

# Community tradeoffs assessment

## Tool

### Purpose:

This tool presents a multi-stage approach to community-based planning that looks for hidden tradeoffs among economy, ecology, society and culture, to assist communities to undertake business, conservation and development initiatives that fit their unique value systems.

### Activities:

A step-by-step process for developing a customised community tradeoffs assessment tool comprises a preparatory stage (setting up and managing the overall process) followed by three development stages:

- 1 **Negotiating the village conceptual map**, which is specific to the community and local culture. The village conceptual map is a conceptual framework and the primary tool for analysis – an iteratively agreed, partly visual model for identifying and classifying aspects of community life, resources and forces that act upon these.
- 2 **Developing village standards** – a systematic process of setting up shared goals for the future, known as village standards. These are developed first by separate groups (e.g. women and men separately) and then together at village level. Pair-wise comparisons between every aspect of the village conceptual map (economic, social, cultural, ecological) then draw out acceptable and non-acceptable tradeoffs.
- 3 **Developing indicators** through which a community has a practical and simple means of checking whether they are achieving their standards over time, or evaluating whether any internal or external project is contributing to their goals or undermining them. Word-picture indicators work well.

### Keep in Mind

The *Community tradeoffs assessment* tool is based on the premises that:

- ★ A systematic approach is required to identify properly the benefits and costs of engaging certain activities and hidden trade-offs. Even in the most well intended participatory process, achieving this can be a practical challenge.
- ★ Sub-groups in communities need to negotiate and agree on acceptable tradeoffs, goals for the future and indicators of success for a planning, monitoring



Each of the three development stages has involves a number of individual steps, all of which are fully explained within the tool.

A further testing phase is useful to help the community evaluate, adjust and gain confidence in the tool. Once a community tradeoffs assessment tool is developed, a community can apply it independently or in conjunction with partners, to rapidly assess any proposal for business, conservation or development. To enhance accountability and to be prepared for challenges from outsiders, villagers and facilitators should also keep thorough publicly available records of the process and product.

and evaluation process to be genuinely community-based.

★ Plenty of time and patience from villagers and facilitators is needed to make this process as rewarding and representative as possible.

### **Further information**

Find full tool and other related tools and resources at:

**[www.policy-powertools.org](http://www.policy-powertools.org)**

For further information on the tool, contact  
Simone Mangal  
[simone.mangal@crepnet.net](mailto:simone.mangal@crepnet.net)

Janette Forte  
[janette\\_forte@yahoo.com](mailto:janette_forte@yahoo.com)  
or Vanda Radzik  
[Iwokrama@Iwokrama.org](mailto:Iwokrama@Iwokrama.org)