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# Insights from practitioners in Madagascar to inform more effective international conservation funding

Johanna Eklund<sup>1</sup>, Jennifer Zavaleta Cheek<sup>2</sup>, Luciano Andriamaro<sup>3</sup>, Tsiorisoa Mihanta Bakoliarimisa<sup>4</sup>, Christina Galitsky<sup>5</sup>, Ony Rabearivololona<sup>6†</sup>, Domoïna J. Rakotobe<sup>7</sup>, Harifidy O. Ralison<sup>8</sup>, Lalatiana Odile Randriamiharisoa<sup>9</sup>, Joe Rasamoelinarivo<sup>10</sup>, David Rasolofoson<sup>11</sup>, Joëlisoa Ratsirarson<sup>12</sup>, Andriamandimbisoa Razafimpahanana<sup>7</sup>, Eric Marcel Temba<sup>13</sup>, Aili Pyhälä<sup>1\*</sup> and Daniel C. Miller<sup>14\*</sup>

Correspondence:

Dr Johanna Eklund  
Development Studies, PO Box 18 (Unioninkatu 35),  
Helsinki Institute of Sustainability Science,  
00014 University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland  
email: johanna.f.eklund@helsinki.fi

\* AP and DCM should be considered joint senior author

† In memorandum of Ony Rabearivololona deceased 31 March 2021.

## ABSTRACT

Bending the curve on biodiversity loss will require increased conservation funding and a wiser resource allocation. Local conservation practitioner expertise will be vital in decision-making processes related to funding. Yet, the integration of their insights into funder priorities and strategies is often insufficient, particularly in countries where international funding comprises the bulk of support for conservation. More generally, the role of funding remains under-analyzed in conservation and opportunities for funder-practitioner dialogue at a broad strategic level are limited. We seek to address these critical gaps by presenting results from a participatory workshop of conservation practitioners in Madagascar, one of the world's biodiversity hotspots. Five major areas of need emerged, and these challenges need to be addressed if we are to see long-term solutions to the biodiversity crisis: (1) strengthen law and policy implementation; (2) ensure sustainability of funding; (3) improve coherence and coordination within and beyond the conservation sector; (4) support self-strengthening of local communities; and (5) invest in capacity development. This article elaborates on these thematic

areas and their implications for international donors in Madagascar and beyond. Our approach demonstrates a way for amplifying in-country practitioner voices in a collaborative way and highlights the need for their inclusion at all stages of conservation program development so that funding priorities better reflect local needs and aspirations while enhancing prospects for enduring conservation outcomes.

## RÉSUMÉ

Pour infléchir la courbe de la perte de biodiversité il est nécessaire d'augmenter le financement pour la conservation et d'assurer une allocation plus stratégique des ressources. L'expertise des praticiens de la conservation locaux sera vitale dans les processus décisionnels liés au financement. Toutefois, l'intégration de leurs connaissances dans les priorités et les stratégies des bailleurs de fonds est souvent insuffisante, en particulier dans les pays où le financement international représente la majeure partie du soutien à la conservation. Plus généralement, le rôle du financement reste sous-analysé dans le domaine de la conservation et les possibilités de dialogue entre

- 1 Development Studies, PO Box 18 (Unioninkatu 35), Helsinki Institute of Sustainability Science, FI-00014 University of Helsinki, Finland
- 2 South Dakota State University, Department of Natural Resources, 1175 Medary Ave. Brookings, SD 57006 and Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences, 1102 S. Goodwin Ave. Urbana, IL 61801, University of Illinois, USA
- 3 Conservation International, PO Box 5178, Villa Hajanirina Lot II W 27 D, Street Francois Vittori, Ankorahotra, Antananarivo 101, Madagascar,
- 4 Tambazotran'ny Fokonolona Mitantana Harena Voajanahary (TAFO MIHAAVO), Logt 245 Cité Akany Firaisana Itaosy, Antananarivo 102, Madagascar
- 5 Blue Ventures, Villa Huguette, Lot II U 86 Cité Planton, Ampahibe, Antananarivo 101, Madagascar
- 6 Ministère de l'Environnement et du Développement Durable, BP 571, Rue Farafaty, Ampandrianomby, Antananarivo 101, Madagascar
- 7 Wildlife Conservation Society, Villa Ifanomezantsoa Soavimbahoaka PO Box 8500, Antananarivo, Madagascar
- 8 World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) Madagascar, PO Box 738, Antananarivo 101, Madagascar
- 9 Madagascar National Parks, Lot AI 10C Ambatobe, BP 1424, Antananarivo, Madagascar
- 10 Association FANAMBY, Lot II K 39 Bis Ankadivato, Antananarivo 101, Madagascar
- 11 Groupe d'Étude et de Recherche sur les Primates de Madagascar (GERP), 34 cité des professeurs Forduchesse, Antananarivo, Madagascar
- 12 Department of Agroecology, Biodiversity and Climate change, School of Agronomy (ESSA-ABC), PO Box 175, University of Antananarivo, Antananarivo 101, Madagascar
- 13 Zoologie et Biodiversité Animale, Faculty of Sciences, PO Box 906, University of Antananarivo, Madagascar
- 14 Keough School of Global Affairs, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, IN, USA and Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences, 1102 S. Goodwin Ave. Urbana, IL 61801, University of Illinois, USA

