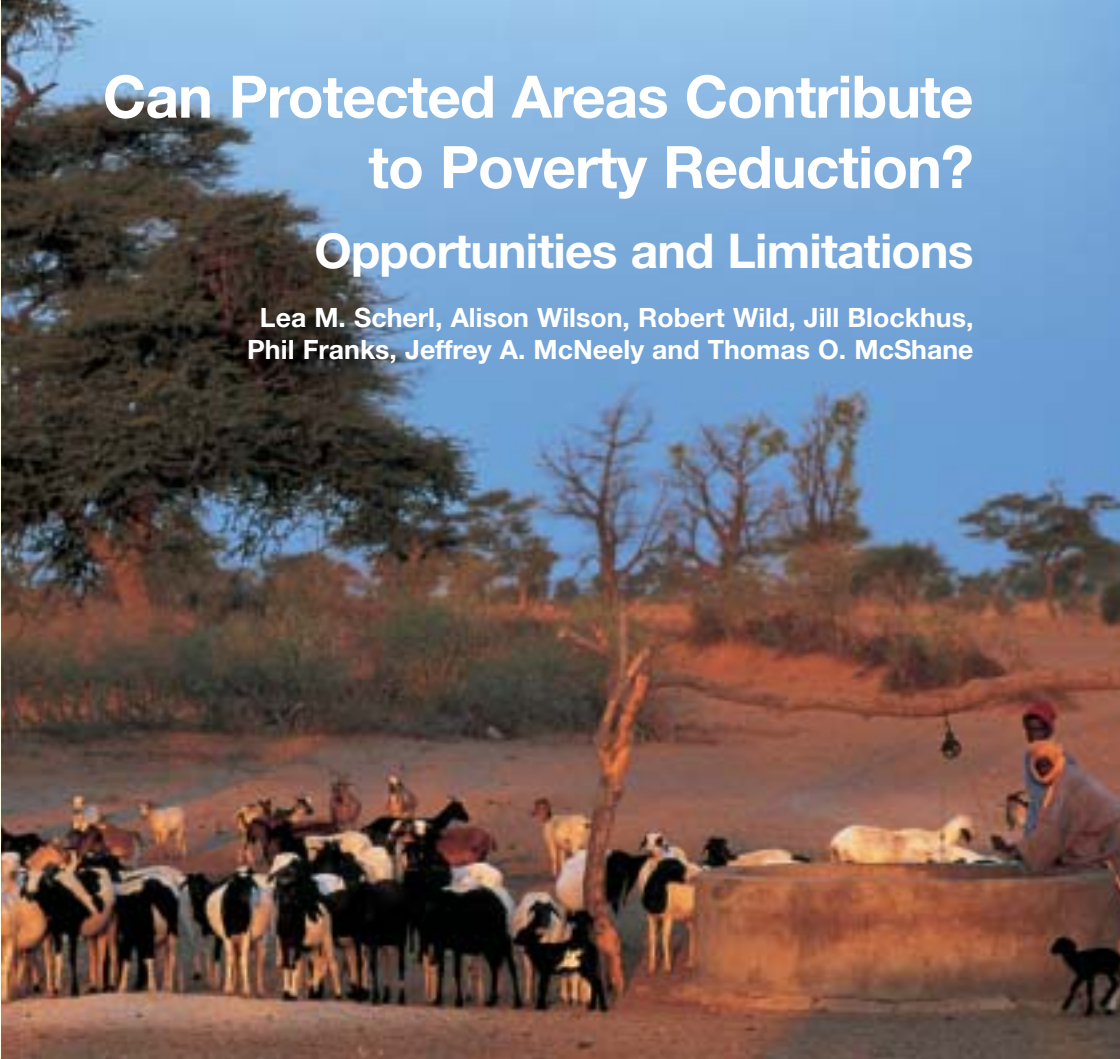


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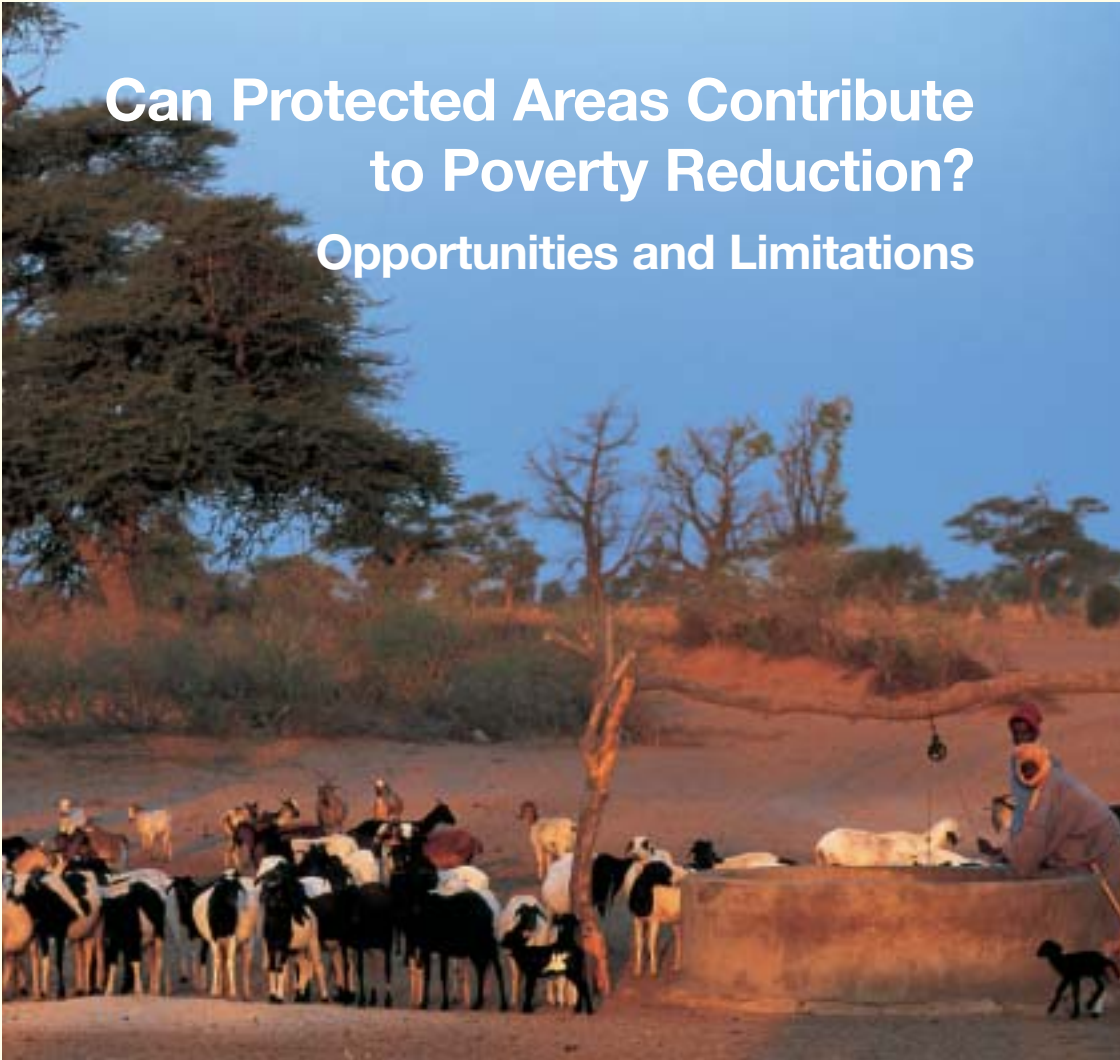
# Can Protected Areas Contribute to Poverty Reduction? Opportunities and Limitations

Lea M. Scherl, Alison Wilson, Robert Wild, Jill Blockhus,  
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**IUCN – The World Conservation Union  
2004**

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## Foreword

This book is a collaborative effort among IUCN, WWF, CARE, and the World Bank to assess where we all agree on the key issues around poverty and protected areas. Recognising that most poverty is rural, as are most protected areas, a relationship between these two aspects of land use is an intimate one, though it is often ignored. But given the much higher profile now being given to poverty issues by development agencies and governments, it is timely to determine how poverty relates to conservation efforts that involve protected areas. This booklet contains numerous very useful perspectives in this regard.

