

Nature and Poverty Panel Discussion
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Transcript of Proceedings

Presenters

IUCN – Ibrahim Thiaw

Introduction to IUCN

Integrated approach to sustainable development

Attain human wellbeing, not a narrow view of development as poverty alleviation. The link between human wellbeing and nature can be explained by examining how ecosystem services influence components of wellbeing.

Ecosystem services support constituents of wellbeing:

Services can be grouped three ways:

- Regulating: Degradation of environment affecting human health (i.e. malaria case)
 - o Climate, flood and disease regulation
 - o Water purification
- Provisioning: Base line resources from nature
 - o Food, fresh water, wood and fiber, fuel
- Cultural
 - o Aesthetic, spiritual, educational, recreational values of nature

These services influence the following elements of wellbeing:

- Security
- Basic material for wellbeing
- Health
- Good social relations

The components of wellbeing are underpinned by the freedom of choice and action which is the opportunity to be able to achieve what an individual values doing and being.

IUCN valuation of ecosystem products

- Tana floodplain (marine and freshwater fisheries, forest products, pasture, flood-recession, agriculture, transport) valued at \$3 million / year (25 – 350 / household)
- Economic studies contribute to getting institutions such as World Bank on board for nature conservation. The valuation provides a context for them to understand the value alongside other priorities – see how conservation fits within poverty alleviation

EFA – Tommy Garnett

Development has limited resources to draw on given the remaining resources

Economic factor – West African economies driven by resource extraction

Conflict factor

- often tied together with environment (illegal mining in Liberia)
- migration (i.e. Nimba – 30,000 refugees) typically clear cut to make room for increased population
- investor aversion to WA
- refugees destroyed palm direct impact on local economy – immediately visible impact
- direct impacts are displacement, human rights violations, resource exploitation and lack of law and order
- indirect impacts are smuggling, drugs, child soldiers and regional instability

Environment actors must:

- look within own nations for financial support
- mainstreaming environment – making government incorporate environmental management principles into existing priorities (the obvious – mining, transport, etc and the indirectly related).

Panel

Facilitator – Ibrahim Thiaw, Regional Director, IUCN BRAO

Eluem Blydin, Department Head, Biological Sciences, Njala University (Freetown)

Nnimo Basse, Director Environmental Rights Action (FoE/Nigeria)

Mandy Barnett, South African National Biodiversity Institute

Rietje Grit, Head of Small Grants Fund, IUCN NL

Mamadou Saliou Diallo, President and Program Director, Guinée Ecologie

Questions from the Facilitator to the Panelists

What do we mean by poverty, what do you understand about poverty? (Rietje Grit)

Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Development cooperation) is the major donor to the small grants programmes of IUCN NL

- Original objective was to conserve forests and biodiversity. Asked to demonstrate results in hectares of forests conserved
- Now Ministry asking for contributions to poverty (donor priorities have changed)
- As a primarily conservation initiative, IUCN NL looked to research for a way to draw the link.
- Used DFID's livelihoods approach
- Income, while important, is not the only indicator for poverty
- Other dimensions include: infrastructure (roads, housing, water, sanitation and health, social (support structures, includes gender issues – women get voice), knowledge and skills (comes with trainings, capacity building efforts), rights (land tenure, laws and policies – anything to protect communities from over exploitation),
- Poverty must not be reduced to one dollar a day mentality
- NGOs active in many types of activities
- Must demonstrate the integrated approach

How can poverty issues mainstream environmental and development planning. What types of methodologies do you use to ensure the environment is incorporated into planning? (Mandy Barnett)

Development agenda has the possibility of negatively impacting biodiversity

So we tried to mainstream biodiversity to ensure these issues are included

Examples:

Land use planning in South Africa. Local authorities produce plans for where development will take place. So the environmental and conservation actors produced information which is accessible to local authorities to make sure the plans allow for maintenance of ecosystem functions

Agriculture in South Africa. Agriculture is the main employer in the Cape Floristic area and transforming land for agriculture is a major threat to the area. We work with farmers who lead the planning process to identify important areas for biodiversity on their land and provide

information which helped the farmers to choose areas less important for biodiversity and be more likely to get a farming permit. Farmers become custodians of the land.

