



# SAGE and its early contribution to improvements in governance of area-based conservation

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Ruth Pinto and Naira Dehmel

## Preface

Site-level Assessment of Governance and Equity (SAGE) is a methodology that aims to achieve better outcomes for conservation — for nature and people — by improving governance and equity of protected and conserved areas.

This report uses outcome harvesting to determine whether SAGE contributes to improvements in governance of area-based conservation. Researchers conducted a document review and a total of 114 interviews with key actor groups across three case study sites in Bolivia, Zambia and Kenya.

The research found that to varying degrees, SAGE helped to improve information sharing, planning processes and participation in decision making, particularly for women and young people. SAGE was also often the first time key actor groups had collectively shared their different perspectives on governance challenges, generated ideas to improve things and discussed them openly, while providing evidence to justify funding proposals to take action.

This report analyses these outcomes and makes recommendations for how SAGE can be improved for the future.

## About the authors

Ruth Pinto, research consultant, IIED

Naira Dehmel, research consultant, IIED

## About SAGE

For more information, visit <https://www.iied.org/site-level-assessment-governance-equity-sage> or contact: Phil Franks, [phil.franks@iied.org](mailto:phil.franks@iied.org)

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International Institute for Environment and Development  
Third Floor, 235 High Holborn, London WC1V 7DN, UK  
Tel: +44 (0)20 3463 7399  
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## Acronyms

ACEAA	Asociación Boliviana para la Investigación y Conservación de Ecosistemas Andino-Amazónicos [Bolivian Association for Research and Conservation of Andean-Amazonian Ecosystems]
BIOPAMA	Biodiversity and Protected Areas Management Programme
CITRMD	Central Indígena de Comunidades Tacana II del Rio Madre de Dios [Indigenous Central Organisation of Tacana II Communities of the Madre de Dios River]
CRB	Community Resource Board
DNPW	Department for National Parks and Wildlife
GMA	Game Management Area
IPBES	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
KWCA	Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association
KWS	Kenya Wildlife Service
NGO	Nongovernmental organisation
PCA	Protected and/or conserved area
REDD+	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation, plus the sustainable management of forests, and the conservation and enhancement of forest carbon stocks
SAGE	Site-level Assessment of Governance and Equity
TCO	Tierra Comunitaria de Origen [Community Land of Origin]
TTWCA	Taita Taveta Wildlife Conservancies Association
VAG	Village Action Group
ZCBNRM Forum	Zambia Community Based Natural Resource Management Forum

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Finally, we would like to thank the SAGE core development team for their inputs while designing this research and Emma Bennett for her support editing this report.

## Summary

This report provides case study research to assess the effectiveness of the SAGE methodology to improve environmental governance of area-based conservation (that is, protected and/or conserved areas (PCAs)). SAGE, or Site-level Assessment of Governance and Equity, uses a multi-actor process where key actors lead the assessment of governance and equity of conservation efforts, as well as the planning, implementation and monitoring of actions to improve governance.

SAGE has two key objectives. The first is to enable site-level actors to improve the governance and equity of their conservation and related work, with the aim of subsequently improving social and conservation outcomes. The second is to generate information for actors at higher levels for management oversight, improving governance of a system of PCAs and developing and applying social safeguards and quality standards for PCA management and governance, such as the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Green List. This information can also be used by countries to report their progress against the targets of the Global Biodiversity Framework, in particular for Target 3 — also referred to as the 30x30 target — which states that PCAs should be “equitably governed” (CBD 2022a) and includes the indicator “number of protected areas that have completed a site-level assessment of governance and equity (SAGE)” in its monitoring framework (CBD 2022b).

The research presented in this report uses outcome harvesting, an established method used to identify, describe, verify and analyse the changes brought about by an intervention. This was used to test the hypothesis: **Use of SAGE does, under certain conditions, lead to improvements in governance of area-based conservation.** This research identifies and analyses governance outcomes contributed to by SAGE, and produces evidence that can be used to improve SAGE.

The SAGE outcome harvest was conducted in two phases. The first of these was a scoping phase that considered 15 sites that used SAGE between October 2020 and November 2021. The purpose of this phase was to finalise the research design and identify outcome leads (reported but unsubstantiated outcomes) through a review of relevant documents and online interviews with 25 informants across all the sites. Three key outcome leads were noted across the majority of the 15 sites. Firstly, the SAGE was often the first time different key actor groups collectively shared their different perspectives on governance challenges and generated ideas to improve the situation. For example, this experience was noted by PCA managers at different sites, particularly regarding the perspective of women living in and around the area.

Secondly, SAGE provided an opportunity for key actors to collectively recognise and discuss governance challenges. While they might have been aware of these challenges prior to using SAGE, discussing them during the SAGE helped to develop a shared understanding of the issues and possible ways forward. Thirdly, SAGE results provided evidence of governance challenges and ideas for action that were useful in developing and justifying new funding proposals. Other outcome leads gathered during this phase related to improvements in participation in decision making (particularly women’s participation) and transparency and information sharing through the development of new communication channels and marking of PCA boundaries.

This scoping phase was followed by visits to three of the 15 sites to (in)validate reported outcome leads and examine their significance based on different actors’ perspectives. The three case study sites selected and presented in this report are Tacana II, an Indigenous territory in Bolivia, Lumo Community Wildlife Conservancy, a community-owned conservation area in Kenya, and Lower Luano Game Management Area, a protected area in Zambia co-managed by the Department for National Parks and Wildlife and resident communities. Across the three case study sites, researchers conducted interviews with 114 informants from key actor groups and reviewed relevant documentation. They identified 11 substantiated outcomes to which SAGE contributed. The strength of evidence for these outcomes varied, with nine outcomes being strongly substantiated by at least five informants from at least two actor groups. Six of the outcomes were also supported by other forms of evidence such as planning documents, meeting minutes, presentations, booklets, photographs and reports.

Most substantiated outcomes related to improvements in information sharing, planning processes and participation in decision making. SAGE improved women’s participation in meetings and leadership at the sites in Bolivia and Zambia, where many resident women attributed changes in men’s attitudes and

their own confidence to discussions during the SAGEs and subsequent workshops and training. SAGEs at the sites in Bolivia and Kenya both included discussions about youth participation, with the SAGE in Kenya having a separate group for youth conservancy members. These SAGEs highlighted the importance of considering youth perspectives and including them in PCA decision-making processes. Information about governance was also shared through workshops and meetings on traditional leadership and grievance mechanisms at the site in Zambia, and women and youth leadership at the site in Bolivia. In Kenya, a key action of the conservancy was to employ a local young woman as a liaison officer, with the intention of improving transparency, information sharing and coordination with other key actors. Importantly, across the sites, the SAGE process and results helped to legitimise the actions planned and the issues they aimed to address.

Site	Outcomes contributed to by SAGE
Tacana II, Bolivia (Indigenous territory)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community representatives and municipality officials collectively discussed challenges of managing the territory for the first time, resulting in a consultation visit from the municipality</li> <li>Leadership workshops were introduced, inspiring community women to participate in decision-making forums</li> <li>Update of the <i>Plan de Vida</i> for the territory involved greater consideration of community priorities, highlighting its value to community representatives</li> </ul>
Lower Luano Game Management Area, Zambia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Governance training sessions were introduced, inspiring community women to participate in decision-making forums</li> <li>Increased awareness of community resource rights, resulting in a REDD+ project developer changing consent processes for continuation of the project from community leadership to the household level</li> <li>Community leaders prioritised women as beneficiaries for a new livelihood project</li> </ul>
Lumo Community Wildlife Conservancy, Kenya	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased awareness among conservancy leaders about the immediate need for improved information sharing, transparency and coordination with communities and other key actors led to the employment of a liaison officer</li> <li>Conservancy leaders introduced new rules to support more equitable distribution of future benefits</li> <li>An action plan was developed enabling the conservancy to secure new funding to improve governance</li> </ul>

Table 1 | Outcomes contributed to by SAGE and identified by this research

This research also points to next steps to enhance the impact of SAGE on governance, conservation and social outcomes in area-based conservation, in particular regarding the third and final phase of SAGE or the 'Taking action' phase. Specifically, it recommends the development of comprehensive guidance for SAGE Phase 3 covering the planning, implementation and monitoring of actions to improve governance and equity, and the establishment of learning platforms for sites using SAGE to share their experiences and innovate approaches to improving governance. These two specific actions might help ensure that the assessment does indeed lead to action and that this action delivers changes to tackle the root causes of governance challenges. This can often mean tackling issues deeply rooted in long-standing power imbalances and other structural barriers to change.

The hypothesis examined in this research is closely associated with SAGE's theory of change, which assumes that key site-level actors taking action informed by SAGE will deliver more equitable governance. This research provides empirical evidence supporting this assumption, particularly on aspects of governance such as: more equitable and effective participation in decision making; information sharing; and planning processes. We therefore conclude that SAGE is well-placed to contribute to equitable governance of area-based conservation, an important element of Target 3 of the Global Biodiversity Framework.

# Introduction

## SAGE and its theory of change

This report provides case study research on early contributions of a methodology for assessing and improving environmental governance of area-based conservation, including protected or conserved areas (PCAs)<sup>1</sup>. Using a tailorable multiple-choice questionnaire, the stakeholders and rightsholders (or ‘actors’, for short) conduct the Site-level Assessment of Governance and Equity (SAGE). Perceptions of equity can vary widely between and among PCA actors (Martin et al. 2014), which is why SAGE uses a multi-actor-led self-assessment process that allows for deliberation. For a SAGE to produce reliable results, all key actor groups must be willing to fully engage in the assessment, with PCA managers and at least some other actors being willing to work together to implement actions to improve governance and equity. SAGE has been developed for PCAs that have been functioning for at least two years, and where there is low risk of the assessment causing conflict between or within different actor groups.

The assessment is guided by a framework of ten principles of effective and equitable governance (Table 2). This framework has been developed by IIED and partner organisations. It draws on the IUCN framework of governance principles for protected areas, as well as academic work on good governance (Franks and Booker 2018) and equity in the context of area-based conservation (Schreckenberget al. 2016, Zafra-Calvo et al. 2017). Each of the ten principles is assessed through five questions with four alternative descriptive responses (with numeric values 0–3) representing different levels of governance quality — the lower the score, the lower the perceived quality of governance. The framework is flexible; principles may be left out due to time constraints and the questions and descriptive responses may be adjusted, in order to suit the context of the PCA.

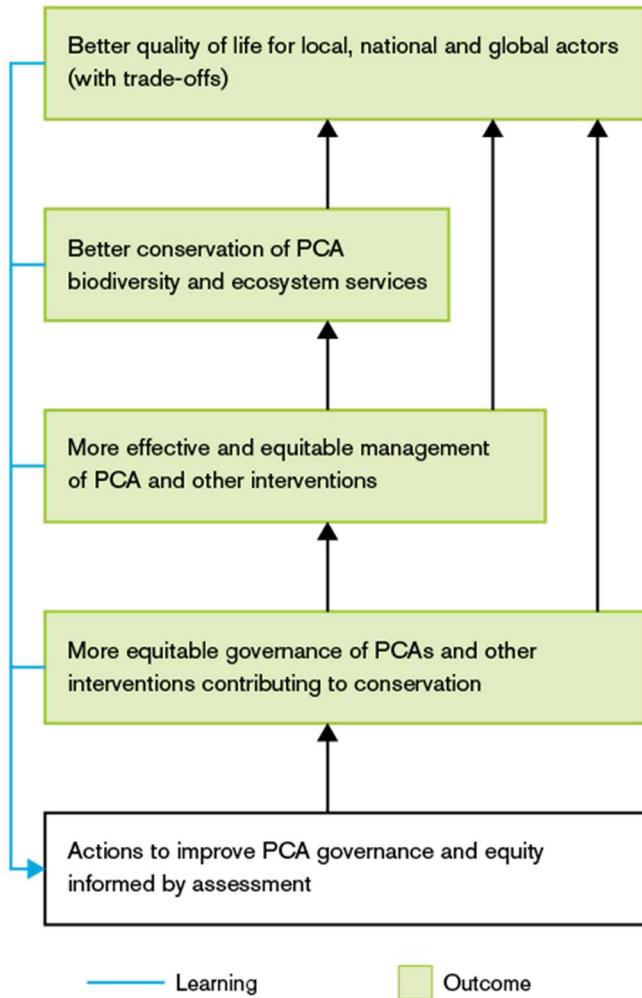
<b>Equity: recognition</b>	1. Recognition and respect for the rights of community members
	2. Recognition and respect for all relevant actors and their knowledge
<b>Equity: procedure</b>	3. Full and effective participation of all relevant actors in decision making
	4. Transparency, information sharing and accountability for actions and inactions
	5. Access to justice including effective dispute resolution processes
	6. Fair and effective law enforcement
<b>Equity: distribution</b>	7. Effective mitigation of negative impacts on community members
	8. Benefits equitably shared among relevant actors
<b>Other governance</b>	9. Achievement of conservation and other objectives
	10. Effective coordination and collaboration between actors, sectors and levels

Table 2 | SAGE principles of equitable governance

SAGE has two key objectives. The first is to enable site-level actors to improve the governance and equity of their conservation and related work, with the aim of subsequently improving both social and conservation outcomes. The second is to generate information for actors at higher levels for management oversight, for improving governance of a system of PCAs and developing and applying social safeguards and quality standards for PCA management and governance, such as the IUCN Green List. This information can also be used by countries to report their progress against the targets of the Global Biodiversity Framework, in particular for Target 3 — also referred to as the 30x30 target — which states that PCAs should be “equitably governed” (CBD 2022a) and includes the indicator “number of protected areas that have completed a site-level assessment of governance and equity (SAGE)” in its monitoring framework (CBD 2022b).

<sup>1</sup> PCAs refer to area-based conservation and include areas not formally recognised as protected areas. PCAs can be governed by governments, Indigenous Peoples, local communities and a number of shared governance arrangements. They include Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures.





The theory of change behind SAGE is that the implementation of actions seeking to improve governance — informed and encouraged by SAGE — will lead to more equitable governance. This will then result in more effective and equitable management, better conservation of biodiversity and ecosystem services and, ultimately, better quality of life for various local, national and global actors (see Figure 1).

The theory of change makes several critical assumptions. Firstly, it assumes that more effective and equitable management of PCAs will lead to better conservation. The developers of SAGE cite IUCN research and guidelines (Hockings et al. 2006) to support this. The second assumption that improvements in biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services will lead to better quality of life draws on the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) conceptual framework, which highlights associations between biodiversity, ecosystem services and human wellbeing (Diaz et al. 2015). The third assumption that more equitable governance will deliver more effective management and conservation within PCAs is based on academic work examining relationships between improvements in aspects of PCA governance and conservation outcomes (Dawson et al. 2021, Gaymer et al. 2014,

Figure 1| SAGE theory of change

Clarke and Jupiter 2010, Ostrom 1990). Lastly, the theory of change assumes that using SAGE to identify governance challenges, as well as develop and implement ideas for action, will deliver improvements in governance and equity of a PCA. This final assumption is the focus of the research presented in this report.

### SAGE process — three phases

SAGE has three phases: Preparation, Assessment and Taking action. Guidance for Phases 1 and 2 has been iteratively developed and continues to be improved based on feedback from SAGE convenors (those who organise a SAGE) and facilitators (those who facilitate the assessment).

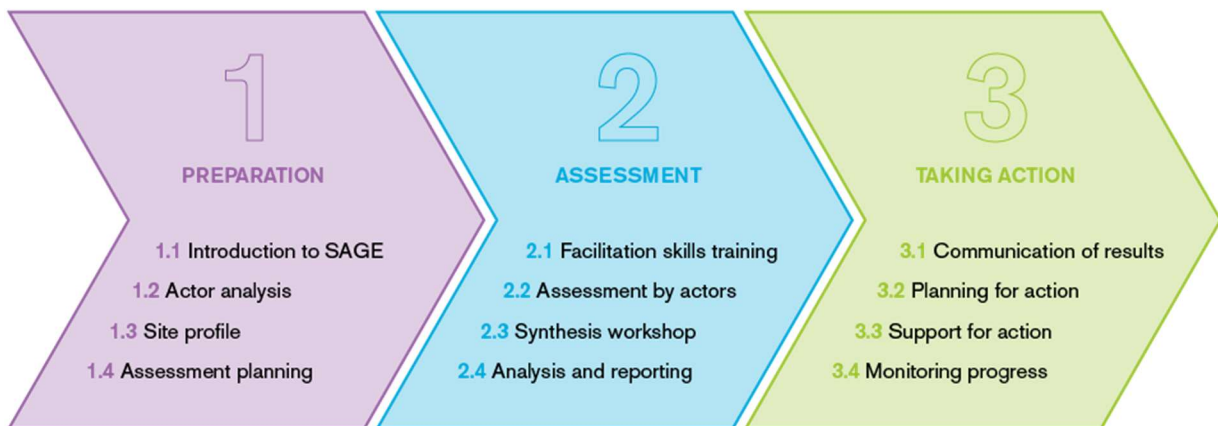


Figure 2| SAGE phases

## 1. Preparation

Preparation starts with an introduction to SAGE for the potential convenors and other key actors. At the end of this stage they will complete a feasibility check, which requires them to ensure that, in principle, all key actor groups are willing to fully engage in the SAGE and that there is low risk of the assessment causing conflict between or within these groups. Phase 1, led by a SAGE lead facilitator<sup>2</sup> with support from the convenor, then continues with an actor analysis to ensure all relevant actor groups are invited to participate in the SAGE, the development of a site profile in consultation with residents in and around the PCA, and an adaptation of the SAGE process and questionnaire to fit the context of the PCA.

## 2. Assessment

The second phase consists of a facilitation skills training session for convenors, lead facilitators and between two and five assistant facilitators, followed by the assessment itself. The assessment by actors involves SAGE participants coming together with others from their actor group to use the SAGE questionnaire to discuss governance challenges, evidence of these challenges and possible ideas for action to improve them. Soon after, usually the following day, the lead facilitator presents an analysis of this information back to all the SAGE participants — this is referred to as the synthesis workshop. This step in the process informs all participants of the assessment results of different actor groups, highlights differences in opinion between different actor groups and provides an opportunity to collectively generate ideas for action to try to address the governance issues underpinning these differences. For example, there may be differences of opinion on benefit sharing because the different actor groups have varying information or different understandings of available information.

After the synthesis workshop, the lead facilitator produces a SAGE report that can be shared with relevant actors and used to inform actions to improve governance. Taken together, Phases 1 and 2 are typically conducted over a period of four to eight weeks, costing between US\$2,000–10,000 depending on the cost of facilitators and the size and complexity of the site.

## 3. Taking action

From 2019 to 2022, Phase 3 has been described as an optional phase aimed at boosting the impact of SAGE at the site level. As explained by developers of SAGE, this was to avoid deterring use of the methodology in situations where key actors were unable to make firm commitments to actions prior to the assessment, and on the assumption that there would be some actions to improve governance that need little or no resources. Phase 3 includes communication of the results to a wider audience and supporting the planning, implementation and monitoring of early actions to improve governance and equity. At a minimum, SAGE convenors were recommended to commit to the implementation of a few early actions that could build confidence and help secure further financial and political support needed to improve governance.

To date, SAGE has been used at 45 sites across 22 countries in Europe, Africa, Asia and Latin America. These have included state owned and governed protected areas, co-managed or shared governance areas, local community owned and governed areas, and Indigenous territories.

## Research methodology

The research presented in this report uses outcome harvesting, an established method used to identify, describe, verify and analyse the changes brought through an intervention (Wilson-Grau and Britt 2012). It involves collecting evidence of a change, and then assessing what contributed to that change. It does not rely on a counterfactual to assess if the change would have happened without the intervention, but rather examines the intervention's influence on the change. It also identifies the significance of the change for different actor groups based on the intervention aims. Overall, the method is useful for understanding processes by which changes come about, assessing an intervention's influence on or contribution to a change, and identifying relevant learnings. We therefore considered outcome harvesting to be a useful method to test the hypothesis: **Use of SAGE does, under certain conditions, lead to improvements in governance of area-based conservation.**

<sup>2</sup> As outlined in the SAGE manual, the lead facilitator is an independent person, experienced in facilitating multi-stakeholder workshops with at least a basic knowledge of principles and practices of good governance.

This research identifies and analyses governance outcomes contributed to by SAGE, generating evidence to help understand how SAGE might help improve environmental governance in the context of area-based conservation.

Outcome harvesting consists of five or six iterative steps:

1. Designing the outcome harvest
2. Reviewing relevant documentation to identify outcome leads
3. Engaging with informants to review and further identify outcomes
4. Substantiating outcomes
5. Analysing patterns and interpreting findings
6. And finally, if appropriate, supporting the use of findings.

The SAGE outcome harvest was conducted in two phases that cover these steps. The first of these was a scoping phase, which took place from May to August 2022 and included steps 1–3 and 5. The scoping phase considered 15 sites (see Table 3) that used SAGE between October 2020 and November 2021. The sites where these assessments took place provided an opportunity for understanding, documenting and learning from potential outcomes related to improvements in governance contributed to by SAGE.