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Madagascar Conservation & Development  
Institute and Museum of Anthropology  
University of Zurich  
Winterthurerstrasse 190  
CH-8057 Zurich  
Switzerland

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BP 3391  
Antananarivo, 101, Madagascar

bailleurs de fonds et praticiens à un niveau stratégique général sont limitées. Nous cherchons à combler ces lacunes essentielles en présentant les résultats d'un atelier participatif des praticiens de la conservation à Madagascar, l'un des points chauds de la biodiversité mondiale. Cinq grands domaines de besoins ont émergé et ces défis doivent être relevés si nous voulons voir des solutions à long terme à la crise de la biodiversité : (1) renforcer la mise en œuvre des lois et des politiques ; (2) assurer la durabilité du financement ; (3) améliorer la cohérence et la coordination ; (4) soutenir l'auto-renforcement des communautés locales ; et (5) investir dans le développement des capacités. Cet article développe ces domaines thématiques et leurs implications pour les bailleurs de fonds internationaux à Madagascar et au-delà. Les défis persistants identifiés sont par exemple le rôle de l'État et sa faible capacité à faire respecter la loi, la difficulté à trouver des financements pour les coûts opérationnels et la gestion de base, ainsi que les lourdes exigences en matière de rapports, et les capacités et ressources nécessaires à cet effet. La communauté des bailleurs devrait reconnaître que les solutions profitables pour les deux parties sont rares à court terme, et démontrer une plus grande volonté d'accepter et de discuter d'un échec comme un moyen d'avancer au lieu de le stigmatiser. Une plus grande coordination au sein et entre les différents groupes et secteurs est nécessaire pour éviter que les efforts ne soient dupliqués, que les lacunes restent non comblées ou que les échecs de mise en œuvre ne se répètent. En raison d'une mauvaise conduite, ou par crainte de celle-ci, de nombreux donateurs semblent avoir évité de travailler avec des acteurs étatiques, favorisant plutôt les ONG internationales de conservation. Cette approche n'est cependant qu'une solution à court terme, car elle ne contribue qu'à renforcer faiblement la capacité nationale à aborder et à surmonter la corruption dans le secteur de la conservation. Pour aller de l'avant, il est essentiel de donner une voix plus forte à ceux qui connaissent le mieux le contexte spécifique et la mémoire institutionnelle des projets précédents. Le processus de réflexion et d'interaction dans l'atelier a permis de dégager des perceptions concrètes pour Madagascar, mais pertinentes pour les autres pays tropicaux où le financement international prédomine dans le domaine de la conservation. Cette approche démontre une manière d'amplifier les voix des praticiens nationaux de manière collaborative et souligne la nécessité de les inclure dans toutes les étapes du développement des programmes de conservation afin que les priorités de financement reflètent mieux les besoins et les aspirations locaux tout en améliorant les perspectives de résultats durables de la conservation.

### THE NEED TO REFORM FUNDING STRUCTURES

Enduring biodiversity conservation success requires adequate funding. In the highly biodiverse but often economically poor countries of the tropics, the lion's share of conservation funding derives from official development assistance, private philanthropy, and other international sources (Waldron et al. 2013). Such funding remains well below estimates of financial need (Deutz et al. 2020), with many high-biodiversity countries in the Global South especially underfunded (Waldron et al. 2013). However, successful funding outcomes are not only a matter of amounts, but also how and on what the money is spent. Effective spending is therefore paramount as the global community seeks to find solutions to bridge conservation financing gaps under a post-2020 biodiversity framework (Convention on Biological Diversity 2020). In-country

practitioner insights and experience are critical to the wise allocation of resources (Ostrom 1990, Smith et al. 2009). Yet, local practitioners' voices are not always heard in shaping funding priorities and strategies at the possible cost of effective, just, and long-lasting biodiversity outcomes (Smith et al. 2009, Rai et al. 2021).