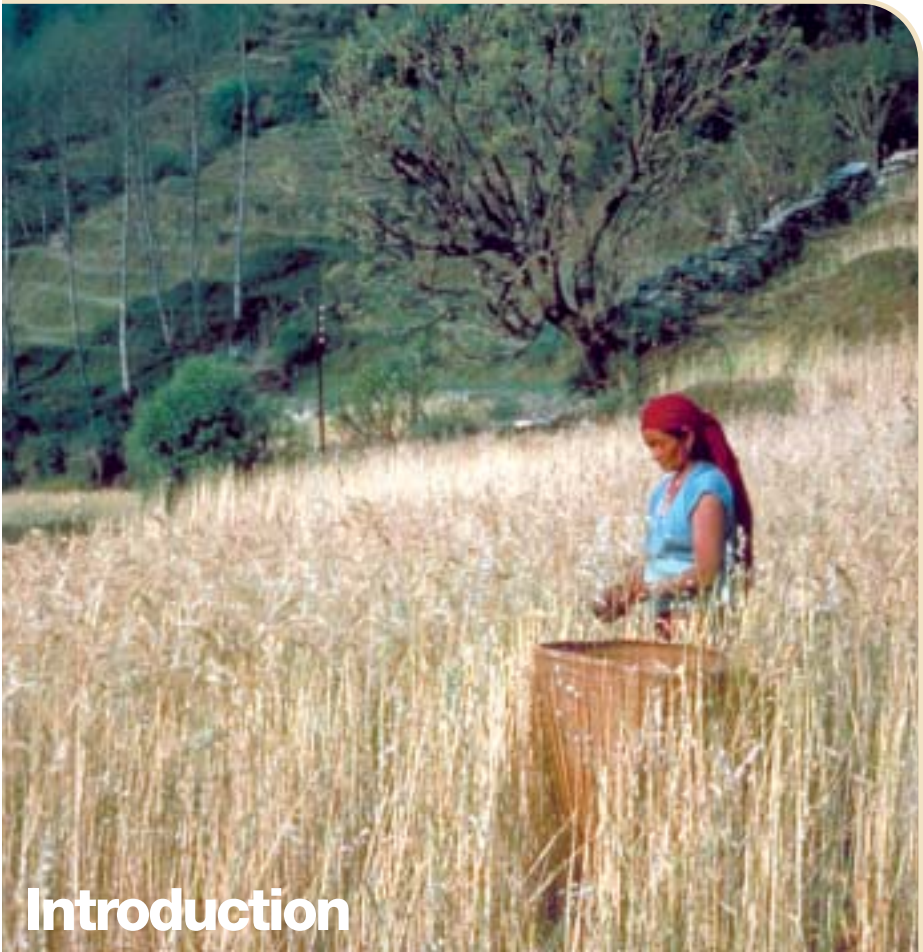
At a practical level, forming a more effective link between protected areas and poverty reduction might include measures such as:

- improving knowledge of the values of ecosystem services to build the case for the contribution of protected areas to the rural poor;
- designing management systems that permit certain subsistence activities in some categories of protected areas and provide a safety net for poverty reduction strategies;
- making local protected area agencies more aware of poverty issues in order to ensure that their management activities do not inadvertently contribute to greater poverty;
- ensuring that the finance and economic planning ministries are well aware of the values of protected areas and the goods and services they provide (aiming to ensure that poverty reduction strategies do not lead to inappropriate activities in protected areas);
- ensuring that decisions about an individual protected area and its relations with surrounding communities involve those communities as interested parties with clearly-defined rights;
- providing access, under a permit system, to certain limited use of resources that are harvested in a non-destructive manner (such as medicinal plants, seeds, or grass);

- providing goods in the form of fish, birds, and mammals, that disperse out of the protected areas and are subsequently harvested by local communities outside the protected areas;
- providing opportunities to develop a tourist industry based on the protected area; and
- providing access to infrastructure, such as roads, electricity, improved communications and health care associated with supporting the protected area infrastructure.

A healthy environment is not sufficient in itself to alleviate poverty, but equally, any attempt at poverty alleviation that ignores environmental realities will soon be undermined. Discussing poverty along with protected areas may well lead to trade-offs between poverty reduction and conservation interests, but these need to be addressed in a positive way that does not disadvantage either of the two perspectives inappropriately. This discussion will also force protected area managers to better articulate their policies and their contribution to the well being of society (not only the poor). Protected areas are seldom designed specifically to alleviate poverty, but this does not mean that they are therefore isolated from sustainable development and the alleviation of poverty. The challenge is to define appropriate roles for protected areas that will enable them to continue to make their fundamental contribution to conserving biodiversity at a time when demands for development are increasingly urgent. This paper suggests many possible approaches that can be taken to deliver a greater share of the benefits of conservation to the rural poor, and thereby strengthen public support for protected areas.

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## Introduction

Some of the world's poorest countries now have a significant proportion of their territories designated as protected areas (Table 1). With growing international concern over poverty, protected areas inevitably are drawn into the discussion. This paper seeks to build understanding of the relationship between poverty and protected areas, as a way of helping governments to fulfil their national and international commitments on sustainable development.

**Table 1.**

## Extent of Protected Areas in the World's Poorest Countries

Country (Rank)	% Area protected	Country (Rank)	% Area protected
Tanzania (1)	39.8	Zambia (7)	41.5
DR Congo (2)	8.3	Mali (8)	3.8
Burundi (=3)	5.3	Malawi (=9)	16.4
Congo R. (=3)	17.9	Nigeria (=9)	6.0
Sierra Leone (=3)	4.5	Ethiopia (11)	16.5
Yemen (6)	0	Madagascar (12)	3.1

*Source: Countries ranked according to Purchasing Power Parity (World Bank Development Indicators 2003); % area protected from Chape et al. 2003.*

The primary goal of most protected areas is to conserve biological diversity and provide ecosystem services, not to reduce poverty. However, examination of the linkages between the establishment and management of protected areas and issues of poverty in developing countries has become a practical and ethical necessity. Practical, because to survive, protected areas in the poorer nations must be seen as a land-use option that contributes as positively to sustainable development as other types of land use. And ethical, because human rights and aspirations need to be incorporated into national and global conservation strategies if social justice is to be realised.

An increasingly vocal proportion of the conservation community believes that allocating tracts of land, large and small, for biodiversity conservation

and sustainable use of resources needs to be reconciled at the local level with the livelihoods, opportunities and empowerment of the poor. In other words, *'protected areas should not exist as islands, divorced from the social, cultural and economic context in which they are located'* (Recommendation 5.29, V<sup>th</sup> IUCN World Parks Congress). Furthermore, unless they become more relevant to countries' development strategies and the rights and needs of local people, many protected areas will come under increasing threat (Dudley *et al.* 1999; Barrow and Fabricius 2002).

