

Bridging gaps in conservation

Bapa Hendri was born in the village. From a young age, he has learned to farm, hunt for meat, collect tree resin, rattan and timber in the forest, and mine for gold in the river.



He works as a member of the field staff at the conservation research station. His practical knowledge and deep understanding of the forest and community are crucial to local conservation projects.



The conservation project is not Bapa's only job. He is also a logger.

Half of that batch is mine. By the way, have you procured the rest of the materials for the conservation site?

Fine. And yes, we can drop them off at the site tomorrow, then take the conservationists to the monitoring station.

4

Perfect. Thank you, I will let the team know we have the transportation.

5

I'm the only one who can walk this tightrope because I understand both sides.

6

The next day

Just another day at the office...

7



Takeaways

1. Western scientific frameworks are usually held up as the basis of conservation expertise. But conservation relies on many other kinds of expertise, including traditional knowledge, environmental knowledge, social and cultural diplomacy, and skilled labour. Without these, conservation activities could not take place.
2. Conservation staff and collaborators have their own goals and responsibilities, which may not always perfectly align with conservation agendas.
3. Local knowledge and experience are crucial to the success of conservation initiatives, from physical labour to social mediation. Yet, these are often overlooked forms of expertise. Recognizing and valuing local expertise is essential for building effective and inclusive conservation efforts.



Questions for conservation practitioners:

1. What skills and knowledge do you find important for your conservation work?
2. Who do you see as experts in conservation? Are there other types of experts that might be overlooked?
3. How does scientific knowledge shape your approach to conservation? What are the limitations of this approach?
4. Are there local or traditional knowledge systems that contribute to your conservation efforts? How might they be better appreciated?
5. How would recognising different forms of expertise change conservation practice?
6. How can you work productively with complex individuals like Bapa Hendri, who have connections across various sectors?

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