

**THE HARMONIZATION OF WILDLIFE HABITAT  
AND HUMAN LIVELIHOOD IMPERATIVES:  
ADDRESSING COMMON ROOT CAUSES THROUGH A  
PARTICIPATORY, COLLABORATIVE AND SUSTAINABLE APPROACH**

**Preliminary Findings**

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**2008**

**1. Introduction**

For almost three decades, the world has experienced a liberalization of controls on economic activity that has taken a serious toll on the natural environment, including animal welfare and endangered species, in particular, and on chronically and newly impoverished human populations, especially marginalized groups lacking secure access to resources. Were it not for organized struggles – local and global – for conservation and economic justice, the situation would be considerably worse than it is today.

Unfortunately, the commercial exploitation of the natural resource base has put those attempting to preserve their livelihoods and those trying to preserve biodiverse landscapes in real or prospective conflict over control of those resources that remain. A number of imperatives, ranging from the institutional to the struggle for survival, have short-circuited the development of understandings and visions that might enable the simultaneous satisfaction of these objectives.

Openings are now finally beginning to appear on the global stage, as the world is becoming multi-polar and many governments thus have more options and latitude of action. At the same time, a number of factors, including the high prices on commodities and the explosive growth of new economic powers, present new dangers to the natural resource base and to both humans and non-human species trying to survive in those habitats.

Add to this the current emphasis in international environmental conventions on the incorporation of a pro-poor development agenda, and the desire to find opportunities, methods and strategies for collaboration between conservationists and poor communities has a powerful pertinence. The search for an integrated approach, for a conservation/development nexus, that can bridge the gap that frequently exists between these parties will depend on finding common ground in addressing the underlying causes of their problems. In what form and manner can local engagement facilitate this? What are the opportunities for collaboration across sectors -- at both the micro and macro level -- to achieve sustainability in both conservation and livelihoods? What are the challenges and

obstacles? How can all-too-often competing interests be accommodated, balanced, indeed harmonized and promoted to achieve commonly agreed ends?

In drawing on perspectives from conservationists, other environmentalists, advocates of sustainable development and economic justice and our own experience with poor communities and in building networks of activist organizations across sectors and across borders, we have come to see that there are a number of important elements to an effective harmonization of environmental and development interests, in general, and animal-welfare and human-livelihood concerns more specifically. Among our own collaborations, two in particular – joining our economic-justice agenda with the campaign of U.S. environmental organizations against World Bank environmental destruction in the 1980s and our coordination in the 1990s of the Structural Adjustment Participatory Review Initiative (SAPRI), a cross-sectoral assessment of the impact of World Bank structural adjustment policies – give us reason to believe that common ground and effective methods can be found to satisfy simultaneously what may appear to be divergent interests.

To start, it is essential to view humans as an integral part of the ecosystem. As explained in the brief review that we provide of perspectives on this issue, to do otherwise, to treat those populations living in or near wildlife habitats as part of the problem, is to lose a critically important resource and prospective partnership required for sustainable habitat conservation. Similarly, any efforts to protect wildlife and their habitat without an understanding of the political economy that has shaped current, local circumstances are unlikely to find sustained success. Local peoples cannot be expected to make the protection of wildlife and habitat a priority if the broader economic and political forces that have been marginalizing them economically and physically are not addressed.

When poor communities are viewed in these contexts -- which themselves can only be fully understood with community input -- the importance of their participation in finding sustainable solutions to habitat degradation and wildlife survival becomes apparent. Their involvement is also indispensable in identifying economic opportunities and income sources and flows that do not overexploit the local resource base. We suggest ways to facilitate that involvement and to maximize its effectiveness, ideally establishing the bases for partnerships that not only can produce, but also advance, a common or complementary agenda. Finally we reflect on the types of solutions that this integrated approach might yield in terms of harmonizing conservation and livelihood concerns.

## **2. Viewing the Issue through an Ecosystem Lens**

It is clear and now acknowledged by most conservation organizations – even if it is not fully reflected in their operations – that finding long-term, sustainable solutions to the loss of animal habitat depends on the incorporation of local populations as part of that solution. Viewing them as part of the problem is indeed counterproductive. As Mike Sansom of African Initiative puts it, “Fortress Eden” fundamentalism won’t do. Juliette Majot, former Executive Director of International Rivers Network, observes that isolating

conservation efforts from the priorities of local human populations most always leads to failure in achieving conservation objectives. Jose Warman of ENDESUR in Mexico goes further, arguing that, as humans have destroyed animal habitats, they must play a role in restoring them. Indeed, he contends that the correct terminology should be “social ecosystems”.

The academic community in the North has also been weighing in and has been supportive of the increased questioning in the South about the viability of biodiversity conservation through the creation of protected areas. David Bray of Florida International University, J. Peter Brosius of the University of Georgia, and others have referred to changes in the traditional conservation view of humans as an invasive species and to the social and ecological costs of displacing people in order to “impose wilderness”.

This perspective is reflected in the positions now taken publicly by some of the large conservation organizations. Jenny Springer of the World Wildlife Fund recently emphasized the growing body of research that questions the rationale, in both ecological and social terms, for displacements of local populations and restrictions on their use of resources. She points critically to long-held assumptions of a fundamental incompatibility of people and wildlife that have led to decisions to “separate people from nature,” and welcomes the “increased understanding of the role of humans in shaping ecologies and landscapes” and the “growing recognition of indigenous and traditional peoples as owners and managers of high-biodiversity areas.”

Her position reflects the “Principles and Guidelines on Indigenous and Traditional Peoples and Protected Areas,” which WWF adopted with IUCN in the mid-1990s. The document recognizes indigenous peoples’ long history with, and understanding of the natural world, and that there is no inherent conflict between their objectives and those of conservationists.

Springer and WWF call for more analysis of how human activities affect biodiversity and how conservation interventions would affect local people. “Consistent integration of social impact analysis as part of conservation planning is ... a critical need,” says Springer. That analysis “should be part of and, in turn, can strengthen and inform collaborative planning and decision-making processes with indigenous peoples and local communities.”

Critics, including representatives of smaller environmental groups, contend, however, that large conservation organizations like WWF, Conservation International and The Nature Conservancy have changed little in practice, as their protected-areas approach continues to lead to conflicts with local communities. Some, according to these observers, pay lip service to the “fad” of community development, while their actions lead to these groups being pushed off of lands on which they have relied for subsistence.

Mac Chapin, director of the Center for the Support of Native Lands, writes of an undercurrent of talk in these large NGOs about how “difficult” indigenous people can be and how hard it can be to work with them, sometimes choosing their own economic well-

being over the preservation of natural resources. In his 2004 “Challenge to Conservationists,” he points to the declining interest, despite their public rhetoric to the contrary, on the part of WWF and other large conservation organizations in collaborating with local groups in addressing conservation matters. There is also a presumption, he says, that biological science should be the sole guiding principle for biodiversity conservation, leaving human inhabitants out of the ecological equation.

The reality is that local knowledge is as indispensable for the sustainable management of ecosystems and biodiversity as it is for social and economic development. Just as a creative mix of local input and economic analysis can yield insightful development planning, the blending of indigenous wisdom and scientific knowledge, according to such observers as Bill Mollison, is key to ecological sustainability. The engagement of local communities is integral to conservation measures for the very reason that they are part of the ecosystem, and those that have subsisted there for long periods of time long ago learned how to manage resources judiciously. Researchers have demonstrated that human modification of landscapes can actually enhance soil and water quality and maintain or increase levels of biodiversity. If local peoples are now overexploiting resources, it is usually not for lack of understanding or desire, but generally the result of extraneous influences that are negatively affecting, directly or indirectly, both their livelihoods and the environment and that thus need to be investigated and addressed holistically.

This is the mindset with which Niaz Dorry of Greenpeace moved to Gloucester, Massachusetts in the 1990s to try to address the threat to marine animals that was particularly dire in the northeast (and northwest) of the United States. She took a holistic approach to the problem of declining fisheries, examining and addressing the entire food chain, including humans. As detailed in the case study included in this report, Dorry spent years in the fishing community, not only learning about the marine ecosystem (and the industry’s economic and political history) from the fishermen, but also forming relationships with them that led them to be central to the resolution of the problem.

Brosius questions, however, whether many other conservation organizations thoroughly assess the historical ecology of the places they are attempting to save. Few in the conservation community, he says, have followed up on empirical studies of biodiversity-rich environments influenced over time by human activities. “Conservation research has focused overwhelmingly on elements or patterns of biodiversity, while largely ignoring histories of land use in areas of conservation interest,” he says. “As a result, the ways that previous generations of local peoples have shaped current patterns of biodiversity composition have been overlooked.” Brosius contends that the actions taken without this understanding “have resulted in the exclusion of people from areas where human activity has shaped species composition and density over millennia.... “Without this knowledge, conservation is foreclosing the possibility that human displacement or exclusion might not actually be best for achieving conservation goals.” In short, he says, “the identification and creation of protected areas has not been much informed by an historical perspective.”

He provides case examples in which such exclusion is undertaken without adequate justification. In Pulong Tau National Park in Sarawak, Malaysia, for example, the government decided to enforce strict protection with park boundaries rather than acknowledge long histories of use of forests in ways that are in no way contrary to conservation goals. In another case, communities in Nanda Devi National Park in Nepal were prevented from grazing their livestock within park boundaries, despite the fact that there was little evidence that grazing was a threat to biodiversity.

Arun Agrawal of the University of Michigan and Kent Redford of the Wildlife Conservation Society relate that there are very few studies that demonstrate a relationship between the displacement of humans from protected areas and even a marginal gain in biodiversity conservation. Rarely, they say, do studies focus on the extent to which assumptions that human presence negatively impacts wildlife and biodiversity are correct.

Bray says that dealing with local people as part of the ecosystem not only elicits critically important knowledge. It also elicits their defense of the environment from which they derive their livelihoods and their identity. Bruce Rich of Environmental Defense says that his and other organizations took an ecosystem approach to their challenge to the World Bank's financing of Amazon rainforest destruction in the 1980s, looking for and finding a vigorous constituency in rubber tappers and other indigenous peoples who had a stake in protecting the environment. Wholesale timber production has been strongly criticized, but Bray points to evidence that many forms of selective logging by long-settled rural communities have minimal effect on biodiversity. He and colleagues found that a region of community forests in which timber is produced has had the lowest rate of land-use change recorded anywhere is southeastern Mexico. He also points to initial evidence that community-managed forests in that region of Mexico and in the Peten of Guatemala may be considerably more effective than traditional enterprises in maintaining forest cover.

Studies by the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) in the Peten show that the intensity of community harvests is among the lowest in the world and have little impact on biodiversity. Conservation International has found that mahogany logging in the southeastern Amazon Basin has had little impact on small mammals and the habitat structure. Such experiences, says Bray, occur in areas in which people live and defend their livelihoods. "The emergence of 'place-based' conservation," he contends, "is a new robust form of biodiversity conservation and merits full inclusion," alongside protected areas, as its second major pillar.

This perspective is reflected in the 1989 appeal by the Coordinating Body of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin (COICA) to environmentalists around the world to form an alliance in defense of the Amazon:

We, the Indigenous Peoples, have been an integral part of the Amazon Biosphere for millennia. We have used and cared for the resources of that biosphere with a great deal of respect, because it is our home, and because we know that our

survival and that of our future generations depend on it. Our accumulated knowledge about the ecology of our home, our models for living with the peculiarities of the Amazon Biosphere, our reverence and respect for the tropical forest and its other inhabitants, both plant and animal, are the keys to guaranteeing the future of the Amazon Basin, not only for our peoples, but also for all humanity.

Avecita Chicchon of WCS is fully supportive of this sentiment. “Indigenous peoples and those local people who have strong ties to the land are the best allies for conservation, as they will stay in the region,” she says. “The ‘human footprint’ left behind by indigenous peoples is much less than environmental impacts left by other groups. Most indigenous groups understand that their way of life depends on maintaining the services that their ecosystems provide.”

