGY PROGRAM

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Despite an increased call for integrated frameworks that emphasize cross sectoral approaches and that link environmental and social disciplines for greater impact (as highlighted by the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the International Finance Corporation (IFC) Performance Standards on Environmental and Social Sustainability), there continues to be, in practice, a challenge with traditional siloed approaches to development and programming by governments, NGO's and companies alike.

Conservation International's (CI) mission is to protect the nature that people around the world rely on for food, fresh water and livelihoods. CI believes that by approaching environmental and social issues in an integrated manner, it is possible to deliver more sustainable and mutually reinforcing outcomes, particularly for companies in the mining and oil and gas sectors. With this premise, research was undertaken to better understand what the challenges and opportunities are for companies in the extractive sector to utilize an integrated management approach. The research highlighted the significant benefits from integration that could be realized, including improved risk and impact assessment and management, and greater efficiency and effectiveness of social investments on the ground.

A number of opportunities exist for companies to advance this approach and demonstrate leadership in this space, including: enhancing coordination between corporate functions devoted to social and environmental management, adopting a more systematic application of an ecosystem services approach to risk management and environmental impact assessments, and designing social investment strategies or strategic giving that are integrated and holistic from inception.

## INTRODUCTION

Building upon a strong foundation of science, partnership and field demonstration, Conservation International's (CI) mission is to empower societies to responsibly and sustainably care for nature and our global biodiversity, for the well-being of humanity. CI believes that people need nature to thrive, and recognizes that environmental, economic development and social issues are often inextricably linked. Therefore, CI's strategy is to help society, from communities to businesses, adopt the conservation of nature as the foundation of development.

Around the world, governments, international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), corporations and financial institutions have increasingly become more aware of the significant opportunities that holistic approaches that integrate both environmental and social issues can bring to sustainability and development efforts (for example the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and the International Finance Corporation (IFC) Performance Standards on Environmental and Social Sustainability). Despite this, evidence from CI's engagements with the mining and energy sectors on corporate social responsibility (CSR) issues has shown few examples of companies truly integrating environmental and social issues in decision making processes and practices. Often these two disciplines are managed separately and there are few mechanisms to foster integrated approaches in practice.

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## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research for this white paper was conducted based on a literature review and expert interviews. The objective of the research was to assess whether companies are integrating environmental and social issues in any capacity; identify the benefits and potential barriers for doing so; and understand the opportunities there may be to foster greater integration. The literature review included an organized search of published materials from journals and the internet using key words and phrases such as: social and environmental integration, integrated approaches, integrated conservation and development, ecosystem services and linkages between ecosystems and human well-being. The review also included CI's institutional publications and knowledge about initiatives and projects using integrated frameworks.

Lastly, expert interviews were conducted with specialists from environmental and social departments of oil, gas and mining companies, consultants and NGOs. A total of thirteen individuals representing ten organizations were surveyed.

## FINDINGS & ANALYSIS

### BENEFITS OF AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

Based on the research conducted, it was observed companies are integrating environmental and social issues to varying degrees. While some have corporate frameworks that are intended to foster integration (e.g. Sustainable Development Strategies), in practice few are systematically applying a multi-disciplinary, integrated approach into decision making processes and practices. Despite this occurrence, our research suggests there are significant potential benefits from integrating environmental and social issues: improved impact assessments; enhanced risk management; and improved synergies and effectiveness of social investments or philanthropic programs.

### Improved environmental and social impact assessments

The field of impact assessment has evolved over time. The first generation of Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) focused primarily on environmental issues and regulatory requirements; however, as the interrelation between project impacts and social dynamics became more evident, social issues also started to be considered, evolving to what now is known as Environmental and Social Impact Assessments (ESIAs). Despite the existence of this integrated framework, our research found that in practice, often these assessments still tend to address each of the issues in a 'siloed' fashion, undermining the development of holistic evaluations and comprehensive conclusions (Landsberg et al., 2013). In addition, standard ESIAs do not specifically account for a project's impacts or dependencies on 'ecosystem services' (Landsberg et al., 2013; Baker et al., 2012; Honrado et al., 2013).

### Ecosystem Services

The term 'ecosystems services' can broadly be defined as "the benefits and services that people, including businesses, obtain from ecosystems" (International Finance Corporation, 2012). Scientists generally divide ecosystem services into four categories (Arico et al., 2005):

1. **Provisioning services:** goods or products produced by ecosystems, e.g. food, and water.
2. **Regulating services:** natural processes regulated by ecosystems, e.g. regulating the quality of air and soil or providing flood and disease control.
3. **Cultural services:** the non-material benefits people obtain from contact with ecosystems, e.g. aesthetic, spiritual and psychological benefits.
4. **Supporting services:** functions that maintain all other services, e.g. photosynthesis, water and nutrient cycling.



To address this shortcoming, an ecosystem services approach has been suggested as a framework to improve ESIA's. An ecosystem services approach, allows for a fuller understanding of both the socio-economic dimensions of a project's environmental impacts and the implications of ecosystem change for affected stakeholders (e.g. better understanding about the relationship of communities to certain habitat in its present condition) (Landsberg et al., 2013). An ecosystem services approach emphasizes the multi-functionality and underlining interconnectivity between the processes in the natural environment and human well-being, providing a holistic, cross-sectoral, and integrated framework for assessing impacts and dependencies (Henley, 2013) (Landsberg et al., 2013). Another benefit of utilizing this ecosystem services approach to impact assessments is that it helps companies comply with emerging best practices and requirements from lending institutions, such as the IFC's Performance Standards. The Performance Standards require clients to assess impacts (direct and indirect) on ecosystem services as well as dependencies, and implement mitigation measures with a goal to maintain the value and functionality of those services, particularly those that affected communities depend on (International Finance Corporation, 2012).

### Enhanced risk management

Considering both environmental and social issues and how they relate to each other, particularly through an ecosystem services approach, is equally beneficial for both physical and reputational risk assessment processes. Many companies use risk assessments as a predictive planning tool to identify potential material and reputational impacts, the likelihood and relevance of those to the business, and to develop and prioritize responses. For a company, stakeholder related risks associated with actual or perceived environmental and social impacts can have multiple and profound consequences, such as production delays, negative publicity, community conflict, threats to operating licenses and unforeseen expenditures (Davis et al., 2014). There are many examples of costly projects being abandoned or forced to forgo development as a result of community conflict, often triggered by environmental impacts such as pollution (Davis et al., 2014) (ICMM, 2015). This is informally known as a company losing its 'social license to operate' – when a project no longer has the ongoing approval of the local community and other stakeholders – which ultimately increases a company's reputational risk (Moffat and Zhang, 2013). An ecosystem services approach can help identify stakeholders and issues that may have been missed in the traditional EIA approach. Also, the application of an ecosystem services approach to risk assessment could support the identification of operational risks and dependencies that may otherwise be overlooked, for example, increased risk to operations from soil erosion and landslides as a result of deforestation activities further upstream from project facilities (Landsberg et al., 2013).

### Improved synergies and greater efficiency and effectiveness in social investment programs<sup>1</sup>

Many companies support projects in and around the communities they operate as part of CSR or social investment efforts. Approaching environmental and social issues in a coordinated manner in community development projects has been shown to ensure greater synergy between goals and resources (USAID and Conservation International, 2008) (Pielemeier, 2007). By combining resources, organizations can potentially operate and implement programs and projects more efficiently as well as effectively. Partnerships between programs or sectors are beneficial because skills can be complemented, resources can be combined and overlapping activities can be minimized (Shope, 2014). Sectors working together complementing each other's efforts can achieve more than if/when they act independently. For example, when environmental organizations partner with health groups, it is possible to provide health benefits, which are often more quickly perceived and realized, providing project implementers an opportunity to gain trust among the community and becoming an entry point for other more difficult discussions about health, conservation and livelihoods (Bonnardeaux, 2012). Additionally, when working in an integrated fashion across programs and sectors, it is possible to reduce potential conflicting outcomes (USAID and Conservation International, 2008). Finally, integrated approaches have the opportunity for a greater chance of success because they can be built upon existing policies or agendas at any level. Given their interdisciplinary nature, integrated projects can contribute to a number of environmental and social goals that address broad development needs. As such, integrated programs or projects can fit within a wider variety of development frameworks more easily than can single-sector approaches (BALANCED Project, 2011).