In a broad sense, the inter-dependence of human welfare and the conservation of natural resources is now internationally recognised and enshrined in policy instruments such as the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Millennium Development Goals. But protected areas perhaps hold a uniquely contentious place in the conservation toolbox because they are viewed by some as having been established at the expense of local communities (the term includes all people living in and around protected areas) through displacement and dispossession, and regarded by others as responsible for perpetuating poverty by the continued denial of access to land and other resources (e.g., Colchester 1997; Ghimire & Pimbert 1997).



Elephants often raid crops, as these two are doing in Thailand. This crop raiding can often make the difference between hunger or food sufficiency.

Objections to ‘fortress conservation’ have been voiced for several decades, leading to often rancorous debate between conservationists and social advocates. However, as discussed below, approaches to managing protected areas have been evolving for some time: globally, protected areas display a wide spectrum of management regimes ranging from those exclusive of human intervention to those allowing for sustainable exploitation of resources (IUCN 1994; Box 1). Moreover, approaches to the establishment and management of all categories of formal protected areas are evolving towards more socially responsible models that are inclusive of the aspirations and needs of local peoples (Phillips 2003), and the involvement of local communities in protected area management is being actively encouraged in many countries (e.g., Western and Wright 1994; Hulme and Murphree 2001).

The issue of how to deliver benefits from protected areas to local people has long been recognised as of great importance. For example, the fifth objective of the Bali Action Plan, one of the products of the 1982 Third



Remote areas in mountainous countries have few economic options, but protected areas may give governments a means of injecting some forms of development into these areas.

Photo: ©J.A.McNeely

World Parks Congress, was, “*to promote the linkage between protected area management and sustainable development*” (McNeely & Miller, 1984). The recommendations arising from the Bali Congress specifically recognised that people living in or near protected areas can support protected area management “*if they feel they share appropriately in the benefits flowing from protected areas, are compensated appropriately for any lost rights, and are taken into account in planning and operations.*” (Recommendation 5, Third World Parks Congress.)

Ten years later, at the Fourth World Parks Congress, participants agreed in the Caracas Declaration that management of protected areas “*must be carried out in a manner sensitive to the needs and concerns of local people*”, and encouraged “*communities, non-governmental organisations, and private sector institutions to participate actively in the establishment and management of national parks and protected areas*” (McNeely, 1993). The Caracas Action Plan recognised priority concerns for local communities, and focused on people and protected areas, calling on governments to ensure that the planning process for protected areas is properly integrated with programmes for the sustainable development of local cultures and local economies, and that it uses and enhances local knowledge and decision-making mechanisms.

The need to find innovative and effective ways to position protected areas within sustainable development and poverty reduction strategies was highlighted at the V<sup>th</sup> IUCN World Parks Congress held in Durban, South Africa, in September 2003. Participants at the Congress agreed numerous recommendations relevant to its theme ‘Benefits Beyond Boundaries’, including a recommendation (5.29, see Annex 1) on Poverty and Protected Areas.



After thirty years of acknowledging that people and protected areas need to be brought together, the conservation community is still washed by a current of acrimony and conflict over the impact of protected areas on rural peoples. This paper builds on the discussions held and case studies presented during the V<sup>th</sup> IUCN World Parks Congress, as well as other examples drawn from recent literature. It also examines the role of protected areas in sustainable development strategies.



The widespread habitat destruction caused by cultivation of illicit crops in past decades has been alleviated by the establishment of protected areas, as in Thailand's Doi Inthanon National Park.

Photo: © Boonsong Lekagul





## Protected areas

The rural poor often live in the most remote parts of a country, often in the last villages before forests. It is essential that such people have secure tenure to their lands, so that they will make adequate investments in ensuring long-term productivity.

Photo: © J.A. McNeely

Protected areas, defined by IUCN as *an area of land and/or sea especially dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity, and of natural and associated cultural resources, and managed through legal or other effective means*, are the cornerstone of the global community's efforts

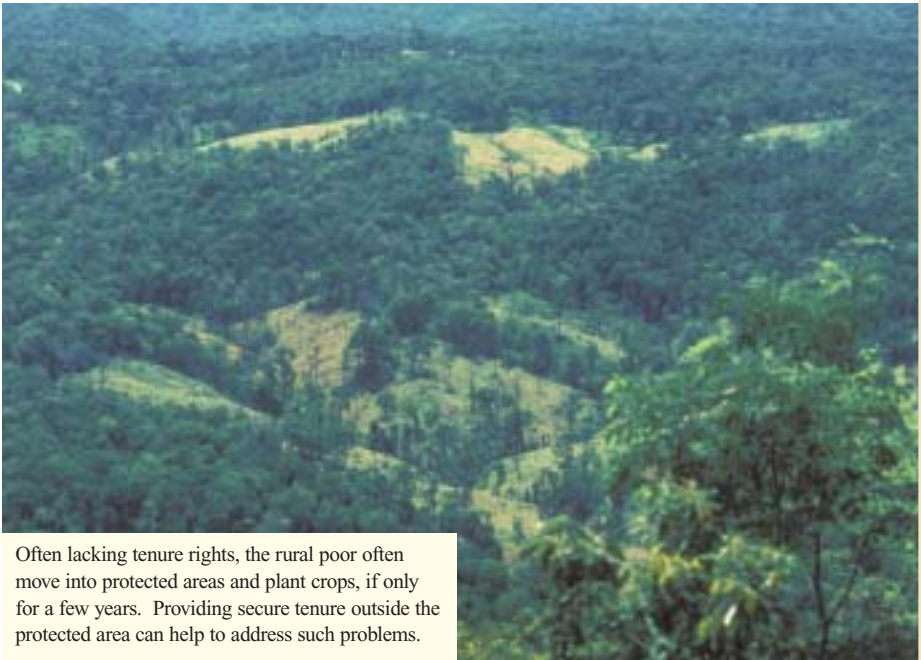


Many areas of great value for biodiversity are difficult of access, often requiring long trips by foot. Villagers in these areas must carry in all of their requirements from outside.