One can, of course, romanticize the conduct of indigenous and more recently arrived populations, who are neither incorruptible nor immune to the pressures and temptations of creeping modernization. It is when people who are part of the local ecosystem are shut out of critical decisionmaking, however, that important conservation opportunities are most surely lost. For a sustainable protection of animal habitat to be achieved, these communities must be an integral part of the undertaking and must, as emphasized by Sansom of the African Initiative, maintain secure access to natural resources and benefit from an equitable distribution of revenue generated from their lands. Livelihoods must be sustained in this fashion, rather than through the launching, for example, of small-scale development projects that do not produce a sustainable solution to local poverty and, therefore, to the loss of habitats and biodiversity.

### **3. Applying Political Economy Analysis**

Just as the human presence, role and history in the ecosystem must be understood in order to achieve sustainable conservation, the economic, political and social forces that have put local populations in actual or potential conflict with conservationist or animal-welfare goals must be taken into serious account if a mutually satisfactory resolution is to be found. Clearly, sustainable solutions cannot be found if the reasons for local overexploitation of the natural resource base are not fully comprehended and addressed in a respectful manner.

It is equally important that a conservation organization apply this political-economy approach in assessing and shaping its own role and behavior in attempting to achieve its own objectives. Indeed, such a process may help to clarify those objectives. Without appreciating and addressing how its relative power affects local and national economic and political dynamics, the organization cannot facilitate a process and an end result that harmonize a range of local interests.

An understanding of the political economy is also critical to helping the weaker parties identify the capacities and strategies required to level the playing field. If a conservation

group is truly interested in winning the cooperation of local populations, it must help provide it with the tools required to protect and enhance its livelihoods and other interests.

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An informed intervention by conservation organizations cannot be achieved without an understanding of the broader context and the political and economic dynamics that underlie the conservation problem and the problem of local livelihoods, as well as an understanding of what motivates the various actors. Where local, poor populations are a factor, conservation groups must start by asking and learning why they are poor and why they have made the difficult decisions they have regarding resource use if habitat destruction is to be halted. Engaging them directly will facilitate an understanding of the pressures that will likely continue to influence their survival strategies and their impact on their environment.

Pressures on the land and the uneven distribution of resources that are causing conflicts between local communities and conservationists have, to one degree or another, historical and policy roots. It is essential to understand, in this regard, that both affected populations and natural environments have been and still are frequently the victims of the intrusions of major commercial interests, particularly extractive industries, and of the relations of these interests with government, as well as of policies such as structural adjustment, trade liberalization, and privatization. Without an appreciation of such dynamics, it is difficult to find not only immediate consensus solutions to conflicts but also longer-term, sustainable approaches that satisfactorily address the underlying external causes of local tensions.

Structural adjustment policies were designed to open markets and reduce the state's role in the economy. They have come to include, among other things, the removal of trade barriers that had protected the livelihoods of small farmers and fledgling domestic industries, the deregulation of investment and the financial sector, the privatization of public utilities, marketing boards and other state enterprises, the promotion of export production and the elimination of labor protections. They have been prescribed by multilateral financial institutions and official aid donors and adopted by governments that are typically forced, under the threat of being cut off from international financing, to respond to the interests of their official and private creditors over those of their own people.

James Isiche, who heads the Nairobi office of the International Fund for Animal Welfare, has seen the pressures that economic adjustment policies have placed on Kenya's resource base and their negative effects on wildlife policy and local populations. Even now, he points out, with international institutions focusing on poverty and livelihoods in the promotion of Millennium Development Goals, the pressure on the government to generate revenues to address these issues has led to an increase in the cutting down of trees. In Ghana, as well as the Philippines, adjustment-bred mining policies have, as the

international civil-society network, SAPRIN, has shown, devastated rural environments and pushed people onto more marginal lands.

In Mexico, IFAW's Bettina Bugada and her Latin America regional staff point to small-scale corn producers, who, forced by the effects of adjustment policies and trade liberalization to migrate, have been negatively affecting animal habitats and biodiversity in Chiapas and other parts of the country's south. The SAPRIN team in Mexico, in coordinating a citizens' assessment of structural adjustment (CASA), has emphasized the same phenomenon, as agricultural-sector adjustment policies favoring large-scale monoculture have led to a further concentration of resources. Small-scale farmers and the poor have been pushed onto, and had to overuse, more marginal quality land due to a lack of alternative employment and sources of income. SAPRIN points to the loss of biodiversity as a consequence, as well. Overall, in five countries on three continents, SAPRIN has documented the intensification of rural inequality as a result of adjustment policies, with most of those who previously had access to productive resources benefiting from the measures while the poor have become ever more marginalized.

At the same time, adjustment programs have created opportunities for major business interests, many foreign, to exploit the natural-resource base directly, thereby undermining both sustainable resource use by local populations and conservation goals. Friends of the Earth, a long-time partner of The Development GAP in the joint environmental/development challenge to the economic policies of the international financial institutions (IFIs), describes the environmental impact succinctly in its report, "IMF: Selling the Environment Short":

One major goal of structural adjustment programs (SAPs) and stabilization programs is to generate foreign exchange ... To meet the IMF's ambitious targets ... countries often overexploit their resources through unsustainable forestry, mining and agricultural practices that generate ... environmental destruction ... Exports of natural resources have increased at astonishing rates in many countries under IMF adjustment programs, with no consideration of the environmental sustainability of this approach... Structural adjustment and stabilization also aim to generate positive government budget balances... [I]nvariably, the environment loses. Decreased spending weakens government ability to enforce environmental laws and diminishes efforts to promote conservation. In addition, governments are told to ... reduce the role of the state in favor of private sector development... Governments may also relax environmental regulation to meet SAP objectives of increasing foreign investment ...

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Of course, the past generation of externally prescribed structural adjustment policies is just the latest period of a centuries-long history of oppression, exploitation and displacement that have not only shaped the environmental and social landscape around the world but also in the process engendered distrust and resentment among affected groups. These include both communities that reside in areas with high levels of

biodiversity and those that have gravitated towards those areas after being displaced from other regions.

The WCS offers the case of the Maya in the Peten region of Guatemala, where those who survived the Spanish onslaught took refuge in the forest. They survived there through hunting, gathering, small-scale agriculture and later chicle production for large companies. When the government created the Maya Biosphere Reserve in 1990 to protect biodiversity, it included protected areas, multiple-use areas and buffer zones. Overall, there have been strong restrictions against exploitation of resources in the multiple-use areas, including chicle and oil.

The government, however, has done little, historically or now, to remove wealthy landowners who dominate those areas with large ranches for cattle production, and the buffer zones have been badly deforested. Though locals are paid to clear and work the land for the absentee owners, most all the benefits go to the latter and the ranching is generally devastating to the habitat and biodiversity. Small landowners point out that they farm and manage their land in a much more sustainable way, and they have suggested, so far unsuccessfully, that the government begin evictions with the wealthy ranchers. The government's hesitancy to apply the law against the latter has promoted a general disregard on the part of the poorer landholders for rules regarding the multiple-use and protected areas. Clearly, the protection of the area and its biodiversity will be difficult if these circumstances, resentments and distrust are not understood and addressed by conservationists and by the policymakers with whom they advocate.

Peter Peuschell of IFAW is very sensitive to the effects of colonization and corporate interventions that have prejudiced economic systems against the poor. At the same time that the industrialization of farming and fishing has further marginalized small producers, both physically and economically, the national-park movement has removed many poor communities from their lands and provided the rich with opportunities to exploit the natural resource base through mining, ranching, hunting and other activities. He understands the unfairness of not addressing the historical and ongoing forces of exploitation when asking those who consequently have few economic options to reduce their pressure on the resource base. He cites the history of slaughter by Canadian companies of seals in Greenland for their white pelts, which cost many local seal hunters their livelihoods and drove them to drink and suicide. When Greenpeace subsequently succeeded in a campaign to limit the sales of the pelts in Europe, he was acutely aware of the historic injustice in the further loss of income in the affected poor communities. While he recognizes that some issues are beyond the capacity of outside groups to address, he feels that it is incumbent upon those groups to approach each situation on the ground with a holistic and historical perspective.

IFAW's Jason Bell feels that, while it is important for community development to be part of conservation efforts, such endeavors will be successful only if the broader context is addressed through policy changes. Currently in southern Africa, there are political and economic constraints – in the form of the distribution of resources – that place limits on how much conservation projects can contribute to economic development. Access to,

and management of, the land are key, he says. In South Africa, where companies, both national and foreign, control much of those resources and continually use their leverage to expand their extraction in such forms as mining and trophy hunting, there are few opportunities for meaningful economic advancement locally. In this context, micro-economic development initiatives launched by the government have limited impact. Unless the distribution of resources and benefits are addressed, Bell says, one will be working on the margins. This will be the challenge for the South African government – and for those working for sustainable livelihoods and conservation – over the next decade. It is a challenge that requires going to the root of the problem and one that is at the core of the country's political debate today.

In Kenya, James Isiche sees a similar challenge, as the government's land-use policy continues to focus on maintaining large, viable parcels, leading poorer farmers to settle in wildlife areas on marginal lands. This leaves conservationists with the option of encouraging them to co-exist with wildlife by living from tourism and related activities. Yet local communities remain the lowest link on the tourism chain, with most of the benefits going to airlines, tour operators and so on. Clearly, organizations wishing to have credibility and collaborate successfully with poor communities to preserve habitat have to address these structural constraints.

The multi-year SAPRI initiative was rooted in a political-economy approach, one that was also highly participatory and that integrated local knowledge with the economic and political knowledge of organizations and academics at the national level. In this sense it was fundamentally different from most all previous engagements between civil society and international financial institutions, in which the symptoms, rather than the causes, of economic problems had been addressed. While SAPRI, in most of the ten countries in which it was organized, incorporated programs of economic literacy that helped local groups comprehend local economic dynamics and individual government policies in the context of comprehensive national economic adjustment programs mandated by international agencies, the on-the-ground contacts between local participants and visiting economists were at least as enlightening to the latter. They came away not only with a greater comprehension of the impacts of adjustment policies, but also, like conservationists in other settings, with a strong appreciation for people's understanding of their local realities, circumstances and environments and thus for the necessity of their involvement in the assessment and development of policies and programs that affect them.

For centuries and especially recently under neoliberalism, strong outside forces, both national and foreign, have increased pressure on the natural resource base and reduced space for the negotiation of a common agenda among those representing the interests of wildlife and local communities, usually the two most vulnerable parties in the competition for resources. Rapidly, however, the world is changing, with the economic strength and influence of China and the oil-rich countries weakening the policy stranglehold of the North upon the South and creating options for Southern governments. Of the SAPRI countries, Ecuador is an example of a government that is seizing that opportunity. The increased demand for natural resources from these sources creates its

own dangers, of course, but the entrance of new players in the competition for resources changes the national and local dynamic and provides new opportunities and necessities for local populations to challenge prevailing patterns of exploitation of local resources.

While it may be impossible for conservation organizations, however influential they may be with government, to rectify centuries of injustices that have pushed marginal population groups to inhabit and overexploit wildlife habitats and biodiverse areas in general in order to survive, they will be fighting an uphill battle for the confidence and cooperation of those groups and communities indigenous to the area if they do not display an appreciation of this history and fairness in their actions.

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To be effective in this work, conservation organizations require not only a comprehension of the history and relative power of the myriad of interests involved in these conflicts, but they must also possess a keen understanding of their own identity, role, biases, influence and responsibility in the local context. There is a tendency, however, to ignore this part of the equation.

“Conservation is blamed for many rural problems that conservation organizations have no impact on,” writes Katrina Brandon of Conservation International (CI), “and conservation organizations are easier to attack than development organizations, corporations, national governments, and international policy institutions. There is no doubt that colonial legacies influenced a great deal of conservation policy and action decades ago. But the assumptions that conservationists blindly want to push people off the land to have strictly protected areas everywhere is very far from the truth,” she continues. “[O]versimplified critiques point the spotlight onto conservation organizations who are often bit actors in a much more complex drama ... while distracting from greater problems that should be addressed by social scientists. In the case of Chiapas [Mexico], these include unequal distribution of land and resources, income and inequality, landlessness, poverty, development pathways, resource degradation, corporate interests, corruption, and civil conflict.”

