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# Advancing Collaboration with International Fund for Animal Welfare

## Approach to Collaboration

Collaboration is essential to achieving International Fund for Animal Welfare's (IFAW) vision. IFAW is increasingly focused on building strong, deep partnerships to maximize animal rescue and conservation impact. IFAW partners with local organizations, governments, local communities, and more. Collaboration can take many forms. Examples include creating and nurturing disaster response and risk reduction networks, building coalitions to advocate for strong conservation and animal welfare policies, and providing funding and technical support to organizations closely aligned to its strategy, to name a few.

For the nonprofit sector, Katie thinks it is essential to be open to meeting new organizations, talking to new people, and looking outside of your space. She suggests, "Keep your eyes open and don't be afraid of sharing with other organizations." Another piece of advice is to have patience and to understand your risk tolerance, accepting successful collaborations may take a long time to build, and pursuing innovative approaches can require a willingness to step outside of organizational comfort zones.



**Katie Miller**

**Deputy Vice President, International Operations,  
International Fund for Animal Welfare**

International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) is an international nonprofit organization pursuing a world where people and animals thrive together, through fresh thinking and bold action for animals, people and the place we call home. We are headquartered in Washington, D.C., with offices in 15 countries and projects in more than 40.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup><https://www.ifaw.org>

## Application of the 9 Considerations for Collaboration

### Build Trust

Partnerships often start with personal relationships. For this reason, it is vital to begin with building relationships to build trust. To cultivate these relationships, spend time on the ground listening to partners and stakeholders, to share and clarify expectations, and to deliver on the commitments you make.

### Have a Vision

IFAW envisions a world where animals and people thrive together, and to move closer to that, it must keep an eye on the future. We need to understand the changing dynamics of threats to animals, whether those be from wildlife crime, human activities like shipping and fishing, or consumer decisions. For example, climate change is a big challenge that will undoubtedly result in more natural disasters and change the availability of food and water, which affects both people and wildlife. IFAW works with scientists and makes scientific contributions itself to inform where to focus its energy and to pinpoint which types of collaborations are most needed. IFAW also monitors political, economic and social trends to identify the issues where collaborations will be critical to influencing policy decisions and changing consumer behavior.

### Seek to Assure the Success of Collaborators

Capacity building is an important component of IFAW's approach. IFAW engages its disaster response networks in technical trainings to build and maintain their animal rescue skills, and to ensure their teams can train new members themselves. IFAW has conducted more than 5,000 trainings worldwide in the prevention of illegal wildlife trade for wildlife rangers, customs and border officers in source, transit, and consumer countries committed

to reducing wildlife crime. IFAW's Community Engagement program utilizes participatory approaches and technical expertise to help communities co-design and implement solutions to animal-human conflict issues. IFAW also provides funding and in-kind support to key partners to ensure they have the tools needed to achieve shared outcomes. IFAW makes multi-year commitments to large-scale projects to ensure its local partners can sustain impact.

### Take Stock

IFAW has found that careful consideration of the context should drive collaboration decisions. With every project, IFAW strives to clarify the gaps between the impact it seeks and what it can deliver through its own expertise and capacity. IFAW looks for local partners that not only have the technical expertise for the project at hand, but also understand the situation, have close community ties, and are trusted by the community. Ethical considerations are also critical when choosing appropriate partners. While they do not have to agree on every issue, partners do have to understand each other's differences, trust each other's organizational integrity, and have a shared commitment to achieving the outcomes they'll work towards together.

### Start Small

Working together on concrete, time-limited projects can serve as the foundation for more ambitious, longer-term collaborations. For example, IFAW leads a disaster response network in Southeast Asia that started small and has grown over time. This network began with people and organizations that worked together on specific disaster responses and evolved into a more proactive network that addresses preparedness and risk reduction

so that the impacts of disasters on animals and people are minimized. The same has happened with IFAW's conservation work in Africa. Projects working with government wildlife agencies to reduce poaching in specific parks in Malawi, Zambia, and Kenya have led to long-term, cross-boundary, multi-stakeholder landscape protection projects that include funders, local NGOs, and communities.

### **Fail Fast, and Build Rigorous Feedback Loops**

Access to flexible funding has been essential for IFAW to respond quickly where it's needed, pioneer new approaches and course-correct along the way. IFAW is grateful to its supporters worldwide for making this possible. As expectations from funders have increased to more rigorously document project monitoring and evaluation, it has challenged IFAW in healthy ways and created new opportunities to learn what works and why. Getting the balance right between rigor and flexibility is something IFAW strives for. It is on a journey of strengthening its adaptive management to maximize impact and encourages funders and donors to foster this entrepreneurial approach of taking risks, building feedback loops, and learning from what doesn't work and from what does.

### **Take a Portfolio Approach**

IFAW's tenBoma initiative in East Africa is deeply rooted in a portfolio approach, based on building relationships with diverse community stakeholders. This project uses intelligence-based techniques and sophisticated data analysis to prevent poaching and mitigate human-wildlife conflict. Regular and varied types of intelligence about what is happening on the ground is the key to staying one step ahead. The tenBoma team collaborates with a wide range of local

stakeholders, from Maasai elders, youth and women's groups to community scouts, Kenya Wildlife Service, and other agencies to gather, analyze and share useful information to get ahead of poaching and conflict.

### **Consider Non-traditional Partners**

IFAW looks for ways to collaborate with organizations who have complementary strengths to its own that can magnify impacts. Maintaining long-term pro bono relationships with the private sector has enabled IFAW to vastly increase the visibility of its conservation and animal welfare messaging in Asia. IFAW works directly with online commerce platforms, auction houses, and other companies around the world to reduce illegal wildlife trade. It also collaborates with entrepreneurs and social media influencers to reach new audiences who are interested and invested in its work.

### **Keep Your Donors Apprised of Your Collaborations**

Donor relationships and networks are very important and can sometimes open doors to new sources of funding. IFAW has had funders of its work promote projects to other funders in their network, which contributes to sustainability and is a powerful testament to its credibility. Funders seek out IFAW due to the strong collaborations it builds with local organizations and its ability to increase the impact of their funds through these partnerships. Due to its vast network of animal rescue collaborators and the trust IFAW has built over time, IFAW assisted its largest private foundation funder in identifying local, effective organizations that are most in need of funding.

## **Future Collaborations**

For animals and people to thrive in the future despite growing environmental pressures, we have to find new and better ways to share the planet. IFAW seeks to collaborate with organizations, companies, governments, and communities that also care about animals, communities, and the environment. It seeks collaborations to implement rescue and conservation initiatives in Africa and Asia, to advocate for stronger national and international policies, and to educate, motivate, and engage new audiences to be part of the solution.

## **Interested in reading more about other collaboration stories?**

Visit Give.org to discover how other charities are using the nine considerations framework to drive collaboration within their organizations.

**Disclaimer:** All participants were interviewed about past collaborations through the framework of the 9 Considerations for Collaboration. Naturally in some organizations, not every one of the considerations are applicable to their circumstances.