	<b>Site</b>	<b>SAGE completed</b>
1	Parque Municipal Natural Andakí, Colombia	October 2020
2	Rufunsa Game Management Area, Zambia	December 2020
3	Mufunta Game Management Area, Zambia	May 2021
4	Makame Wildlife Management Area, Tanzania	May 2021
5	Banjar Lestari Village Forest, Indonesia	June 2021
6	TCO Tacana II, Bolivia	June 2021
7	Mount Kalatungun Range Natural Park, Philippines	August 2021
8	Burunge Wildlife Management Area, Tanzania	September 2021
9	Namwala Game Management Area, Zambia	September 2021
10	Queen Elizabeth National Park, Uganda	September 2021
11	Mangrove conservation area, northwest coast of Menabe, Madagascar	October 2021
12	Port Launay and Baie Ternay Marine Protected Areas, Seychelles	November 2021
13	Lumo Community Wildlife Conservancy, Kenya	November 2021
14	Satao Elerai Wildlife Conservancy, Kenya	November 2021
15	Lower Luano Game Management Area, Zambia	November 2021

*Table 3 | 15 SAGE sites included in the scoping phase of the outcome harvest*

The scoping phase involved two workshops facilitated by the first author of this report, one with the core SAGE development team and another with SAGE lead facilitators and convenors at the 15 sites. At the first workshop, the SAGE development team discussed outcome harvesting in the context of SAGE. This included presentations on the outcome harvesting method and the purpose of and plans for this harvest, followed by discussions of key terms essential to harvesting outcomes in the context of SAGE. Key terms such as outcome, outcome lead (see Box 1), contribution, significance, social actor and change agent were discussed and defined in the context of SAGE.<sup>3</sup> Building on these discussions, a second workshop introduced and familiarised outcome harvesting to SAGE lead facilitators and convenors who were considered key informants and change agents. Discussions at this second

<sup>3</sup> Categories such as change agents and social actors were useful to discuss in the context of SAGE as both terms were often used to refer to the key PCA actors and SAGE convenors and facilitators. This is because these actors would have both influenced outcomes (making them change agents) as well as changed as a result of another change agent's actions (making them social actors).

workshop also informed research decisions, including the definition of key terms, and provided insights on possible outcome leads.

**Box 1. Definition of an outcome and outcome lead in the context of SAGE**

**Outcome** — refers to a change in governance. It could be an immediate action or consequence of an action or a more transformative change. It does not have to be an intended change or related to a governance challenge identified during SAGE and could be a consequence of the overall SAGE process. Furthermore, what counts as an outcome, and its significance, is informed by research informants' perspectives.

**Outcome lead** — refers to a reported but unsubstantiated outcome.

The first author also reviewed relevant documentation from the 15 sites, including SAGE raw data, reports and planning documents informed by the SAGEs. The purpose of this review was to understand context (particularly site-specific governance, wellbeing, conservation and management challenges) and identify possible outcome leads.

The workshops and document review were followed by a total of 25 online interviews with key informants across all the sites. These were primarily with SAGE lead facilitators and convenors, but at times included PCA managers, rangers, elected representatives and other residents of the sites. The purpose of these interviews was to review and further identify outcome leads. The interviews were conducted by both authors and were semi-structured, focusing on understanding the outcome process (how an outcome happened), identifying potential evidence for the outcomes (to be substantiated in the second phase), assessing the influence of SAGE on the outcomes, and identifying relevant learnings. Some of the identified outcome leads are presented in the following section.

The scoping phase culminated in a review of the outcome leads, with sites reporting a higher number of outcome leads being prioritised for the second phase, referred to as the substantiation phase. The purpose of the substantiation phase was to visit three of the 15 sites to (in)validate reported outcome leads and examine their significance based on different actors' perspectives (step 4). This second phase also included a final analysis and interpretation (step 5) and reporting of findings.

Perceptions of key actors are important to consider when evaluating environmental governance interventions (see Bennett 2016). Substantiation of outcomes and outcome leads therefore involved obtaining perspectives of key actors who: 1) are knowledgeable of the outcomes and how they were achieved; 2) can verify the outcome and contribution descriptions; 3) can add nuance to the outcome descriptions. The second author led the data collection at the Indigenous territory Tacana II in Bolivia in September 2022, with the first author visiting Lower Luano Game Management Area in Zambia and Lumo Community Wildlife Conservancy in Kenya in October 2022. Both researchers discussed ethical considerations of the research, integrating these into a guiding research protocol. Research methods included community workshops, semi-structured interviews, document review and observations. Interviews were conducted with all key actor groups at the sites, including PCA managers, local government officials, nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), private companies, and residents and rightsholders of the sites. Interviewees included SAGE participants as well as non-SAGE participants from key actor groups. Researchers used snowball sampling, drawing on the review of relevant documents and interviews with key informants from the scoping phase to identify other research informants. In the case of PCA residents, both authors ensured the sample was gender balanced and considered where rightsholders lived in proximity to the PCA (a similar number of interviews were conducted with men and women, with a few more women being interviewed than men; interviews were also conducted with rightsholders residing closer to and further away from the PCA and its main offices). Across the three case study sites, this totalled 114 interviews, alongside workshops (only at case study 1), group discussions and informal conversations with all key actor groups identified by the SAGEs.

## Cross-site outcome leads

The scoping phase revealed the importance of contextual factors in enabling changes in governance after a SAGE. For example, COVID-19 and local and national elections played significant roles in determining whether governance improved, deteriorated or stayed the same. Another important factor was funding for the planning of actions to improve governance after the SAGE. As Phase 3 was presented as optional, donors did not always provide sufficient funding to undertake Phase 3, with some assuming that SAGE results would be integrated into pre-existing planning processes. However, the availability of funds did not always align with other planning processes, leaving many sites with no formally planned actions for a year or more after the assessment. For example, at Lumo Community Wildlife Conservancy, the SAGE took place in November 2021, with funding for actions aimed at improving governance only being acquired in October 2022. However, prior to securing funding, actors at the site did adopt some actions to improve governance (see case study 3).

Bearing in mind such contextual challenges, some outcome leads were shared by many of the sites. These leads refer to unsubstantiated outcomes reported by key informants during the scoping phase and include unsubstantiated outcomes from the three case studies presented in this report. The case studies only describe outcomes that have been substantiated by multiple informants and other supporting evidence; they do not include outcomes for which the strength of evidence is considered 'very low' (see Table 4 for categories used to describe the strength of evidence).

Category	Description
Very low	Outcome lead, unsubstantiated
Low	Outcome substantiated by 2–4 informants, no other supporting evidence
Medium	Outcome substantiated by 5+ informants, might be supported by other evidence
High	Outcome substantiated by 5+ informants from at least 2 actor groups
Very high	Outcome substantiated by 5+ informants from at least 2 actor groups and supported by other evidence (eg documents, observations)

*Table 4 | Categories used to describe strength of evidence. These categories refer to how confident we are in the evidence based on triangulation*

One outcome lead reported across most of the sites was that the SAGE was often the first time different key actor groups collectively shared their perspectives about governance challenges and generated ideas to improve the situation. In interviews many months after the SAGEs, key informants shared discussions they remembered having during the SAGE and how they had not previously considered the perspectives of some actor groups. For example, this experience was noted by PCA managers at different sites, particularly regarding the perspective of women who reside in and around the PCA. Another commonly noted outcome lead was that the SAGE provided an opportunity for key actors to collectively discuss and recognise governance challenges. While they might have been aware of these challenges prior to the SAGE, discussing them at the SAGE helped to develop a shared understanding of the issues and possible ways forward. Furthermore, SAGE results provided evidence of governance challenges and ideas for action, which were useful in providing legitimacy to project proposals.

Other outcome leads gathered during the scoping phase mostly related to improvements in participation in decision making (particularly women's participation), and transparency and information sharing through the development of new communication channels and marking of PCA boundaries. In the following chapters, three case studies describe substantiated outcomes that were contributed to by SAGE. The final chapter provides a discussion of the results from across the case studies and highlights implications and ways forward for SAGE.

## Case study 1: TCO Tacana II, Bolivia<sup>4</sup>

### Site description

The Tierra Comunitaria de Origen [Community Land of Origin] (TCO) Tacana II is an Indigenous territory founded in 2001 under the formal leadership of the Consejo Indígena del Pueblo Tacana [Indigenous Council of the Tacana People]. It is located along the top northwest border of La Paz department<sup>5</sup>, within the municipality of Ixiamas, and covers more than 852,000 acres. The territory covers a variety of ecosystems, including seasonal evergreen forests, savannah shrublands, swamps and floodplains. Four communities reside within the TCO Tacana II: Puerto Pérez, Las Mercedes, Toromonas and El Tigre. Since its establishment, the TCO has been waiting for official recognition of its land ownership rights.



Picture 1 | Community centre in Las Mercedes (Naira Dehmel, 2022)

The communities have collective decision-making rights over community matters. In 2010, the Tacana II formed their own organisation called the Central Indígena de Comunidades Tacana II del Rio Madre de Dios [Indigenous Central Organisation of Tacana II Communities of the Madre de Dios River] (CITRMD). The CITRMD is affiliated to a multi-level network of Indigenous organisations (CITRMD 2016). It is made up of a committee of elected community representatives, with elections occurring every four years. Each of the four communities within the TCO have their own community leadership committees, with elections held every two years. The current CITRMD leadership was elected in May 2022, and all the community leadership teams have changed since the SAGE.

Since 2017, the TCO has produced a management plan called a Plan de Vida. It includes an overview of the geographical and historical background of the TCO, ecological and biological baselines, a description of socio-cultural and economic practices, and a list of objectives and strategies for territorial management.

<sup>4</sup> This case study was co-produced by the four communities that collectively form the territory of the TCO Tacana II. Collective recognition of the communities' observations and reflections was discussed by the second author at community meetings held prior to commencement of this case study research.

<sup>5</sup> Department refers to the largest administrative unit in Bolivia.

The primary land use and source of income in the TCO is the collection and commercial sale of Brazil nuts. Most households hunt and fish for subsistence, and harvest timber for home construction. Some families practise agriculture with even fewer pursuing cattle ranching. Small-scale gold mining has become increasingly common over the past two years, largely due to a drop in the price of Brazil nuts.

### SAGE process and results

Asociación Boliviana para la Investigación y Conservación de Ecosistemas Andino-Amazónicos [Bolivian Association for Research and Conservation of Andean-Amazonian Ecosystems] (ACEAA) is an organisation that supports the land titling process, income diversification, and offsetting the negative environmental impacts of gold mining in TCO Tacana II. ACEAA first heard of SAGE through the Euroclima+ programme and applied to implement the assessment at the TCO Tacana II through this programme. The SAGE lead facilitator was already working as an independent consultant supporting the ongoing land titling process of the territory, and in continuation was hired to conduct the SAGE, and facilitate the update of the Plan de Vida 2022–2026.

TCO Tacana II was the first Indigenous territory that used SAGE. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the SAGE was conducted in two phases, with the group assessments happening in October 2020, followed by a synthesis workshop in early June 2021. The SAGE convenor and lead facilitator collectively completed all steps of Phase 1 of the SAGE, which included an actor analysis, development of a site profile, invitation to key actors to participate in the SAGE, selection of principles to assess, and translation of the questionnaire. Some of the questionnaire language also had to be adapted to suit the context of an Indigenous territory. Five actor groups participated in the SAGE, namely CITRMD, local municipality officials, representatives from two adjacent PCAs and ACEAA, and community men and women. A representative of each actor group participated in the synthesis workshop in June 2021.

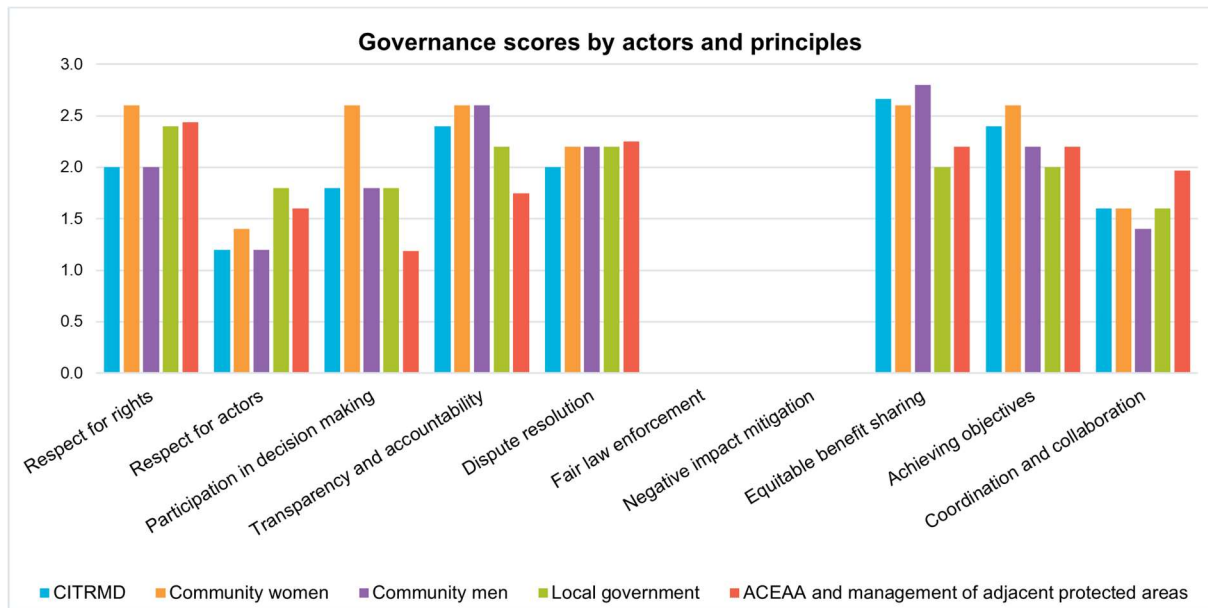


Figure 3 | TCO Tacana II SAGE results

The assessment focused on eight of the SAGE principles. It did not consider SAGE questions about ‘fair and effective law enforcement’ or ‘negative impact mitigation’, as these were considered less relevant to the territory. The lowest scoring principle was ‘respect for actors’, with SAGE participants discussing relations between the communities and the local municipality. Other concerns discussed included insufficient flow of information between the TCO leadership and communities, and a lack of support for young people and women to participate in decision making.

### Action planning

The SAGE was conducted with the upcoming update of the Plan de Vida in mind. The intention was to integrate SAGE results into the Plan de Vida, rather than to pursue a separate action plan. However, rather than specific ideas for action developed during the SAGE being integrated into the new Plan de

Vida, the SAGE highlighted community concerns that should be revisited in the renewal of the plan, such as the importance of involving youth in governance of the territory. In general, however, the process to update the Plan de Vida was separate and it is unclear how the SAGE results and ideas for action were incorporated. Nonetheless, the SAGE assisted with familiarising the lead facilitator and TCO communities and building momentum towards the update of the Plan de Vida.

Overall, the updating process was much more participatory compared to previous planning efforts, with workshops held in each of the TCO communities. These workshops, led by the SAGE lead facilitator, responded to a need for financial training, which emerged during the SAGE. They included presentations by an economist and an ACEAA administrator on household budgeting and micro-businesses, administration of state projects, and financial education for project administration. The lead facilitator also held leadership workshops for women and young people from the communities in response to governance challenges discussed at the SAGE. Lastly, the plan updating process involved community mapping exercises, vision boards and discussion of management objectives.

The content of the updated Plan de Vida was presented and authorised at a general assembly of the TCO in September 2021. To promote the awareness and implementation of the Plan de Vida, a group of 'Plan de Vida promoters' was selected — two people from each community. However, the official Plan de Vida was not yet finalised and the TCO had not received a copy of it at the time of the research visit. For the same reason, the group of promoters, while highly motivated, was not active.

## Outcomes

At TCO Tacana II, interviews were conducted with all key actor groups, including ACEAA, Ixiamas municipality, a neighbouring reserve, previous and current CITRMD and community leadership, and men, women and young people from all four communities who both did and did not participate in the SAGE. In total, 39 interviews were conducted. Reported changes in governance included the introduction of new governance-related training sessions, an increase in women's participation in community meetings and more participatory planning processes. These changes are described below and highlight the SAGE's influence on governance of the TCO.

### Re-establishing relations with the municipality

*Strength of evidence: high*

The SAGE, for the first time, brought together representatives from the TCO with representatives from the Municipality of Ixiamas to discuss TCO-related challenges in a workshop setting. According to informants from ACEAA and the municipality, the initial achievement of the SAGE was the re-establishment of relations between the TCO and the municipality (informants I1, I33, I35)<sup>6</sup>. This was also reflected in the SAGE report, which starts with a quote from the then vice-president of the CITRMD: "Thanks to the analysis of these governance issues, we are going to create partnerships with the municipality and with the park rangers — after a long time we are going to have a more fluid relationship with them" (ACEAA-CITRMD 2021, p.2).

After the SAGE, a municipality representative went to the TCO for the first consultation visit in many years. This visit was organised by ACEAA with the aim of authorising the new Plan de Vida. From the beginning of the visit, however, TCO communities expressed their anger and disappointment with the municipality for their lack of support in providing public services. The meeting resulted in a municipality representative being subjected to a traditional customary punishment. According to municipality informants, this event alienated the visiting representatives who they said had originally been willing to approach the community and sincerely consider their needs. Instead, they left feeling unfairly treated and only willing to support the TCO out of a sense of duty.

Despite the SAGE having created a space for engagement between the municipality and community representatives, most community informants agreed that relations with the municipality had not in the end improved. Instead there was general mistrust in the community that any promises made will be met. No community informant reported a positive change in relations. Similarly, municipality informants stated that the relationship between the municipality and the TCO Tacana II was difficult (I35) and had

<sup>6</sup> These letters/numbers refer to informant interview codes.



not improved (I33). Further, the TCO communities have clear demands and are not convinced that consultation visits or budget plans will improve relations. Several informants explained that they understand there may be good intentions behind the visits, but they are still waiting to see direct investments and results (I6, I13, I18, I27).

The municipality informant who participated in the SAGE, explained that SAGE was not the cause for the conflict escalation during the consultation visit. Instead, she suggested that more sensitive facilitation during the consultation visit would have helped. While they remained open to participating in another SAGE, they suggested some mediation between the municipality and TCO communities beforehand would have been beneficial (I33).

### **SAGE informed the process for updating the Plan de Vida, highlighting its value to communities**

*Strength of evidence: very high*

For ACEAA, SAGE was considered an important diagnostic tool conducted to identify key issues and needs for the Plan de Vida (I1). This notion was confirmed by an ex-CITRMD community leader who believed that SAGE had helped identify elements that had been missing in the previous Plan de Vida and saw them reflected in the update (I13).

Reiterating this, the lead facilitator explained that, compared to the previous Plan de Vida, which had been conducted primarily with biological conservation priorities in mind, SAGE allowed for consideration of the priorities of people living within the TCO. This highlighted topics that are understood to have an important influence on the biological and territorial sustainability of the area — such as a lack of interest in sustainable territorial management from the youth. These topics were then addressed and discussed while preparing the new Plan de Vida (I34).

Community informants also highlighted how the SAGE process raised awareness of the Plan de Vida among the communities (I3, I13). As the SAGE referred directly to the Plan de Vida as the main conservation management instrument for the territory, the assessment revealed that a lot of community members were unaware of the Plan de Vida itself, or its content. For example, as described by a community woman: “During the SAGE, [the facilitator] was asked what the Plan de Vida was. For some, it was the first time, we did not know what it was, or many did not know what it said” (I13).

According to ACEAA, the process for the update of the Plan de Vida was different from the previous Plan de Vida development process (that is, this time it used a more participatory approach), but most community informants could not clearly conceptualise and compare the two processes. Beyond the idea that SAGE helped inform the Plan de Vida, there was a general impression that through the participatory process of the update of the Plan de Vida, including the SAGE, there was greater appreciation and comprehension of the Plan de Vida and its regulations among the TCO community members (I1, I20, I25, I30). Several informants could specifically recall the zoning process during the update of the Plan de Vida and insisted that the implementation of the different use areas now worked better than before because of increased awareness and social control for the agreements (I20, I25). According to a community leader, at the end of the update of the Plan de Vida, more people understood its importance and were happy with the update (I3).

### **Leadership workshops for community women and young people**

*Strength of evidence: very high*

After the SAGE, to address an identified gap in women and youth leadership, the SAGE lead facilitator returned to the TCO Tacana II to deliver leadership workshops in each community. During the SAGE, the community women’s group reached out to the lead facilitator to ask for leadership capacity-building workshops for women and youth (I18). It is unclear if the SAGE process and the reflections generated by its questions, or the approach of the lead facilitator prompted this request. However, as requested, the lead facilitator, with support from ACEAA, delivered two workshops in each of the four TCO communities, one for women only and one for youth, both male and female.

The workshops were titled ‘Training in leadership and territorial management’ and covered key leadership skills, Indigenous, human, women and children’s rights, and basics of territorial management

and planning, including the concept of the Plan de Vida. Each attendee was given a booklet, with many informants in possession of their copy at the time of this research visit.

Although the TCO youth were not represented as a separate actor group in the SAGE, discussions during the assessment highlighted a perceived lack of interest among youth to remain in the TCO and take responsibility for its sustainable development (I18). For this reason, the leadership capacity training mentioned above was not only requested for women, but also for young people (I18).

Young people interviewed who participated in the leadership workshop remembered the event and the facilitator very well (I23, I24), but only roughly remembered the topics that were discussed. Most strongly remembered was the objective to help young people lose their fear of participating, speaking up and showing their interest or opinions in community affairs in front of more senior people in the community meetings (I23, I24, I21). The general opinion was that the workshops helped a little but that on the whole the same fear remained.

Overall, the feedback on these leadership training sessions was overwhelmingly positive — some women and men reported to have found the workshops key in inspiring women to participate more and speak up for their rights and opinions (I6, I12, I13). As described by a woman who attended the workshop: “The leadership workshops really have been important. It was the first time that we spoke specifically about topics like leadership, the Plan de Vida, mining, protecting the territory as a reserve only among women” (I6). Informants thought these changes were sustainable, rather than a short-term drive (I16), and overall found them to be important, as participation in community affairs is generally highly valued.

### Increased attendance and participation of women in community meetings

*Strength of evidence: high*

An outcome mentioned by most informants was the increase in women’s attendance of and participation in community meetings. In particular, the leadership training workshops conducted for women as a result of the SAGE were understood to have had an important impact on women’s participation (I6, I7, I39). For some younger informants, it was the first time they had participated in such a workshop (I7), for others it was one in several workshops that “gave courage” and motivation (I6, I9). Related to this, since the last change in community and TCO leadership in May 2022, more women are in community leadership positions (I3, I6).

It is unclear to what extent this change was made possible by the SAGE methodology. Informants pointed to other influences such as being inspired by the female SAGE lead facilitator (I16), other interventions that discussed gender equity (I39, I11, I17) or an increase in pressure for women to represent their households at community meetings as more men pursued gold mining (I6, I10). ACEAA staff also thought that visits from young women professionals over the last few years might have had an impact on young women’s aspirations and in general to the community’s conception of gender equity (I39). However, most informants reported a new high in women’s participation and women speaking up during meetings since the leadership training.

Both women and men expressed that it was important for women to access capacity building opportunities, learn about their rights, participate, and express their opinions and take on leadership roles. Several women said they enjoyed learning and participating in the SAGE and subsequent workshops, and found this important, especially to learn about their rights and how to defend them (I7, I13, I18). However, some also felt there were various challenges in this process, including finding it difficult to follow the content of these workshops or overcome the fear of speaking up (I24, I26, I39).

The leadership workshops also aimed to increase youth participation in community meetings. However, although the current leadership teams across the communities include more young people than before (I11, I14, I18), most informants agreed that there had not been any major changes to youth participation overall (I6, I21, I23, I24). Some interviewees indicated that the SAGE allowed the TCO to develop new strategies aimed at increasing youth participation. For example, after the SAGE, a new community statute was introduced suggesting that youth be (a) allowed and encouraged to participate in community meetings from the age of 14, and (b) encouraged to take up leadership positions (I18). Other strategies taken in the TCO to mobilise the youth include general invitations to get involved (I5, I21), asking teachers to help with motivating students to become leaders for their communities

(I3, I22), and sending young people to participate in scholarships and training programmes outside the TCO (I16, I18, I29). However, apart from the clear link of SAGE to the leadership workshops, there was no evidence of SAGE specifically contributing to improving youth participation in decision-making processes.

## Case study 2: Lower Luano Game Management Area, Zambia

### Site description

Established in 1971, Lower Luano Game Management Area (GMA) is a PCA located across the Lusaka and Central provinces of Zambia. It covers more than 2 million acres and includes riparian forests and different types of woodlands and grasslands. Lunsemfwa, Lukusashi and Luangwa rivers flow through the GMA. The GMA also supports a wide variety of wildlife including 19 species of mammals, 42 bird species and several species of reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates (Lower Luano GMP 2022).



*Picture 2 | Residents of Shikabeta chiefdom, located in Lower Luano Game Management Area (Ruth Pinto, 2022)*

GMA are co-managed areas, established as buffer zones alongside state parks. GMA are governed by the Wildlife Act 2015, which places their management in the hands of the state Department for National Parks and Wildlife (DNPW) and Community Resource Boards (CRBs). CRBs are comprised of elected representatives of chiefdoms located within the GMA. In Lower Luano GMA, there are six chiefdoms, however Shikabeta is the only chiefdom present within the GMA that has an active CRB with defined Village Action Groups (VAGs). The GMA is therefore currently being governed by one CRB. Shikabeta chiefdom is made up of five VAGs that each consist of a few villages. Residents elect VAG representatives who then nominate CRB members.

Revenue generated by the GMA is shared between DNPW and the CRB, with the latter managing its distribution among residents. Lower Luano GMA raises revenue through commercial hunting, gold mining, tourism, and a REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation, plus the sustainable management of forests, and the conservation and enhancement of forest carbon stocks) project. Some of the revenue generated is used to recruit residents as village scouts to assist DNPW with law enforcement within the GMA. The CRB also uses this revenue to cover their management costs. Due to the introduction of the REDD+ project, the CRB has also registered as a Community Forestry Management Group under the Forest Act 2015.

The CRB holds meetings with residents of each VAG on a quarterly basis. Meeting participants are often provided with lunch or other forms of compensation for their time. It is therefore routine for most residents to attend meetings about governance and management of the GMA. Residents of Shikabeta farm, fish, harvest non-timber forest products and hunt, with few keeping livestock and participating in small-scale mining. The CRB has assisted with introducing other alternative livelihood activities such as beekeeping and aquaculture.

### SAGE process and results

The SAGE at Lower Luano GMA was organised as part of a three-year IUCN Biodiversity and Protected Areas Management (BIOPAMA) Programme project led by IIED and the Zambia Community Based Natural Resource Management Forum (ZCBNRM Forum). The project involved using SAGE at four GMAs, the final of which was at Lower Luano GMA in November 2021. ZCBNRM Forum convened the assessment, first organising a preparatory meeting with a few key actors to complete Phase 1 of the SAGE. This included an actor analysis, completion of the site profile, identifying who to invite to participate in the SAGE, selecting SAGE principles to assess and translating the questionnaire. This phase was supported by an experienced SAGE lead facilitator.

The SAGE involved five key actor groups, namely district government representatives, DNPW and the Forest Department, private sector actors (a tourism operator and REDD+ project developer), and a group each for men and women from Shikabeta chiefdom that included elected VAG and CRB members. The assessment covered eight SAGE principles. The ‘respect for actors’ and ‘negative impact mitigation’ principles were not included.<sup>7</sup> Overall, the participants scored governance of the GMA highly, with all principles averaging a score of 1.5 and above. This positive perception of governance under the Shikabeta CRB was reinforced by residents of Shikabeta interviewed for this research. Most interviewees reported being routinely informed about GMA activities and consulted about important decisions, such as the distribution and use of GMA revenue.

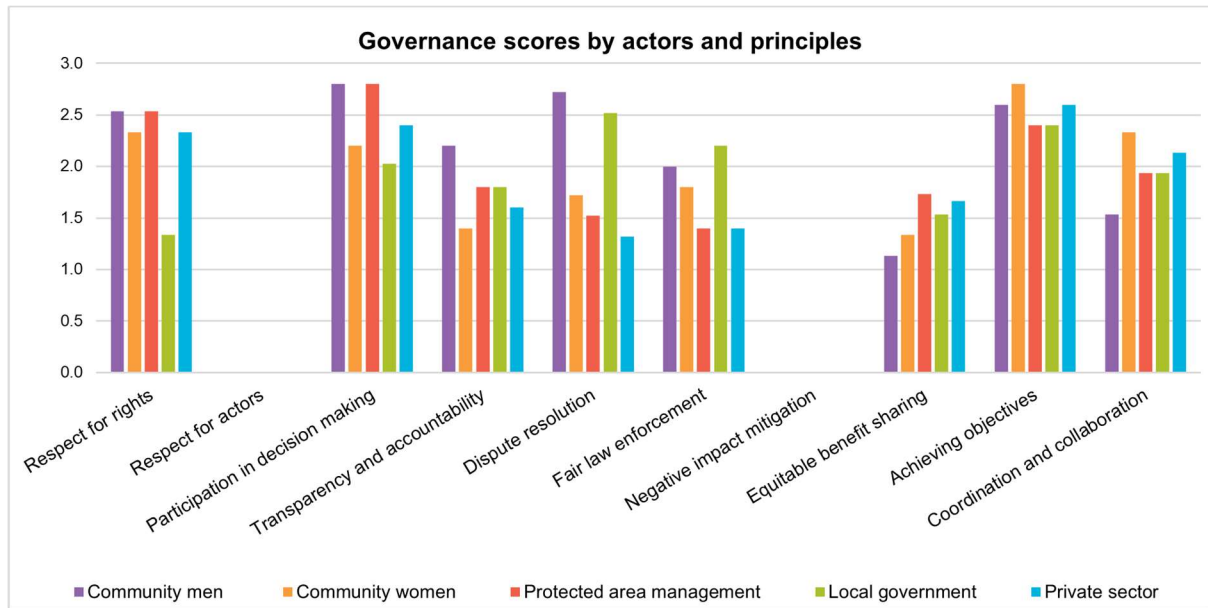


Figure 4 | Lower Luano GMA SAGE results

The lowest scoring principle was about equitable benefit sharing among residents. The questions under this principle were adapted to focus on two specific benefits: tourism revenue received by the CRB and the distribution of fishing permits. Broader benefit sharing practices were reported on positively by most residents that participated in the outcome harvest, with most benefits being distributed to all households. The scores for this principle are low because of the questions about fishing permits. It is not common for people in Shikabeta to have fishing permits. Most households fish for subsistence. The

<sup>7</sup> SAGE convenors and lead facilitators prioritise principles to assess during SAGE Phase 1. The researchers were unable to establish why these principles were not prioritised for this site. However, it is common for SAGEs to cover fewer than ten principles due to time constraints.

law is unclear if permits are needed for this purpose (informant G31), and most SAGE participants were unsure about residents' fishing rights. There was general consensus among participants that there is fair respect for rights, however some issues raised were a lack of respect for the perspectives and ideas of women, and limited information sharing about residents' rights with all residents of the GMA.

## Action planning

A few months after the SAGE, ZCBNRM Forum organised a one-day action planning meeting. This meeting was attended by most SAGE participants and a few other local actors, such as the police and the media. The meeting was facilitated by staff of ZCBNRM Forum and involved reviewing and prioritising the governance challenges and suggesting ideas for action identified by the SAGE. Most of the actions proposed focused on 'sensitisation', 'capacity building' and 'information sharing' aimed at Shikabeta chiefdom residents. Participants also discussed the importance of coordination, particularly between government departments and the marking of GMA boundaries.

Participants of the planning meeting volunteered to lead on various actions, with some committing to completing them within a particular timeframe. However, it was unclear whether and how those making such commitments would be accountable to each other. As described by a government official who attended the SAGE, "I haven't heard anything since that action planning meeting. I assumed those organising the project would follow up on the different proposed activities, but this was not made clear during the meeting" (G32).

During the action planning meeting, most actions were committed to by local government and private sector actors, sometimes in collaboration with the CRB and VAGs. However, most of these actions have yet to be implemented. This was attributed to a lack of funding, small workforces and a lack of communication between key actors (G32, G34). A few months later, ZCBNRM Forum organised an action prioritisation meeting to review progress on the action plan and reprioritise actions, paying attention to the needs and capacity of the CRB. This meeting was attended by fewer SAGE participants. Prioritised actions emphasised the need to conduct training to encourage residents, particularly women, to participate in GMA decision-making processes and share further information about residents' rights within the GMA.

Besides these meetings, SAGE results influenced action planning processes already present at the GMA. The CRB considered the SAGE report and action planning process during their own internal action planning meeting. Similarly, the REDD+ project developer took learnings from the SAGE process and action planning, such as the importance of translating written material into local languages and requesting consent for the project's continuation from all residents rather than only seeking consent from elected CRB members. However, neither of these actors systematically considered the SAGE results and ideas for action in their respective planning processes. Rather, they — along with other key actors — collectively reflected on governance challenges at the dedicated SAGE action planning meetings organised by ZCBNRM Forum.

## Outcomes

At Lower Luano GMA, interviews were conducted with all key actor groups, including ZCBNRM Forum, the tourism operator and REDD+ project developer, district government officials, Shikabeta CRB members, traditional leaders, VAG members, and other men and women who reside in Shikabeta who both did and did not participate in the SAGE. In total, 38 interviews were conducted. Reported changes in governance included the introduction of new governance-related training, an increase in women's participation in various VAG and village-level meetings, and improved REDD+ project consent processes. These changes are described below and highlight SAGE's influence on the GMA's governance.

### Training on traditional leadership and women's participation

*Strength of evidence: high*

Meetings at the VAG and village level are routinely held across the chiefdom of Shikabeta. Following the SAGE, ZCBNRM Forum and the Shikabeta CRB introduced several governance-related training sessions to residents of Shikabeta. This training focused on traditional leadership responsibilities,

women's participation in decision-making processes, CRB-led grievance mechanisms and conservation.

Training or awareness-raising meetings about conservation were mostly hosted by the CRB and REDD+ project developer and pre-date the SAGE. Similarly, some CRB members shared that they were made aware of the importance of “not leaving women behind” during a national CRB meeting a few years prior (G4). However, since the SAGE, the CRB and residents pointed to new topics being presented at VAG meetings, particularly about the value of women's participation in meetings and traditional leaders' responsibilities (G7, G11, G16). For example, a traditional leader reflected on the training saying, “if you are a good leader, you should share things equally. Your job is to listen. I am happy to learn about this, I have not attended a meeting like this before. This was in February 2022, the CRB had two meetings about leadership” (G9). Fewer informants remembered attending sessions on grievance mechanisms (G7, G12).

However, many residents also shared that while they remembered these training sessions taking place, they could not recall their contents, noting that they attend a lot of meetings about the GMA and its governance (G11, G14, G17, G19). Some jokingly admitted that an important motivation for attending these training sessions is the provision of lunch and opportunities for socialising, so they did not always pay attention to what was being shared (G17). However, they maintained that an increase in women's participation in decision making, and improvements in traditional leaders' practices of listening to grievances and sharing information were important. This importance was routinely highlighted by both men and women residents of Shikabeta (G9, G13, G16). While a couple of residents who did not routinely attend VAG or village-level meetings had not heard of any of these training sessions, they were in the minority of the people interviewed (G20, G22).

### Changes to women's participation in meetings and decision making

*Strength of evidence: high*

During the research visit, the researcher was not able to attend any meetings in Shikabeta. However many women shared that they felt more confident to participate in VAG and village meetings. Furthermore, they spoke of the importance of women being elected to VAGs and the CRB to lead on governance of the GMA. For example, one woman said: “More women speak in meetings now, they contribute a lot. It was not like this two years ago. I started attending meetings because I saw changes... the CRB has got us many projects now... before women would attend meetings, but not speak, but since all the meetings about why we should participate and stand for elections, we know a lot more now” (G8).

Some women attributed this new-found confidence to discussions they had at the SAGE: “I always spoke up during meetings, but other women speak up more now. They are less fearful because we learned that it is okay and good for us to speak up, we learned this at the workshop at Mpanshya last November [referring to the SAGE]” (G13).

Women from Shikabeta also reported changes in the attitudes of men from their villages. As noted by a VAG member: “When I was first elected, I was scared, but now I can speak. Before, the men used to tell us, ‘You don't belong here’, but since this year they do not say it anymore. Men used to say the women should be silent, they would tell us to sit down, but now they know we know about our rights. We learned about these at the BIOPAMA [SAGE] workshop in November. I shared what we learned with others at a CRB meeting” (G21). While men informants did not confirm SAGE's contribution to this change, they referenced the training programmes that were an outcome of the SAGE as having influenced their perspective on the role of women in governance (G9, G24, G10).

### Improved consent processes for continuation of a REDD+ project

*Strength of evidence: high*

For the REDD+ project developer, the SAGE provided a platform to engage with other key actors and understand their perspectives (G2). It also encouraged them to reflect on the equity of their own project practices within the GMA (G3). An important change discussed at the SAGE and introduced soon after was related to how the developer sought consent to continue running the project in Shikabeta.

When the REDD+ project was first introduced more than five years ago, the developer negotiated agreements with the CRB and Chief of Shikabeta. As elected representatives of the chiefdom, it was only their consent that was deemed essential at the time. However, after the SAGE, staff of the REDD+ project who participated in the assessment decided it would be more appropriate to request consent at the household level to continue operations of the existing REDD+ project. This decision was influenced by discussions about Shikabeta's residents' resource rights, including the possibility of some residents having land access rights within the chiefdom (G3).

To acquire household-level consent for the project, staff of the REDD+ project have since begun asking residents to raise their hands during VAG and village-level meetings if they are in favour of the project's continuation. Photographs of people with raised hands are then captured and recorded in reports (G3). This practice was confirmed by all interviewed residents of Shikabeta who attended these meetings in 2022 (G10, G15, G16, G24). However, as one resident commented when asked about this process for acquiring consent, "they are already here, what can I say?" (G27). Many informants were also unclear of the details of the project and how it is funded (G6, G12, G18). So, while they were agreeing to the continued presence of the REDD+ project, their consent was not requested prior to its initiation, nor is it clear if their consent is freely given or well-informed.

### Resident women being prioritised as beneficiaries for a new livelihood project

*Strength of evidence: low*

Some informants from the CRB and VAGs reported recent changes in how project benefits were being distributed, with more women being registered as project beneficiaries in 2022. For example, a company interested in producing wild honey has provided bee boxes for the CRB to distribute, agreeing to pay households for the honey they produce. As a woman CRB member described: "We had another bee box project before, but the person distributed the bee boxes haphazardly, but this time the CRB chose beneficiaries. We learned from the SAGE and other workshops, and from our own observations, that women should be involved in such projects. If we only include men, they will use the money to buy beer, so it is better to write women's names for projects" (G29).

While multiple CRB and VAG informants (men and women) attributed this change in their decision making about benefit sharing to SAGE (G4, G29), women residents interviewed did not make this link, nor did they think this change was intentional. As described by one woman, "they just put down the name of whoever is at home at the time, sometimes it is men and sometimes it is women" (G16). This was reiterated by many other women, with one sharing: "They have not asked us specifically if women are interested in these projects — I did receive a bee box, but I know many men who have received them as well. Altogether, 25 bee boxes have been distributed in our VAG, but only eight have gone to women" (G13). It is therefore unclear if changes had in fact been made to how benefits were being distributed and if the SAGE had contributed to these changes, as reported by CRB and VAG informants.



## Case study 3: Lumo Community Wildlife Conservancy, Kenya

### Site description

Lumo Community Wildlife Conservancy is located within the Tsavo Landscape in Taita Taveta County, Kenya. Established in 2001, the 48,000-acre conservancy is owned by three community ranches (Lualenyi, Mramba and Oza), each contributing a section of their land to collectively form the conservancy. Lualenyi is a private ranch that contributed 28,000 acres to the conservancy, while Oza and Mramba ranches are group ranches that each provided 10,000 acres to make up the remainder of the conservancy. Nestled on the border with Tsavo West National Park, the conservancy contributes to gene transfers between wildlife populations in Tsavo East and Tsavo West National Parks in Kenya and Mkomazi National Parks in Tanzania.



*Picture 3| Members of Lumo Community Wildlife Conservancy live in the plains surrounding the conservancy as well as surrounding upland villages (Ruth Pinto, 2022)*

The conservancy is governed by a nine-member board of trustees, elected by members of the three ranches. Board members are elected every three years. Two of the ranches that contributed land to the conservancy are also in the process of changing their legal status to comply with the Community Land Act 2016. These changes will affect existing governance structures in the coming years. The conservancy also has 20 rangers and three non-ranger staff. It has diverse actor groups, including members of the three ranches, several NGOs working with the conservancy such as the African Wildlife Foundation, Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association (KWCA) and Taita Taveta Wildlife Conservancies Association (TTWCA), the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), and a tourism operator that rents land within the conservancy on which it has developed a lodge and campsite.

Besides management staff, no one resides within the conservancy. However, residents of neighbouring villages include livestock owners and herders who graze cattle in the conservancy, particularly during the dry season and times of drought. Decisions about when and where grazing is permitted are made

by a grazing committee, which develops a grazing plan in discussion with the conservancy board and management. Rangers assist with monitoring compliance with the plan. Residents also harvest other resources from the conservancy, such as timber and firewood for charcoal production.

## SAGE process and results

The SAGE at Lumo Community Wildlife Conservancy was conducted in November 2021. It was organised and convened by KWCA with assistance from TTWCA. Both organisations have long worked on conservation and governance in Kenya, with Lumo Community Wildlife Conservancy being a member of TTWCA. The SAGE was organised with the conservancy management team and an independent SAGE facilitator. The facilitator and convenor together conducted the actor analysis, selected the SAGE principles to assess, and translated the SAGE questionnaire. The management team was involved in identifying actor group representatives.

The SAGE involved six actor groups, namely the conservancy board, conservancy management, private investors and ranch member women, men and young people. Two representatives from each actor group participated in the synthesis workshop. A total of eight of the ten principles were assessed, with the SAGE convenor and facilitator choosing not to include questions on 'fair and effective law enforcement' and 'coordination and collaboration'. However, many of the actor groups did discuss both these aspects of governance. Specifically, ranch members highlighted discussions about the rangers' treatment of herders and people cutting tress for timber and charcoal. Actor groups, particularly the representative from the tourism venture at the conservancy, also discussed coordination of community engagement and other social projects.

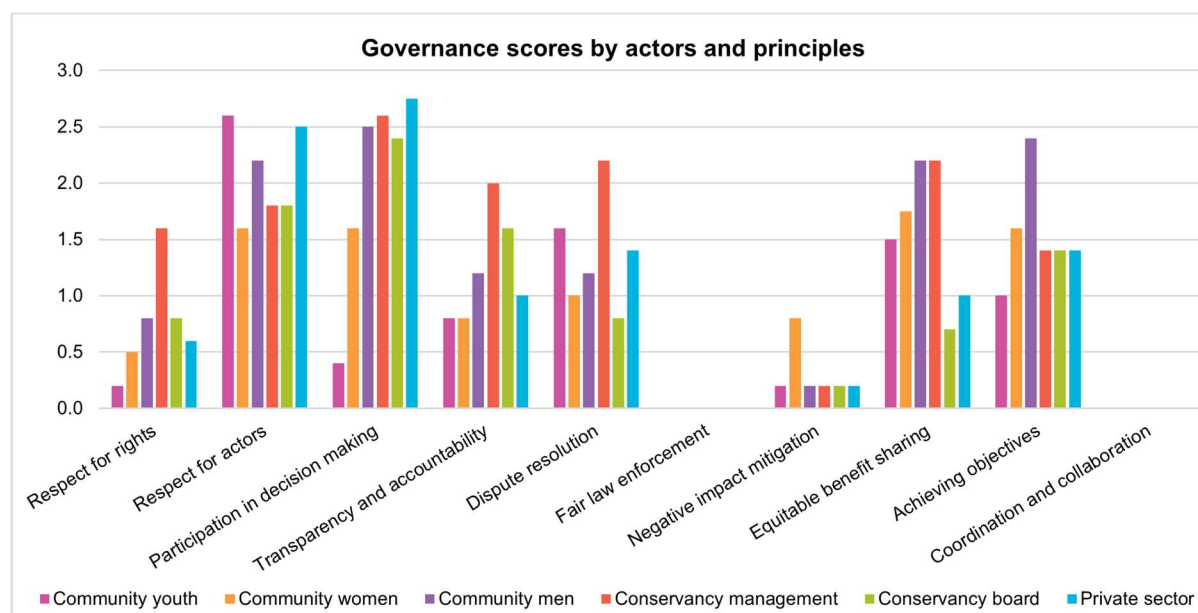


Figure 5 | Lumo Community Wildlife Conservancy SAGE results

The lowest scoring principle was 'negative impact mitigation', which focused on the impacts of wildlife on crops and livestock. Compensation for these impacts is typically provided by the state through KWS. While KWS did not participate in the SAGE, they were present as observers during the synthesis workshop. While SAGE participants highlighted the importance of effective negative-impact mitigation, it is worth noting that such instances of crop destruction and preying on livestock by wildlife are not common around the conservancy. At the time of this research, no changes related to the mitigation of negative impacts were reported.

Another important observation at the SAGE was what younger ranch members thought about governance of the conservancy, expressing interest in being more involved in decision making. This was the first time key actors were coming together to discuss governance challenges and collectively reflect on ideas for action. This resulted in the SAGE participants who were interviewed for this research easily being able to recall discussions and share their perceptions of SAGE's contribution to changes in governance.

## Action planning

The SAGE at Lumo Community Wildlife Conservancy was organised by KWCA, with the intention of helping to strengthen governance. However, less consideration was given to the action planning process following the SAGE. As described by a KWCA employee: “Most conservancies are struggling with governance issues. Our focus was on eventually strengthening governance, but we wanted the conservancy and its members to discuss the issues and ideas for action. At the time we tried to find funding, but then there was a change in the management team, so it was a few months later that I called the new manager and invited the team to participate in proposal development” (informant C2).

The action planning therefore took place around six months after the SAGE and involved KWCA and conservancy management staff only. A KWCA staff member noted that it would have been better to sit down with the conservancy board, ranch members and other SAGE participants for the planning, but that this would have required additional time and funding (C2). Instead, KWCA encouraged the conservancy management to share their discussions with the board.

On identifying a potential donor, KWCA initiated the action planning by calling a meeting with the conservancy management team, requesting them to identify and prioritise actions based on the SAGE report and other general observations of their current needs. This process therefore prioritised the perspective of the PCA management team, in particular that of the head ranger, manager, liaison officer and accountant. KWCA led the development of the proposal with the conservancy management, drafting and prioritising actions under broad objectives. Both entities produced separate budgets.

The proposed plan, which has since secured funding, includes ideas for action discussed at the SAGE and focuses on strengthening governance by improving:

1. Recognition and respect for the rights of all relevant actors within the conservancy
2. Participation of women and youth in decision making within the conservancy
3. The capacity of rangers for effective performance
4. Benefits and benefit-sharing mechanisms
5. Management and governance of the conservancy
6. Access to justice by all conservancy actors

Some of the planned actions include:

- Improve information sharing with ranch members about their rights by hiring a communications officer, initiating a monthly newsletter and holding biannual meetings at the ranch level
- Enhance participation in decision making by implementing membership registration campaigns and creating forums for women and youth who are ranch members
- Strengthen capacity of rangers through recruitment, human rights training and provision of better equipment
- Create more equitable benefit sharing through the development of a framework for revenue generation and guidelines for distribution, management and use of conservancy revenue, and
- Enhance management by developing a management plan, reviewing existing plans and by-laws, conducting relevant training, organising learning visits to other conservancies, and demarcating conservancy boundaries.

Funding for these actions was secured in October 2022, so they were yet to be implemented at the time of this research. However, the SAGE process and report supported the development of this plan by providing evidence for existing governance challenges and suggesting ways to address them. The following section presents other reported substantiated outcomes.

## Outcomes

At Lumo Community Wildlife Conservancy, interviews were conducted with all key actor groups, including KWCA, TTWCA, the tourism operator, conservancy management, board and rangers, as well as ranch members who both did and did not participate in the SAGE. In total, 37 interviews were conducted. Reported changes in governance revolved around the recruitment of a liaison officer in 2022, COVID-19 impacts — including a drop in tourism and subsequent conservancy revenue — changes in weather patterns with extended and more severe dry seasons, and alterations in conservancy governance structures since 2019. These changes impacted and were influenced by the SAGE near the end of 2021. The following are substantiated outcomes that highlight SAGE’s influence on governance of the conservancy.

### Employment of a liaison officer

*Strength of evidence: very high*

In April 2022, the conservancy hired a new manager as well as its first liaison officer. While there is no mention of a liaison officer in the raw assessment data, the SAGE report mentions improving transparency, information sharing and accountability and recommends a “liaison officer be put in place to link the community and conservancy”. As described by a board member: “A few years ago, before COVID-19, we visited another conservancy and learned that they find it useful to have a liaison officer. We thought about this for Lumo, since our members often complain that they do not get much information about what is happening here. We thought this would be something we do later when we have more funds, but the SAGE made us realise that there was need for this now. We need more information sharing to improve things at Lumo, we need better coordination between everyone” (C6).

As described in the liaison officer contract, their primary duty is to “act as liaison between Lumo office and community, public and private organisations, and stakeholders around the Tsavo landscape”. This includes attending relevant meetings, monitoring and evaluating alternative livelihood options, assisting with research related to enterprise development, supporting the development of project proposals, and acting as a guide to visitors, among other tasks. The conservancy board led the recruitment process for this position and appointed a young woman who is a ranch member and had also participated in the SAGE. This individual had previously interned at the conservancy and had interviewed for another position. The creation of the liaison officer position and her subsequent appointment were likely influenced by her involvement in the SAGE and interest in working at the conservancy.

At the time of this research, the liaison officer had completed six months at the conservancy and had been involved in several programmes. This included coordinating and assisting with a needs assessment survey for all schools in nearby villages, liaising with community groups interested in starting their own projects, and attending a village meeting to respond to questions ranch members had about the conservancy (C5). The school needs assessment survey was conducted in collaboration with the tourism operator. The tourism operator routinely initiates projects aimed at improving the wellbeing of nearby residents. These include operating dental clinics, providing educational material, clothing and food for primary school children, carrying out infrastructure projects such as the laying of water pipelines, and so on. However, these are often provided to the schools nearest to the conservancy without considering how equitable this distribution of resources is or the needs of ranch members who live further away. A thorough needs assessment survey and mapping of the schools was conducted to address this governance concern (C5, C11).

Similarly, the liaison officer spoke to board members and other community leaders to identify community groups in the villages that are developing alternative livelihood projects — for example, a women’s group growing edible mushrooms or a youth group making paper from elephant dung. The liaison officer met with these groups to better understand their needs and incorporate their projects in the broader work of the conservancy. However, when visiting these different groups, some noted that the liaison officer had met with them just once (C18) while others shared that they had been invited to the conservancy office for further meetings (C16). According to the liaison officer, the time spent with each group is contingent on many factors, including the interest of donors (C5). Yet, groups that did not have routine meetings were unsure what the role of the liaison officer was, when to contact her and what kind of support they could ask for (C18, C19).

Since COVID-19, and the related restrictions and drop in tourism revenue, the annual general meeting of the conservancy has been put on hold. There were also other changes in governance structures in 2019 that resulted in cuts to the total number of elected representatives, including positions that were responsible for sharing information with ranch members and holding other elected officials accountable. This has left many ranch members feeling left in the dark about conservancy matters (C9, C12, C22). While the liaison officer's attendance at a singular ranch meeting does not address these concerns about information sharing or accountability, a few informants expressed that it provided a space for them to find out about the conservancy (C14, C20). The liaison officer being a young woman from one of the ranches also made her more approachable to some ranch members (C7, C13).