This statement reflects why it is important that conservation organizations employ political-economy analysis in assessing their own role in shaping decisions regarding natural-resource allocation. From the perspective of local populations, it should be the CI’s of the world, which are seeking to restrict their land use, that address these “greater problems”, in part because their access to powerful economic and political actors is far greater than exists among local groups. Brosius relates how large conservation groups often engage in regional and national land-use planning exercises and, in the process, are involved in land-use trade-offs – “this area for timber extraction, that area for conservation. All the while, local communities continue to be construed as threats or ignored while extractive industries are embraced as partners. This does not come without cost to credibility.”

Despite their rhetoric about engaging poor communities, Brosius says, conservation organizations tend to “look up” to national governments, donors and industry, embracing especially big industry, in good part to build their own conservation portfolios. He decries the lack of reflection on how the broader institutional context influences their work, particularly how the funding environment conditions their priorities.

Probably no one writes more incisively about how institutional funding arrangements can set conservationists and local communities at loggerheads than Mac Chapin. In “A Challenge to Conservationists,” he discusses how the securing of the preponderance of their funding from bilateral and multilateral donors and corporations, particularly extractive industries, has greatly expanded the size of the largest Northern conservationist NGOs, transformed their operations, distanced them from local communities, particularly in their challenge to established interests, and led them often to accept the operations of extractive industries in fragile forest areas and to let government corruption or inaction go unchallenged.

Chapin relates how indigenous organizations, empowered in the 1990s to work on conservationist and sustainable development endeavors, “ran head-on into private companies, governments, bilateral and multilateral agencies, and conservationists all standing shoulder to shoulder” when they began using their new strength to defend their lands and resources. The large conservationist groups, he says, “are seldom willing to support legal battles over land tenure ...; they consider these actions ‘too political’ and outside their conservationist mandate. They have been reluctant to support indigenous peoples in their struggles against oil, mining, and logging companies that are destroying vast swaths of rainforest throughout the world.”

The dangers lie not only in the conservationists’ sources of funding, but also in their impact on the fundraising and freedom of action of local NGOs, which often receive their funding from Northern donors through the large Northern conservation groups. This, says Chapin, gives the latter considerable power over the agendas of local groups, which is particularly problematic “for indigenous peoples, who are frequently in an adversarial relationship with their national governments over their lands and natural resources.” The constraints are both political and administrative – on the relatively rare occasions when the funds are passed on by the Northern organizations in amounts that can make a difference.

Some twenty Southern academics recently wrote in *Science* magazine (“Globalization of Conservation: A View from the South”) that international NGOs (INGOs) are increasingly registering in the South, and competing for funds with local NGOs. To the extent that the latter will have to secure their funding from the better-connected international groups, they say, the pursuit of locally defined priorities and the building of local capacity can suffer.

Those Northern conservation organizations that are not dependent upon major corporations and official donor institutions for support are in a position to be more responsive to Southern groups. Working with local communities and organizations to

elicit their priorities, to understand the structural constraints they face, to help build their capacity to challenge and overcome those constraints and to facilitate their fundraising is key to both identifying and addressing the forces that stand in the way of sustainable livelihoods and conservation.

“As conservation organizations rarely make land-use decisions but rather influence governments that do,” says John Robinson of the WCS, “they have an obligation to recognize and use their relative power responsibly by balancing the claims of all local parties. This would include ensuring that government obtains free, prior and informed consent from all people denied access to land and other resources and that the latter receive at least equivalent land, resources or opportunities. Otherwise the conservation organization should not participate in the conservation effort.”

We would go a step further. Given the historical and ongoing “reallocation” of resources that has produced current-day power relations in most countries, organizations seeking to protect animals and animal habitat have an obligation and a need – if they want to achieve their long-term conservation objectives – to become advocates, in true partnership, for the rights and interests of the weakest affected parties. This requires one to be prepared to support challenges by local communities to claims of land, for example, that have been seized by or ceded to powerful commercial interests and the use of which not only degrades the local environment but may also undermine local livelihoods. International organizations have access to, and often leverage with, global and national institutions and officials that local organizations lack. They also have greater access to certain information and resources for campaigns and other actions. The extent to which these institutions utilize those advantages on behalf of, and in collaboration with, local groups will reflect the depth of their commitment to a just harmonization of local interests.

The authors of “Globalization of Conservation” emphasize the importance of helping build capacity for the strong management of resources, agenda setting and strategic planning by appropriate local organizations, as well as helping them in fundraising. “... [B]iodiversity will only be conserved,” they write, “if local people and interests want to save it for ethical and broadly utilitarian purposes. Th(e) level of support has to be large enough to resist a minority that may seek alternative land uses for narrowly selfish utilitarian reasons.” In the same vein, Dorry, reflecting on her work with fishermen in Gloucester, told Congress that the strategy of Greenpeace was to work with those “who were happy at making a living and against those who wouldn’t stop until they made a killing.”

Ensuring the sustainability of conservation and development endeavors requires an understanding of economic and political dynamics, of how and by whom power is exercised and decisions are made. This is a capacity that can be greatly enhanced by engaging and learning from local groups. Development initiatives launched to compensate for local concessions made to conservation may be ephemeral if they are not rooted in local control over productive resources. Guidance from affected communities

will be indispensable in this regard in helping to shape, enhance or expand income-generating activities.

While a development element in conservation efforts is now usually required by donors, the benefits from development initiatives have for the most part been narrowly shared and compensation to those displaced and otherwise affected has generally been negligible. The latter are most always poor and are usually further impoverished and disempowered. Development can be ineffectual or, worse still, damaging to local populations. If development endeavors are designed without local involvement, include goals and/or conditions that are anathema to local priorities, fail to take into account local and national economic and political dynamics, are managed by unrepresentative or otherwise inappropriate organizations or by those with insufficient capacity, or have limited sustainability, they will only compound local difficulties and undermine trust and conservation objectives.

#### **4. Case Study: Northeast U.S. Fisheries Campaign**

*This protracted endeavor, centered in Gloucester, Massachusetts, to restore and protect marine-animal habitat is illustrative of the necessity and importance of investing time in engaging local populations and leaving predetermined concepts and agendas behind when seeking community support for conservation.*

In the 1990s, the Greenpeace Oceans Campaign turned its attention to the threat to marine animals in the United States, particularly off its northwest and northeast coasts. It focused on the issue of fisheries and maintaining the integrity of the ocean habitat. It saw the bigger picture, that it was not just a matter of saving one species of fish or another, understanding that all the occupants of the oceans, including marine mammals, were being adversely affected by damage being done to the local food chain and the complex ecosystem in general. This position was not too far out of the mainstream at the time, as even traditional scientists were beginning to take a multi-species approach.

##### ***Reaching out to the communities***

After extensive work, with limited success, in the Pacific Northwest, Greenpeace decided to try a novel approach particularly in the northeast, borrowing from the community-organizing and grassroots methodology utilized in its Toxics Campaign. It wanted to learn from the perspective of those intimately involved in the decline of domestic fisheries, to see if they shared common perspectives, and, if possible, to form alliances for constructive change. In particular, it was interested in working with small-scale fishermen, whom some questioned as being part of the problem and not typical allies. But others recognized that the latter were being hurt by overfishing in various places and hence had a stake in finding a solution to a common problem. According to Greenpeace's lead campaigner on the issue, Niaz Dorry, in Congressional testimony:

Greenpeace's decision to reach out to the fishing communities stemmed from our belief that the knowledge and experience of these coastal fishermen would be of great value in solving some of these problems. With their cooperation, we hoped to shatter the perceptions that saving our oceans meant destroying jobs in their communities. Our strategy was to side with those in the fishing industry who were happy at making a living and against those who wouldn't stop until they made a killing.

As an organization, we felt that in order to develop a vision for the future of the fishery, it was important not to determine only how much fish should be caught but also who should catch the fish, how it should be caught, where the fish should be caught and when it should be caught, if at all.

Dorry, who had successfully worked with communities in the Toxics Campaign, moved to Gloucester and engaged local fishermen. She did not go there with a predetermined idea of what the problem was, much less what the solution was. While at first there was a lot of suspicion, some invited her to join them on their vessels. During the first four or five years, she made a point of trying to work on various boats as often as invited, in the process learning, by design, the life of fishermen. She also got to know them on the docks and in the bars. In addition, she grew to know the families and established relationships of trust with them, not just in Gloucester, but along the New England coast (and elsewhere), as she was upfront, transparent and consistent in her explanation of who she was and why she was there. She chose to ignore the fact that the fishermen had become part of the problem and they, in turn, were willing to ignore the fact that she was there ostensibly to help protect marine life. She cared as much about the fishing families as about the creatures in the sea and understood that by saving small-scale fishermen and their communities she was saving, historically and potentially, the most responsible stewards of the oceans.

### *The campaign in context*

In learning about the history of the region alongside the work and lives of the fishermen themselves, she came to understand the underlying causes of the long-term problem that had evolved and the small-scale operators' contribution to the problem. For centuries, there had been fishing in the Georges and Grand Bank areas off the coast of New England, with immigrant families at one point taking over the trade and passing it on from generation to generation. Until the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the catch had been seasonal, and the local inhabitants ate what was plentiful at a particular time in the ocean. But, by the beginning of last century, there had been a move away from a diverse fishing fleet that caught cod, shrimp and other species in accordance with the ocean seasons to one with larger boats that went out further and longer in search of particular types of fish that were in demand throughout the year. All types of species were caught in large sweeps, but now prey species that were not commercially viable were thrown back, dead, into the sea. The resulting rapid decline in fish stocks was further exacerbated after World War II by the intrusion of foreign, industrial-scale factory boats. With a lack of regulation, the local U.S. fleet began to be hurt badly economically. The result was the

Magnuson-Stevens Fisheries Conservation and Management Act in 1976, which banned foreign-flagged fishing vessels from U.S. waters and established a system of local and regional councils, composed primarily of local fishing interests, to manage the fisheries.

Dorry came to understand, however, that the problem had not been solved, that the ocean was not being restocked with fish. The Magnuson-Stevens Act may have banned foreign factory boats, but, it encouraged and subsidized American fleets to fill the void, and this competition drove the destructive behavior of the smaller operators. The same global market that the foreign fleets had identified and developed was determining the nature of local fishing, which continued to be keyed on meeting the demand for specific species of fish. Fisheries management was also market-based, with the fishing industry, and particularly the larger concerns, determining who received what quotas without adequate concern for the recuperation of a broken marine food chain and a highly damaged ecosystem. Dorry understood that, unless, through a community-based approach, local small-scale fishermen gained a voice and the ability to decide who could fish, according to ecological principles, in the local port, a viable marine ecosystem and their own way of life would disappear.

Her discussions with the local communities, and her organizing strategy, came to be focused on the need for them be more modest in their fishing – to make a living, not a killing. This would result ideally in a more seasonal and ecosystem-based approach in order to save the prey species upon which the cod, for example, depended. Progress was slow, but things turned around when, as Dorry predicted, industrial fishing trawlers, this time American flagged, expressed interest in re-entering local waters to fish for herring and mackerel – critical prey for the region’s troubled species. With their indiscriminate catch and superior capacity, they greatly heightened the competitive pressure already on local fishermen to employ destructive fishing practices. A combination of government policies and loans had attracted the larger vessels with more sophisticated technology, and the New England Council had further exacerbated the situation by basing its Total Allowable Catch for herring at historically high limits, thus favoring the year-round fishing by larger vessels, while ignoring the dragging of the ocean floor by the larger concerns. Greenpeace knew that, while these vessels represented the smallest percentage of fishing boats around the world, they were responsible for the most global fish catches and the most by-catches (species thrown back dead), while generating the least employment and revenue for local communities. In addition, inviting larger vessels to fish even for a few species would give them the foot in the door they needed to re-enter the region and possibly take over other fisheries.

