

Voices, Choices, Action Framework – A Freshwater Review
SCOPE OF WORK

Jan 10, 2019

The Voice, Choice, and Action (VCA) Framework ([available here](#)) describes The Nature Conservancy's approach for partnering with indigenous people and local communities¹ on shared conservation and sustainable development goals. This framework includes four pillars and two cross-cutting foundational elements that are essential for achieving successful outcomes for people and nature in community-based conservation projects:

Pillars

1. Secure rights to territories and resources
2. Strong community leadership and capacity
3. Effective multi-stakeholder platforms for decision-making
4. Environmentally sustainable economic development opportunities

Cross-cutting Foundational Elements

- A. Cultural connection to place
- B. Equity

The VCA framework was developed by practitioners with expertise in *land* conservation (i.e., grasslands, tropical forests). We are interested in applying the VCA framework in a *freshwater* ecosystem context, specifically addressing issues around communities' use of, access to, and management of freshwater resources including: water supply for domestic or agricultural needs, freshwater inland fisheries, and subsistence use of wetlands. We seek a review of each of these pillars and cross-cutting foundational elements for their relevance and application to freshwater ecosystems and communities' uses of freshwater resources. Our focus is initially for specific geographies in Africa and South America but ultimately, we seek guidance that is relevant globally to any combination of freshwater ecosystem and freshwater resource use.

We are seeking a consultant to review the VCA framework with an eye toward increasing its relevance to freshwater resource use and conservation. Questions to be addressed are listed below. We expect this research project to be completed using published and grey literature, possibly supplemented by phone interviews with experts in the field. We do not anticipate any field work or travel. We expect regular communication (i.e., approximately every 6 weeks) via teleconference on progress and to discuss questions and direction. All work must be complete, and invoices submitted, **by May 31**.

¹ We define indigenous people and local communities as those people who possess a profound relationship with their natural landscapes and depend on these territories for their cultural, religious, health, and/or economic needs.

Deliverables include a final report answering the questions listed below, and an annotated bibliography of key references.

Please submit a brief proposal (1-3 pages) with a list of project researcher(s), their relevant experience, and a budget, **by January 28**. For questions, please contact Allison Aldous, aaldous@tnc.org or at 503-704-5866.

Questions to be addressed:

Specific questions for three of the four pillars listed above include:

1. Secure rights to territories and resources

- a. What is the bundle of rights that is necessary for communities to successfully manage their resources for both biodiversity and social outcomes (i.e., access, withdrawal, management, exclusion, alienation, due process)? How do different types of rights influence communities' long-term access to adequate supplies of clean water or other freshwater resources to meet basic needs and/or economic opportunities? Are some more secure than others? For example, are traditional or customary rights adequate?
- b. What rights are necessary for communities to have a high level of water security? Are there aspects of water security that are not included in one of the VCA pillars or foundational elements?
- c. Under what circumstances are land rights important for guaranteeing access to water and sustainable management of freshwater resources? Are there other rights that are needed for communities to ensure the health of the freshwater resources? If the community-based conservation strategies are tied to land-based activities (e.g., upland restoration being done to protect freshwater habitat or instream processes) does the community need both land and water rights for the strategy to be successful?

2. Effective multi-stakeholder platforms for decision-making

- a. What governance structures and decision-making bodies and/or processes are essential for freshwater community-based conservation to be effective?
- b. Which stakeholders are essential members for both participation and decision-making?

3. Environmentally sustainable economic development opportunities

- a. What is the full suite of economic development activities that involve use of or effects to freshwater species and/or ecosystems, and that have sustainable management options? (e.g., inland freshwater fisheries, agriculture, water-based tourism).

4. General questions:

- a. What evidence is there for a relationship between community-based natural resource management of freshwater resources and the protection of freshwater biodiversity?
- b. Is there anything else in the VCA framework that needs to be adjusted to reflect freshwater resource management?