If you had the ability to include environment in PRSP, what specifically would you include?
(Eluem Blydin)

Culture is the way we do things around here – poverty is about the power to change one's situation. It is important to regain ground in the cultural dimension. We need to change the situation, but we need to hold onto our culture while we do it. We are being compared to a scale that we didn't have anything to do with creating, such as the G8, and this is not realistic.

PRSP theory has implicit that we are comparing to some abstract model.
We should invest in our own know how of how things work around here, encourage people to hold to their values, their values are what we have to contribute to the world, on the global scale.

Questions opened to the floor

John DeMarco, Gola Forest Program – I often hear a debate about conservation and development, some say it is good for development other say it makes people poorer. Neither side is right or wrong. It is about how you DO conservation. Show that we are able to do conservation in a way that makes people better off (in their opinion) in a broad sense – not income only – do they have smiles on their faces?

Jules Adjima, Les Compagnons Ruraux – In Benin, there are some swamp forests, where the people in small villages have various activities in the forest, such as snail harvesting to trade for salt. But when the conservationists came and stated that the snails were over-harvested, snail collection was banned and fish farming was taken up. Then it became evident that fish farming was not going to make enough money for the people. Conservation could not do it. We promote the link between people and their environment. We skipped some steps that led us to conservation – ecosystem conservation maintain links, even though there are local strategies, the link must be perceived in a way that does not do harm to the people who must benefit.

Ralph Woods, CEEB – How can we reduce poverty in our own cultural setting? Conservationists are also concerned about conserving cultural values. We use our cultural values. What can we do? How can we do it?

Richard Sambolah, FFI – We need to consider the influences that have diluted our culture here [in West Africa]. We must acknowledge this.

Paulinus Ngeh, Birdlife International – Women play a big role and we recognize this. Tried to get a women panelist and she said that she wants to be a woman, not a man in a woman's dress. What does she really mean? Are we getting women out of their culture to do what we want them to do?

Responses from the Panel

Nnimo Bassey – responding to the floor:
Women have always been in the forefront of conservation – they harvest and put back. We must start with gender in a positive light.

Saliou Diallo – responding to the floor:

Regional and global are at the level which we often meet. I think we should go back to the local level and integrate. John DeMarco said everything depends on how we deal with conservation. Jules Adjima says that the activities did not lead to positive change. So should we keep doing things that don't work? Everything depends on how you do it. Marketing strategy? If I go at the local level, poverty is defined in the most basic way – naked children with big stomachs, they do not go to school, they don't have enough food, not safe, women smile but they can't hide the hardship and men are sitting around drinking tea. What does the future hold? If I had to define it, I would say give good food, clothing and put up a good table where they can eat. How can all the actors (from policy makers, intermediate actors, nongovernmental organizations (NGO) and civil society (CS)) put hands together to make things move to have real and observable change in the field? In the field we have the feeling that nothing is moving. A 25 Million USD programme failed. Why? What can we do?

Eluem Blydin – You have to let go of cultural values to alleviate poverty, to some extent, but no, but there is no contradiction to holding on to cultural values and conservation as long as you take note of where we are today.

Western culture did not dilute, but enriched just as African tradition enriched western tradition. If we don't hang on to our traditions (which may be western), we will just change to Chinese influence. It is about foundation – externalize on the outside of your buildings, airplanes, to maintain your identity.

Life styles affect environment as much as livelihoods.

Tommy [in his presentation] refuted that West Africa is poor – he showed all the stats, but then says that West Africa is not poor. It has youth and diversity. Africa is seen as the poorest continent and West Africa is seen as the poorest in Africa. Thus it is the poorest in the World. Yet, West Africa has its own wealth. This is a paradox. We are rich and poor at the same time. What has not been done? What should change to address this issue?

Nnimo Bassey – Someone once said that we are so poor because we are so rich! We are poor in one sense – poor governance. There was a gap in governance and all sorts of people stepped in. Environmentalists are not taking interest in politics. If communities have a say in how the resources are used, get communities to have a stronger voice in how decisions are made. Need laws that people buy into at the lowest and highest level. Imperial interests now represented in transnational initiatives. We must regain our sovereignty. Votes must count. Votes have not counted in Nigeria for several decades. We can't hold politicians to account, if our votes don't matter.