We address the need for in-country practitioner perspectives to inform conservation funding decision-making with a focus on Madagascar. Recognition of the importance of Madagascar's rich endemic biological heritage in combination with it being among the poorest countries in the world, has led to major international donor investments over the past three decades (Miller et al. 2013, Waldron et al. 2013, Waeber et al. 2016). Despite this, Madagascar has lost 44 % of its forest area since the 1950s (Vieilledent et al. 2018) and has the highest number of threatened species of any country (IUCN 2019). Saving Madagascar's biodiversity is thus of global concern. However, despite decades of financial support to save the island's unique biodiversity, the impacts of conservation funding have been meagre (Freudenberger 2010, Corson 2016, Waeber et al. 2016).

What has made it so challenging to translate invested funds to conservation success in Madagascar? We address this question and provide a forum through which practitioners in Madagascar can share their insights on how funders might more effectively support conservation in this globally important biodiversity hotspot. The funders we address are bi- and multilateral aid agencies and private foundations, recognizing that these donor types have different mandates and objectives and may operate differently in how they engage with in-country practitioners. Different donor types may therefore have different roles to play in relation to the recommendations we present.

We believe the insights and approach to amplifying in-country practitioner voices developed in this article will be applicable in many other countries, especially where international funding predominates in conservation. Given that Madagascar has faced political instability, corruption, and weak institutions (Kull 2014, Jones et al. 2019), recommendations may be especially relevant to countries that have struggled with such governance issues.

### ELICITING PRACTITIONER INSIGHTS

The findings presented in this article derive from a two-day workshop held in Antananarivo, Madagascar in January 2020. Representatives from well-established organizations with documented experience receiving international conservation funding from a range of aid and foundation donors were invited. Invitees included those from Malagasy conservation and development organizations and networks, the national parks agency, international conservation nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and university units involved in conservation. Eighteen participants (7 women, 11 men), representing eleven conservation organizations attended (8 were from Malagasy associations or networks, 8 from in-country offices of international NGOs, 1 from local universities, and 1 from the national parks agency). Three international researchers and three Malagasy collaborators helped facilitate the workshop.

The overall goal of the workshop was to identify challenges and solutions in translating conservation funding into long-term impacts. To achieve this goal, we adapted scanning and visioning-methods commonly used in futures research (Bengston et al. 2012) and conservation research priority-setting (Sutherland et al.

2011). Workshop participants first recorded key challenges to adequate and effective conservation funding they had faced on individual notecards (Table 1). Workshop facilitators grouped the challenges thematically with iterative feedback from participants. Participants then anonymously voted on which topics they thought needed the most attention from the international funding community (Table 1). Potential solutions and enabling conditions required to implement them were discussed in breakout groups and subsequently among all workshop participants (Table 2). Finally, we refined conclusions drawn during the workshop through collective drafting of this article. All participants, including workshop facilitators, were offered the opportunity to be co-authors.

## WHAT DONORS NEED TO KNOW

Workshop participants identified 64 challenges to effectively translate funding into long-term conservation outcomes (Table 1). The top five areas of need were: (1) strengthen implementation of law and policy; (2) ensure sustainability of funding; (3) improve

coherence and coordination; (4) support self-strengthening of local communities; and (5) invest in capacity development. These areas of need are presented in the order of importance as ranked by workshop participants and each includes a description of the need and related recommendations for conservation funding. We highlight that actions to address these needs must involve a variety of actors across different scales.

**STRENGTHEN IMPLEMENTATION OF LAW AND POLICY.** Conservation actors in Madagascar face continuous challenges related to weak law enforcement, corruption, and insufficient involvement of relevant government agencies in conservation and environmental management. Madagascar is currently performing poorly on global governance metrics, ranking 158 out of 198 on the Corruption Perception Index (Transparency International 2020) and showing steady declines in good governance since 2008 (Kaufmann and Kraay 2020). Willingness to curb official misconduct is limited as those in positions of power sometimes benefit

Table 1. Identified challenges to adequate and effective conservation funding and their thematic categorization by workshop participants. Areas of need ordered based on votes (recorded in parentheses) for total number of identified challenges.

