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Reconciling Global and Local Priorities for Conservation and Development

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If you love tigers so much, why don't you shift all of them to Hyderabad and declare that city a tiger reserve?[1]

1. A NEW ASCENDANCY FOR LOCAL PRIORITIES IN CONSERVATION?

'People-centred conservation' is now firmly at the centre of international environmental policy discourse, after decades of dispute. Most recently, the 2003 World Parks Congress put forward the overarching principles that 'biodiversity should be conserved both for its value as a local livelihoods resource and as a national and global public good' and that 'equitable sharing of the costs and benefits of protected areas should be ensured at local, national and global levels.'[2] The Convention on Biological

1. Anonymous Chenchu hunter-gatherer, quoted in Guha, R. (1997). 'The authoritarian biologist and the arrogance of anti-humanism: wildlife conservation in the Third World'. *The Ecologist* 27: 14-19.
2. IUCN (2003). *Recommendation 29: Poverty and Protected Areas*. World Parks Congress. http://www.iucn.org/themes/wcpa/wpc2003/pdfs/outputs/recommendations/approved/english/html/r29.htm

Diversity (CBD) similarly calls for equitable benefit sharing, and has as its core mechanism the holistic 'Ecosystem Approach' (see Chapter 6), which draws on multiple interest groups within society and relies on local management institutions as far as possible. Bilateral donors and finance agencies (for example the OECD, World Bank, IMF, ADB) have jointly committed over the last decade to target development spending towards reduction of poverty.[3]

The first message from these international processes is that conservation must work for poverty alleviation. Allied to this is a second supporting message that being poor means more than lacking income: poverty has many facets and can be tackled through investments along a variety of routes towards development, particularly in healthcare and education. The range of targets and indicators of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) reflect this broad understanding of poverty. Importantly, multi-dimensional approaches to poverty reduction recognise that being poor means not just fewer goods and services, but exclusion from social decision-making – in other words, lack of power. In recognition that poverty is as much about political as economic marginalisation, international environmental policy processes call for 'strengthening mechanisms for the poor to share actively in decision making…and to be empowered as conservators in their own right'[4] and for 'freedom and choice' to be understood as a central component of human well-being and poverty reduction.[5]

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All of these international processes provide a forceful and widely legitimised framework for a people-centred conservation in which the viewpoints and choices of poor people are taken seriously. This chapter outlines some of the key areas in which progress can be made to take up the practical challenges of reconciling global and local priorities for conservation and development.

3. OECD (1996). ***Shaping the 21st Century: The Contribution of Development Co-operation.*** **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Washington DC, USA.**
4. WPC (2003). ***op.cit.***
5. Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (2003). ***Ecosystems and Human Well-being: A Framework for Assessment.*** **Island Press, Washington DC, USA.**

2. DIFFERENT PERCEPTIONS OF BIODIVERSITY VALUES

In general usage, conservation of biodiversity means sustaining total biological variety for the global public good. But neither 'conservation' nor 'biodiversity' has a single agreed meaning.[6] Local understandings of ecosystems and values attached to biological diversity are by definition specific and unique – not just to ethnic groups or communities, but to individuals within those communities. Nonetheless it is useful to generalise some of the salient features of internationally dominant values compared with the kinds of values more likely to be shared by poor rural communities – but not often made explicit (Table 5.1).

Local conservation priorities are likely to be very different to international concepts, focusing on the direct use values of biodiversity and its cultural associations rather than the continued existence of internationally rare species or habitats. Direct use values accrue from the benefits of a

Table 5.1. Contrasts between global and local biodiversity perceptions and priorities

Global biodiversity values	Local biodiversity values
Indirect-use (environmental services) and non-use values (option and bequest values) are primary concerns	Direct-use values (in providing a variety of foods, medicines and other uses) as, or more, important than indirect-use and non-use
Ideal of conservation, with or without sustainable use	Ideal of sustainable use, with or without conservation benefits
Benefits of and priorities for biodiversity management are shared by humankind generally	Biodiversity values have immediate ties to people's sense of place and culture, and specific groups have specific priorities
Endemics (species that occur locally only) and other rare species given high values	Global endemics no more important than other species
Focus on genotypes (genetic information)	Focus on phenotypes (observable qualities)
Wild and agricultural diversity treated separately	No clear boundary between wild and agricultural biodiversity
Focus on biodiversity in protected areas and wilderness	Focus on biodiversity in multi-use landscapes