Reacting and playing to local concerns about the destruction caused by factory trawlers in the 1960s and ‘70s, Greenpeace began fighting along with the communities to keep these huge ocean vessels, which could move from area to area as available fish were exhausted, from returning to the region. The trust, understanding, relationships and capacity built through the time spent by Dorry at sea and in community discussions allowed the community to mobilize to fight off his new industrial onslaught. According to *Time* magazine at that time:

Dorry's great gift, though, is for living and working, talking and listening in towns shadowed by the threat of ecological calamity – towns like Gloucester, Mass., the heavily Italian old fishing port where she settled... At first fishermen losing boats to bankruptcy weren't eager to hear their trouble analyzed by a woman environmentalist... But the underlying problem, years of overfishing off New England that had caused fish stocks to crash, wouldn't go away. Neither would Dorry. Quietly, she spoke to Gloucester residents: this is my information; this is what I think and why I think it. A few at a time, often grudgingly, the fishermen or their wives began to listen. What she said was what they knew: if the broken ocean food chain were to mend itself, New England fishermen would have to hammer out fairer catch limits, along with rules for gear type and boat size and number. If they couldn't handle this, Gloucester might be finished...

But it's not finished yet. Dorry's campaign took hold last year when fishermen along the East Coast joined to protest a 369-ft. factory trawler...refitted...to catch herring and mackerel. The two species are food for cod, tuna, birds, whales and dolphins, and could be a vital link in rebuilding the Atlantic food chain... Greenpeace and many other groups contend that trawlers are too efficient and too wasteful. They contribute to overfishing by catching everything in a gigantic swath. A problem with this is "by-catch," undersize fish or unwanted species that go back over the side, dead.

An inspiring and unusual coalition representing the breadth and diversity within fishing communities from up and down the eastern seaboard and consisting of individual fishermen and their families, commercial and recreational fishing groups, local and national environmental organizations, local communities, seafood sellers, local clergy, and the general public, as well as local governments and fishing groups from outside the region, came together in a few short months in opposition to the return of factory vessels fishing for herring and mackerel. People were mobilized through the internet, community town-hall-style meetings, mailings, speaking engagements, the media, and community organizing through churches and local civic organizations. The coalition was active at all levels, from local city and state governments to the New England Regional Council and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission to the U.S. Congress and even internationally with a campaign that fishermen and other interests in ten countries took to the United Nations in an effort to ban factory fishing. Dorry even took local fishermen on a bus tour to the American heartland to find common cause with small-farm families fighting against huge corporate food producers.

### ***Conclusion***

The immediate result of the U.S. campaign, achieved in record time, was the introduction and passing of legislation that banned factory vessels from the herring and mackerel fisheries. It was ultimately successful in making permanent banning of ships over 165 feet and 3000 horse power from the New England area. In 1999, a veteran Gloucester fisherman was quoted by Greenpeace praising the campaign: "So many different sectors of the Gloucester region's fishing communities came together to stop the return of factory

trawlers. We knew that all of our work to save the fisheries in this region would be for naught if factory trawlers were to fish indiscriminately and take the food of the very fish we are trying to save, especially cod, haddock, and other groundfish on Georges Bank.”

The fight against industrial fishing for herring and mackerel continues, led by coalitions, including one consisting mainly of fishermen and fishing community organizations, that have built upon the foundation laid by the Greenpeace campaign. In testimony, Dorry emphasized that:

(L)ong-term success in conservation of fisheries demands the participation of fishing communities in developing new approaches and solutions. Many fishermen on the East Coast have fished these waters for three or four generations... The current collaboration between many sectors of the fishing industry throughout the East Coast shows that diverse community interests can actually work together toward a common goal of promoting ecologically responsible principles and practices for fisheries. Such principles, such as limiting size and horsepower, reducing by-catch in the fishery, using selective gear, and preventing overcapitalization, are vital to ensure the economic sustainability which fishing communities desire.

*The New York Times* looked to the future and to the broader view of the campaigners:

These advocates are pushing for an entirely new paradigm of fishing, one in which regulators would concentrate on creating habitats where fish as a whole can thrive rather than simply setting quotas on single species.

“I always joke that it takes an ecosystem to raise a fish,” Ms. Dorry said.

And some of the bigger optimists in Gloucester believe that the coalition could presage a new era in which such a sophisticated approach will be encouraged, one in which a new breed of fisherman, more focused on the long term, might replace the every-man-for-himself breed of the past.

## **5. Addressing the Development/Conservation Nexus through Local Participation, Empowerment and Mobilization**

While some conservation organizations pay lip service to the incorporation of local populations and their economic well-being into conservation endeavors, others recognize its importance, indeed its necessity. The involvement of these local groups – both those indigenous to the natural habitat in question and those now there as a consequence of their displacement from other lands – in decisionmaking that affects their future and that of their homeland is at the same time a matter of right, justice and practicality.

The rights of indigenous and other inhabitants residing in or near areas of biodiversity or endangered species have been a subject of much discussion, debate and pronouncements

by conservation organizations, the United Nations, academics and affected populations themselves, among others. The recently adopted U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is clear that among those rights are those relating to their land, resources and environment, development and self-determination, as well as to the requirement of free, prior and informed consent vis-à-vis relocation. WWF, among others, goes a step further, adopting the principle of free, prior and informed consent as a requirement for its support of conservation or development activities in indigenous lands.

In addition, WWF's Jenny Springer suggests that, "while principles and standards related to indigenous peoples have been a focus of attention in conservation policy, social impact issues also need to be addressed in relation to non-indigenous communities and require relevant policy and guidance." The distinction between these two groups should not, however, be an issue for conservation and animal-welfare organizations guided in their decisions by a commitment to justice. The issue is one of collaboratively finding and adopting approaches to local livelihoods that help build, rather than undermine, sustainable local economies and habitat.

From a practical perspective, the involvement of local communities is indispensable to the achievement of long-term conservation objectives, both because of the importance of the knowledge that they bring to it and the commitment that they make to it. The Latin America staff of The Nature Conservancy has, for example, recommended to headquarters that TNC systematize its work with indigenous people and communities to gather best practices. As Mac Chapin writes,

... conservation cannot be effective unless the residents of the area to be conserved are thoroughly involved. This is not solely a matter of social justice, which must in any case be a strong component of all conservation work. It is also a matter of pragmatism. Indigenous peoples live in most of the ecosystems that conservationists are so anxious to preserve. Often they are responsible for the relatively intact state of those ecosystems ...

Indigenous or not, local groups have much to say of value to conservationists about the local dynamics and impact of national policies, about the relationship between their poverty and habitat destruction, and about the pressures that will continue to influence their survival strategies. As indicated in the case study (see Section 6) of the SAPRI experience in Zimbabwe -- and as was the case in most of the other SAPRI countries, where economic policy-impact assessments were done by civil society in conjunction with the World Bank -- the economists who went to the grassroots level were tremendously impressed by the grasp that local groups had of economic issues and by their capacity to link them to local conditions. SAPRI, the national civil-society network, connected organizations from virtually all sectors and elicited extensive input from thousands of people, many from poor communities that had never before been consulted, who expounded upon their experiences under conditions emanating from prevailing, Bank-prescribed economic policies.

A commitment to justice is an essential factor in eliciting the participation of local communities and organizations and in forming partnerships with them. After so many negative experiences with outside interests, few will be prepared to support an externally defined conservation agenda without feeling sanguine that they and their views will be treated respectfully and that their interests will receive priority and be promoted. Indeed, without an enhancement of their economic well-being, they will not have the sustained wherewithal to do other than continue to exploit the local resource base to whatever extent is necessary to survive.

The starting point for animal-welfare organizations and other conservation organizations must be the local community that is or will be affected. One must approach the inhabitants and the leadership without a preconceived agenda or preconceived notions about the community, its perspectives or the forces that shape the actions of its members. As much time as necessary must be devoted on the ground to getting to know each of these elements and to building a trust with the people and their leaders.

As international coordinators of SAPRIN, we and the steering committee originally allocated three to six months to the work of our national counterparts in eliciting and organizing the participation of a broad range of people and organizations in the initiative. It took, in fact, a year for this to be accomplished. Greenpeace's Dorry spent more than four years with the fishermen and their families in Gloucester, learning about their lives and the economic problems they faced. During this time, she came to recognize that their fate and that of the animals in the sea were closely tied and jeopardized by the same outside commercial interests. This investment in time and education earned Dorry the trust of the community and established the basis for a successful collaboration.

Beyond an open mind and shared values, there are other requirements for the building of trust with poor communities, particularly those that feel that their livelihoods are under threat. Dorry and other conservationists and activists we consulted, including SAPRIN personnel, also cite the importance of transparency, confidentiality, accountability, credibility and legitimacy. Hidden agenda, as well as any actions conceived and taken unilaterally, will undermine confidences; decisions must be made openly and be agreed upon and accepted by all. Sharing information and opinions provided in confidence can put local groups in jeopardy in their societies and severely strain any bonds that might be developed. Legitimacy will derive from the degree of validity that local groups see in the role that one is playing, so conservationists must be able to look at themselves through the eyes of people in the community and determine whether their goals and roles justify their being there. If, as WCS's John Robinson suggests, "an organization is not convinced that the minimum standards are met, then perhaps it should not participate in the conservation effort."

One's credibility will often derive in the first instance from the people and organizations that facilitated the contact with the community. If one decides to work with the community through, or in partnership with, an organization that itself has considerable credibility locally due to previous collaborations, one's acceptance by the community will, of course, be even more easily facilitated. Over time, however, that credibility will

depend upon the degree to which one is and remains accountable to the community. This will depend in part upon the representativeness and reputation of the local organizations with which it is working, so considerable groundwork must be put into that selection. Beyond that, two other issues are of particular importance.

One relates to the question of risk. If a common analysis and objectives are agreed upon, is the conservation organization willing to put its interests on the line to the same extent that are local populations that it is asking to make concessions to advance a conservationist agenda? An important and not uncommon example is the circumstance in which major commercial interests, national or international, gain unfair access to, and exploit, local resources, either legally because of their influence with government or illegally in the absence of government intervention. Will the conservation organization support the community in challenging the inequity and in seeking resources for its livelihoods or will it, as it too often happens, beg off “political” involvement rather than run the risk of alienating its funders, public officials or others of importance to it? It is difficult to see how a wealthy outside organization can remain accountable to its local counterparts if it is not prepared to make sacrifices at least comparable to those it is asking poor communities to make.

International organizations must also be accountable to communities when they ask their members to share their views for the purpose of developing an assessment, agenda or strategy. The international development field is replete with experiences in which agencies do “one off” consultations with local groups, eliciting their input, using that part of it that coincides with their own agenda, and then disseminating the product without offering those consulted an opportunity to review it and provide feedback. The World Bank and IMF’s PRSP process is a good example of this, as it has circumscribed the participatory process and focus to evade consideration of the major policy influences upon poverty. Indeed, the effective imposition of devastating economic adjustment around the world by these international financial institutions was made possible, in part, by the fact that participation by local populations and accountability on the part of the IFIs existed, at best, in name only. “Current standards for participation and inclusion are inadequate, ineffective and perhaps even unethical,” says Michael Brown of Innovative Resources Management, “based as they are on superficial consultation.”

Conservation organization not experienced in engaging local communities might do well by adding this capacity to their staff or by employing the skills of anthropologists or others with comparable skills and insights. Unfortunately, some organizations have employed these talents to manipulate local groups and circumvent their opposition to undesired conservation efforts.

In Zimbabwe, SAPRIN engendered widespread local participation through an extensive outreach program that had many different elements. In addition to involving national organizations, such as the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) and the Zimbabwe Confederation of Trade Unions (ZCTU), that have excellent reputations, especially among poor communities, it also identified and activated the best placed institutions in each locality. In the process, it created new structures that integrated teachers, church

leaders and others who had the respect of community members. This was particularly important in remote areas. SAPRIN would also go into market places, discuss the national economic structural adjustment program (ESAP) and SAPRI with the women and ask them to select their own representatives to join the workshops. The media was also an important tool for reaching people, attracting many normally left out of the policy dialogue. In Ghana, SAPRIN's outreach group also used the mass media, making radio broadcasts in local languages. The group used local civil-society networks, as well, to inform the broader public about the initiative and to draw people into workshops, which served as a key vehicle for participation.

In El Salvador, SAPRI found that distrust generated by a prolonged war, as well as the extensive migration that the war engendered, made it very difficult to reach and involve people directly. Hence, SAPRI worked through NGOs that had long-established relationships with poor communities. Robert Rubio, SAPRI's coordinator, used that approach effectively again as a member of the government's economic development planning council. Consulta Ciudadania organized people in workshops and were able to elicit important perspectives on problems and prospective solutions.