Photo: ©J.A. McNeely

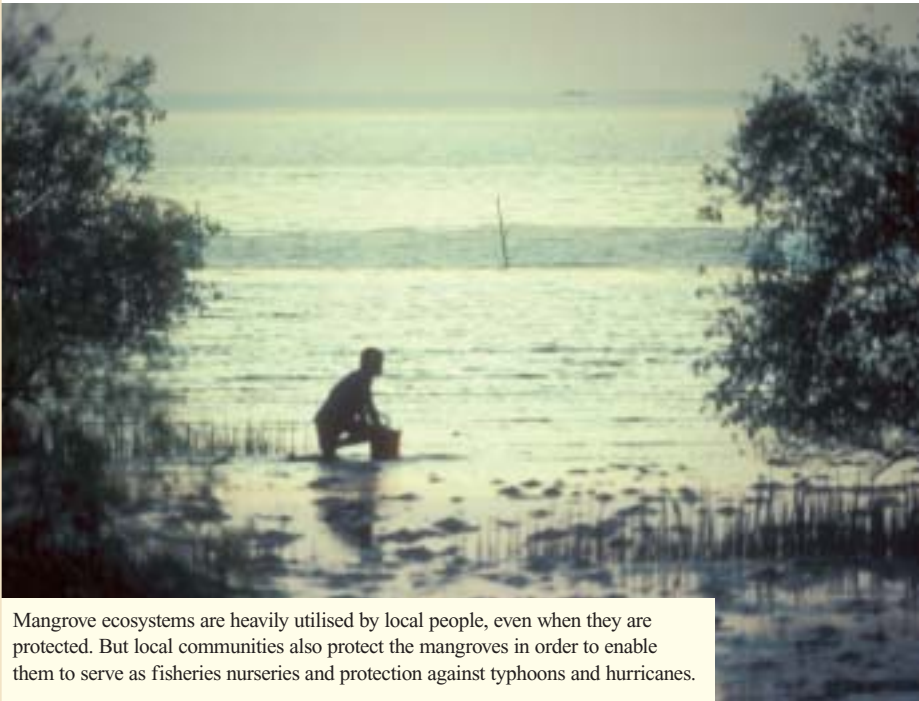
to conserve biological diversity. According to the *2003 UN List of Protected Areas* (Chape *et al.* 2003), the extent of the Earth's surface covered by terrestrial protected areas is now about 17.1 million km<sup>2</sup> (11.5% of the land surface), while marine reserves cover an additional 1.7 million km<sup>2</sup>, or less than 0.5% of the world's oceans. The 2003 UN List is more fully inclusive than previous Lists, as it attempts to include all protected areas that meet the IUCN protected area definition, regardless of size or whether they have been assigned a management category, and including privately managed reserves. However, the data indicate a genuine increment in both the number and extent of protected areas since the first UN List was published in 1962.

Protected areas are of many types, established with widely different objectives, and designated by many different names (national park, nature reserve, national reserve, etc.) in different countries. With this in mind, IUCN has developed a system of categorisation for protected areas, based on their management objectives. This system recognises that while some protected areas (e.g., those in Categories I and II) are more strictly protected against consumptive human activities, others (e.g. those in Categories V and VI) allow for certain types of intervention such as the sustainable use of natural resources. About two-thirds of the world's protected areas have now been assigned an IUCN management category, while 33.4% remain uncategorised (Chape *et al.* 2003). Box 1 describes the IUCN categories, and indicates the proportion of the world's protected areas in each category in 2003.



Often lacking tenure rights, the rural poor often move into protected areas and plant crops, if only for a few years. Providing secure tenure outside the protected area can help to address such problems.

In the context of rural poverty, Categories V and VI protected areas have obvious relevance. Category V protected areas recognise the value of human interactions with nature, and the role that humans have had in shaping many of the world's ecosystems. They are 'lived-in, working landscapes' that promote and support traditional livelihoods and cultures as well as protection of biodiversity. Category V areas can accommodate diverse management regimes including customary laws governing resource management (Oviedo and Brown 1999). Examples of Category V areas include the buffer zones of Royal Chitwan National Park in Nepal and the Gobi Gurvan Saikhan National Park in Mongolia (Phillips 2002). Category V areas have proven to work well in places where strictly protected areas have failed due to lack of community support (Oviedo and Brown 1999).



Mangrove ecosystems are heavily utilised by local people, even when they are protected. But local communities also protect the mangroves in order to enable them to serve as fisheries nurseries and protection against typhoons and hurricanes.

Photo: © J.A. McNeely





Many protected areas are important sources of fisheries, an important part of the diet for the rural poor.

Photo: ©J.A.McNeely

Category VI is the latest innovation in the IUCN protected area management category system. Like Category V protected areas, Category VI areas allow for the sustainable flow of goods and services to meet community needs through multiple resource use, but differ from other Categories in that they comprise ‘an area of predominately unmodified natural systems’ (as opposed to human-modified landscapes) which is to be managed so that at least two-thirds of it remains that way (Phillips 2003). Globally, Category VI protected areas now comprise 23.3% of the total area of protected areas although almost a quarter of this figure is taken up by two vast reserves, the Ar-Rub’al-Kali Wildlife Management Area in Saudi Arabia and Australia’s Great Barrier Reef. In terms of numbers, Category VI areas only comprise 4% of the world’s protected areas. It is likely, however, that many other areas will qualify in future, often managed by agencies other than the usual protected areas departments.

**Box 1.**

## **The IUCN System of Protected Areas Categories, and the Proportion of Protected Areas in Each Category in 2003\***

### **I. Strict Nature Reserve/Wilderness Area.**

Areas of land and/or sea possessing outstanding or representative ecosystems, geological or physiological features and/or species, available primarily for scientific research and/or environmental monitoring; or large areas of unmodified or slightly modified land, and/or sea, retaining their natural character and influence, without permanent or significant habitation, which are protected and managed so as to preserve their natural condition.

**5.9 % of total no. of protected areas      10.9 % of total area protected**

### **II. National Park: Protected Areas Managed Mainly for Ecosystem Conservation and Recreation.**

Natural areas of land and/or sea, designated to (a) protect the ecological integrity of one or more ecosystems for this and future generations, (b) exclude exploitation or occupation inimical to the purposes of designation of the area, and (c) provide a foundation for spiritual, scientific, educational, recreational and visitor opportunities, all of which must be environmentally and culturally compatible.

**3.8 % of total no. of protected areas      23.6 % of total area protected**

*Continued opposite*

### **III. Natural Monument: Protected Areas Managed Mainly for Conservation of Specific Features.**

Areas containing one or more specific natural or natural/cultural feature which is of outstanding or unique value because of its inherent rarity, representative or aesthetic qualities or cultural significance.

**19.4 % of total no. of protected areas      1.5 % of total area protected**

### **IV. Habitat/Species Management Area: Protected Areas Managed Mainly for Conservation Through Management Intervention.**

Areas of land and/or sea subject to active intervention for management purposes so as to ensure the maintenance of habitats and/or to meet the requirements of specific species.

**27.1 % of total no. of protected areas      6.1 % of total area protected**

### **V. Protected Landscape/Seascape: Protected Areas Managed Mainly for Landscape/Seascape Conservation and Recreation.**

Areas of land, with coast and sea as appropriate, where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant aesthetic, cultural and/or ecological value, and often with high biological diversity. Safeguarding the integrity of this traditional interaction is vital to the protection, maintenance and evolution of such an area.

**6.4 % of total no. of protected areas      5.6 % of total area protected**

*Continued overleaf*

## VI. Managed Resource Protected Area: Protected Areas Managed Mainly for the Sustainable Use of Natural Ecosystems.

Areas containing predominantly unmodified natural systems, managed to ensure long term protection and maintenance of biological diversity, while providing at the same time a sustainable flow of natural products and services to meet community needs.

**4.0 % of total no. of protected areas      23.3 % of total area protected**

*Sources: IUCN, 1994; Chape et al. 2003.*

*\*note: 33.4% of the total number and 19.0% of the total area of protected areas have not been assigned an IUCN category.*



In rural parts of Nepal, many villagers have had protected area boundaries imposed on their traditional lands. Nepal has established special categories of protected areas to accommodate their needs.

