The Millennium Development Goals and Conservation

Managing Nature's Wealth for Society's Health

Edited by Dilys Roe

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The Global Challenge: Goals and targets

The Millennium Development Goals are an ambitious agenda for reducing poverty and improving lives that world leaders agreed on at the Millennium Summit in September 2000. For each goal one or more targets have been set, most for 2015, using 1990 as a benchmark.

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

Target for 2015: Halve the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day and those who suffer from hunger.

2. Achieve universal primary education

Target for 2015: Ensure that all boys and girls complete primary school.

3. Promote gender equality and empower women

Targets for 2005 and 2015: Eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015.

4. Reduce child mortality

Target for 2015: Reduce by two-thirds the mortality rate among children under five.

5. Improve maternal health

Target for 2015: Reduce by three-quarters the ratio of women dying in childbirth.

6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

Target for 2015: Halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS and the incidence of malaria and other major diseases.

7. Ensure environmental sustainability

Targets:

- Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources.
- By 2015, reduce by half the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water.
- By 2020 achieve significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers.

8. Develop a global partnership for development

Targets:

- Develop further an open trading and financial system that includes a commitment to good governance, development and poverty reduction – nationally and internationally.
- Address the least developed countries' special needs, and the special needs of landlocked and small island developing States.
- Deal comprehensively with developing countries' debt problems.
- Develop decent and productive work for youth.
- In co-operation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries.
- In co-operation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies – especially information and communications technologies.

Contents

Foreword

Shoji Nishimoto, Assistant Administrator and Director, Bureau for Development Policy, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

The search for paths to an environmentally sustainable future is more urgent than ever before. The developing world has shown that progress is possible, and on terms that respect the social and cultural norms of diverse peoples and places. This can, in part, be attributed to a growing recognition that conservation and development are often inherently compatible and mutually supporting goals.

Local, indigenous, and resource-dependent communities are showing that great gains can be made when livelihoods and environmental needs are viewed together. The growing successes that local people – and their NGO, governmental and United Nations partners – have had in these areas indicate that the silos and divisions that once separated the conservation and development communities are breaking down. Local and global actors are jointly engaged in a coherent and collaborative attack on poverty that recognizes the interconnectedness of environmental sustainability and poverty issues: the effort to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The MDGs range from halving extreme poverty to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS, and providing universal primary education to ensuring environmental sustainability –all by the target date of

2015. Moreover the MDGs have unprecedented political backing: never before have such concrete goals been formally endorsed by rich and poor countries, and never before have the United Nations, World Bank, International Monetary Fund and the international system come together behind the same development agenda.

Historically, the role of biodiversity and natural resources in underpinning key development issues was often overlooked, with dire consequences. Far from being a luxury, biodiversity and ecosystem services – such as the provision of clean water, the maintenance of soil fertility, protection from floods, and the regulation of disease – are essential to the well-being and livelihoods of the poor. The poor, with the greatest direct dependence on the natural world, bear the brunt of environmental degradation, species loss, and pollution. Biodiversity, whether privately or commonly held, has global benefits. By working with all those who manage biodiversity to promote conservation and sustainable use, the entire global family can reap rewards.

This book – with its focus on the interface between poverty and the environment – reminds us that achieving the MDGs will require a genuinely integrated approach to conservation and development, which recognizes intact ecosystems as a basic human need. It also highlights that communities and local partnerships are a vital driving force for sustainable development. Continued success towards the full achievement of the MDGs will require that we learn from innovative and diverse experiences at all levels and think and act across disciplines and approaches.

This volume is a valuable contribution to the effort to bridge conservation and development issues and address the challenge of sustainable development as a unified whole. The importance of this work resides in its ability to outline the challenges that face us while also illuminating promising solutions. Collaborative, culturally relevant, and locally informed experience must be the bedrock of our shared global effort to achieve sustainable development and improve the human condition.