Areas of need	Thematic grouping	Identified challenges (individual notecards)
Law and Policy (21)	Law and Policy	Corruption Government and political system Lack of coherence between sectorial policies Lack of correct policies/laws Lack of enforcement of laws Lack of involvement of the administration (state) Lack of power/imbalance of power Misappropriation of law enforcement Seldom funding to deal with regional/national policies
	Lack of funding	Access to funding Co-financing Funding insufficient to provide real/tangible impacts Funding not enough Funding too focused, not integrated, not addressing reality Lack of funding Reality on the ground not understood by funders
Sustainability of funding (21)	Types of funding	Big donors/grants injecting too much money in area without proper foresight on effects Funding not flexible enough for other uses and to deal with unforeseen issues Limited means Lots of money for paper parks (not involving communities/others affected - not achieving conservation) Restricted funding
	Short-term funding	Funding too short-term (3 years or even less) No certainty (can we hire - will we have funding after 2, 3, 5 years?) Short-term Short-term funding Short-term funding of funders Sustainability of funding
Coherence and Coordination (15)	Heavy procedures (reporting etc.)	Governmental funding associated with heavy procedures Heavy administrative procedure Heavy procedures Inconsistent (changing during grant term) or too much administration and reporting requirements Procedures Requirements of donors State / local government procedure: e.g. delegation contract when legalization is required to obtain financing
	Coherence and Coordination	Competition between grantees to get funding (players) Inability to report negative results (negative effects on future funding) Intersectorality Lack of awareness or information at local level Lack of trust between stakeholders Limited coordination between funders and risk of duplication of funding Not coordinated among groups (NGOs, Government, etc.)
Local community and stakeholder involvement (13)	Access to information	Capitalization of lessons learned Restricted access to information and research results
	Local communities	Capacity Communities expect quick results Cultural barriers, e.g. inter-clan conflicts impeding collaboration Difficulty to get funding for local communities Do not consider the well-being aspect Involvement of local communities Lack of capacity at local level, those who should be managing the resources (and getting the funding) Lack of self-confidence for change Many barriers to engagement outside conservation, like social services (health, education, etc.) No recognition of local communities' contribution to biodiversity conservation Overlapping of protected areas and communities conserved areas Precarity of local communities Unsatisfying outcomes
Capacity development (11)	Other stakeholders	Involvement of stakeholders Lack of consultation of all stakeholders during policy making Mentality of stakeholders
	Capacities	Weak capacity of sub-grantees Writing proposals
	Personnel/ Human resources	Change of leadership and implementing team

from illegal activities (Randriamalala and Liu 2010). Previous research has repeatedly raised concerns about poor governance and its effect on conservation in Madagascar, but the issue is sensitive and exacerbated by political instability (Jones et al. 2019, Pyhälä et al. 2019).

Many of these governance challenges require structural fixes that might appear to lie beyond the scope of what the donor community can address or influence directly. This was something that workshop participants disagreed with. They provided several suggestions how funders could redress this issue. For example, donors could invest in awareness raising campaigns and specific training on how to deal with misconduct. Donors also can decide the actors they will support, and to require that principles of good governance are followed. Due to misconduct, or the fear of it, many donors appear to have avoided working with state actors, instead favoring international conservation NGOs (Kull 2014). This approach is only a short-term solution, however, as it does little to strengthen national capacity to address and overcome corruption in the conservation sector. When funders only work with international NGOs it gives these organizations unequal power and risks that they narrowly advance Western conservation agendas (Rodríguez et al. 2007), which in turn risks excluding various types of actors and national viewpoints, ranging from individuals, to communities, to the Malagasy state itself. To avoid this scenario, funders could provide greater support for intermediate solutions such as conservation trust funds that are managed from within the country but not directly under state control. Examples include the Madagascar Biodiversity Fund, which supports the country's protected areas, and the Tany Meva Foundation, which supports conservation and sustainable development projects led by community organizations. Donors should also consider direct support to Malagasy research institutions that can investigate governance issues in relation to conservation and develop more specific policy recommendations for addressing them.