Ibrahim Thiaw – Question to the Panel and Floor: *Can you present solutions to change the paradox of wealth and poverty in West Africa?*

Saliou Diallo – Can conservation be successful in improving the living conditions of people? Marketing of trees – a method we are trying – people won't plant trees for forest. We asked if they were interested but the community will not plant trees because nature provides the forest. So we explained that the trees are declining drastically.

Mandy Barnett – The dilemma is about access to and use of the resources. What is important is to work at the strategic enabling level and on the ground to give them [local people] a mechanism to use resources in a sustainable way. Example from Cape – Baviaanskloof Megareserve – community in the middle of the reserve was illegally using resources and farming failed in the

region. Partners legalized use of resources for the communities and created employment through the reserve and tourism which is expected in the area. You need both levels – on the ground action and enabling policies.

Eluem Blydin – See what happens when we put price tag on specific resources and not others. The case of diamonds.

Global – diamonds valued

Community – diamonds not important

Sierra Leone is in the middle now using two different rulers

Gain serenity – gain control – sovereignty.

There was a suggestion yesterday that site scale efforts are the way to do conservation. No one agreed yesterday, but now I do. We must drive biodiversity with greed. Business model. Explain the numbers. We must join the game to beat the game. Conservation must use more than altruism to save the world.

Rietje Grit – In the western part of Mali every family has at least one son in France. France is seen as the land of opportunity. In Mali they have so many cows, what do they do with the cow dung? Why not dry it and sell it as a fertilizer? Why not collect and process the fruits of the Baobab tree, abundant in that area? Why do the people not make more use of their resources? Now people from Senegal came to use it. We should try to revive a sense of pride and action in the people. In the Netherlands we once had very large problems (too much water) but long ago the people chose to work together and do something.

Saoudata – Forty years ago the people of the Sahel were living in perfect harmony with the environment. Biodiversity rich, cattle, people came for colonization, new states took over, and the new states took the same path as the colonists and built a legacy that was not agreed to by the people. Environmental management was not included. Go back to traditional values. Ask ourselves one question – how the people were able to manage the environment sustainably for thousands of years.

Silas Siakor – we have acknowledged the link between poverty and conservation but we still see that there is a problem and it is not happening. We are reluctant to do the right thing. We are setting up a protected area network in Liberia – do we ask the communities and understand how they use the resources – do we engage with the communities? Everyone says yes, but then 5 months later someone says there is no time and so they don't do it and just do a desk study. We know what is right but we now must do what is right.

Gordon Adjonina– Cameroon Wildlife Conservation Society – Rich yet poor. The Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers. We build on these tools and culture is link to natural resources. We need a yard stick to measure. We are dealing with fragile systems that are resilient.

Bryna Griffin – GCF – Women should not be expected to work in the same way that men do, instead the workplace (the conservation field in particular) must accommodate the way women work. This is what I think the woman Paulinus quoted meant.

Dr. Kamera – Dept of Forestry, SL - very little is provided for conservation. A lot of talk in COPs, NYC etc. Conservation has a lot do with our values and lifestyles. Government said forest is important. 95% of the SL population depends on wood for fuel. What have we done to change this? In Brazil, they use ethanol. What are the alternatives? Without them we will continue to see

a loss of biodiversity. NGOs must work in consultation with government to ensure that things happen on the ground.

Sylvain Dufour – FFI – Surprised to hear talk of conservation and livelihoods but not sustainable use of natural resources. We should orient our work in the sustainable use of renewable natural resources. Changing behavior takes a long time. Instead of conserving for the sake of conservation put in place systems that allow for conservation based on sustainable natural resource use.

Don Kris – Friends of the Nation – While efforts have been directed at alternative livelihoods, we are too much focused on the people. Are we the right people to go tell these people that they are poor? These questions must be answered. At a policy level, we are unsustainable. Who are our targets? Need regional engagement so that we consolidate.