### BARRIERS FOR REALIZING INTEGRATED ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL OUTCOMES

Given the evidence collected that companies could benefit from applying an integrated approach to decision making processes and practices, why is integration not more widely practiced? Our research suggests that there are a variety of barriers to achieving integration more broadly:

#### 'Siloed' effect between organizations and within their departments

Within the extractive industry, it is common to find corporate organizational structures where the social or community function is separated from, or a sub component of, the environmental function. The environmental function has traditionally been linked to regulatory requirements focusing

<sup>1</sup>We refer to strategic social investments as those voluntary investments made by companies to support both social/community initiatives as well as environmental ones





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primarily on compliance. The social function, in contrast, tends to promote the social investment priorities of the company, which traditionally takes a philanthropic approach to its investments. In recent years, some companies have taken a more strategic approach to link business drivers and social objectives, but the two disciplines require quite different skills sets and expertise. The structural differences that exist within organizations tend to inhibit coordination and limit opportunities to engage in a multi-disciplinary manner. Similarly, when companies make social investments, implementers of those projects in the field are often organizations with a singular focus, for example in environmental issues, poverty alleviation, health, education, etc. These divisions and specializations usually mean that organizations and programs can unintentionally apply a fairly narrow knowledge base, without considering all the work happening in different but relevant sectors (Shope, 2014).

### **Limited leadership recognition about benefits from integration and opportunities to foster it**

To truly achieve the integration of social and environmental functions within the decision making processes and practices of a company, senior leadership must fundamentally understand the concept of integrated approaches and its added value. Without leadership support, it is very difficult for a company to work on better aligning governance and operational structures, strategies and standards aiming at reflecting integrated approaches across the company. There is a need to develop greater fluency among senior leaders regarding the benefits to their business from integrated approaches in order for them to become champions of these approaches.

### **Complexities of biodiversity and social issues**

Biological diversity as a broad concept is very complex. It encompasses all genetic, species and ecosystems diversity,

the interactions among them, and the different kinds of human use and cultural values. In addition to these complexities, there is relatively limited scientific understanding and low priority for investment when set against other societal values, which makes the practice of biodiversity conservation associated with significant levels of uncertainty and risk (Moilanen et al., 2009; Walker et al., 2009). At the same time, social issues are also very complex and dynamic, as they include the perceptions, needs and values of diverse human beings. Therefore, integrating biodiversity and social disciplines can become a very big challenge for companies to manage.

## **OPPORTUNITIES FOR FOSTERING GREATER SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL INTEGRATION**

Despite the barriers companies face for adopting integrated approaches to decision making processes and practices, through this research the following areas of opportunity were identified through which companies can adopt more integrated management approaches, and as a result, demonstrate leadership:

### **Enhance coordination between corporate functions**

Considering the 'siloed' effect many companies experience between environmental and social/community functions, some companies are changing their organizational structure or strategies to allow for greater integration between functions. For instance, Sustainable Development or Corporate Responsibility departments, policies, strategies and/or networks are being created under which the social, environmental and economic development areas are better





integrated and given equal prominence. Companies are recognizing that integrated approaches, to the degree that they can help create models of positive experiences in the different areas of sustainable development (social well-being, environmental protection and economic livelihoods), frequently result in improved risk management and generated cost savings.

### **Systematically apply an ecosystems services approach in environmental and social impact assessments and risk assessments**

Because ecosystem services are about the benefits that people derive from functioning natural systems, a significant portion of this work includes stakeholder engagement around social and environmental needs and connections. Integrating ecosystem services within impact mitigation and risk management frameworks like ESIA's and risk assessments can facilitate improved understanding of local stakeholders' reliance on the environment and how projects may affect them (Landsberg et al., 2013). In addition, it can facilitate an improved understanding for companies of operational dependencies on the environment that are often overlooked. Companies within the extractive industries are increasingly exploring tools and approaches to better assess ecosystem services in a landscape (e.g., IPIECA Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Fundamentals (IPIECA/IOGP, 2016); World Resources Institute (WRI)'s Ecosystem Services Review

for Impact Assessment (Landsberg et al., 2011); Integrated Valuation of Ecosystem Services and Tradeoffs –InVEST (Natural Capital Project)).

### **Design strategic social investments with an integrated framework**

Companies can also consider how they can apply an integrated approach to environmental and social issues in how they structure their strategic giving or social investment strategies. Based on the research conducted, relatively few companies design social investment strategies to promote projects that seek environmental and social integration. Typically, investments are led by one thematic driver, like education, health, economic development or the environment. Testing and demonstrating how integrated approaches can work on the ground and maximize the benefits the company and communities could obtain from them, while also minimizing unintended negative results, remains an important area of opportunity for corporations. Population, Health and Environment (PHE) programs; integrating water access, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) projects with freshwater conservation projects; or implementing Conservation Agreements (CAs) are some examples of approaches utilized by CI and partners that have proven it is possible to achieve more effective results by tackling conservation and development issues through integrated planning and action.