**ENSURE SUSTAINABILITY OF FUNDING.** Participants identified three main concerns related to the sustainability of funding: international priorities may not match in-country needs, access to funding for operational costs is limited, and short-term funding cycles inhibit long-term planning. Conservation projects often must align with trends in international conservation agendas to compete for international funding (Rodríguez et al. 2007, Redford et al. 2013). In Madagascar, such trends have shifted from protected area gazettement (often with a focus on forests); to integrated conservation and development projects; to decentralization and community-based natural resource management; to market-based approaches, such as ecotourism, payment for ecosystem services, and REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation) (Kull 2014, Pollini et al. 2014, Scales 2014). International donor agenda-setting creates a need to brand operations in accordance with current global trends, even though it may not reflect what is most needed or likely to work on the ground. Two especially striking examples of abrupt changes in the local Malagasy setting are 1) the shift away from community-based natural resource use approaches that occurred following the contested election of Ravalomanana in 2001 and implementation of the Durban vision to triple the protected area coverage (Corson 2014, Pollini et al. 2014), and 2) the shift in influence when the USA emerged as the main conservation donor around the onset of the first stage of the National Environmental Action Plan (1990 on-

wards) (Kull 2014) and their abrupt exit following the political coup in 2009 (Freudenberger 2010).

An additional barrier is the increasing difficulty in finding sustained funding for basic management and operational costs, which are crucial for maintaining trained staff and long-term planning. Finally, many conservation projects are funded on short-term cycles (< 3 years). This funding paradigm creates incentives for new projects that deliver short-term reportable outcomes, but that can do little to address the underlying long-term changes needed. Participants highlighted that building community support and trust can take decades, and such long-term relationships are the foundation of some success stories (Gilchrist et al. 2020). Even as donors in Madagascar have articulated a long-term vision (e.g., USAID across three National Environment Action Plans (1990–2009) (Freudenberger 2010), in-country practitioners experienced a different reality. Political crises in 2002 and 2009 both caused hesitations among donors (Kull 2014) and were reported by workshop participants to have affected the funding situation, which set conservation progress back by undermining trust that had been built with local communities and limiting education and enforcement of protected area regulations. Such funding gaps have also meant the temporary or permanent loss of experienced staff. Finally, the burden of constantly applying for and reporting on often small grants to ensure organizational continuity eats time and resources that otherwise could be used for operations.

The funding community could address these concerns by involving in-country experts earlier in the planning stages of new funding programmes and initiatives. They could conduct needs assessments so that calls for proposals can better reflect local priorities. Some funders have already started to explore different funding mechanisms and scales of intervention that focus on organizations instead of specific projects. More funders should provide grants to cover basic operational costs. Participants noted that some donors have started to explore such options (e.g., Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Sida). Lastly, funding cycles could be creatively lengthened to enable long-term planning and activities, including those that are more labor-intensive and require building trust with local communities, while still ensuring accountability. Options for doing so include extending project duration or making longer-term commitments explicit up front while structuring disbursements so they are contingent on performance. Further supporting conservation trust funds could also help address the issue of short-term funding and the insecurity it brings.

**IMPROVE COHERENCE AND COORDINATION.** Participants highlighted that there is very little formal coordination between grantees, government, and funding actors, even though they generally share the same conservation goals. More coordination within and among different groups and sectors is needed to ensure that efforts are not duplicated, gaps not left unfilled, or that implementation failures do not repeat themselves. Lack of coordination is especially troublesome given the high turnover rate of employees in conservation organizations. Participants also highlighted how important it was for them to share “lessons learned” and openly discuss “implementation failures”, a need that has been recognized in conservation broadly (Catalano et al. 2019).

Funders can both improve coordination across projects and normalize “failures” by formally acknowledging that setbacks are

inevitably part of project implementation, dispelling the notion that reporting on them will foreclose future funding opportunities. Funders can encourage this by incorporating a discussion of setbacks in grant application and reporting processes. Specifically, funders could require grantees to reflect on the limitations of previous, related projects; discuss what issues may be a barrier to implementation and what steps they are taking to circumvent the roadblocks; and describe the potential costs of their project to socio-economic groups. Such changes can help reorient grantees from writing about wishful “win-wins” that gloss over potential problems to more frank treatment of potential limitations and trade-offs in implementation.

Funders should also be open to renegotiating terms when projects suggest alternative implementation strategies thereby supporting adaptive management. To foster more effective collaboration, funders can support communities of practice where grantees can network and learn from one another, build trust among conservation-relevant actors, and have a platform to raise emerging issues and provide more direct input into broader funding priorities. Such communities of practice have been shown to be effective in enabling social learning and boosting problem-solving capabilities (Watkins et al. 2018).