Workshops have proven to be an effective tool for others, as well, in gaining trust, participation and substantive input. In Argentina, Fundacion Cethus has found workshops and meetings to be very empowering tools when they are organized in a non-hierarchical manner. When encouraged to speak as equals with companies, national organizations, scientists and government officials, local groups have shared important knowledge about local realities and political and economic dynamics, and they have not hesitated to put more established interests in their place. This practice can resolve difficult issues, and has the additional advantage of bringing local groups together and into partnerships with other organizations that participate. Another Argentine NGO engaged in the protection of whales, the Institute for Whale Conservation (ICB), has also put this methodology to good use, convening multi-sector workshops, which have included local populations, to resolve problems such as the inappropriate disposal of dead fish, which was indirectly affecting the health of whales.

This methodology can also provide forums for the discussions of economic policy and local livelihoods. Workshops held in different regions around the country constituted the centerpiece of the outreach work of SAPRIN/Ghana and brought civil-society groups together. Organizations that normally would not have access to, much less participate in, national advocacy forums were drawn in, and they provided input into discussions of local economic and social impacts of SAPs. This engagement led to the creation of an unprecedented, multi-sectoral network to address an issue of critical importance to Ghanaians.

Workshops also helped galvanize community participation in Zimbabwe, at a time when the loss of income and livelihoods was becoming a grave issue in the country. SAPRIN invited stakeholders at all levels who were interested in democratizing the economy and empowering ordinary Zimbabweans. The role of the presenters was to demystify issues and then to subordinate themselves to community discourse. Churches and trade unions,

in particular, helped frame the dialogue and stimulated people to share their views, providing a forum for those who were paying a heavy price for the government's implementation of the World Bank-prescribed economic program. The participants were of diverse backgrounds, but the openness and democratic nature of the workshops facilitated not only broad-based participation but also the cross-fertilization of perspectives, the building of a movement, and the creation of structures for future work connecting economic policies with local conditions.

Another vehicle that has been used effectively to engender the participation and cohesion of communities is the oral documentation of the local history. Interviews of older community members by younger members, especially on videotape, can provide information and perspectives regarding local resources, ecology, capacities, injustices and rights that can help mobilize communities to defend and responsibly utilize their lands.

Mapping is another such instrument for galvanizing the involvement of communities, giving them a measure of ownership of the conservation process and empowering them vis-à-vis other forces with an interest in local resources. The involvement of communities in the mapping of their homeland can go far in leveling the playing field in the competition for those natural resources

The Wildlife Conservation Society has recently engaged in participatory mapping exercises in the Ituri Forest in the Congo, where it was negotiating agreements with local chiefs, villages and individual families to establish agricultural zones and protected areas around villages. The purpose is to delineate hunting and conservation zones, as there is a great deal of pressure on the land from people who have been continually moving into the area from other parts of the country where there is inequitable land distribution, as well as political instability and military pressures. WCS stresses that authorities must find means to address and control this migration and the resulting deforestation and to ensure that the long-term residents continue to benefit foremost from the natural resources in the area.

Some of the most interesting work in participatory mapping has been facilitated and documented by the Center for the Support of Native Lands. In interviews and in the study, *Indigenous Landscapes*, which he prepared with Bill Threlkeld, Mac Chapin relates how the mapping process has involved indigenous communities directly in the defense of their lands, helped those communities develop a critically important capacity, and empowered them to protect and procure resources necessary for their livelihoods. Once skilled in their development and use, local groups can utilize maps to make claims to land and indicate where there are encroachments in the form, for example, of hunting, farming or extraction.

In Papua New Guinea, the Center helped communities that lacked title to their land to develop detailed maps with which to negotiate with logging companies that had been given concessions. While local cartographers were involved, the process started without a foundation of trust, but by the third drafting workshop the local input was reflected in, and was shaping, the mapping to the point where more than 150 local residents were participating and effectively running the project. According to Chapin, the success of the

mapping lay in providing the people with a skill they valued, in bringing them together and organizing them, and in establishing in the community a negotiating power that had not existed without the maps.

The Mount Cameroon Project made even more effective use of participatory mapping. Having leased some of the land surrounding a forest reserve to rubber, tea and palm oil plantations, the government looked to privatize the rest of the land on which villagers farmed, hunted and fished. The latter teamed with local cartographers to form an all-African team that mapped and named all the sites and areas used by the community. Though fatalistic at first, Chapin explained, the villagers became excited as their mapping progressed and they were able to show their local knowledge. The accuracy of the map enabled the community to claim their territory, negotiate with the government and ultimately to deter the government from privatizing the buffer area. By gaining land tenure, the villagers secured the land they needed for their livelihoods and thus helped keep the forest reserve intact.

In Honduras, the uses to which the maps were put “surpassed what we had imagined,” Threlkeld and Chapin write in *Indigenous Landscapes*:

They were employed in proposals for land legalization, political negotiations, and campaigns against outside exploitation of natural resources. They were useful as planning documents for management of natural areas and the basis for environmental education and programs for recovering indigenous history. The maps ... served as a bridge across which indigenous peoples, government officials, and conservationists could communicate. For the first time, the groups that participated in the projects were learning how to read, interpret, and use maps – essential skills for dealing with outsiders on land and natural resource issues. And the process of constructing the maps fostered political cohesion and unity.

A local organization, MOPAWI, launched a diverse program of integrated development in 1985 in the Mosquitia, a large wilderness area in the northeast corner of Honduras, but soon recognized that the social, political and economic integrity of the local population, as well as the area’s fragile ecology, was dependent on land protection. For 25 years, cattle ranchers, as well as the colonization by landless peasants, had advanced steadily into the region and ever deeper into its forests. In 1991, a Chicago-based corporation gained concessionary rights from the government to clear-cut a vast stretch of the forest, a transaction that “was carried out secretly, under circumstances that were certainly shady and most likely illegal.” In this context, MOPAWI and Native Lands proposed the mapping projects both to help protect the indigenous lands and to forge cross-ethnic cooperation, analysis and strategizing.

The regional map, once completed, did, in fact, engender the formulation of strategies by local leaders for protecting community lands and natural resources. After its widespread dissemination, the map was used to organize workshops, to convene meetings with communities and local government authorities, to raise consciousness and to educate, to lobby locally and nationally, to negotiate with government agencies, to stimulate

organizational development at the community level and to facilitate exchanges with other Central American groups experiencing similar problems.

In both Honduras and the Darien region of Panama, the production of the maps and the maps themselves “unleashed considerable forward movement ... Virtually all of this energy welled from the bottom ... The indigenous peoples who had participated and now had the maps ... focused, for the first time, on the issue of territorial limits, and they began organizing around this theme.” In Panama, a national conservationist NGO, ANCON, in seeking to protect the Darien National Park, had failed “to incorporate indigenous views and needs in its conservationist framework, provoking strong criticism from Indian leaders.” Aided by the model provided by the Honduran mapping experience but handicapped by the absence of a local organization that was acceptable to them, the indigenous communities, engaged in a bumpy process of map production. Nevertheless, the penetration of mining companies, loggers, tourism entrepreneurs and land speculators galvanized a collective effort, in which the maps were used to petition the government for title to their lands. The maps have also enabled the groups “to negotiate better terms among the gigantic projects ... being imposed upon the region... [I]t does give Indians a seat at the table. And it makes it more difficult for outsiders to hoodwink the locals ...”

In Bolivia, local mapping was targeted in good part on the protection of local livelihoods in the Izozog region. It enabled the Izocenos to pool knowledge about their subsistence activities of hunting, fishing, gathering, herding and farming, undertakings that are usually organized at the level of the extended family or a group of cooperating households. This cooperative effort has led to planning the preservation and management of the entire region’s natural resources ... “so that secure livelihoods might be gained from sustainably exploiting communal lands.”

Chapin and Threlkeld lay out a process of participatory mapping that can generate products which, because they “reflect local knowledge and have the rigor of cartographic science,” are valuable tools for use by poor communities. This process entails the selection of an appropriate lead organization, the development of a work plan with the full participation of community representatives, broad-based community consultations, the development of relationships with appropriate government agencies, the organization of community research teams and cartographic technical teams, methodology and follow-up workshops, participatory fieldwork, the transcription of field data onto maps, and the production of final maps with community input and oversight.

The use of workshops, mapping, economic-literacy programs and other vehicles for popular participation have at the same time helped local communities and organizations develop capabilities that can enable them to advocate beyond the local level for economic and social change. Opportunities to exchange perspectives and information, to see power relations in a broader context, to build relationships and fashion a common or complementary agenda with other groups, to construct vehicles for the expression of viewpoints and networks to give those views force, and to raise consciousness and gain

confidence through these processes help build a capacity to engage and, when necessary, challenge powerful institutions.

It is important that conservation and animal-welfare organizations help empower local populations in this fashion. A willingness to provide resources and create structures, vehicles and platforms for the conveyance of local positions will go a long way toward the creation of trusting alliances and a common and integrated agenda for sustainable habitats and livelihoods. Such organizations must do what it can to level the playing field for local groups. This often requires that those organizations reduce their own relative power, help create the space and in which affected groups can organize and mobilize, and then join forces with them to more effectively battle stronger, outside interests. In the “Globalization of Conservation: a View from the South,” the authors argue that, while international NGOs have an important role in influencing global policy, “leadership in conservation has to be decentralized and better integrated into local conditions. Locally produced strategies and agendas, implemented by strong local institutions and individuals are keys to success.”

The SAPRI experience demonstrates what an outside organization, working respectfully with local groups to encourage their involvement and strengthen their analytical and institutional capacity, can do to help empower poor constituencies to advocate collaboratively and on their own behalf to sustain and enhance their livelihoods and economic well-being.

In Ghana, SAPRI, having helped people understand the connection between structural adjustment and the concerns they expressed in workshops about their livelihoods, then helped build up civil society’s capacity for engaging the World Bank and government and created a vehicle to facilitate this engagement on adjustment policies. In Zimbabwe, people were already looking for a way to effectively negotiate with government, and SAPRI provided a vehicle for marginalized communities to provide their input with a view to influencing policy formulation and for future work on connecting economic policies with local conditions and building a movement for change.

In El Salvador, the synergetic dynamic that developed between local populations and visiting economists and NGOs helped all parties to better understand the links between macroeconomic policies and local circumstances. This, in turn, facilitated effective dialogues with government ministries – until the government, feeling strong structural constraints, decided to withdraw from SAPRI. Nonetheless, the NGOs representing and promoting the interests of their local constituencies developed strong commitments to SAPRI and its agenda and to continue mobilizing around major economic issues on their behalf. Mexican groups similarly built upon their enhanced economic literacy and organization and focused increasingly over time on advocacy in the construction of public economic policies.

In Ecuador, SAPRI unfolded in the midst of an economic crisis and widespread social protests against a new set of economic adjustment measures. This gave SAPRI’s work a greater pertinence and urgency and moved it to mobilize groups participating in its

network and in activities at local levels around the country to collaborate in the development and promotion of an Alternative National Economic Plan. Agricultural workers and subsistence farmers from around Ecuador traveled to the capital to propose changes in the social-security system for peasants. Small and medium-scale producers gathered to develop alternatives for agricultural development. Union members focused on alternative labor-market reforms. A national seminar was convened and a representative subcommittee named to pull these and other proposals into a national plan, which, when completed, was submitted to a broad range of civil-society organizations for review and discussion. Their input and feedback were incorporated into a framework proposal that has been used as a basis for ongoing civil-society work on alternatives and dialogue with government.

## **6. Case Study: SAPRI/Zimbabwe**

*The Structural Adjustment Participatory Review Initiative (SAPRI) offers illustrative examples of how people and organizations representing various sectoral interests mobilized and collaborated to address a serious, and what they came to see as a common, constraint to the realization of their particular objectives. Launched in 1996 in ten countries by the civil-society network, SAPRI, with the president of the World Bank, this ground-level, multi-year assessment of the impact of Bank-prescribed structural adjustment policies was rooted in political-economy analyses of the causes and effects of local problems, the broad-based participation of affected parties, and the building of alliances to more effectively address common obstacles. Below, one of those country endeavors, that undertaken in Zimbabwe, is presented to demonstrate the integrated nature and intensive processes of SAPRI and its relevance to organizations such as IFAW that are committed to collaborative efforts to ensure sustainable local economies and habitats.*

People were angry about ESAP. The Zimbabwean government had implemented the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme, financed by the international financial institutions, without consulting them, emphasizing the importance of its privatizing and liberalizing measures to the economic well-being of the country. They had heard warnings on the radio from the trade unions about the prospective impacts of the program on them and their livelihoods, but they were unable to get answers to their questions from the government. They felt that they weren't being heard, that they were talking to themselves.