The Millennium Development Goals and Conservation: Summary

1. LINKING CONSERVATION AND POVERTY REDUCTION

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set 48 targets, to be achieved by 2015. Four years after the Millennium Declaration – from which the MDGs are derived – the United Nations has reported significant progress in many regions of the world and against many of the targets. Progress in some regions of the world – particularly in sub-Saharan Africa – and against some of the targets – child and maternal mortality and access to improved sanitation – has been slow however, and in some cases is worsening. Getting back on track and making progress world-wide against the full set of goals and targets by 2015 is clearly going to require significant extra effort, from conventional and

non-conventional sources. Can conservation play a role in this effort?

Despite the close interlinkages between conservation and poverty reduction there is still considerable polarisation between the conservation and development communities. On the one hand, because the goods and services generated by natural resources are generally unaccounted for in national statistics, development agencies have often undervalued the potential role they can play in poverty reduction – as evidenced by the decreasing emphasis on environment in the project portfolios of many donors and the limited integration of natural resource and environmental issues into national poverty reduction strategies. On the other hand many conservation organisations have been unimpressed with the results of initiatives such as community-based conservation and integrated conservation and development projects (ICDPs) and have viewed poverty concerns as outside their core business.

Not only is poverty reduction an international imperative, but addressing poverty concerns is critical for long term conservation success

That poverty reduction is not the role of conservation organisations can be countered with both moral and practical arguments: not only is poverty reduction an international imperative, but addressing poverty concerns is critical for long term conservation success. However, the lack of attention to biodiversity in poverty reduction strategies and the apparent lack of awareness amongst development practitioners and policy-makers of the potential contribution that biodiversity conservation does and can make to poverty reduction and the achievement of the MDGs is of increasing concern.

Maximising the contribution of conservation to achieving the full spectrum of MDGs – particularly those where progress is lagging – requires efforts by both conservation and development communities to:

- Enhance awareness amongst development agencies as to the importance of conservation – not least because of the real contribution that biodiversity can make to poverty reduction and other development objectives.

- Acknowledge and build on the comparative advantage that biodiversity offers to many poor countries, exploiting opportunities for income generation and enterprise development.
- Shift the focus of international conservation policy from one that appears to focus primarily on rare and endangered species and the extension of protected areas, towards one that also emphasises the development values of biodiversity and landscape management approaches that can deliver both conservation and development benefits.
- Acknowledge the opportunity that community-centred biodiversity conservation offers to re-examine rights-based approaches to natural resource management and to support strengthened local governance and decision-making.
- Integrate environmental concerns into poverty reduction activities – and vice versa – so that international goals and targets such as the MDGs and the CBD are mutually reinforcing.

2. BIODIVERSITY BENEFITS

Human Health

Human health is dependent on biodiversity and on the natural functioning of healthy ecosystems. Biodiversity supports human life and promotes health by providing essential ecosystem services – pollution control, soil fertility, water management and so on – as well as by providing medicines from plants, animals, and microbes on land, in lakes and rivers, and in the oceans and models for medical research that help us understand human physiology and disease. The relationship of biodiversity to human health has relevance to all eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), but it has special and fundamental importance for goals 1, 4, 5, 6, and 7. It also has particular relevance in some of the world's poorest countries where diseases such as HIV/AIDS and malaria have reached crisis point and

Environmental concerns should be Integrated into poverty reduction activities – and vice versa – so that international goals and targets such as the MDGs and the CBD are mutually reinforcing

where other treatable and preventable diseases such as sleeping sickness and bilharzia are endemic.

Separating health goals from other environment and development goals reinforces the widely held misconception that human beings are separate from the environments in which they live. People will not do what is necessary to protect the global environment until they begin to understand the risks that disruptions to physical, chemical, and biological systems present to themselves and to their children. There is no more effective way to help them achieve this understanding than to frame discussions about development and the environment in the concrete, personal terms of human health.

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Climate Change

Biodiversity is inextricably linked to climate – changes in climate, and efforts to mitigate climate change, affect biodiversity and changes to natural ecosystems affect climate. Hence biodiversity conservation can be an effective mitigation mechanism. Given the dependency of the poor on biodiversity resources, any impact that climate change has on natural systems threatens the livelihoods, food intake and health of poor people. Climate change is not sufficiently dealt with in the MDGs – it is part of MDG7 but the indicators are limited and the emphasis is on mitigation rather than adaptation. Far greater attention also needs to be paid to the role of local processes – the use of biodiversity as a risk aversion strategy and a way to reduce vulnerability of climate change shocks, improved trade and aid mechanisms (as implied in MDG8), support for local initiatives of ecosystem management and restoration activities that sustain and diversify local livelihoods.

Markets for Ecosystem Services

There is growing interest in market-based approaches to conserving ecosystem services. The basic concept is to create positive economic incentives for land managers to behave in ways that increase, or at least maintain, certain environmental functions. These include, among others:

- The sequestration of carbon in biomass or soils;
- The provision of habitat for endangered species;
- The protection and maintenance of landscapes that people find attractive (such as cloud forest in Costa Rica, the veld in Southern Africa or the patchwork of hedgerows, cropland and woodland typical of southern England); and
- A catch-all category of 'watershed protection' which involves various hydrological functions related to the quality, quantity or timing of fresh water flows from upstream areas to downstream users.

While the primary goal of these market initiatives has been environmental, the commitment to the MDGs raises the question as to whether these new markets for ecosystem services can also help reduce poverty. In this respect, the most obvious benefit of market initiatives is the potential to bring new sources of cash income to previously marginalised communities. But just as the formulation of the MDGs reflects a view that poverty is multi-dimensional, so it is important to look beyond cash income and consider how market initiatives affect other dimensions of poverty. For example, the improvement of natural resource management resulting from the use of such mechanisms may bring benefits in the form of improved nutrition for those who depend on wild foods. Similarly, the urban poor may benefit from improved access to safe drinking water and reduced risk of floods, as a result of payments for watershed protection upstream.

Just as the formulation of the MDGs reflects a view that poverty is multi-dimensional, so it is important to look beyond cash income and consider how market initiatives affect other dimensions of poverty

With respect to the impacts of market-based incentives for ecosystem services on the poor, we can take some comfort from an overall increase in transfers from richer segments of the economy to less affluent segments. On the other hand, there is reason to worry that the truly poor may find themselves unable to participate as suppliers of ecosystem services, displaced from their jobs, and cut off from natural resources that they previously exploited (either sustainably or otherwise). In addition, the poor are not only potential

suppliers of ecosystem services but also consumers. If a new payment scheme involves transfers from beneficiaries or users of ecosystem services to providers, some relatively poor users might end up paying money they can ill-afford to some relatively well-off providers. Extra care must therefore be taken to ensure that poverty is not exacerbated by such initiatives and, if possible, to assist the poor to participate actively as suppliers. The first priority here is to facilitate access by small landholders to existing or new payment schemes and then to ensure they are able to sustain their involvement and derive net benefits on a long-term basis.

Different perspectives can result in major tensions between North and South, between policy-makers and 'policy-takers' and their reconciliation requires a range of tools and strategies to negotiate trade-offs and to identify and build on synergies

3. MAXIMISING THE POTENTIAL OF BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION: KEY CHALLENGES

Reconciling Global and Local Priorities

While conservation clearly has huge potential to contribute to achieving the MDGs, major challenges need to be tackled if this potential is to be realised. A fundamental question to address is what we actually mean when we talk about conservation. To many in the North, conservation means preserving rare or endangered species and habitats so that we, and our children, may continue to enjoy them for generations to come. For those that actually live near, and depend upon, biodiversity in the South, the priority is to conserve those species that provide direct benefits such as food, medicines, fuel or that have cultural or spiritual significance. Distinctions between domesticated and wild species are also less meaningful to many Southern rural communities, who farm forest gardens or gather food widely, than to the Northern architects of international conservation policy. These different perspectives can result in major tensions between North and South, between policy-makers and 'policy-takers' and their reconciliation requires a range of tools and strategies to negotiate trade-offs and to identify and build on synergies.

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. 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 markets.

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.

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 markets

Taking a Strategic Approach

One way forward is to adopt an 'ecosystem approach' to conservation planning – as advocated by the Convention on Biological Diversity. This recognises that ecosystems must be managed as a whole, with protected areas serving as reservoirs of wild biodiversity in a 'matrix' of land that is managed to enhance its habitat value, while also providing a range of benefits to people such as food supply and income for ecosystem services. Within this integrated strategy, agricultural lands need to be managed as part of the matrix surrounding protected areas, while the protected areas are managed as part of the matrix surrounding agricultural lands. The approach draws on multiple interest groups within society and relies on local management institutions as far as possible.

'Ecoagriculture' builds on this concept and refers to land-use systems that are managed to simultaneously achieve

improved livelihoods, conserve biodiversity, and enhance sustainable production at a landscape scale. For ecoagriculture, enhancing rural livelihoods through more productive and profitable farming systems becomes a core strategy for both agricultural development and conservation of biodiversity.

A programme for sustainable landscape management that includes biodiversity conservation needs to include both firm governmental action and alliances with the other stakeholders. National governments cannot delegate their role of guarantors of the conservation of a country's natural heritage, so the appropriate authorities need to build the capacity to fulfil their regulatory and management duties and responsibilities. But civil society can share certain rights and responsibilities regarding the management of living natural resources after careful preparation and an adequate definition of roles and responsibilities. Given the interests of NGOs, business, indigenous peoples, and local communities who live within or close to protected areas, alliances should be created among stakeholders that enable each to play an appropriate role according to clear government policies and laws.

All businesses have some form of impact on biodiversity – whether directly through their operations or indirectly along the supply chain through pollution or resource use

Enhancing the Role of the Private Sector

The private sector is only one of this set of key stakeholders. However many businesses operate in ways that have fundamental negative impacts on biodiversity – through sourcing of raw materials for production and consumption, management of company landholdings and through release of environmental pollution such as green house gas emissions. Food processors, forestry and paper, mining, oil and gas, utilities, electricity, pharmaceuticals and biotechnology and tobacco companies are the sectors with the greatest impacts on biodiversity, but all businesses have some form of impact – whether directly through their operations or indirectly along the supply chain through pollution or resource use. The lack of a clearly understood link between corporate and natural value has meant that business has been slow to understand that there are both threats and opportunities posed by mismanagement of

biodiversity and have often seen the issue of biodiversity management as a governmental or societal responsibility.

Nevertheless, there are now a number of initiatives amongst large and small companies that are beginning to address the issue of biodiversity loss. Much of the focus of NGOs and investors to date has been on the biodiversity impacts and management practices of big business. However, small- and medium- sized enterprises (SMEs) are major contributors to both income generation and resource use in much of the world and thus have the potential to significantly impact on, and influence, biodiversity. Indeed, many consider that the path to biodiversity-aware development lies with removing the barriers faced by SMEs rather than focusing on big business.

Given the far-ranging impact of the private sector in terms of development, social equity and environmental impacts, business is surely a key sector to catalyse into action

The Millennium Development Goals have surprisingly little direct reference to business given that more than half the flow of aid from developed to developing countries is from private sources. Given the far-ranging impact of the private sector in terms of development, social equity and environmental impacts, business is surely a key sector to catalyse into action. Links to biodiversity conservation can be made within Goal 7: *Ensuring environmental sustainability* although the associated indicators mean very little in terms of the impact and performance of industry with regards to biodiversity management. Similarly, whilst Goal 8 refers to the need to develop an 'open, rule based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system' which includes a commitment to 'governance, development and poverty reduction' it fails to acknowledge the need to adjust current financing methods to factor in environmental and social risks and opportunities and therefore appropriately value investments. This misses a fundamental lever for change in corporate behaviour.

Overall such initiatives and processes remain obscure to business and, as a significant global force for development and potentially for conservation, excluding business is a major omission. There is an urgent need, therefore, for the governors of these processes to consider how business –

large and small – can be drawn into these discussions and appropriate safeguards set up to ensure that their level of influence is appropriate.

Scaling Up Local-level Success

There is now a growing sense that the MDGs will only be achieved with the full participation of local people, and the scaling-up of the many individual initiatives that have managed to link conservation and development successfully is one area where it is hoped that progress towards the MDGs might make great headway. However, little discussion has occurred around what types of scaling-up might be best suited to advance the MDG agenda or how desired levels of scaling-up might be achieved. Any effort to scale-up successful community initiatives is likely to produce some positive movement towards the MDGs. However, since the MDGs are measured broadly – at the national level and according to relatively coarse measures – some types of scaling-up are likely to contribute more to the MDG effort than others.