#### SUPPORT SELF-STRENGTHENING OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES.

Participants identified several challenges for local communities to effectively engage in conservation. Communities do not typically have many opportunities to be meaningfully involved in the planning and implementation of conservation projects, even though they are affected by them. Formal hearings are often legally required at the onset of projects, but two-way communication is rare, inhibiting genuine participation (Corson 2014). Lack of information and capacity are key challenges: local people might not know their rights and how to engage in decision-making processes, especially as international and national interests drive local implementation (Corson 2014). Yet local communities typically carry the highest costs of conservation, and it is rare for conservation to bring greater short-term benefits than existing practices like swidden agriculture (Neudert et al. 2017). This imbalance has meant that many attempts to incentivize conservation using local management institutions have failed or resulted in conflicts (Kaufmann 2014, Pollini et al. 2014). However, there are examples where local knowledge, norms, and practices have supported conservation and where local resource use has been governed in a way that is compatible with conservation objectives (Pollini et al. 2014). We note that most of the workshop participants are involved with new protected areas established from 2015 onwards that emphasize strong community involvement. For such protected areas, management transfers have often been negotiated with local communities and build on Dina (traditional community regulation), supported by the protected area management agency to be formalized and recognized by the state.

Funders interested in promoting biodiversity conservation are increasingly having to acknowledge and accept that local communities might have views, perceptions, and priorities that do not serve the main interests of different conservation actors. This also means that attempts to change local customs to serve a conservation agenda may have far reaching consequences that in the long term might harm sustainable outcomes (Kaufmann 2014). More funding for social sciences, especially interdisciplinary research, and support to bring this knowledge into the conservation

policy process, is needed. Funders could also improve participation and engagement by supporting civil society organizations to translate the technical language of legislation and ensure local communities know their rights and options to mediate potential conflicts with conservation and development projects. Issues related to equity and how best to compensate local communities for resource restrictions did not emerge as separate topics in the workshop, yet this is an area where the role of funders is crucial (Hockley et al. 2018). Previous research has shown that transaction costs can be high with on average only 59 % of project costs reaching local communities through microprojects related to REDD+ (Mackinnon et al. 2018). Investment in development-related projects, including direct cash transfers to alleviate poverty, may also boost community welfare while enhancing biodiversity impact as shown in other tropical countries (Ferraro and Simorangkir 2020).

**INVEST IN CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT.** The workshop participants recognized the need for more support for capacity development within local communities, within and across NGOs, and within the formal education sector. Many communities would benefit from communication, leadership, and problem-solving skills that can help empower them to self-organize and advocate for their rights and interests at larger spatio-administrative scales, not merely at village levels. Alternative livelihoods training promises to benefit communities living near protected areas specifically.

Participants identified several ways funders could support capacity development within and across civil society organizations, including support to develop individual skills in fundraising, communication, leadership, and certain technical areas, such as data analysis and statistics. To enhance capacity across organizations, funders can support the costs associated with face-to-face interactions among grantees so that they can learn about one another's efforts to minimize duplication of efforts, identify and plan to fill gaps, and discuss lessons learned. Successful networks like Forum Lafa for terrestrial protected area managers and the Mihari network (<https://mihari-network.org/>) for locally managed marine areas provide examples that could be further supported or expanded upon.

Finally, participants noted that Malagasy universities now train many conservation biologists, but existing programs do not adequately prepare students for the management roles that they are being recruited to fill. Funders could address this need by supporting efforts to revamp curricula to include core management competencies, such as developing management plans, fire monitoring with GIS software, and instruction on the use of the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool to evaluate protected area management effectiveness. Relatedly, there is a particular need for greater support for conservation social science within universities in Madagascar to ensure graduates receive the necessary training and skillset to work with people and vulnerable groups.

#### CONCLUSION

The themes and recommendations identified here are interrelated and extend beyond traditional biodiversity conservation agendas. Together, they point the need for support to address key underlying conditions like good governance and coherence and coordination. Business as usual cannot continue if the necessary transformational change is to take place and be sustained over the long term (Díaz et al. 2019). Donors have often chosen to work

with the international NGO sector to circumvent an inefficient state machinery, but there are limits to how much non-state actors can achieve on their own, especially as individual organizations. Strengthening both state and non-state institutions, ranging from local levels all the way to the level of ministries, is therefore crucial as doing so cannot only enhance the impact of specific conservation projects but also build a more broadly-based and resilient in-country conservation community (Nelson 2009). Most participants worked at the interface between international donors, government agencies, and local communities, and are therefore uniquely positioned to reflect on current challenges across actors and scales.