Photo: © J.A. McNeely





## The concept of poverty

Photo: ©Corbis

Peoples, communities, societies and nations have varying perceptions of the meaning of poverty. Poverty is often defined in economic terms, against indicators such as income or consumption. But recognition is growing that poverty is a multi-faceted condition involving several, usually inter-connected, economic and social dimensions, including:

- **lack of assets and income;**
- **lack of opportunities** to engage in productive activities that can sustain livelihoods;

- **lack of voice and empowerment**, and exclusion from decision-making processes, governance systems and legal recourse;
- **vulnerability** to man-made and natural disasters, ill-health, and economic shocks; and
- **lack of capacity** to promote and defend community interests.

The communities that face the greatest development challenges are located where these dimensions overlap and reinforce each other. The *2000/2001 World Development Report's* framework for action to effectively reduce poverty suggests the need for increasing the resilience of the poor, by: providing opportunities (for work and to build up their assets); empowerment (effectively influencing the decision-making processes of institutions that affect their lives and strengthening participation in political processes at all levels); and security (reducing their vulnerability to risks such as natural disasters, ill health and economic shocks, and helping them to cope) (World Bank 2001). Stewardship of natural resources, upon which so many rural communities depend, is a vital aspect of strengthening the resilience of the poor (Sanderson and Redford 2003). But what role can protected areas play in this process?



Poor people are often on the forest frontier, where they come into conflict with biodiversity objectives. Ambang Reserve, North Sulawesi.

Photo: © J.A. McNeely



## Protected areas and poverty – examining the linkages

In many mountainous regions, protected areas conserve watersheds, thereby ensuring a reliable supply of fresh water useful for irrigation, as in the Andes mountains of Peru.

Photo: ©J.A.McNeely

### **Protected areas and the international sustainable development agenda**

Recognition of the importance of biodiversity conservation and its linkage to global development issues has increased significantly during the thirty years since the 1972 Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment. At that time, many developing countries saw Northern concerns about increasing environmental degradation as possible obstacles to their own economic growth. As a result of the Stockholm Conference, however, acceptance grew that natural resources are essential assets on which economic growth must be based and that conservation and development are inseparable (Holdgate 1999). The following decades saw the establishment of the United Nations Environment Programme, the 1980 World Conservation Strategy (in which the conservation community for the first time embraced the concept of “sustainable development”), the World

Commission on Environment and Development (whose 1987 report '*Our Common Future*' established the term sustainable development in the global lexicon), and the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (the Earth Summit) in Rio de Janeiro.

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), adopted at the Earth Summit and now ratified by 190 countries, clearly links conservation with development, recognising in its preamble that "*economic and social development and poverty eradication are the first and overriding priorities of developing countries*". Article 8 of the CBD, on *in situ* conservation, calls for systems of protected areas and various measures to conserve and sustainably use biological diversity, as well as requiring countries to promote efforts to support "*environmentally sound and sustainable development in areas adjacent to protected areas, with a view to furthering protection of these areas*." This provides a legislative justification for linking poverty issues to *in situ* conservation (McNeely 2004), and an acknowledgement that poverty can pose a threat to the survival of protected areas.

The recognition that effective management of natural resources is an important pillar of sustainable development has been given further emphasis by the adoption in 2000 of the United Nations' eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which aim to implement measures to reduce poverty in the world's poorest countries by 2015. Among these is MDG7: 'to integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources' (OECD 2002), which accompanies other goals related to poverty reduction. One of the indicators for progress in achieving MDG7 is the 'land area protected to maintain biological diversity'. However biodiversity conservation is not just the business of MDG7, as it also underpins the achievement of other goals such as those related to income, hunger alleviation, and access to water (see also Roe and Elliott 2004).

Biodiversity conservation in general and protected areas in particular are still far from fully integrated into sustainable development planning. Some reviews of the MDGs voice concern that biodiversity conservation is being sidelined in a push for development largely driven by the demands of urban populations (e.g., Sanderson and Redford 2003). For example, many nations are now embarked on compiling Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), which are country-written documents detailing their plans for poverty reduction within the World Bank's Comprehensive Development Framework. A recent World Bank study (Bojo and Reddy 2003) found that while information on protected areas relating to MDG7's environmental baselines and targets featured in 16 of the 28 full PRSPs, in general information on these baselines and targets was either very limited or non-existent. The study also found that the relevance of indicators such as biodiversity loss and forest clearance to poverty reduction was ignored or ambiguous in some PRSPs, leading to a recommendation that a major effort be undertaken to clarify and align issues related to MDG7.



Protected areas provide a useful service to the rural poor, especially in the form of clean water for domestic and agricultural uses.



### Potential benefits of protected areas to the poor

Protected areas can provide a wide range of goods and services to people living in and around them, and to society as a whole. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MEA) divides these services into four categories (MEA 2003). The first category, *provisioning services*, includes the services that yield natural products such



Protected areas can also provide fuel in the form of charcoal and firewood for local peoples, where such harvest can be managed in an appropriate manner, for example through the use of buffer zones or areas allocated for such use.

Photo: ©J.A.McNeely

as food, fresh water, fuel wood and herbal medicines that have direct use-value to rural communities. In theory, these products would only be legally accessible to local people living in and around those protected areas that allow the sustainable harvesting of such resources (for example, extractive reserves and those with IUCN Category IV, V and VI management objectives). However, even the most strictly protected areas could provide additional food security for surrounding communities in times of famine. Protected areas also act as reservoirs of fish and wildlife that disperse into surrounding areas. The importance for local fisheries of marine protected areas and no-fishing zones, particularly those which incorporate fish spawning and nursery habitats such as estuaries, coral reefs and mangroves, is now well documented (e.g., Wells and Hildesley 1999; Ward *et al.* 2001; Roberts *et al.* 2001; Shanks *et al.* 2003); however, relatively few empirical

studies have been undertaken of the role of terrestrial protected areas as sources of species hunted for food by humans (but see Joshi and Gadgil 1991; McCullough 1996; Pulliam 1988; Novarro *et al.* 2000; Hart 2000).

The other three categories of ecosystem services include: *regulating services* (i.e., benefits from ecosystem services such as climate regulation, watershed protection, coastal protection, water purification, carbon sequestration, and pollination); *cultural services* (e.g., religious values, tourism, education, and cultural heritage); and *supporting services* (e.g., soil formation, nutrient cycling and primary production). McNeely (2004) points out that while these services are important for the living environment of the poor and their spiritual well-being, they provide little immediate concrete poverty relief for communities in and around protected areas. However, while services such as watershed protection, climate regulation, or tourism opportunities tend to provide more benefits at national and international levels, services such as storm protection provided by coastal mangroves or forests above mountain villages provide very local benefits.

Protected areas do provide some of the few options for income available for people in remote areas, for example by providing jobs as park rangers or guides, or in the tourism industry. In countries such as Zimbabwe, Zambia, South Africa, and Pakistan some local communities obtain income from sport hunting around protected areas (Johnson 1997; Jones and Murphree 2001; Child and Dalal-Clayton 2004). In addition, many countries now have legislation in place to ensure that local communities benefit directly from revenues collected by protected area authorities, for example through tourist entry fees or hotel levies (Box 2). In Uganda, revenue sharing is supported by a Wildlife Statute and 12% of gross revenue generated by parks goes back to adjacent communities (Worah 2002).

**Box 2.**

## Distributing benefits from protected areas in KwaZulu Natal

In KwaZulu Natal, South Africa, a Community Levy Fund has been established by Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, the parastatal organization running protected areas. The Fund uses levies charged to visitors to protected areas for development projects identified by local communities. It includes a capital fund, where 10% is retained in the fund for growth and for distribution to areas where tourism is not a major economic activity, and 90% is disbursed to projects identified by the immediate neighbours of the protected areas.