Juliet Ceesay -- It is about the people, making them see what they have. Can't say don't do that and not provide livelihoods. Once they understand, then you can conserve. It is not just for tourists, researchers, it is yours, not ours now tell us how we can help you to take care of it. We received funds for strict conservation related activities. The agency that funded did not give us funds for wells, schools, etc. but this is what the people need.

Letla Mosenene – FFI – I hear about culture but have a dilemma with government. What are conservationists doing about good governance and democracy? This is where ownership will emanate from.

Daniela Lerda – CEPF – Question to the panel: what do you think of incentives to local communities?

John Oates – humans are but one species on the planet. Do these other species not have a right to take up space – national parks?

Wadja Egnankou – the talk is good but we should leave with concrete ideas.

Linus – UNHCR Focal Point for Environment. Find balance. Provide alternatives. We need to find alternatives so that people can reduce their impact.

Saliou Diallo – In 1960 Malaysia and Ghana had the same status. By 1996 Malaysia had doubled its figures for development. How did they do that? The only difference is that they took advantage of opportunities, while we didn't have the internal momentum for development. We accuse the World Bank of putting us in difficult situations, because the World Bank changes its criteria. We need local solutions and we need to devise local level plans.

Rietje Grit– The reason for the workshop is to get more reasons to explain how the two link. Billions of dollars are available for development in Africa. What we must do is convince the donors that environment is a part of the plan.

Mandy Barnett– the purpose of the day is to figure out what we want to achieve. We have heard that the problem is difficult and wrapped up in other problems. Mainstream agenda planning, capacity, humanitarian, only through partnership with civil society, donors, and government to come up with one agenda that can deliver benefits to people and the environment in a way that is sustainable. We need one agenda, not competing agendas.

Nnimo Bassey – We should demand a moratorium on mining in West Africa for the next five years, in order to assess what has happened – undertake an audit on the impact – and also plan for what might be feasible in the future. Government has so much, while the people have nothing.

Eluem Blydin – We are still dealing with the colonial legacy. Our laws protect what the colonials would have wanted protected. We need education and to engage our government. We need to look at our laws, even some indigenous laws that may be archaic. Regional coordination needs to be developed and we need to move away from dependency on donors. Be bolder and develop for-profit mechanisms to contribute to conservation / environment. Use muscle. Conceptualize environmental management so that everyone has a role to play. Technology – can impact efficiency of nature. Information age. We need to encourage more participation.

Wrap up

Ibrahim Thiaw --

- Started with defining poverty – don't measure it only in monetary value
- Compare forest and dry lands tribes. Dry land must spend 1/3 time gathering wood. In many ways they are in the same statistical place, but they are in fact quite different realities.
- We must ensure that poverty alleviation projects don't have a negative impact on environment as this will likely cause negative repercussions
- Demonstrate more that environment contributes to the economy
- Need alternatives. Some CEPF projects quite good at developing alternatives
- Policy – we may not be enough involved in poverty. We must work in partnership to take our local level initiatives to the policy level
- Regional integration – many shared resources (2, 3, 4 or more countries). Water – widely shared in West Africa. There is not one country that isn't sharing one basin. Guinée shares 14 basins at an international level. There are possibilities to exchange between the coastal land and the interior - two types of ecosystems (forest and dry) – the complementarity has not been explored. Exchange is very important between the two.
- Mining industries are a huge part of the landscape in West Africa. We need to come up with standards so that impact is reduced. Also we note that many mines in West Africa are exploited by foreign companies. Our laws pertaining to mining are very weak.
- West Africa is considered poor in many ways but there are lots of possibilities. Peace and security in the world cannot be secured, development globally cannot happen without Africa on board. More and more positive change is happening in Africa. Things are discussed openly which wasn't the case 10 years ago.
- We don't have regional coordination mechanisms – but we do need to develop these so that we can become strong enough to organize at the regional level.
- A coalition is being organized for the West Africa Forest Initiative, in which actors are invited to work together to influence policies and heads of states. All the players are invited to work together, and a meeting will be scheduled for this coming June or July. (Now planned for 3-4 July in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso)