



# CSC STORIES

## Developing Conflict-Sensitive Management Strategies in Public-Private Conservation Concessions in the Amazon

Situated in the heart of the Peruvian Amazon, the Los Amigos Conservation Concession was established in 2001 to protect the forests in the Los Amigos watershed in Madre de Dios, Peru. Operated by the non-governmental conservation organization La Asociación para la Conservación de la Cuenca Amazonica (ACCA), Los Amigos protects 360,000 acres of old-growth forest. The concession lies inside the Tropical Andes biodiversity Hotspot and is one of the most biodiverse places on the planet. The landscape is a mosaic of terrestrial and aquatic habitats and provides sanctuary for 12 globally threatened wildlife species, including giant otters, harpy eagles, spider monkeys and jaguars. It is also an important area for conservation science and biological research.

While the region is biologically rich, it also holds large reserves of valuable commodities, including several species of tropical hardwoods and important gold reserves along the Madre de Dios River, Los Amigos and Tambopata rivers and their tributaries. These reserves, along with other non-timber forest products such as Brazil nuts, honey and freshwater fish, provide needed livelihoods for the native peoples of the region and local communities of indigenous and immigrant communities.

The intersection of biodiversity and economic interests has increasingly become a source of conflict in the region, and because protected areas are seen as restricting access to valuable resources, they are often at the focal point of controversy. Those conflicts are played out in a variety of ways, from political protests in urban centres to verbal confrontations between protected area managers and stakeholders to violent conflicts related to the informal timber and gold sectors.

Due to a convergence of several factors like rising gold prices, increased road construction and policies to encourage resource exploration in the region, the Los Amigos concession has seen increases in social conflicts around its borders over the past several years. However, because ACCA is a non-governmental organization, its options for enforcement, monitoring and protection are constrained. This has meant that, historically, they have had to react to conflicts as they occur and respond to individual incidents.

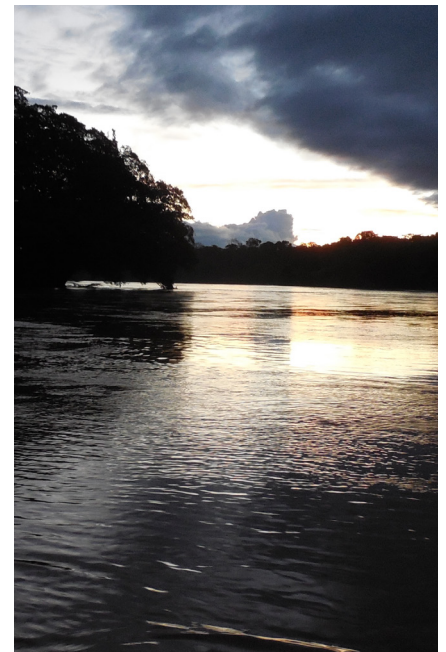
In 2012 ACCA made the strategic decision to proactively address the issues of conflict in and around Los Amigos by using the conflict-sensitive conservation (CSC) toolkit to first understand conflict dynamics in and around the concession, and then identify conservation management strategies to find opportunities to use conservation as a tool for conflict prevention and mitigation. Funded under a partnership with Columbia University, the project team consisted of field personnel who operate the protected area, conservation managers from ACCA, and researchers from The Earth Institute at Columbia.

The CSC initiative was framed around conflict-sensitizing the Los Amigos management plan, a five-year document that describes the conservation targets, programs and initiatives that ACCA undertakes in the concession. A new management plan was needed for period 2013–2018, and the CSC team designed a process to conflict-sensitize the new plan by assessing conflict dynamics in the region. To accomplish this, the CSC initiative consisted of a multi-tiered, iterative set of conflict analysis workshops followed by a planning workshop and the socialization of the management plan with affected stakeholders.

The initial conflict analysis workshops convened managers and field personnel from Los Amigos and other adjacent protected areas in the region, including Manu National Park. Due to the low-intensity and episodic nature of conflict in the region, formal conflict analysis had previously not been conducted. This initial set of workshops served to build a network of managers for information-sharing and collaboration around conflict issues that affect protected areas in the region. The inclusion of multiple management perspectives likewise provided a rich and full baseline of information on conflicts, stakeholders and conflict drivers. The sensitivities surrounding informal resource extraction and trade made it difficult to involve community stakeholders in the initial workshops. However, to fully understand the conflict dynamics in the region, infusing their voice and perspective into the conflict analysis was paramount for the CSC team. To navigate that dilemma, the team undertook a large field initiative and travelled to each community surrounding the concession. Through interviews, focus groups and community plenaries, the team was able to elicit community perspectives from civic groups, indigenous representatives, local governments and traditional authorities. This served three purposes: 1) giving a voice to affected stakeholders in the conflict-sensitization of the management plan; 2) ground truthing the initial view of conflict dynamics from the conservation managers; and, perhaps most importantly, 3) building bridges and constructive engagement between communities and conservation managers.



The final component of the CSC initiative involved reconvening managers and field personnel from ACCA to synthesize the conflict data, prioritize issues and threats, and design possible mitigation strategies to include in both their conservation programming and the Los Amigos management plan. With a plan and strategy in place, the team held a series of socialization workshops with stakeholders to introduce the plan and re-engage stakeholders through constructive dialogue.



Each phase of the CSC initiative was designed to simultaneously elicit the information needed to design conflict-sensitive programming and to serve as a point of dialogue and trust-building among stakeholders. The information gained through the initiative gave important insight to ACCA on how current programming was affecting conflict dynamics in the region and enabled them to develop strategies to consolidate the positive impacts of their existing work. Through the engagement strategy, the CSC initiative made important in-roads for ACCA with adjacent protected areas, local communities and authorities in the area. These in-roads now serve as important channels for coordination, communication and further cooperative engagement.

ACCA is now championing conflict-sensitive approaches to resource management throughout the region, and is currently undertaking a large initiative to build conflict management capacity among other conservation areas in the Peruvian Amazon.

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