Their anxieties and anger intensified as they began to feel the effects of the program. The government abdicated its responsibilities in the provision of health care and education. Jobs were lost, driving people into the market and survival modes. Subsidies for basic foods disappeared. There were few signs of the external aid that was to accompany the adjustment program except for compensatory programs that had little impact. People couldn't make ends meet, and economic hardships intensified. Livelihoods and marriages were destroyed.

Meanwhile, the rich got richer. The political elite gained new opportunities. Public lands were being used by public officials for private gain. The people were now up against a new breed of black elite. There was a widening ideological and class divide. The country's social fabric was being destroyed. Godfrey Kanyenze of the Zimbabwe Confederation of Trade Unions, who became a central figure in SAPRI/Zimbabwe, was among the many who saw the ideals of the liberation struggle being lost.

People wanted to know why government adopted ESAP policies if they yielded advantages to some, but disadvantages to many. Judging by its effects on most Zimbabweans, ESAP was a failure. The government had done everything that the international financial institutions had asked of it, so people around the country lost whatever faith they still had in the policies themselves. Yet, when the ESAP ended, the government began to move forward with another program that was new in name only. People began to organize, but initial efforts to challenge this process were not broad-based and were hijacked by the government.

### *Giving local people a voice*

When Kanyenze and other Zimbabwean activists agreed to form a national civil-society network to assess the impact of the ESAP with the World Bank and government, the timing was good. People were anxious for something new, an effective way to engage the government. They wanted their independence back, and virtually all sectors, including the media, were excited and had a serious interest in SAPRI. It finally gave the people a way to publicly discuss the issue, provide their input to the government and not fear repercussions.

SAPRI was a deeper, more participatory process than previous civil-society attempts to analyze economic policies and address them with government. SAPRI captured the "unheard voices" of the disadvantaged and was the only program that solicited the perspectives and insights of marginalized communities with a view toward influencing policy formulation. While there is generally much lip service given to participation, and most initiatives (such as the Bank-promoted PRSPs) have their own agenda and seek public affirmation, SAPRI's methodology was different. It gave people a sense of ownership and intensified their desire to better understand and address the source of their problems.

For the participatory program to succeed, it was necessary to set up structures so as to reach and involve the most vulnerable people at the grassroots. SAPRI formed a Steering Committee and launched an outreach program, asking the Zimbabwe Council of Churches and the ZCTU to organize a number of one-day participatory workshops. All stakeholders interested in democratizing the economy and empowering the people of Zimbabwe were invited. The presenters were people who were able to subordinate themselves to community discourse and to demystify both ESAP and SAPRI issues. Participants included people from many walks of life, including workers, housewives, the unemployed, informal laborers, students, business people, teachers, nurses, bus operators,

pastors and church development officers, as well as representatives from women's organizations, resident associations and human rights groups, among others.

### ***Working across sectoral lines***

SAPRI was received with great enthusiasm by a wide range of civil-society sectors in Zimbabwe. Almost 250 civic organizations from virtually all sectors became members except for big business, though small businesspeople and farmers joined. NGOs and trade unions were very active. Together they identified the need for extensive outreach to peri-urban and rural communities of the very poor and disadvantaged, who are usually left out of consultation processes. The ZCC saw SAPRI as offering a strategy and model for effective advocacy, lobbying and networking on an issue that was a priority to it and that "everybody" had a problem with, i.e., the effects of ESAP. It saw unemployed youth, retrenched workers, and poor women suffering the burden of the economic reforms that diminished access to formal employment, basic health care, education and other critical needs.

One of the things that made SAPRI unique, according to Kanyenze, was the nature of its outreach, which was facilitated by involving the best placed and most trusted institutions and organizational networks in each locality. This and the involvement of teachers and youth made people feel comfortable and mobilized large sectors of each community. The outreach involved bringing together all the civil-society groups in the region and creating a culture of cooperation and a sense of solidarity, pulling together their views on issues that concerned them, and creating structures that would facilitate future collaboration and activities.

### ***Workshops as a participatory tool***

To facilitate a voice for those people who were confronted by a set of externally imposed, deleterious policies, the ZCC, on behalf of SAPRI and with the leadership of a local nurse union organizer and the assistance of local churches, helped arrange local workshops and seminars and mobilized a great many other civic groups to attend in order to share their experiences and views on SAPs. Participation was very broad and included, among others, housewives, teachers, nurses and other health workers, the unemployed, informal- and formal-sector workers, business people, vendors, small-farmer and cooperative representatives, students and other youth, pastors and church leaders, women's club members, NGO representatives, chiefs and headmen, councilors, police, district administrators and committee members, and representatives of government ministries. There was usually a good mix of community leaders and ordinary citizens, as well as a good gender balance.

The workshops were complemented by study circles. These were organized around sectors, because the meetings were convened during and around work time. This had the added advantage of isolating intruders, so that it would be safe to talk. It was done at lunch hour, tea time, over beers, or whenever it was convenient for the participants.

Communities welcomed the workshops because it was first time such gatherings brought together various sectors and, just as importantly, presented an opportunity to air grievances about the SAP programs with a broad cross-section of people. Because the groups were diverse, it was important to build and maintain trust and confidence through transparency and accountability. Thousands of people were involved, as 60-100 people would attend each workshop, some walking long distances to participate, in almost all of the country's 46 districts.

The participants also attended workshops in economic literacy, where they learned and discussed the origins of policies (e.g., agricultural reforms), their objectives and content and why the government had adopted them. The roles of foreign companies and other major actors and influences were also discussed. SAPRIN developed a paper to demystify SAPs, which, along with other materials (some of which were translated into both major vernacular languages), were disseminated at each workshop. These workshops and seminars achieved a high level of participation through group discussions and helped educate people across the country.

This use of political-economy analysis was, as Kanyenze notes, another unique and key part of SAPRI. It served as a very useful tool for consciousness raising and mobilization and for dealing with power relations and the control of resources. SAPRI's application of this analysis, defined in SAPRI's terms of reference by SAPRIN and the World Bank, made it clear why the poor were poor, that their poverty was not the natural state of affairs, and that it could therefore be tackled.

### ***Local knowledge, capacity and leverage***

The SAPRIN people were very committed, and the outreach took them repeatedly out to the secondary cities and smaller towns. Two of the principal economists, Teresa Moyo (head of the technical committee) and Kanyenze, were humbled by the knowledge of the local participants. The meetings organized by SAPRIN allowed people to speak out and define issues themselves. The structures were local, the relationships organic, and everyone participated in group discussions. The economists and others coming from the capital were surprised to see that local people could understand the intricacies of economic issues. In each workshop, an economist would explain, with flip charts, the information and concepts in simple language, and people would then do the analysis and give new insights related to local life.

Empowered with new analytical skills, information and organization, many ordinary people were for the first time emboldened to engage government officials, challenge World Bank representatives, and build alliances across sectors. Issues, problems and conflicts related to enterprise viability, urban employment, small-scale agricultural producers, food security, and health and education came to the fore and became the subjects of further investigation. Kanyenze says that SAPRI not only gave people space in which they could speak freely about their own experiences in the local economy, but also the confidence to assess economic policies and engage and challenge policymakers. In addition, it created capabilities and structures that still exist and that can be expanded

to develop and promote alternatives. Recommendations from the field, in this regard, point to the need for additional mobilization, economic literacy, capacity building (particularly in organization and administration), research, and advocacy. Despite these needs and for all the grave problems facing the people of Zimbabwe today, the efforts and structures of SAPRIN enable them to have a voice of their own, though the follow-up to SAPRI was one of the many victims of the current political and economic crisis.

Jonah Gokova and others in SAPRIN look upon SAPRI foremost as a vehicle for accountability. Previously no civil-society structures or mechanisms had existed that had the potential to make politicians accountable to their own people. Having seen what happened when people were not involved in decisionmaking by the government and the international financial institutions, SAPRIN facilitated the creation of a strong network of organizations and people who gained an understanding of the issues that impacted them and who could link local poverty and global policymaking – and who had the confidence to engage and, if necessary, confront policymakers until the national crisis deepened.

## **7. Building Partnerships and Alliances for Effective Action**

International conservation organizations can contribute significantly to the empowerment of local communities and groups by forming, facilitating and supporting alliances of organizations with similar or complementary objectives. Indeed, the choices that an organization makes in this regard will tell local groups a great deal about the degree of its commitment to local priorities and thus its trustworthiness as a prospective partner.

Partnerships and alliances can take several forms. Conservation or animal-welfare organizations may, if they are experienced in a region or are willing to invest the time and human resources required, be able to forge working relationships directly with one or more local communities or organizations. Another option is to identify and collaborate with national conservation, development, economic-justice, human-rights or other organizations that have the confidence of, and work with, those groups. Alliances with international, national or local government agencies and vested economic interests may be tactical and useful, or they may seriously compromise conservationists wishing to ally themselves with local organizations and their livelihood agendas, as well. Finally, an issue of widespread concern, such as a threat to local livelihoods, can, especially with the constructive intervention of respected national organizations, galvanize a broad-range of diverse interests into the formation of a potentially powerful network geared to local action and national advocacy.

Greenpeace's intensive work in fishing communities in the northeast United States is an example of how an environmental or conservation organization can work directly and effectively with local groups to achieve both economic and biodiversity objectives. Niaz Dorry, who spent years in the communities, wanted to learn from those who were every day experiencing the decline of domestic fisheries not only "how much fish should be caught but also who should catch the fish, how it should be caught, where the fish should be caught and when it should be caught, if at all." The organization therefore sought, and

over time was able, to ally itself with those who, while seen by others as part of the problem, turned out to share with Greenpeace a common perspective and a willingness to look in partnership for a common solution to a common problem.

Where such time-intensive investments in learning have not been made, the first contacts should be made -- and sustained -- with international and national organizations that are known to local communities and that have worked with them on issues related to sustainable livelihoods. A good deal of research should be put into this process, as the choice of organization will influence one's credibility with the communities and how one approaches them and the issues they prioritize. It is highly advisable to retain the involvement of such organizations or others they might recommend that work locally on issues of sustainable development and economic justice, as few conservation organizations are experienced in these areas.

The community groups, given their residence in the ecosystems that conservationists wish to preserve, are, as Mac Chapin puts it, "without doubt preferable to the most common alternatives – logging, oil drilling, cattle ranching, and large-scale industrial agriculture – that are destroying ever larger tracts of forest throughout the tropical latitudes." Chapin laments the fact that:

NGOs entrusted with the enormous responsibility of defending the planet's natural ecosystems against the encroachment of the modern world in its most destructive manifestations have increasingly partnered with – and become dependent on – many of the corporations and governments that are most aggressively making this encroachment... Each of the large conservation NGOs has close financial and political ties to the governments, bilateral and multilateral agencies, and multinational corporations operating throughout the Third World, and it is reluctant to oppose them. This has given rise to the ironic observation that the large international NGOs are allying themselves with forces that are destroying the world's remaining ecosystems, while ignoring or even opposing those forces that are attempting to save them from destruction.

Peter Brosius sees this embracing of big industry on the part of large conservation organizations as the result of both the desire to build larger conservation portfolios and the questionable belief that they may be able to influence industry. "The question to ask," he says, "is whether institutional partnerships with industry reduces credibility ...". A major problem, as Peter Peuschell points out, is that some large conservation organizations have accepted the current system of exploitation. They have acceded to the extraction or intensive cultivation of resources on the part of major economic interests in order to ensure that other lands nearby are preserved. Of course, it is usually weaker groups and communities that are expected or forced to make concessions in this regard.