*Source: Lockett, Mkhizi and Potter (2003)*



In Phang-Nga Bay, southern Thailand, tourism has become a major enterprise, providing opportunities for local people to manufacture and sell their handicrafts. Where other forms of employment are scarce, such opportunities are very welcome.

Photo: © J.A. McNeely



## Potential costs of protected areas to the poor

The rural poor are largely dependent on access to natural resources to sustain their livelihoods. Critics of the strict historical model of protected areas – which they call ‘fortress conservation’, the ‘colonial model’, or the ‘fines and fences approach’ – point out that it often involved displacing people, and usually deprived them of access to resources such as land, timber, and wildlife. Moreover, the approach denied indigenous communities their traditional rights and responsibilities for the stewardship of those resources, thus exacerbating all the dimensions of poverty discussed above (see, for example, Lewis and Carter 1993; Ghimire and Pimbert 1997; Brechin *et al.* 2003). To add injury to insult, communities adjacent to protected areas may suffer from crop-raiding animals or predators that kill their livestock or even family members. The result in many cases was, and still is, ill-feeling and resentment, and increasing threats to the survival of the protected area through illegal incursions to collect fuelwood or to hunt, or through encroachment by agriculturalists or pastoralists. The example of Ethiopia’s Simien Mountains National Park, Ethiopia (Box 3) is a case in point, but many others could be cited.

### Box 3.

## The Simien Mountain National Park

The Simien Mountain National Park (SMNP) in north-west Ethiopia is an IUCN Category II protected area. SMNP was gazetted in 1969, declared a World Heritage Site in 1978 and has been on the List of World Heritage in Danger since 1996. At the time it was gazetted, the park included significant portions of the settlements and land of small-scale farmers who had raised crops and livestock there for many generations.

*Continued overleaf*

Of the region's 30 villages, two are completely located within the park boundaries. About 28,000 people live in and around the SMNP, and some 10,000 either live on or use land and other resources such as forest products inside the park. Poverty and food shortages are widespread, there is little infrastructure, and access to basic health and education is very limited. The surrounding region of the SMNP is densely populated, the population is rising by an estimated 2% per year, and there is virtually no possibility of expanding agricultural land as remaining areas are inaccessible or are within the park boundary.

The region was closed to development for over 17 years due to war and insecurity. Years of civil unrest, suspicion between authorities and indigenous communities, and a government policy that precludes local participation in protected area management, have led to a breakdown of communication around the issue of natural resource utilisation and management. Conflicts arise over the shortage of agricultural land, fuelwood extraction (all the remaining forests in the region are within the park boundary), crop raiding and livestock depredations by wild animals. The communities inside the park boundaries face a continued threat of resettlement and are resentful of the lack of development opportunities. However, protected area policy makers and management staff argue convincingly that further encroachment will simply transform the SMNP into eroded, degraded and wildlife-impooverished landscapes like the rest of the Ethiopian Highlands.

*Source: Beltrán (2000).*

Economists refer to the on-going loss of access to land and resources by the creation of protected areas as *opportunity costs* which can exacerbate and perpetuate poverty. Estimates at a national level have shown that states can incur considerable opportunity costs from the loss of agricultural land to protected areas (e.g., Norton Griffiths and Southey 1995, Howard 1995) but the costs to people at a local level remain poorly researched. In one study, Ferraro (2002) estimated that the local costs of establishing the Ranomafana National Park in Madagascar averaged \$19 to \$70 per household per year over a 60-year time frame, when average household cash income was \$50-60 per year.

### **Documenting the impacts of protected areas on adjacent communities**

While much thought has been given to the potential costs and benefits of protected areas, understanding of their actual impact on peoples' lives is still very incomplete. People living around protected areas in developing countries are often poor and marginalized, but this may simply reflect the fact that protected areas are often sited in the less agriculturally productive areas, or in remote rural regions with little access to markets, or in areas to which socially marginal peoples have been relegated by dominant societies. These rural communities are often the last to be provided with development opportunities or social services and be effectively involved in decision-making processes that affect natural resources (Franks 2003; McNeely 2004; Wilkie, Redford and McShane, *in prep.*, Scherl, *in prep.*). Thus, it is extremely difficult to show causal links between protected areas and poverty, or to prove that protected areas themselves perpetuate poverty without taking history, geography, national economic status, and national development strategies into account. Conversely, it is easier to demonstrate that poverty often has a deleterious effect on protected areas.

In sub-Saharan Africa, for example, the top threats to World Heritage Sites are poverty related, with unsustainable resource extraction (illegal hunting or fishing, fuelwood collection, etc.) affecting 71% of Sites, and encroachment for agriculture or livestock use affecting 38% of Sites. In the Asia and Pacific region, unsustainable resource extraction affects 36% of World Heritage Sites (Wilson and Wilson 2004).

To date, no economic studies have been carried out on the long-term impact of protected areas on the communities surrounding them (Wilkie, Redford and McShane, *in prep.*). Such an undertaking would be complex, requiring rigorous controls (e.g., comparing communities ‘within the sphere of influence’ of a protected area with those further away), good baseline data (i.e., the welfare status of the affected communities before the protected area is established), and an understanding of all the national and international macro-economic factors affecting the development, or lack thereof, of the target communities. A five-year study now under way, funded by the MacArthur Foundation, on communities surrounding five new protected areas in Gabon may provide some hard data on this (Wilkie, Redford and McShane, *in prep.*).



A continuing problem in many coastal protected areas is the illegal harvest of turtle eggs. Since managed harvest is feasible, at least in principle, dialogue with the harvesters may provide ways of providing an appropriate compromise between protected areas and the needs of local people.

Photo: © J.A. McNeely



## Poverty reduction approaches in protected area management

Photo: ©J.Thorsell

Current attempts to ensure that local communities derive benefits from protected areas involve approaches such as *integrated conservation and development projects*, *inclusive management approaches*, and creating opportunities for biodiversity conservation within the wider rural landscape in the form of *community conservation areas*. These approaches are described briefly below.

### **Integrated Conservation and Development Projects (ICDPs)**

Since the 1980s, conservation organizations have been implementing approaches that aim to build support among local communities by sharing social and economic benefits from protected areas. The goals of these initiatives include compensating local people for lack of access to protected areas and providing alternative income sources that would allow people to benefit economically from conservation while refraining from environmentally destructive practices (Box 4). During the 1990s, ICDPs found support from international development agencies which provided funding for biodiversity conservation on an unprecedented scale (McShane and Wells 2004).

**Box 4.**

## **ICDPs in Marine Protected Areas in Eastern Africa**

The International Coral Reef Action Network (ICRAN) is coordinating projects to demonstrate good management practices in marine protected areas (MPAs), with the aim of showing effective ways to alleviate poverty among the stakeholders using them on a regular basis. Coral reefs in the two MPAs chosen have high biodiversity values but are increasingly under threat despite a legal framework for their protection. In Kenya's Malindi/ Watamu Marine National Parks and Reserves, ICRAN is supporting target communities with the aim of motivating them to conserve marine resources, to develop income-generating activities and to become involved in the management of the MPA. Activities have included improved repair and maintenance facilities for vessels belonging to local tour-boat operators, improved visitor accommodation facilities and increasing capacity among tour-boat operators and park staff in visitor guiding skills. New ecotourism projects (for example, mangrove boardwalks) have generated funds for school fees for local children.