## Water Access, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) and Freshwater Conservation Projects

One area of opportunity for stronger integration of social and environmental issues within the extractive sector is linking investments in WASH with freshwater conservation projects. Societal expectations have increased in the last several years with respect to the role companies should play on water, regarding both WASH and freshwater conservation. In 2010 the United Nations (UN) formally recognized the human right to water and sanitation, and in 2011 the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights were unanimously endorsed by member states in the Human Rights Council. The Guiding Principles have clarified the global expectation that businesses everywhere should respect human rights throughout their operations, and subsequent efforts have been made to elaborate on how companies can work to align their corporate water stewardship strategies with their responsibility to respect human rights (The CEO Water Mandate, 2015). Many extractive companies have long-standing commitments to invest in WASH projects within the communities surrounding their operations, particularly in developing countries. For example, through the Chevron-Liberia Economic Development Initiative, since 2010 over 651,000 Liberians have gained access to clean water and improved sanitation and hygiene facilities.

At the same time, there is also an increasing call for strengthening corporate approaches to water management within the realm of environmental performance – including freshwater conservation projects – as a means to better manage and disclose companies' exposure to risks (e.g., operational risks due to physical shortages or reputational risks due to potential impacts to sensitive freshwater biodiversity and ecosystems) (Abdel Al et al., 2014; GRI, 2013; CDP, 2012). The extractive sector has responded through development and use of a variety of globally- and locally-focused guidance and tools (IPIECA, 2011; IPIECA, 2005; WRI, 2013; GEMI, 2012; IBAT, 2015), though there remains significant opportunity for further enhancement of sector companies' water stewardship approaches.

There is a growing evidence base that suggests designing projects with objectives to increase community WASH while also conserving freshwater ecosystems can lead to cost and effort savings, among other benefits (Bonnardeaux, 2012). Recently published guidelines provide a roadmap for how this integration can be done effectively, from optimal project siting and design to use of natural infrastructure to a holistic approach to stakeholder engagement ("Integration of Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction into the District Strategic WASH Plan I K4Health," n.d.) (Edmond et al., 2013). Oil and gas companies may find utility in taking an integrated approach to WASH and freshwater conservation to guide social investments and water management strategies, particularly in places where there is a need to protect important freshwater ecosystems and improve WASH for surrounding communities.

## CASE STUDIES

The following case studies illustrate how environmental and social issues are being integrated in projects CI and partners have implemented.<sup>2</sup>

### CONSERVATION AGREEMENTS IN LIBERIA

Since 2012, Chevron Liberia and CI have partnered in Liberia to develop community-level integrated social and environmental projects with the Barcoline community through Conservation Agreements (CAs). CAs are negotiated with local communities and include a package of social benefit investments as an incentive for environmental conservation commitments and performance. CI conducted feasibility assessments for CAs with twelve villages comprising the Barcoline community, just east of the port city of Buchanan.

Out of the twelve villages, four were selected as good candidates for implementing CAs based on their well-established leadership and governance structures; clearly defined pressures to key biodiversity values, which included mangrove destruction for charcoal production for basic energy needs and sea turtle hunting and harvesting of their eggs; and most importantly, willingness to participate in the CA model.

Through the CAs 1,524 people will benefit and 3,573 hectares of mangroves will be protected. Some of the commitments made by the communities include limits to harvesting of wood from mangrove forests and stopping hunting of sea turtles and leaving their nests undisturbed. CI in partnership with development partners will deliver the benefit packages that include among others the provision of sustainable fishing tools and materials and training, and employment to current sea turtle hunters to support management of coastal areas and mangroves.

<sup>2</sup> Given the limited examples found of mining and energy companies supporting projects that integrate environmental and social issues, within the case studies showcased only one is directly related with the extractive sector.



The communities, Chevron Liberia, CI and government agencies are positioning these CAs as demonstrations of replicable structure for relationships between local communities and companies, informing the design of a national conservation and development program for Liberia. A national CA program inspired by Chevron Liberia and CI's demonstration project with the Barcoline community could facilitate broad distribution of the benefits of Liberia's natural resource wealth, and also serve as a model for other countries. Although the CA approach has been implemented in more than 25 projects in 15 countries with support from eight companies, this is the first time it has been used with an energy company. Bringing this model of integrated environmental and social investment projects to the sector could spur greater delivery of social and environmental benefits to communities and countries with energy development, as well as companies seeking to enhance their environmental and social performance.

## WORKING TOGETHER FOR HEALTH AND SUSTAINABILITY IN THE NOSIVOLO RIVER PROJECT IN MADAGASCAR

The waters of Madagascar's Nosivolo River are an important source of drinking water for local communities and support rich freshwater biodiversity. Unfortunately, sewage is also dumped directly into the river due to the lack of latrines in

the area. Seventy-five percent of local people are afflicted with waterborne illnesses, and twenty-five percent of the population is under age of five.

CI and partners have been working in the Nosivolo river basin since 2005 to save nine endemic species from extinction and improve human health. Efforts include raising awareness among local people about the connections between WASH and human and ecosystem health, and how a healthy, river ecosystem can benefit both local communities and wildlife.

The project activities principally focused on reducing the severity of waterborne diseases by encouraging people to use latrines and distributing free antibiotics to fight schistosomiasis and other worm parasites. The project also aimed at promoting synergy between traditional culture and environmental conservation, such as encouraging communities to continue traditional forest protection practices that keep trees standing, preserve species habitat, and maintain a healthy watershed. Finally, micro-projects focused on improving methods for crop production to reduce exploitation pressure of the river were implemented, and there was a significant effort to ensure the involvement of all stakeholders in advocacy and education, including government officials, community leaders, teachers and health services employees.





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The project expanded local involvement in natural resource management by applying an innovative approach that connected improvements in nutrition to conservation and development activities at a landscape scale. This provided a crucial opportunity to change behavior regarding water use, personal hygiene and communal sanitation practices, and led to cleaner water, more resilient ecosystems and healthier human populations.

## REDD+ IN THE ALTO MAYO PROTECTED FOREST, PERU

REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) is an innovative mechanism designed to offset carbon emissions, by protecting forests. REDD+ interventions are inherently integrated as they seek to mitigate climate change and provide local communities with financial, social and environmental benefits. In the San Martín region of Northern Peru, CI has been working with local communities to conserve the Alto Mayo Protected Forest (AMPF), an area of global conservation significance and home to Peru's three endangered primates and numerous endemic plant and bird species, as well as a critical source of freshwater to a large portion of the downstream Peruvian Amazon population. Despite AMPF's protected status, it was experiencing some of the country's highest deforestation rates; factors included lack of enforcement of the protected area, a national

highway bisecting the forest, influx of people to the region, unsustainable farming practices, and expansion of the agricultural frontier. To address these compounding issues, CI, in cooperation with the Peruvian government and a variety of other actors, developed a REDD+ program.

Companies, such as Disney, have invested in the Alto Mayo REDD+ project, driven by CSR commitments. With this support CI is addressing the main causes of deforestation with incentive-based conservation agreements. To date, 235 families have pledged not to cut down the Alto Mayo's trees in return for agricultural training, as well as for other benefits like educational materials and medical supplies. Farmers who signed conservation agreements are benefitting from increased productivity and higher incomes. The project, having been validated under the Verified Carbon Standard as well as the Climate, Community and Biodiversity Standard, provides companies with the assurance that the project is indeed delivering on multiple benefits for carbon, communities and nature.

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LEADERSHIP

The integration of social and environmental issues, while principally applied in leading development frameworks, can also be more systematically applied in the corporate context. Extractive companies currently face several challenges to improving integration, including the siloed corporate structures, complexities inherent in social and environmental areas and insufficient awareness and understanding of the benefits and opportunities for achieving stronger integration. However, this research proves there are significant benefits to social and environmental integration, and extractive companies can demonstrate leadership on this subject by:

- Adopting a more systematic application of an ecosystem services approach to risk management and environmental impact assessments.

- Applying an integrated approach to environmental and social issues in structuring of strategic giving or social investment strategies.
- Building the evidence base with respect to integrated approaches by advancing research on the causal relationships between environmental and social performance and the positive outcomes that can be generated; and by sharing lessons learned and guidelines.

As highlighted in the case studies from Liberia, Madagascar and Peru, integrated development projects have demonstrated significant social and environmental benefits and present successful models for consideration. Through an integrated approach, extractive companies have a true opportunity to improve effectiveness, efficiency and risk management, while achieving environmental and social outcomes on the ground.

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