Governments are generally complicit in such injustices, either through the adoption of policies and laws or by turning a blind eye to exploitations by commercial interests. Hence a decision by a conservation organization to work in partnership with government carries with it significant implications. One of the most important issues is the choice of

agency with which to “partner”. The development of a working relationship with a ministry of indigenous or community affairs will clearly lead one in a different direction than if a partnership is forged with only a forestry ministry.

Those working to preserve animal habitat and those working to save local livelihoods should be natural partners, especially as they frequently face common external threats and are in relatively weak positions in the competition for land. “Conservation and social impacts are ... linked by the broader forces that threaten both biodiversity and social welfare of local people, such as commercial over-extraction of natural resources,” says Springer of WWF. “These synergies and shared threats form the basis for collaboration between conservationists and indigenous and local communities.”

Partnerships between these two parties can often be difficult, however, and thus have to be constantly nurtured and reassessed. Mistrust is frequently a problem. From the perspective of poor communities, external conservationists may not appear to understand or prioritize local economic realities or agendas. Conservationists, on the other hand, may be uncomfortable with the style of local organizations that have become militant in the face of continual external exploitation of them and their land. This has led to talk in the community, says Chapin, about how ‘difficult’ indigenous people can be and, public statements notwithstanding, how unsuitable they can be as partners. Rather than view them as “political actors who can form an environmental constituency,” significant sectors of the conservation movement, says Chapin, caution that indigenous people sometimes choose their economic well-being over the preservation of natural resources and, once given tenure to their lands, may not work to preserve their biodiversity.

For their part, the large conservation NGOs do publicly extol the virtues of working in partnership and recommend methods for doing so. “Understanding the complexities of indigenous and traditional communities and incorporating their knowledge into conservation planning is a continuous process,” writes The Nature Conservancy’s Latin American regional program leadership. “It requires a long-term commitment to learning about community needs and concerns, and developing and refining joint solutions that integrate local knowledge, best conservation practices based on sound science, and lessons learned from our experiences working at sites around the world.” They recommend that clear principles for working with indigenous peoples, such as those developed by WWF and IUCN, be developed.

WWF itself recommends that conservation organizations clearly delineate their policies on these issues. Policy, writes Jenny Springer, “provides a basis for collaboration with others who share concerns for socially equitable approaches to conservation and development. Policy also provides a clear statement to other potential partners regarding the terms on which the organization can engage in a partnership or activity, and the kinds of activities it cannot support.” She emphasizes that “[c]ollaboration with indigenous and local communities and their organizations is essential in order to hear their concerns, understand their issues in relation to the potential negative and positive impacts of a conservation activity, identify common interests, and resolve conflicts ...”

Springer identifies a major gap that must be filled to facilitate healthy partnerships. She points to the need for analysis to understand how conservation interventions affect local people, rather than only the reverse. "... [The] lack of social impact analysis limits the ability of practitioners and affected people to define and develop appropriate responses – such as alternative strategies or compensation measures – to ensure against negative impacts or promote positive ones... Impact analysis should be part of and, in turn, can strengthen and inform collaborate planning and decision-making processes with indigenous people and local communities."

As laudable as these suggestions may sound, they indicate a serious and all-too-common failing in the conservation field: the proclivity to view the problem and thus the solution first and foremost from a conservation perspective rather than through the eyes of affected parties at the local level. Social impact analysis, in this more insular ecological context, addresses the impact of conservation measures, but not the far more significant commercial factors that have placed communities literally between a rock and a hard place. Indeed, delineating *a priori* a policy position on the kinds of activities that one's conservation organization cannot support, may preclude, for example, one's engagement in campaigns against a mining investment and the government policies that support it before one has had an opportunity to discuss the cause of a problem with an affected community.

As Chicchon of WCS writes, "it is critical to begin by understanding the interests and value system of each stakeholder group ... when developing alliances for conservation." She stresses that, in trying different models to achieve conservation in Latin America, WCS has found that "those that have been more successful and long-lasting in remote areas are those that combine local peoples' interests with sound resource-use planning." This requires the development of transparent partnerships rooted in the full participation of all parties. Local communities must be at the table as equals. "No social group," says Chicchon, "wishes to be ... excluded from the decisions on natural resource allocation."

WCS commits to specific landscapes for the long term, and its local partners recognize this dedication, says Chicchon. The trust built by this commitment, the leveling of the playing field, and full local involvement in decisionmaking, especially regarding land-use and resource-use planning, are key to effective partnerships. Time must be allocated for developing these alliances, negotiating common positions, strategizing and mobilizing.

It has been our experience that, through these processes, the respective roles of the partners will become clear. Generally, an international conservation group has access and leverage at the national and international levels to not only facilitate access for local groups but also to help provide the protection and space that may be needed for local organization and mobilization. The Fundacion Cethus of Argentina has found, as we have, that when working in other countries, they often have a better chance of being heard by the national government than are local groups and thus have an opportunity to help promote a local agenda while helping create a policy platform for the latter. At the same time, community groups usually have a superior knowledge of the local political

economy and good, if informal, contact with local officials, and thus are better placed in the first instance to design collaborative strategies at that level.

The combination of local knowledge and mobilization, on the one hand, and leverage at the macro level, on the other, can go far towards effectively addressing powerful commercial interests and government policy, as well as bring international attention and funding to local groups. WCS, for example, has helped achieve the titling of indigenous lands, and in the Ecuadorian Amazon, for instance, has advised six Kichwa communities in the monitoring of the impact of oil development in what has become a solid partnership. WCS has also helped its Guarani partners in their successful negotiation with corporations to minimize the local ecological and socioeconomic impacts from the development of their land for the Bolivia-Brazil gas pipeline.

Chapin, a strong critic of large, international conservation organizations, holds the WCS and its local partnerships, especially in Latin America, in relatively high regard. He commends its strong focus on community-level conservation, co-management with indigenous peoples of protected areas, and sustainable community development. He extols its work with the Izoceno Guarani in Bolivia's Gran Chaco region as "an exemplary example of mutual respect and smooth co-management of a protected area." Some field staff, he says, recognize that they can accomplish little of value if they do not work in partnership with local people.

During the course of his work, Chapin has come to see the predominant role played by global and national corporations in the destruction of local habitat and thus the necessity of addressing their actions and the policies that facilitate them. Miguel Iniguez and Vanesa Tossenberger of the Fundacion Cethus in Argentina, came to the same realization several years ago and have since involved the foundation in policy issues in response to the expectations of their local partners. Peter Peuschell also stresses the importance of building alliances, particularly between environment and development organizations, which serve multiple interests and which can more effectively challenge trade and other economic policies that favor commercial over local priorities. He sees the importance of engaging extractive industry and other investors, but, as this can often lead to frustration, he emphasizes the necessity of being prepared to challenge them in campaigns and through other means. This, in turn, he recognizes, generally requires the formation of a strong network of organizations.

In and around Gloucester, it was the prospective return of factory fishing vessels, following the educational and organizing work of Greenpeace's Dorry, that mobilized organizations in the region and led to the creation of an active coalition of commercial and recreational fishing groups, communities, seafood sellers, environmental organizations, clergy and local governments within just a few months. The residents were mobilized through town-hall-style meetings, community outreach, the internet, the media, speaking engagements, churches and civic organizations.

In the case of SAPRIN, the economically, socially and environmentally destructive policies of structural adjustment galvanized broad-based organizational involvement and

networking in countries on five continents. The network building generally began through outreach to organizations with broad national bases and/or to those with a track record or strong interest in advocacy on economic policy. This is how the network was launched in Ghana, where the establishment of common ground and cause through a focus on SAPs helped bridge even the differences that had historically kept the labor movement apart from a number of other non-governmental sectors. The network was expanded to embrace some 300 organizations, ranging from organizations of teachers, nurses and other civil servants to associations of farmers and fishermen, from environmental and development organizations to business, religious and student groups. SAPRI/Ghana was, in effect, an exercise in alliance building, one that has left behind important civil-society relationships. In Zimbabwe, outreach to poor communities, the convening of local and regional workshops and the leadership of the country's principal church and labor organization brought together into a strong network nearly 250 civic organizations, many with broad-based membership. With diminishing disposable income a widespread problem, virtually everybody had a problem with the structural adjustment program, and many saw SAPRI as an effective vehicle for advocacy and networking.

One of the best examples of alliance building by environmental and local organizations took place as part of the campaign in the 1980s against the World Bank-supported deforestation of the Brazilian Amazon. As Bruce Rich of Environmental Defense relates from first-hand experience in his book, *Mortgaging the Earth*, millions of small domestic food producers were uprooted in the 1960s, '70s and '80s from south-central Brazil and replaced as a result of government policies by a massive concentration of landholdings for capital-intensive, export-oriented soy and citrus production. Many of the newly landless, seduced by the misadvertisement of good land, headed for Rondonia in the Amazon, where the government had launched a World Bank-financed massive road-building and colonization scheme. Put at serious risk was the well-being of some 10,000 indigenous people and the integrity of a rainforest three-quarters the size of France.

An alliance was formed among Brazilian environmental and indigenous-rights organizations, on the one hand, and counterparts in the United States and Europe, led by Environmental Defense, on the other, which focused its attention on the board members of the World Bank, particularly the United States. Working with sympathetic members of the U.S. Congress, the campaigners managed, within just a matter of months, to induce the Bank to halt the remaining disbursements of the loans to the Polonoroeste project. But a greater challenge – and mobilization – was still to come.

Despite the disbursement suspension by the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank soon after approved loans for the paving of roads that would enable the extension of the Polonoroeste project into the neighboring Amazon state of Acre. Ranchers, land speculators and logging companies threatened the pristine tropical forest and the livelihoods of the 10,000 indigenous people and the 40,000 rubber tappers who derived income from a number of forest products. The latter, part of 350,000 rubber tappers who had migrated to the Amazon a century earlier, often lacked secure land titles, which fueled increasing conflicts with large landowners.

With their survival dependent on the conservation of their natural surroundings, the rubber tappers intensified their organizing and their efforts to secure title to their lands and to protect the forest as a base of extractive production. Having seen how the Polonoroeste project had destroyed the livelihoods of many of their Rondonia counterparts, the rubber tappers in Acre peacefully obstructed the downing of trees by the large landowners.

At the first national meeting of Amazonian rubber tappers, a national organization was formed, as were partnerships with U.S., British and other Brazilian organizations rooted in long-time relationships that had been established with anthropologists and human-rights and environmental activists. Soon afterwards, the rubber tappers formed an alliance with the federation of indigenous peoples, with whom they had often competed for land but with whom they were now united against the fast-growing threat to their forest home.

Rich relates the objectives of the struggle, as laid out by the rubber tappers:

They called for a halt to agricultural colonization projects in intact forests and for the conservation of the forests they occupied. They insisted that local needs and knowledge be taken into account in future development projects in the Amazon, and that they be consulted and participate in the planning of projects that would affect them directly. And they proposed a new model for conservation of the Amazon rainforest – the setting aside of large areas of forest as protected “extractive reserves” under the management of local rubber tapper communities. In these reserves, the rubber tappers suggested, the forest would be conserved but also economically harvested in a sustainable fashion.

With the indigenous federation, the rubber tappers called for an “Amazonia for the Amazonians” development policy. Representatives of the two grassroots movements accompanied their domestic and international allies to Washington and elsewhere in the North, where they lobbied for their objectives. The murder of the rubber tappers’ leader, Chico Mendes, following the killings of several of his colleagues by local large landholders, evoked U.S. public, media and congressional outcries and intensified the pressure on officials to change course. Once the U.S. Treasury and the World Bank endorsed the establishment of extractive reserves and the Bank and the IDB reprogrammed funds to increase protection of indigenous lands, the rubber tappers and Brazilian allies helped Brazilian authorities draft a new law that enabled rubber tappers to take control of and manage their homelands through a totally new form of tenure.

This experience, especially during the politically challenging times of the 1980s, should serve as a model for conservation organizations engaged in local-habitat issues, the origins of which and ultimately the sustainability of their resolutions lie in a broader context. As Rich explains:

By first organizing nationally with Brazilian human rights organizations and NGOs, and subsequently joining with the Washington environmentalists, the

rubber tappers closed the circle between the highest levels of public international finance, the Brazilian national government, and local concerns. It was a novel form of international political action, linking formerly isolated constituencies. Once the World Bank and the IDB began to support the creation of extractive reserves in Acre, the political balance of power in the state was changed: the [rubber tappers] were now joined to nongovernmental groups that could exercise political pressure nationally and internationally, and even more important, help channel international funding to Acre and other states in Brazil's Amazon to support conservation of the forest... Local groups were taking the initiative in proposing a development alternative rooted in the ecological and social reality of the place they inhabited.