*Source: Dixon Waruinge, in WCPA News 89 (2003).*



Photo: ©Digital Vision

In practice, experience has shown that the equitable distribution of financial and social benefits from protected areas (through, for example, ICDPs) can be problematic. For example, it is often not enough to assume that community leaders will assure that benefits will accrue to the neediest people. In Africa, experience has shown that transparency and accountability are improved if whole communities, including women, are involved in decision-making (Box 5).

**Box 5.**

### **Ensuring transparency in Zambia**

The Lupande Game Management Area, adjacent to the South Luangwa National Park, supports a resident population of 50,000 people. Two hunting concessions in the area bring in revenues of about US\$230,000 a year for local communities. Previously, distribution of revenues was managed through community leaders, but in the past six years revenues have been distributed in cash to villagers in an open and transparent manner. Individuals retain a portion of this sum while giving another portion to community projects (clinics, schools) approved by the whole community. Eighty percent of hunting revenues now devolve to village level. Participatory democracy and ‘bottom-up’ accountability have changed attitudes to the park and as wildlife is now viewed as a private asset by the communities, illegal hunting has been reduced.

*Source: Child and Dalal-Clayton (2004)*



Photo: ©Corbis



Assessments undertaken in the past decade have shown that many ICDPs have failed to meet expectations for ‘win-win’ conservation and development scenarios (e.g., Wells and Brandon 1992; Larsen *et al.* 1998; McShane and Wells 2004). Not only have many failed to limit unsustainable resource use (e.g., Box 6) or change attitudes, on the whole they have not led to demonstrable improvements in peoples’ livelihoods. However, understanding about the reasons for their lack of success is growing. McShane and Wells (2004) summarize the main shortcomings of the first generation of ICDPs as:

- The flawed assumption that planning and money alone were sufficient to achieve ‘win-win’ scenarios;
- Attempting to implement ICDPs within the framework of a time-bound ‘project cycle’ and failure to adapt to the pace of local communities by trying to meet externally imposed deadlines;
- Failure to identify, negotiate and implement trade-offs between the interests and claims of multiple stakeholders;
- Lack of adaptive management and flexibility to respond to evolving scenarios;
- Failure to cede significant decision making to local stakeholders so that ICDPs remained outside local systems, thereby reducing the likelihood that any gains they may have achieved would persist beyond the project life;
- Perceived or actual bias towards the interests of either the protected area management agency or an environmental NGO;
- A focus on activities (social programs and income creation through alternative livelihoods) rather than impacts (on biodiversity);



- Addressing local symptoms while ignoring underlying policy constraints or conversely dealing with macro-level issues while ignoring local realities;
- Regarding ‘local communities’ as a homogenous entity when the reality was a wide range of different stakeholders with different needs and aspirations.

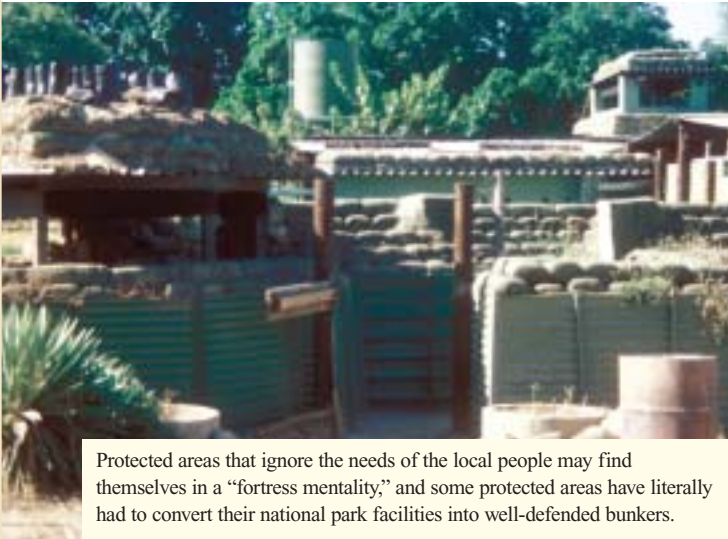
**Box 6.**

### **Gorillas in their Midst: The Impact of ICDPs in Uganda**

The establishment of Bwindi Impenetrable and Mgahinga Gorilla National Parks in 1991 met with conflict and resistance from local people. Park staff faced negative attitudes, illegal exploitation of forest resources, fires, and demands for land. After 15 years of ICDPs around these two protected areas, a recent study, based on surveys in local communities and among park staff, found that attitudes towards the parks have improved greatly: 76% of people in local communities are pro-park vs 47% in 1992. But illegal resource extraction – mainly by the poorer people for subsistence – is still a problem. One conclusion of the study is that the ICDP failed to reduce poverty to a level where dependence on forest resources was significantly reduced.

*Source: Namara, A. (2003). Presentation at V<sup>th</sup> IUCN WPC.*

Despite scepticism (e.g., Oates 1995; Terborgh 1999) about their role in achieving poverty reduction or increasing local support for protected areas, the rationale for ICDPs has not disappeared. Indeed, the need to learn from past mistakes and persevere with ICDPs came out clearly during discussions at the V<sup>th</sup> IUCN World Parks Congress (e.g., Franks 2003). A new generation of ICDPs is already in progress, incorporating innovative approaches such as: building coalitions with all key stakeholders, many of whom can help address broader development-related issues beyond the scope of site-specific projects; starting to apply ICDP approaches to the management of broader landscapes; and supporting carefully selected, small-scale pilot income-generating activities with genuine local support, real prospects of sustainability and clear benefits for biodiversity conservation. McShane and Wells (2004, page 7) conclude that *'linking protected area management with the interests of local stakeholders remains one of the few widely applicable approaches to site-based biodiversity conservation that offers a realistic prospect of success'*.



Protected areas that ignore the needs of the local people may find themselves in a “fortress mentality,” and some protected areas have literally had to convert their national park facilities into well-defended bunkers.

Photo: ©I.A.McNeely



Many of the rural poor depend on protected areas for fruits, vegetables and medicinal plants.

Photo: ©Iconotec

### **Inclusive management approaches**

Participatory planning – involving local communities in protected area management design – is a feature of many ICDPs (Brown 2004). Going beyond this, the formation of *partnerships* for active participation in the day-to-day management of formal protected areas is becoming more widespread (Scherl, *in prep.*). Systems of co-management (or collaborative management) between local communities and technical advisors (for example, government protected area authorities, NGOs or private contractors) can ensure that local communities have a major stake in decision-making and receive a major share of the benefits of protected areas

(Wells and Brandon 1992; Tisen and Bennett 2000; see also Box 7). In KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, for example, legislation is in place to establish Local Boards that have a say in resource management within state-run protected areas. Members of the Boards include traditional community leaders as well as other community representatives. The members have been empowered through skills and capacity building workshops and a relationship of trust has been established between the Boards and the government parastatal organisation running protected areas (Lockett, Mkhizi and Potter 2003).

