

## **Report of Activities for the Tropical Conservation and Development Program**

### ***Applied Community-Oriented Conservation Skills Workshop (April 2016)***

For a few days late last Spring (April 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>) 18 conservation biologists from Latin America, Nepal, and Indonesia assembled in Carr Hall to attend a two-day applied community conservation skills workshop led by Dr. Doug Sheil from the Norwegian University of Life Sciences. The event, made possible by a generous working group grant from TCD and support from the Biology Department, was a collaboration between the Natural Resource Management in Africa and REDD+ Forest Policy & Economics Working Groups.

Doug is a distinguished scholar and leader in building on community priorities to shape ecological research programs. His work spans tropical forests from East Africa to Southeast Asia and a major focus of his work is balancing diverse demands for forest resources while promoting biodiversity. Benefits of this work to local communities have included a review of tools for incorporating local knowledge, preferences, and values into conservation decisions, a proposal for a set of principles to reconcile contrasting land uses with a landscape perspective, and a range of documented specific on-the-ground experiences with local communities to manage wildlife and other critical resources. He arrived with an impressive toolkit of engagement methods from his research program that he shared with workshop attendees.

Doug used his facilitation skills to bring out the existing talent in the room through hands-on and interactive activities. We began by introducing ourselves in a rather unconventional way— by drawing self-portraits and discussing them. We also reviewed key literature by quickly reading hot-topic papers in small groups and then summarizing key points for the larger group. This exercise helped to turn people into a participatory mindset and open to thinking broadly.

One of the biggest challenges to community-based conservation is ensuring all voices are heard. We learned by example and also were exposed to several strategies for facilitation of discussions in groups where people differ in personality and may not have equal social status. Likewise, making sense of many voices can be difficult. We implemented several methods of querying groups and summarizing their views with hypothetical examples and were able to see how these tools work first hand.

As a group we were very impressed with how much we were able to learn in such a short time. "It was a great experience to hear real issues experienced by the participants and how to address those problems." – *Ruslandi*. "It was a great workshop not only because of the valuable skills that were introduced to us by Doug Sheil, but also because the participant group was composed of scholars practicing in many different fields. It is always fascinating to learn how any given method can be applied to multiple settings in multiple ways." – *Akemi Inamoto*. Thank you Doug, Workshop participants, Biology, and TCD!

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