## **8. An Integrated and Structural Approach**

The question of collaboration between international conservation organizations and local populations has been a live issue for almost three decades. The whys, whats and hows have been batted around by the large conservation groups over this period, but, for the most part, this discourse has been misshaped by faulty assumptions. These assumptions – about local peoples and about the conservation organizations themselves – have seriously skewed and limited the course and extent of the actions that these organizations have considered and taken.

In discussing how to deal with local populations who pose a threat to other animals and their habitat, seldom is it asked in the conservation community how these peoples came to live marginalized existences in physical proximity to endangered species. The former are explicitly or implicitly seen as the problem, rather than as victims of some of the same forces that have destroyed wildlife habitat. Their real needs, and priorities, may well be no different than those of their animal neighbors: to deal with the injustices of the past in order to secure and maintain the land and other assets required for secure and dignified lives.

Absent a historical, political and economic analysis of why those who pose an immediate threat to animal welfare are poor and marginalized, organizations are treating the local members of the human species with considerably less respect than is being accorded to the other species in the area. And the refusal to find common cause with these marginalized populations to address the economic and political roots of the problem and challenge the actors most responsible for the destruction of habitat and livelihoods is putting at risk potentially crucial partnerships and potentially sustainable solutions.

The focus, whether real or ultimately rhetorical, over the past generation on identifying alternative livelihoods has failed to yield such solutions. Chapin observes that Integrated Conservation Development Projects, as these income-generating activities have sometimes been called, have been, with few exceptions, “a string of failures”, being generally paternalistic and “driven largely by the agendas of the conservationists, with little indigenous input. As a consequence, few partnerships were formed... and few of

those that were formed functioned very well.” Conservation ecologist Madhu Rao writes in her review of the literature that few of these projects, by whatever name, have been able to

... provide an array of income-generating, labor-absorbing activities to satisfy the needs of those engaging in practices destructive to biodiversity, which are essential to their survival in many cases. The benefits generated as a result of ICDPs usually do not provide adequate incentive to discourage activities that threaten the protected area such as hunting, logging, or the expansion of agriculture... Hence, the major assumption underlying ICDPs, that improving the living standards of people living adjacent to protected areas will necessarily enhance conservation within protected areas, is not upheld in most projects...

Rao indicates several reasons for this failure. One major factor has been the unwillingness to take the time to investigate and understand the local dynamics, or political economy, of the communities and areas in question. Without listening carefully to local populations, conservation groups will not, for example, understand the role and effects of exploitative forces in the community, the seasonal activities of its inhabitants, or the local land-tenure situation. Nor would they understand the impact of such factors on the behavior of these peoples and, by extension, on the effectiveness of particular incentives and the viability of possible solutions. And to obtain meaningful input and equal involvement from local populations all the way through the implementation phase of projects may also require significant time to build local institutional capacity or to find a local partner better able to do the same.

Likewise, the failure to engage and listen to local people as partners almost ensures a conflict of expectations and program failure. Communities not only will consider ecosystem factors from the point of view of their relevance to livelihood security, as opposed to conservationists' focus on biodiversity, but they may also prefer the economic security attendant to employment or other engagement in environmentally destructive economic activities to the insecurity of alternative livelihood activities. While ICDP-type initiatives have often been criticized for not sufficiently linking development alternatives and benefits to community conservation obligations, conservation-related activities, such as tourism, can themselves prove to be fickle. Any and all activities may well be unsustainable financially once foreign involvement ends. In presenting its own list of the limitations of “alternative livelihoods activities as a form of compensation,” WWF concludes that “...the accountability of implementing organizations to communities for these benefits... has tended to be limited.” In effect, communities have often been asked to enter a dependency situation to carry out economic functions that can be alien to their own histories, desires, and need for security as opposed to an equal, respectful and trusting relationship in which they can better define their own economic options and future.

Critics also argue that it is “unlikely that an improvement in the living standards of communities near protected areas will inevitably lead to enhanced long-term viability of many species.” In fact, the very success of a project in increasing local incomes may

well exacerbate conservation problems by attracting new people to the area. Rao points out that the employment, infrastructure and overall development generated by some ICDPs tend to have this effect, while also citing Ferraro's and Kramer's example of an employee of an ICDP project in Madagascar using his earnings to hire more people to help carry out his former poaching activities.

Perhaps more important than the critique of ICDPs by Rao and the researchers she references is the direction in which she implicitly points the reader. Half-heartedly and unconvincingly, she states that, "despite the overwhelming evidence against the effectiveness of ICDPs" and the critical problems associated with them, the rationale for these types of projects still exists and "there appears to be no other approach that has been more effective." Yet she repeatedly calls for a more structural approach to the problem, referencing studies that show that ICDPs, as typically small-scale interventions, "have limited prospects of addressing the larger and more significant threats facing biodiversity in most protected areas." These threats include road construction, mining and logging concessions, all of which dwarf direct threats from local communities. The need for land-tenure changes for local small producers is also referenced. She offers Katrina Brandon's and Michael Wells' position that "ICDPs are plagued by unrealistic expectations of conservation projects to cure structural problems such as poverty, unequal land distribution and resource allocation, economic injustice, corruption and market failure."

"Overall," she writes, "critics argue that for ICDPs to be successful, they need to focus less on influencing the poverty-environment linkage at household levels and more on large issues of policy, institutions, governance, etc." They cannot, she concludes, "act in isolation and need to seek effective partnerships to address larger-scale problems that defy local solutions... ensuring that site-based actions are directly supported by policy-level actions both nationally and internationally." And what is required in this vein is "...a thorough understanding of ecosystems, threats, and the socio-economic context..."

Shared or co-management initiatives have a better chance of having a broader impact because they are based on two principles that tend to differentiate them from typical ICDP-type endeavors that they have eclipsed over recent years. First, in these schemes, local populations are ideally viewed as part of the local ecosystem, rather than as fundamentally incompatible with wildlife, which would necessitate that they be separated from nature. Second, their knowledge, to be gleaned in the context of equal partnerships, is seen as essential to the search for sustainable solutions. Whereas ICDPs, according to Chapin, "were designed and run by conservationists, not the indigenous peoples," community-based, co-managed endeavors depend on joint responsibility by the parties involved for establishing objectives, program design, resource management, and the benefits generated, says Felicity Arengo of the American Museum of Natural History. Chapin points to WCS's South American program and, in particular, its work with the Izoceno Guarani in the Gran Chaco region of Bolivia as effective examples of co-management.

In this context, it is more difficult for conservation organizations to ignore their partners' call to challenge large-scale, competing resource extractors or to support their battles for land tenure. According to Chapin, indigenous agendas, for example, almost invariably begin with the need to protect and legalize their lands for their own use. They emphasize the importance of finding ways to make a living on the land without destroying those resources." Hence, at a minimum, "[a] necessary change for the future would be a comprehensive land/use reform allowing indigenous people to gain access to productive agricultural land," argues Chicchon of WCS. "A focus on effective land-use planning in several countries in Latin America," she writes, "would allow for both protected areas and for indigenous and local people to have access to natural resources. Conservation organizations have the funding and connections to facilitate and implement comprehensive land/resource use plans at specific locations... and we have the responsibility to include indigenous and local peoples as equal partners in conservation."

Similarly, the exploitative role of vested interests will have to be addressed if sustainable solutions are to be found. Participatory planning and equal and respectful relationships will not sustain situations in which local populations are, for example, steered away from logging activities while large companies exploit increasingly valuable timber in the forest. Powerful forces, both foreign and domestic, have used their influence over government policy and regulators to destroy wildlife habitat directly through invasive investments and by driving local peoples, through competition and further marginalization, to more destructive behavior. The presence, and maintenance, of strong partnerships will require addressing jointly this historical and continuing displacement and marginalization of human populations as much as those pressures on other species and their habitat. Vested interests, it is suggested, should be invited to enter dialogues and alliances designed to find equitable and sustainable solutions, but, barring agreement, conservationists, local populations, and their organizations will need to form a united front and, through long-term capacity building, an effective movement to bring balance among the forces operating in the local ecosystem.

In the conclusion to their paper prepared for an April 2008 symposium at the American Museum of Natural History, Ashish Kothari, co-founder of Kalpavriksh and co-chair of an IUCN strategic direction committee, and three co-authors address this essential point:

[E]ven where conservation policy has become more progressive, it risks being undermined by international economic and political forces that foster unsustainable 'development' processes, and cultural and economic homogenization. Forums like the World Trade Organisation, and entities like the world's biggest multinational corporations, remain largely out of the influence of environmental, conservation, and human rights discourse... In such a situation, there is even more of a need for a convergence amongst conservation and human rights advocates from all sections of society. Jointly, we can resist the forces of global destruction; separately, we will all sink.

According to WWF, proponents of community-based natural resource management strategies, while recognizing that not all human uses are ecologically sustainable, address

the sustainability issue by seeking to protect against negative external impacts, in addition to supporting capacity building and secure tenure. Without challenging major external threats to biodiversity, there is little chance that long-term sustainability will be achieved because, not only will habitat be directly destroyed, but the poor and marginalized will be relentlessly pushed toward the abuse of natural resources.

The targets of intervention can be many. In the case of the fisheries campaign in the northeast of this country, organizers worked with authorities at all levels – with city and state governments locally, councils and commissions regionally, the U.S. Congress nationally, and the United Nations globally – to ban invasive, destructive factory trawlers. Lobbying can focus on policy and program changes or changes in their implementation, though sometimes educating government officials about the existence or scope of a problem will suffice. And it is often critically important to build networks in order to be heard by national and international policymakers, as well as by the media, and challenge political and economic interests that currently wield effective influence. Organizations without significant financial capacity will certainly need these alliances and a broader skill base to launch effective campaigns against companies and industries that are unwilling to truly cooperate to protect local biodiversity.

But, above all, these larger initiatives to effect structural and policy changes must be organic in their origin, relying on the community involvement, participatory input, mutual trust, equitable partnerships, local activities, and mutual respect for respective agendas generated by a holistic and integrated approach to wildlife and human welfare. Viewing local human populations as integral members of the local ecosystem, their knowledge as crucial to an understanding of that environment, and their plight as compromised by powerful historical, economic and political forces as that of the other species that surround them is an essential starting point, for it effectively leads one to engage these communities in meaningful participatory dialogues through which strong partnerships can be established for the purpose of taking collaborative, mutually beneficial action.

The participatory process must be based not only on shared values such as justice for all species, but also on open-mindedness, transparency, confidentiality, accountability, legitimacy and credibility. It should be structured to be inclusive and to create a level playing field, and the appropriate skills, institutions and tools should be employed to best access, relate to, and gain the confidence of local groups. If carried out effectively, the process will empower and build the capacity of these groups, tap into their knowledge of the local ecosystem and the political economy, yield locally determined agenda and strategies, and generate a commitment to agreed-upon objectives. It will also provide the basis and impetus for effective partnerships across environmental and development lines, and from this process may well emerge the challenge to address the root causes of the destruction of both livelihoods and habitat.

For these partnerships to work, such challenges must be met, for strong partnerships are based on the reality and perception that risks, responsibilities and benefits are being equitably shared. In the case of indigenous and other local populations who are being

asked to limit their use of natural resources often required for their survival, there is no comparable risk. Conservation organizations can start, however, by being willing to tackle fundamental issues that, while central to the interests of both parties, are also politically difficult to address and may require the broadening of the alliance to incorporate needed skills and experience. It is this ability and willingness to identify and act on common external threats that should bind, in partnerships and broader alliances, those working to preserve animal habitat and local livelihoods. And it is in these collaborative relationships that conservation organizations can truly empower local populations by creating international and national platforms from which to jointly address the root causes of the problems that confront them both.

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### ***Acknowledgements***

We also wish to express our appreciation to Felicity Arengo, Mac Chapin, Kelvin Alie and Anne O'Regan for contributions that greatly facilitated the preparation of this report.