Source: Adapted from Vermeulen, and Koziell (2002). *op.cit.*

6. Vermeulen, S. and I. Koziell (2002). *Integrating Global and Local Biodiversity Values: A Review of Biodiversity Assessment*. IIED, London, UK.

wide range of raw materials – foodstuffs, medicines, building materials and fodder for livestock – particularly during critical periods when staples are not available, such as dry seasons or droughts. Cultural values can range from specific meanings or taboos associated with plants or animals through to cosmologies that locate people as inseparable from nature. Distinctions between tame and wild, a crux of western conservation, are less meaningful to many rural communities, who farm forest gardens or gather food widely. Overall, the active, use-oriented attitudes to nature usual at local levels might enable a more dynamic approach to conservation than external interventions based on broad-scale taxonomic understandings.

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Some aspects of local people's relationships with biodiversity are well documented – particularly local uses of, and local knowledge of, species and ecosystems. Other aspects have received far less attention – particularly the choices, preferences or priorities that people might have for biodiversity management. Much research into local biodiversity values has depended on observation of patterns of harvesting and use, without triangulating these results through interviews, discussions or other techniques that simply ask people what they want. Consequently, a lot of what is said about the possibilities for reconciliation between global and local priorities for conservation and development is based on scant understanding of what local priorities might be in any given locale.

Fortunately, excellent tools for assessing and communicating local understandings of and priorities for biodiversity are beginning to be developed and tested.[7] Joint planning, action and monitoring between external and local partners have proved to be powerful means to reconcile differing viewpoints and develop a shared sense of purpose.[8] Even a simple checklist (Table 5.2) can provide a

7. Sheil, D. *et al.* (2002). *Exploring Biological Diversity, Environment and Local People's Perspectives in Forest Landscapes*. Centre for International Forestry Research, Bogor, Indonesia; Community Conservation Coalition (2003). *Putting Conservation in Context: Social Science Tools for Conservation Practitioners*. Community Conservation Coalition, Washington DC, USA.
8. Lawrence, A., Wells, A., Gillett, S. and J.van Rijsoort (2003). *Participatory Assessment, Monitoring and Evaluation of Biodiversity: A Briefing Paper for Planners, Policy Makers and Advisors*. Environmental Change Institute, University of Oxford.

useful framework to enable a more holistic understanding of local biodiversity values and act as a starting point in negotiating equitable sharing of the costs and benefits of biodiversity management.

Table 5.2. Checklist of possible local biodiversity issues

Access	**Non-use values**
◆ Local land rights: legal ownership of different land types, customary ownership, distribution among communities and among/within households	◆ Environmental services: perceived roles in microclimate regulation, air and water purification, regulation of water flows (both floods and dry season flows), nutrient cycling, pollination, dispersal, disease control
◆ Local resource access rights: bye-laws, rights of access (e.g. seasonal use of privately owned fields), formal or unspoken rules on use and management	◆ Cultural, spiritual and future option values: sacred, heritage and social values associated with nature, landscape beauty, recreation, cultural events and significance of land types and species
Knowledge	**Uses**
◆ Taxonomic and ecological knowledge: species names and distribution patterns; habitat classification, detailed life-cycle and ecosystem knowledge	◆ Uses of land types: residential land, agricultural land, forest land, range land, wetlands, rivers, sea
◆ Non-biological knowledge: knowledge of threats, rights, external policies and contexts and means to influence these	◆ Uses of species and sub-species varieties: crops, livestock, wild flora and fungi, wild fauna
Risks and costs	**Choices**
◆ Costs: opportunity costs due to land allocation, labour and other costs associated with existing and proposed biodiversity management	◆ Preferences for land use: stated preferences among alternative land-use and development options
◆ Risks: level of dependency on biological resources, availability of alternatives, threats to resources and to access	◆ Preferences for biodiversity management: stated preferences for various conservation and sustainable-use management approaches, identification of opportunities and challenges

Source: Vermeulen, S. (2004). *Biodiversity Planning: Why and How Should Local Opinions Matter?* Gatekeeper series 115. IIED, London, UK.

3. STRATEGIES FOR RECONCILING TRADE-OFFS AND BUILDING ON SYNERGIES

Much of the debate around synergies and trade-offs between conservation and local development is coloured by explicit or implicit assumptions as to whether local people's participation in decision-making is a means to better

conservation or an end in itself (Box 5.1). Both pro-conservation and pro-development lobbies place emphasis on win-win outcomes between conservation for the global public good and development for the local good while avoiding politically uncomfortable positions as to which of these outcomes is their primary goal. But strategies and tools for reconciling global and local priorities for conservation and development will be more likely to succeed if different stakeholders are able to state clearly their ultimate aims and preferences in given trade-off scenarios – such as situations in which local people choose short-term economic gains over longer-term conservation.

Box 5.1: Summary of arguments for local participation in decision-making[9]

Justifications for local participation can be divided into two classes of rationale:

- The normative / ethical rationale is that social structures and processes should reflect moral norms.
- Decision-making processes should be legitimate and subject to democratic control (governance argument).
- Costs and benefits of extraction and management should be distributed equitably (distribution argument).
- The instrumental / pragmatic rationale is that participation can decrease conflict and increase acceptance of or trust in the management process. Opportunities occur as new interest groups are positively engaged in the process.
- In worst-case scenarios, shared decision-making will reduce the negative impacts of local activities (mitigation argument).
- In best-case scenarios, participation by diverse groups and individuals will provide essential information and insights about risks and consideration of the social, cultural and political values that will be as important as technical considerations in determining outcomes (synergy argument).∑

Source: Fiorino, D.J. (1989).

Local interest groups in particular can benefit from a more transparent understanding of the goals and motives of external agencies that become involved in local biodiversity management ('local knowledge' in its broad sense includes this kind of understanding of external policies – see Table 5.2). One useful tool to help navigate the jargon of conservation and development projects and policies is a

9. A related but different categorisation of rationales for public participation distinguishes normative (associated with what is right and wrong), substantive (associated with information needed for the decision) and instrumental (associated with achievement of other related goals) rationales. 'Environmental risk and democratic process: a critical review'. *Columbian Journal of Environmental Law* 14: 501-547.

typology based on the continuum from 'poverty reduction as a tool for conservation' to 'conservation as a tool for poverty reduction' approaches (Table 5.3). Making the normative rationale for local participation in biodiversity decision-making more explicit can be a useful policy tool in itself, for example by legitimising assessments of integrated conservation and development projects in terms of outcomes to 'good governance' (e.g. representation, accountability) rather than simply in terms of habitat or species preservation, or immediate local economic effects.

Table 5.3. A typology of pro-poor conservation[12]

Type	Components	Examples	
Use poverty reduction as a tool for conservation	Recognition that poverty issues need to be addressed in order to deliver on conservation objectives. Poverty is a constraint to conservation.	Alternative income generating projects; many integrated conservation and development projects; many community-based conservation approaches.	approach becomes increasingly active ↓
Compensate fully, and mitigate, negative impacts of conservation on poor people, and make policy transparent	Conservation agencies recognise that conservation can have negative impacts on the poor and seek to provide full compensation where these occur and/or mitigate their effects.	Social impact assessments prior to protected area designations; compensation for wildlife damage; provision of locally acceptable alternatives when access to resources lost or reduced; compensation for land foregone.	
Adapt conservation to generate new benefits for poor people	Conservation still seen as the overall objective but designed so that benefits for poor people are generated.	Revenue sharing schemes around protected areas or wildlife tourism enterprises; employment of local people in conservation jobs.	
Use conservation as a tool for poverty reduction	Poverty reduction and social justice issues are the overall objectives. Conservation is seen as a tool to deliver these objectives.	Conservation of medicinal plants for healthcare, wild species as food supplies, sacred groves, pro-poor wildlife tourism.	

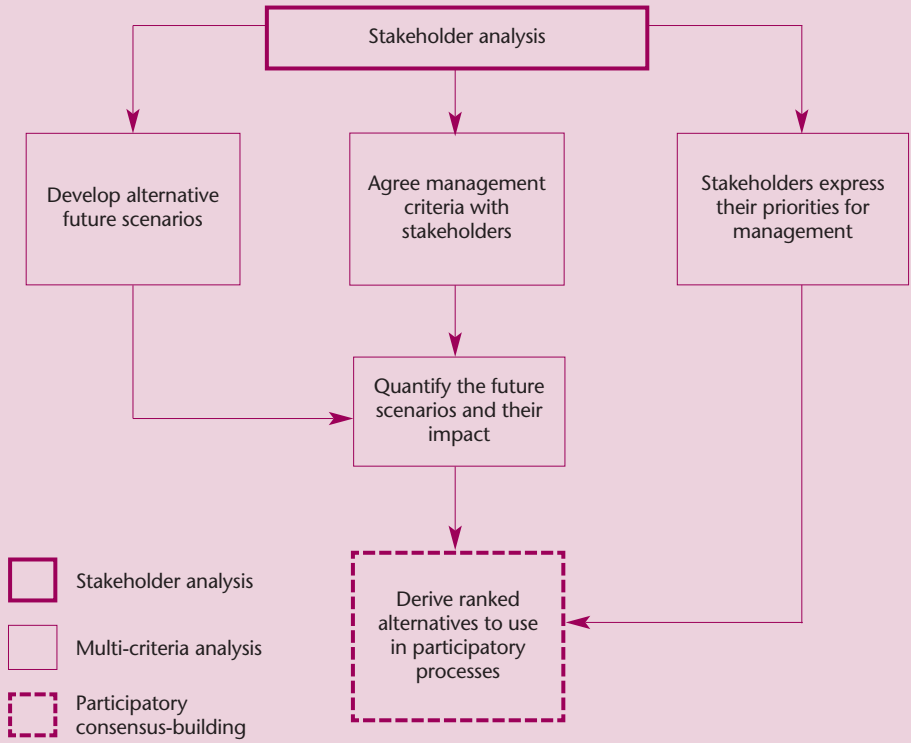
Source: PCWG (2003). 'Pro-poor conservation: harnessing conservation for poverty reduction'. Poverty and Conservation Working Group, mimeo. Paper produced for the World Parks Congress 2003.

The coastal management sector in the Caribbean provides a useful example of how trade-offs – among stakeholders, and between conservation and development – might be

identified and negotiated in practice (Figure 5.1). A multi-step process enables stakeholders to: compare alternative scenarios; prioritise their own environmental, social and economic values; and finally to express these priorities in transparent quantitative terms that they can tally against the priorities of other groups. This kind of combined qualitative-quantitative, within-group-among-group process can form the basis of long-term consensus-building.

Negotiated compromises are often the only real management strategy. But global and local priorities are not always in conflict. Much is made of the disparity between priorities for global conservation and local development. There exist, however, real synergies between priorities for

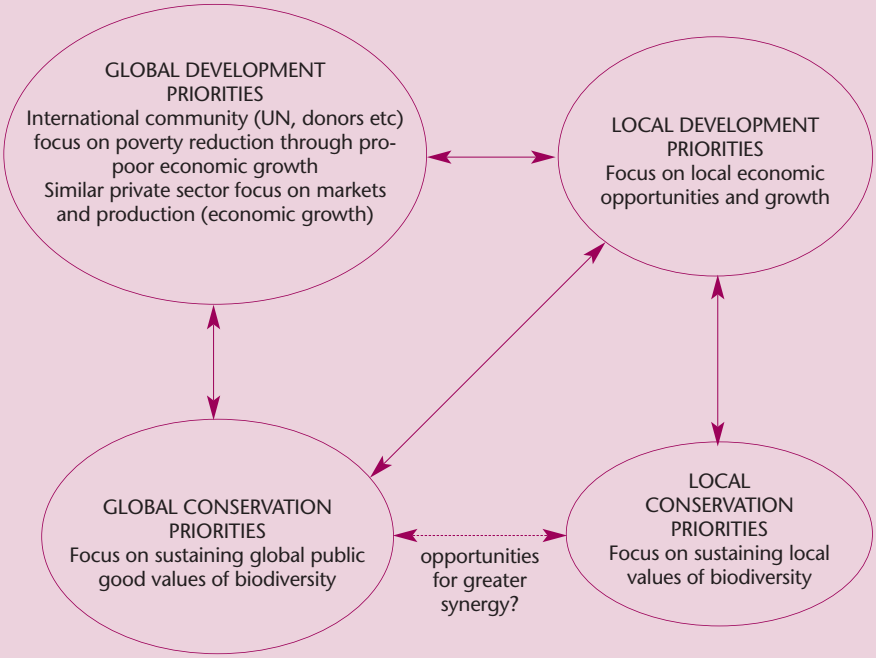
Figure 5.1. Stages in the trade-off analysis process



13. Brown, K., Tompkins, E. L. and Adger, W.N. (2002). *Making waves: integrating coastal conservation and development.* Earthscan, London, UK.

global conservation and local conservation (Figure 5.2). An alternative to using global conservation priorities as the starting point for interventions at local levels is to use local conservation preferences and practices as the starting point.[10] This builds on principles of democracy and partnership. Taking these concepts further, partnerships between local and global conservation interests can combine local legitimacy with international lobbying networks to address the root causes of declining biodiversity. These causes are not, as often implied or assumed, local in origin, but rather due to global development patterns: increasing social inequity and global over-consumption.[11]

Figure 5.2. Conservation and development priorities globally and locally



10. Sheil, D. and Vermeulen, S. (2004). 'Tropical conservation through democracy'. Submitted journal paper. Centre for International Forestry Research, Bogor, Indonesia, and IIED, London, UK.
11. Stedman-Edwards, P. (1998). *Root Causes of Biodiversity Loss: an Analytical Approach*. Macroeconomics for Sustainable Development Program Office (MPO), World Wide Fund for Nature, Washington DC, USA.

4. BUILDING CAPACITY AND LEGITIMACY FROM LOCAL TO INTERNATIONAL LEVELS

Tools for marginalised and disempowered groups (such as local biodiversity interest groups) to increase their positive impacts on relevant policy processes abound,[12] though they are not always recognised as 'tools' or shared successfully through networks. Appropriate development of capacity building will build on local strengths in a variety of areas, such as:

- Social organisation (how to get local institutions right – with legitimised and workable representation);
- Defence of local preferences and conservation practices;
- Information access and management;
- Negotiation techniques to engage successfully with more powerful groups;
- Practical management skills in both conservation and administration.

More powerful groups can use identical or equivalent tools, such as the array of effective methods for stakeholder analysis, to analyse and mitigate their own influence (of course, such tools can also be used tactically to imbalance power further).

Many conservation initiatives engage locally on 'the assumption that they are dealing with local people with legitimate rights to the ownership and control of their natural resources' – while in fact the broader frameworks that might legitimise those rights are entirely lacking

Tools, however, are not enough. Many conservation initiatives engage locally on 'the assumption that they are dealing with local people with legitimate rights to the ownership and control of their natural resources' – while in fact the broader frameworks that might legitimise those rights are entirely lacking.[13] Tactical tools are of little value without higher-level strategies to strengthen governance, particularly at national levels. These are long-term goals: many who rally for equity in conservation decision-making would argue that solutions lie outside the 'sector' in much bigger issues of how society can shape governments and

12. IIED (2004). *Power Tools*. www.iied.org/forestry/tools
13. Colchester, M. (1997). 'Salvaging nature: indigenous peoples and protected areas'. pp 97-130 in K.B. Ghimire, and M.P. Pimbert (eds.). *Social Change & Conservation*, Earthscan, London, UK.

markets. Commentators on conservation have made a powerful case that the true challenge in modern environmental governance is to move from 'public opinion' to 'public judgment'[14] or from 'participation' to 'deliberation'.[15]

Well-intentioned efforts to increase local involvement in decision-making are often built on simple models of roundtable multi-stakeholder dialogue. But less powerful groups are disadvantaged within such dialogue – to the extent that it may be in their best interests to take careful tactical stands within discussions, or not to participate at all.[16] Stakeholders seeking pluralism need to build it actively, through developing capacity among disadvantaged groups as well as structuring the 'roundtable' to limit the dominance of the powerful.

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Of course, local values and opinions are not the only priorities that count. Institutions to manage biodiversity should be matched in scale to relevant landscapes or ecosystems – as advocated by the CBD in the ecosystem approach (Chapter 6). Biodiversity, as a global public good, requires appropriate institutional responsibilities at different scales rather than full devolution of authority to the most local levels. A major question is how far we can generalise across contexts: how similar are different sets of local biodiversity values and preferences and how can successful initiatives be spread? (see Chapter 8). These issues of scale call for capacity building not just at local levels, but also in the agencies responsible for national and international biodiversity decisions. Allowing local self-determination in biodiversity management but also meeting the needs of the global public good suggests the need for 'loose-tight' models of management, in which local flexibility operates within a set of strong, accountable, agreed principles nationally or internationally.

14. Costanza, R. (2001). 'Visions, values, valuation, and the need for an ecological economics'. BioScience 51: 459-468.
15. Brown, K., Tompkins, E. L. and Adger, W.N. (2002). Making Waves: Integrating Coastal Conservation and Development. Earthscan, London, UK.
16. Edmunds, D. and Wollenberg, E. (2001). 'A strategic approach to multistakeholder negotiations'. Development and Change 32: 231-253.

5. MOVING FORWARD

Reconciling global and local priorities for conservation and development challenges practitioners to take action on a number of fronts, as this chapter describes:

- Interrogating the dominance of 'global public good' understandings of biodiversity value.
- Seeking local opinions on, and priorities for, conservation.
- Achieving greater clarity on reasons for local participation.
- Making power dynamics explicit and developing tools to tackle them.
- Developing legitimate frameworks for negotiating conservation and development trade-offs.
- Recognising synergies between global and local conservation values.
- Building capacity and legitimacy at national and international levels.

Indicators are always open to criticism, in part because they are so difficult to choose: they need to be not only relevant to the goals they measure, but sensitive to change, concise, unambiguous, repeatable and practicable

The Millennium Development Goals, and the targets and indicators they encompass, present their own challenges. Indicators are always open to criticism, in part because they are so difficult to choose: they need to be not only relevant to the goals they measure, but sensitive to change, concise, unambiguous, repeatable and practicable. The indicators proposed for the MDGs are currently under particular scrutiny. Recent analyses of the coverage of biodiversity, and natural resources more generally, within the MDGs have noted that:[17]

- The indicators are outcome-oriented and do not address how the goals might be achieved (e.g. acknowledging the centrality of local processes).
- MDG 7 on environment reflects simple global public good outcomes with quantitative targets for forest cover

17. Roe, D. (2003). 'The Millennium Development Goals and natural resources management: reconciling sustainable livelihoods and resource conservation or fuelling a divide?' pp 55-71 in Satterthwaite, D. (ed).*The Millennium Development Goals and Local Processes: Hitting the Target or Missing the Point?* IIED, London, UK.

and protected areas that do not address the quality of contributions to poverty reduction or conservation.

- Biodiversity and environment are integral to all of the MDGs and could be mainstreamed (see Chapter 9).

One way forward here is to lobby for alternative or further indicators that are relevant to local priorities for natural resources and biodiversity. One indicator in the Ugandan poverty reduction strategy has proven to be 'average distance to collect firewood' – a resonant measure of resource availability in a country where more than 90 per cent of people use firewood as their domestic fuel.[18] An alternative to new indicators is to be at all times cautious to interpret the indicators within broader contexts of the distribution of costs and benefits within society locally and globally.

People-centred conservation does not mean that the agendas of poor people must override the role of conservation in other key social aspirations such as environmental sustainability. But it does mean that the trade-offs and commonalities between local goals and global goals, between goals of conservation and goals of development, need to be given greater – and more incisive – attention than has been the case in the past so that differences in perceptions and priorities can be turned from a problem into an asset.

18. A newly proposed indicator for MDG7 is in fact the proportion of a country's population using biomass fuels – the target being to move *away* from renewable biomass energy to other energy sources, with the rationale of decreasing indoor air pollution.