### Reflections and decisions on how benefits should be distributed

*Strength of evidence: low*

In June and July 2022, the liaison officer and staff from the tourism operator mapped all schools in the area. The purpose of conducting this exercise was to address concerns raised by ranch members that conservancy benefits were being repeatedly shared with schools located close to the conservancy office. This issue about fair distribution of benefits was raised during the SAGE, particularly by the ranch members youth group. The mapping of schools involved collecting data such as the name, location and current needs of the school (for example, a fence, desks, books, water tanks for harvesting rainwater, laptops/desktops, secondary school fees). The list of schools was generated with input from board members and interviews with school staff.

The tourism operator was involved in this process as they often introduce wellbeing projects, either drawing on their own revenue or donations from their broader network (C11). Earlier in 2022, the tourism operator wanted to organise a one-day dental clinic at four local schools. To identify possible schools to host these clinics, the tourism operator approached the conservancy management who raised this with the conservancy board. Together, the conservancy management and board selected schools based on how easily they could be accessed by as many ranch members as possible. However, on finalising a budget, the tourism operator decided to host the clinic at three schools instead. While reflecting on their choice of schools, the conservancy board recognised their bias towards two of the schools, which had also been recommended for other programmes including book and desk donations and school meal programmes. This realisation, influenced by the process of nominating schools for the dental clinic programme along with discussions at the SAGE, encouraged them to conduct the school mapping and needs assessment in June 2022. At a board meeting, it was decided that future social programmes that involve benefit-sharing schemes should ensure they either reach all schools in the area, meet the specific needs of a school, or are provided on a rotational basis with no school receiving back-to-back benefits (C5, C8).

While this outcome was substantiated by board meeting minutes, at the time of this research, no new benefit-sharing schemes had been introduced. Furthermore, this decision of the conservancy board had not been communicated to ranch members. It was therefore only possible to verify this outcome from the perspective of the board, resulting in the strength of evidence being considered 'low'. For ranch member informants, there remained questions about the fairness of benefit distribution by the conservancy (C7, C23, C24).

### Securing of funds for governance improvement

*Strength of evidence: very high*

As noted earlier in this chapter, the SAGE results, including the ideas for action, were used to inform a project proposal led by KWCA and the conservancy management team. As described in the project proposal: "The goal of this project is to improve conservation and socio-economic outcomes of Lumo Community Wildlife Conservancy by strengthening its governance and equity principles through the implementation of specific actions born out of a SAGE carried out in November 2021" (Lumo Conservancy 2022).

This was added to by a conservancy staff member who shared that: "The SAGE was important for securing this funding since we could point to the SAGE report as evidence of the governance challenges. It helps that these challenges are recognised by the conservancy and the three ranch members, since their representatives participated in the SAGE. These problems with governance were

discussed by all of us. The SAGE report also lists actions to help make governance better, and these came from all of us” (C6).

During interviews, multiple informants highlighted aspects of governance that they hoped would change in the near future. These included:

- Conservancy rangers’ treatment of herders who bring cattle into the conservancy to graze, especially during unexpectedly dry spells
- Existing governance structures that do not consider accountability of elected board members or how information can be shared with ranch members
- The sustainability of tourism as the main source of revenue for the conservancy
- The distribution of benefits such as school bursaries, infrastructure development and employment opportunities, and
- A lack of youth and women’s representation in decision-making processes.

All of these concerns are recognised in the newly funded project involving KWCA, TTWCA and Lumo Community Wildlife Conservancy. Monitoring and evaluation of these changes within and after the project will therefore be important to understanding the medium-term impacts of SAGE towards enabling more equitable governance.

## Discussion

This report provides case study research on SAGE and its early contributions to improvements in governance of area-based conservation. The substantiated outcomes highlighted in the three case studies demonstrate the potential for SAGE to encourage and contribute to improvements in governance. In this concluding chapter, we provide an analysis of outcomes across the case studies, highlighting similarities and outlining next steps for SAGE.

### Cross-case-study outcome analysis

The three case studies presented in this report each had different governance structures and conservation priorities. SAGE was introduced to these sites by civil society organisations that support area-based conservation and community rights. This was with the intention of supporting self-assessments of governance and equity at these sites, identifying areas for improvement, and generating ideas for action through deliberations within and between key actor groups. Across the case studies, researchers identified 11 substantiated outcomes to which SAGE contributed. The strength of evidence for these outcomes varied, with nine outcomes being strongly substantiated by at least five informants from at least two actor groups. Six of the outcomes were also supported by other forms of evidence such as planning documents, meeting minutes, presentations, booklets, photographs and reports.

The majority of outcomes related to improvements in information sharing, planning processes, and participation in decision making. SAGE's influence on improving women's participation in meetings and leadership at Lower Luano GMA and TCO Tacana II was evident, with many women residing at both sites attributing changes in men's attitudes and their own confidence, at least in part, to discussions at the SAGEs and subsequent workshops and training. The SAGEs at TCO Tacana II and Lumo Community Wildlife Conservancy both included discussions about youth participation, with the latter having youth conservancy members as a separate actor group for the assessment. These discussions highlighted the importance of considering youth perspectives and including them in PCA decision-making processes, as reflected in the recently approved Convention on Biological Diversity's Global Biodiversity Framework (CBD 2022a). Similarly, information about traditional leadership and grievance mechanisms at Lower Luano GMA and women and youth leadership at TCO Tacana II, were shared through workshops and meetings. At Lumo Community Wildlife Conservancy, a key action of the conservancy board and management team was to employ a young woman from one of the conservancy ranches as a liaison officer, with the intention of improving transparency, information sharing and coordination with other key actors. While all three sites pursued different approaches to action planning, the SAGE process and results helped provide legitimacy to the actions planned and the issues they aimed to address.

The case studies also demonstrated how SAGE can bring different actors together and provide them with a framework for understanding each other's perspectives. Across the sites, the SAGEs were often the first time many of the key actors had come together to consider each other's perspectives, which in itself could be an important step towards improving governance. However, in the case of the local municipality and communities of TCO Tacana II, the SAGE was unable to resolve underlying conflict and resentment.

At Lumo Community Wildlife Conservancy and Lower Luano GMA, it was unclear if SAGE had contributed to more equitable benefit sharing, however it encouraged those in decision-making positions to reflect on their benefit distribution decisions.

The prevalence of several substantiated outcomes at these three sites within the first year is also likely due to the influence of the individual lead facilitators. These were highly skilled facilitators who successfully anticipated governance challenges based on their own prior experiences of PCAs (for example, ensuring a separate youth group was present at the SAGE at Lumo Community Wildlife Conservancy) and pursued inclusive and participatory action planning processes (such as at TCO Tacana II). At Lower Luano GMA and TCO Tacana II, having a funded action planning process in place for the SAGE results to feed in to also made a significant difference to the number of substantiated outcomes at each site.

## Recommendations for SAGE going forward

This report explores and highlights some of the early contributions of SAGE to improving governance in area-based conservation. This research also points to important next steps to enhance the prospects for SAGE to have more substantial, broad-ranging and longer-term impacts on PCA governance.

At most of the 15 scoping sites, outcome leads were related mainly to the SAGE process rather than specific governance-related actions or changes. As described in the introduction to this report, many key informants attributed this lack of SAGE-influenced governance changes to a lack of funding for action planning processes. While one of the feasibility criteria for a SAGE is that “PCA managers and at least some other actors are willing to work together to implement some actions to improve governance and equity”, this willingness to implement actions needs to be supported by action planning guidance and funding. In theory, SAGE aims to generate simple ideas for action that do not require much finance but rely on political and social capital to achieve them, and that provide momentum for further actions to improve governance. An example of such actions would be the leadership workshops and increased participation of women in meetings at TCO Tacana II. However, at many of the other SAGE sites, key informants reported that in order to be done effectively and fairly, seemingly simple tasks — like sharing information or marking established PCA boundaries — still require some financial resourcing alongside political will.

An important next step is the development of Phase 3 of SAGE — the Taking action phase — and consideration of whether it is appropriate to refer to it as an impact boosting phase going forward. Describing Phase 3 as optional has been confusing for some SAGE convenors and funders, who only considered the costs of Phases 1 and 2. At a few of the sites featured in this report, key informants shared that underestimating the importance of Phase 3 resulted in long delays to action planning and implementation, which at times caused hostility between some actors. As described by a SAGE convenor: “As much as you might tell SAGE participants that we cannot promise anything during the assessment, when you are asking them to come up with ideas for action, they will develop expectations. And what happens when you cannot support implementation of those actions?”. Our recommendation would therefore be to ensure SAGE convenors and participants are able, at least in principle, to commit to support all three phases of SAGE.

The development of Phase 3 will also improve understanding of what kind of changes in governance, wellbeing, management and conservation SAGE can influence in the long term. PCA sites that have used SAGE and produced action plans have largely drawn on existing practices within area-based conservation. These include capacity-building and awareness-raising activities, information sharing through different platforms, and inviting marginalised key actor groups to participate in meetings. However, these plans rarely include ideas for improving recognition of rights, accountability or respect among key actors. It is understandably challenging for SAGE participants to suggest new ideas that challenge power dynamics underpinning relationships between different actors. However, as Phase 3 is developed and made available to more PCA sites using SAGE, it would be valuable to gather and share experiences of innovative actions between sites.

## Conclusion

As outlined in the introduction of this report, this research examines the hypothesis: **Use of SAGE does, under certain conditions, lead to improvements in governance of area-based conservation.** This hypothesis is closely associated with SAGE’s theory of change, which assumes that key site-level actors taking action informed by SAGE will deliver more equitable governance. This research therefore provides empirical evidence supporting this assumption, particularly on aspects of governance such as: more equitable and effective participation in decision making; information sharing; and planning processes. The findings of this research also provide helpful insights on how to further develop SAGE as a tool for improving environmental governance of area-based conservation.



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This report provides case study research to assess the effectiveness of the SAGE methodology to improve environmental governance of area-based conservation (that is, protected and conserved areas). SAGE, or Site-level Assessment of Governance and Equity, uses a multi-actor process where key actors lead the assessment of governance and equity of conservation efforts, as well as the planning, implementation and monitoring of actions to improve governance.

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International Institute for Environment and Development  
Third Floor, 235 High Holborn, London WC1V 7DN, UK

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