By striving to reduce and eliminate the vacuum in which community initiatives operate and by working to create fertile ground for new endeavours, political scaling-up will be vital to the success of the MDG agenda and a necessary precursor to significant gains achieved through other forms of scaling-up

The most intuitive and commonly-held understanding of the term scaling-up relates to the simple replication of projects and activities – this is quantitative scaling-up. However, the simple replication of community initiatives alone will be insufficient to achieve the MDGs since, to have maximum impact, this replicative process cannot be undertaken in a vacuum. For this reason, the most important form of scaling-up is likely to be political scaling-up. By striving to reduce and eliminate the vacuum in which community initiatives operate and by working to create fertile ground for new endeavours, political scaling-up will be vital to the success of the MDG agenda and a necessary precursor to significant gains achieved through other forms of scaling-up.

Political scaling-up is especially important to the MDG effort since it allows for a unique form of expansion. It facilitates the growth of community initiatives by building a power base for addressing the underlying causes of

underdevelopment. Instead of simply providing and replicating services, political scaling-up allows communities to engage in political and social efforts to combat sources of poverty and environmental degradation at the most comprehensive level. This not only furthers immediate goals, but also helps achieve wider results by gaining support for local action from political actors and policy-makers. Political scaling-up is also extremely important because of the connection between local scaling-up and national political action – both of which are required to create an enabling environment for achievement of the MDGs.

An important role, then, for conservation and development agencies will be to assist community initiatives in overcoming the challenges associated with this form of scaling-up, forging links to policy-makers and the political process in ways that minimise risk and interference with the delivery of essential short-term deliverables.

For biodiversity conservation to contribute fully to poverty reduction and the MDGs, a fundamental shift is needed to more systemic and people-centred approaches that build on poor people's priorities and capabilities

Mainstreaming Conservation into Development Policy and Planning

For biodiversity conservation to contribute fully to poverty reduction and the MDGs, a fundamental shift is needed to more systemic and people-centred approaches that build on poor people's priorities and capabilities; that effectively engage all stakeholders in addressing the underlying policy and institutional drivers of environmental degradation; and that empower poor and vulnerable groups with the assets, rights, and entitlements they need to improve their lives through sound environmental management. Meeting this challenge calls for a new approach and broad-based commitment to integrating the environmental concerns of poor and vulnerable groups into mainstream development processes at global, national, and local levels.

The key to success lies within country-led mechanisms to set, measure, and achieve country-specific environmental sustainability targets that draw on and harmonise targets in existing development frameworks and strategies, including poverty reduction strategies, macroeconomic and sectoral

It is vital to assist developing countries in their efforts to set, measure, and achieve country-specific MDG targets linking environmental sustainability and poverty reduction

policies, and the budget process. This integration will make it possible to forge a broad-based, more co-ordinated response to poverty-environment challenges, to achieve synergies between diverse interventions across many sectors and levels of action, and to ensure that adequate domestic and external resources are being allocated and effectively targeted. Given the multi-dimensional nature of biodiversity-poverty links, this entails a broad agenda for policy and institutional change across many sectors and levels of action.

Among the most important of these actions are to:

- Identify local win-win solutions—such as ecoagriculture, new markets for biodiversity-friendly products, and innovative financing mechanisms such as direct payments to farmers for maintaining ecosystem services—that simultaneously protect biodiversity and maintain critical ecosystem services while also reducing poverty;
- Strengthen global strategies and frameworks so that they adequately support country-led mechanisms to take advantage of such win-win solutions and to scale-up successful local-level processes;
- Assist developing countries in their efforts to set, measure, and achieve country-specific MDG targets linking environmental sustainability and poverty reduction;
- Encourage linkages between, and harmonisation of, environmental targets, indicators and interventions developed within country-led MDG processes with mainstream national development frameworks and strategies, especially national poverty reduction strategies and the PRSP process;
- Engage with line ministries, including finance ministries and other agencies overseeing mainstream development planning, to address barriers to integrating environmental sustainability into national development and poverty reduction frameworks, strategies, and programmes;
- Create a more enabling policy and institutional

environment for mainstreaming of biodiversity-poverty links through improved governance, including an expanded role for civil society in environmental management;

- Reform trade-distorting policies that undermine the livelihoods of developing-country farmers, and build the capacity of poor farmers in developing countries to meet trade-related environmental standards that stimulate demand for biodiversity-friendly products commanding premium prices in world markets.

4. MOVING FORWARD

No strategy to achieve the MDGs can afford to overlook the role of biodiversity. However, the separation of environment into one of eight development goals is one of the weaknesses of the MDGs as a framework for poverty reduction and sustainable development. The very nature of sustainable development emphasises the integration of its three pillars – economics, society and environment – and this implies a need not just to focus on one goal in order to achieve environmental sustainability but to examine how environment – and natural resource management – can be integrated across the set of goals (and equally to consider how progress towards the other goals might impact on environmental sustainability).

Another weakness in the current MDG framework and process is the marginal consideration given to environmental sustainability and biodiversity conservation in the targets and indicators for MDG 8 ('*Develop a Global Partnership for Development*'). Possibly more than any of the other goals, MDG 8 – particularly the targets related to aid and trade – could have considerable adverse impacts on biodiversity. Environmental sustainability needs to be integrated into these targets, and associated indicators should measure the extent to which changes in official development assistance and trade arrangements either support or harm the biological resource base.

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The UN MDG +5 Review in 2005 provides a major opportunity to mobilise greater international support and to forge more effective partnerships for moving the poverty-environment agenda forward in a more integrated and focused manner than in the past. The challenge is firstly to resolve the environment versus development dichotomy and secondly, to find practical ways and means to attain direly needed economic development but *importantly not at the expense of environmental sustainability*. By identifying practical ways forward and capacity building requirements, we hope this booklet goes some way to addressing this challenge.

Introduction

This booklet is the second in a series of three publications on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (see http://www.meetingthemdgs.org/pubs.html#booklet for the first in the series on *The MDGs and Local Processes*). This second book focuses on the links between the MDGs and conservation and is timed to coincide with the IUCN World Conservation Congress which has as its theme, *People and Nature, Only One World*.

Natural resources play a major and very often critical role in the livelihoods of a high proportion of the world's population, providing a wide range of goods (food, fuel, fodder, medicines, building materials) and services (watersheds, carbon sequestration, soil fertility, spiritual and cultural well-being) as

well as opportunities for income generation through jobs and small enterprises (in forestry, tourism, wildlife trade and so on). Moreover, numerous studies have found that it is often the poorest people and households that are most dependent on these resources.

This dependency brings with it a theoretically strong incentive to conserve but in practice, given the weak access and tenure rights of many poor people, there is a also strong potential for local over-exploitation. Moreover, it means that the impacts arising from the loss of natural resources and ecosystem services fall most heavily on the poor – even though the cause of degradation may lie with richer or more powerful groups.

Because the goods and services generated by natural resources are generally unaccounted for in national statistics, development agencies have often undervalued the potential role they can play in poverty reduction

Despite the close interlinkages between conservation and poverty reduction there is still considerable polarisation between the conservation and development communities. On the one hand, because the goods and services generated by natural resources are generally unaccounted for in national statistics, development agencies have often undervalued the potential role they can play in poverty reduction – as evidenced by the decreasing emphasis on environment in the project portfolios of many donors and the limited integration of natural resource and environmental issues into national poverty reduction strategies. On the other hand many conservation organisations have been unimpressed with the results of initiatives such as community-based conservation and integrated conservation and development projects (ICDPs) and have viewed poverty concerns as outside their core business.

Do the MDGs provide an appropriate framework for reconciling this divide? Biodiversity and natural resource conservation is directly addressed in MDG7 – *Ensure Environmental Sustainability*. This includes a target to 'Integrate the principles of sustainable development in country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources.' Of the seven indicators for

MDG7, two specifically address conservation: first, the proportion of land area covered by forest, and second, the ratio of area protected to maintain biological diversity to surface area. However, in this book we argue that conservation has a role to play in achieving many of the other MDGs.

The physical location of much of the world's biodiversity in the South provides some of the poorest countries with a comparative advantage on which they can capitalise – through tourism, biodiversity-based enterprise, markets for ecosystem services and so on. This may prove particularly significant for the countries of sub-Saharan Africa where progress towards the MDGs has proved difficult. The links between biodiversity conservation and human health are also becoming increasingly well recognised – not just for the direct contribution natural products make to traditional and modern medicines, but also because of the role of other species in biomedical research and as vectors or regulators of disease. Here too, Africa in particular may benefit from biodiversity given its contribution to HIV/AIDS, malaria and other treatable and preventable diseases that prevail there.

Given the dependency of the poor on biodiversity resources, any impact that climate change has on natural systems threatens the livelihoods, food intake and health of poor people

Yet none of these efforts to tackle poverty will be worthwhile if we overlook the challenge of climate change. Biodiversity is inextricably linked to climate – changes in climate affect biodiversity and changes to natural ecosystems affect climate. Given the dependency of the poor on biodiversity resources, any impact that climate change has on natural systems threatens the livelihoods, food intake and health of poor people. The role of biodiversity conservation as a tool to both mitigate, and adapt to, climate change is one that requires much greater recognition.

Despite the clear potential that conservation has to address many aspects of poverty, major challenges need to be tackled if this potential is to be realised. How can local level, or small-scale success stories be 'scaled-up' so that progress can be seen at the national and international level? How can the private sector be effectively engaged so that it minimises the impact it has on biological resources and facilitates the

growth of pro-biodiversity enterprises that generate benefits for the poor?

A fundamental question to address is what we actually mean when we talk about conservation. To many in the North, conservation means preserving rare or endangered species and habitats so that we, and our children, may continue to enjoy them for generations to come. For those that actually live near, and depend upon, biodiversity in the South, the priority is to conserve those species that provide direct benefits such as food, medicines, fuel or that have cultural or spiritual significance. Distinctions between domesticated and wild species are also less meaningful to many Southern rural communities, who farm forest gardens or gather food widely, than to the Northern architects of international conservation policy. These different perspectives can result in major tensions between North and South, between policy-makers and 'policy-takers' and their reconciliation requires a range of tools and strategies to negotiate trade-offs and to identify and build on synergies.

Distinctions between domesticated and wild species are also less meaningful to many Southern rural communities, who farm forest gardens or gather food widely, than to the Northern architects of international conservation policy

One way forward is to adopt an 'ecosystem approach' to conservation planning – as advocated by the Convention on Biological Diversity. This recognises that ecosystems must be managed as a whole, with protected areas serving as reservoirs of wild biodiversity in a 'matrix' of land that is managed to enhance its habitat value, while also providing a range of benefits to people such as food supply and income for ecosystem services. Within this integrated strategy, agricultural lands need to be managed as part of the matrix surrounding protected areas, while the protected areas are managed as part of the matrix surrounding agricultural lands. The approach draws on multiple interest groups within society and relies on local management institutions as far as possible. 'Ecoagriculture' builds on this concept and refers to land-use systems that are managed to simultaneously achieve improved livelihoods, conserve biodiversity, and enhance sustainable production at a landscape scale. For ecoagriculture, enhancing rural livelihoods through more productive and profitable farming

systems becomes a core strategy for both agricultural development and conservation of biodiversity.

No strategy to achieve the MDGs can afford to overlook the role of biodiversity. However, the separation of environment into one of eight development goals is one of the weaknesses of the MDGs as a framework for poverty reduction and sustainable development. The very nature of sustainable development emphasises the integration of its three pillars – economics, society and environment – and this thus implies a need not just to focus on one goal in order to achieve environmental sustainability but to examine how environment – and natural resource management – can be *integrated across the set of goals* (and equally to consider how progress towards the other goals might impact on environmental sustainability). The challenge is firstly to resolve the environment versus development dichotomy and secondly, to find practical ways and means to attain direly needed economic development *but importantly not at the expense of environmental sustainability*. By identifying practical ways forward and capacity building requirements, we hope this booklet goes some way to addressing this challenge.