It is critical to allow a voice to those most familiar with the specific setting and ‘institutional memory’ of previous projects. The reflective and interactive process in the workshop led to grounded insights in Madagascar, but with relevance across tropical countries where international funding predominates in conservation. Structural changes need to take place in relation to how and when local experts are consulted, and their voices need to be heard. In-country funding recipients might be engaged in specific negotiations around project funding, but their voices are rarely heard in setting big picture priorities and strategic decision-making. We call upon the donor community to integrate in-country expertise much more strongly in conservation program and project development. In this way, true progress can be made toward ‘let-

ting the locals lead’ (Smith et al. 2009) and advancing conservation over the long term.

Even as the operational environment in Madagascar has been very challenging for international donors at times (Freudenberger 2010, Corson 2016, Jones et al. 2019), in-country practitioners have kept pushing forward, gaining valuable insights along the way. We have distilled these here, highlighting major challenges (Table 1), together with specific recommendations (Table 2) for addressing them based on hard-won experience by in-country practitioners. We recognize that donors are different and will need to coordinate among themselves which role they can play in implementing the recommendations, but given the importance of protecting biodiversity and the limited previous successes in doing so, makes it imperative to develop funding approaches that address systematic barriers. Given the on-going development of the post-2020 international biodiversity framework, the time is ripe for creative thinking and concerted action to support a transformation away from business as usual in conservation funding. Insights from in-country practitioners, as presented here, help point the way forward, especially in areas where no easy solutions exist.

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Table 2. Recommended actions for international conservation donors to address identified areas of need.

<b>Areas of need</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
Strengthen law and policy implementation	Invest in awareness raising campaigns about corruption and offer training at all levels on how to deal with misconduct.
	Support intermediate solutions in countries with weak governance in the state sector, such as conservation trust funds managed from within the country but not directly under state control; make good governance a condition for continued funding.
	Support in-country research institutions to investigate governance issues in relation to conservation and develop more specific policy recommendations for addressing them.
Ensure sustainability of funding	Involve in-country experts already at the start of the planning stages of new funding programs, initiatives, and strategies.
	Conduct needs assessments so that calls for proposals can be designed to better reflect local and national priorities.
	Provide grants to cover basic operational costs and for building organizational capacity.
Improve coherence and coordination	Extend project duration or make longer-term commitments explicit up front while structuring disbursements so they are contingent on performance.
	Normalize “failures” by formally acknowledging that setbacks are inevitably part of project implementation, dispelling the notion that reporting on them will foreclose future funding opportunities. Encourage this by incorporating a discussion of setbacks in the application and reporting processes.
	Require grantees to reflect on the limitations of previous, related projects; discuss what issues may be a barrier to implementation and what steps they are taking to reduce them; and describe the potential costs of their project across socio-economic groups.
	Adopt adaptive management strategies that are open to renegotiating terms when projects suggest alternative implementation strategies.
	Foster communities of practice where grantees can network and learn from one another, increase trust among different actors, and have a platform to raise emerging issues and provide more direct input into broader funding priorities.
Support self-strengthening of local communities	Fund initiatives where local communities collect data to highlight conservation-relevant cultural norms and practices, which can help increase interest in, motivation for, and ownership of positive conservation outcomes.
	Fund civil society organizations to translate the technical language of legislation and bureaucracy to suitable formats so that local communities are well informed and articulate about their rights and options when negotiating possible conservation and development projects.
	Where deemed appropriate by local communities, invest in community-managed development projects for alleviating poverty and boosting community welfare and wellbeing.
Invest in capacity development	Fund initiatives to develop individual skills in fundraising, communication, leadership, and some specific technical skills, such as data analysis and statistics.
	Provide for costs associated with face-to-face interactions across grantees so that they can learn about one another’s efforts to try and minimize duplication of efforts, discuss lessons learned, and identify gaps and reorient their projects to fill these gaps.
	Encourage efforts to revamp domestic university curricula to include core management competencies so that future conservation actors have both the scientific knowledge and practical skills for competence
	Invest in formal education initiatives for training future conservation social scientists in universities across the Global South

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