**Box 7.**

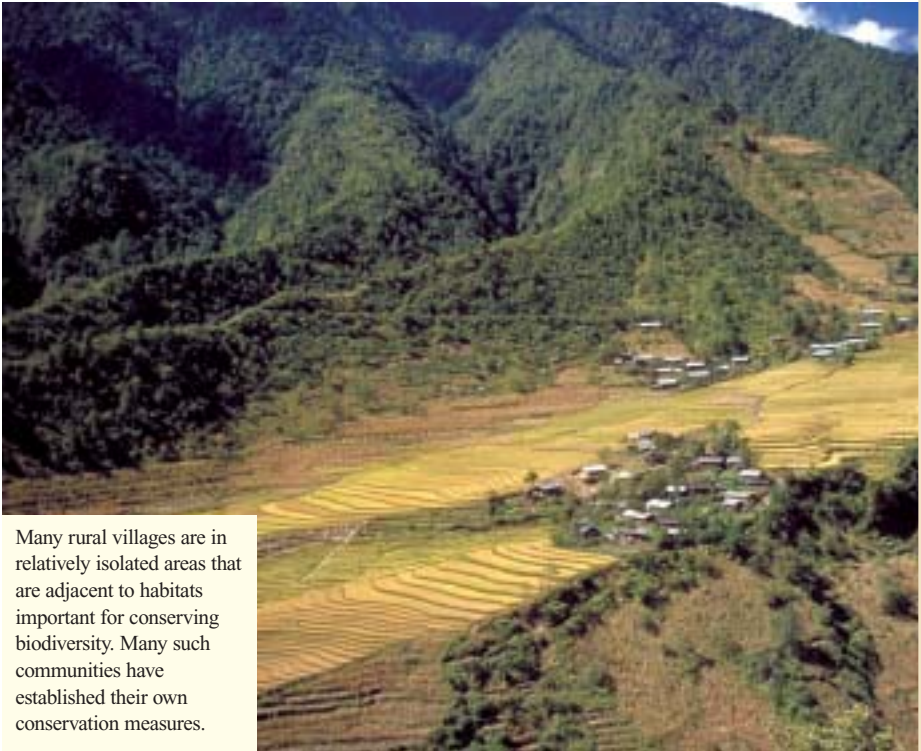
### **People and Totally Protected Areas in Sarawak**

The Sarawak Government recognises that totally protected areas (TPAs) are vital for conservation. The state's policy is that 10% of the land area will be included in TPAs. Many rural communities depend on resources in TPAs, so during the gazetting process they are granted rights to continue to use such areas, wherever appropriate. Often, however, local use, especially hunting, is not sustainable, and law enforcement is impossible without local support. Hence, new laws allow for TPAs to be co-managed by government and local communities. The aim is for unsustainable extractive uses to be phased out, in exchange for benefits from projects compatible with conservation. The new law also bans all trade in wildlife, to increase the sustainability of subsistence hunting. Hence, the needs of local communities are met in a way which does not detract from the central conservation goals of TPAs.

*Source: Tisen, O.B and Bennett, E. (2000).*

## Community Conservation Areas

The V<sup>th</sup> IUCN World Parks Congress recognised that *‘a considerable part of the earth’s biodiversity survives on territories under the ownership, control or management of indigenous peoples and local (including mobile) communities’*. Most such sites have been hitherto unrecognised in formal national and international conservation systems, perhaps *‘because [their] management systems are often based on customary tenure, norms and institutions that are not formally or legally recognised’*. Realizing that many such sites are under threat, participants at the Congress agreed a recommendation in support of the national and international recognition of such areas (Box 8).



Many rural villages are in relatively isolated areas that are adjacent to habitats important for conserving biodiversity. Many such communities have established their own conservation measures.

**Box 8.**

## **Community Conserved Areas**

*Community Conserved Areas (CCAs) are natural and modified ecosystems, including significant biodiversity, ecological services and cultural values, voluntarily conserved by indigenous and local communities through customary laws or other effective means.*

The term as used here is meant to connote a broad and open approach to categorizing such community initiatives, and is not intended to constrain the ability of communities to conserve their areas in the way they feel appropriate.

Participants at the V<sup>th</sup> IUCN World Parks Congress, Durban 2003 recommend (*among other things*) that

### **Governments should:**

- Promote a multisectorial process for recognizing, enlisting, evaluating CCAs;
- Recognize and promote CCAs as a legitimate form of biodiversity conservation, and where communities so choose, include them within national systems of protected areas, through appropriate changes in legal and policy regimes;

### **Communities should:**

- Commit to conserving the biodiversity in CCAs, maintaining ecological services, and protecting associated cultural values.

*Extract from Recommendation 5.26. V<sup>th</sup> IUCN World Parks Congress 2003*





Gandoca-Mata de Limón Community. Part of the Gandoca-Manzanillo mixed Wildlife Refuge in the Caribbean off Costa Rica. The local community is participating in a workshop to validate information concerning the co-management governance process of the Refuge.

Photo: ©Coope Sol I Dar

Growing numbers of initiatives aim to ensure that rural peoples can benefit directly from good stewardship of their resources. In Kenya and Tanzania, for example, the Maasai living around Tsavo, Amboseli and Kilimanjaro National Parks have developed community wildlife sanctuaries that benefit from wildlife dispersal areas around the protected areas. Here, local communities are involved at all levels of management in a range of conservation and ecotourism enterprises (Wishitemi 2002; Okello *et al.* 2003). However, experience in Africa and elsewhere has shown that community conservation initiatives can only work when supported by a national policy and legislative environment that enables devolution of meaningful authority and responsibility for natural resources (Barrow and Murphree 2001; Jones 2001; McShane and Wells 2004). Participants at the V<sup>th</sup> IUCN World Parks Congress repeatedly stressed that clarity over tenure (of land and natural resources) is fundamental to the success of these initiatives, both in terms of conservation of biodiversity and in the fair and equitable sharing of its benefits (Box 9).

**Box 9.**

## **Namibia's Communal Area Conservancies**

Namibia's communal area conservancies are zoned by members of the community for their livelihood needs, including crop and livestock production, and wildlife and tourism. In return for responsible management, government gives the conservancy rights over consumptive and non consumptive uses of wildlife. The legislation enables conservancies to: use, manage and benefit from wildlife on communal land; recommend quotas for wildlife utilisation and decide on the form of utilisation; and enter into agreements with private companies to establish tourism facilities in the conservancy. By mid-2003, 19 communal area conservancies had been gazetted and some of them are now financially independent.

*Source: Jones (2001);*

*[www.dea.met.gov.na/programmes/cbnrm/cons\\_guide.htm](http://www.dea.met.gov.na/programmes/cbnrm/cons_guide.htm);*

*[www.irdnc.org.na/cons.htm](http://www.irdnc.org.na/cons.htm)*

Although ICDPs, inclusive management, and community conservation areas may contribute towards reducing poverty through social empowerment and provision of financial benefits to communities in and around protected areas, on their own they are rarely enough to achieve significant poverty reduction. Providing economic incentives for conservation is not the same as generating broad development benefits (Emerton 2001), and protected areas can not (and should not) be expected to provide the latter by themselves.



Photo: © Ian J. Dight

As signatories to the Convention on Biological Diversity, most of the world's governments have recognised the needs to conserve natural resources for the benefit of present and future generations. They have recognised the importance of planning and managing these resources at the landscape level, adopting an ecosystem approach that includes making optimal use of land and water used for production, while enhancing the management of those needed primarily to conserve biodiversity. In this context, protected areas are a tool for promoting effective planning of land and water use so that they can better contribute to broader socio-economic development plans and programmes in the territory where they are located. This broader landscape approach enables Protected Areas to be linked to poverty alleviation strategies and action plans.

Some of the key discussions at the V<sup>th</sup> IUCN World Parks Congress revolved around the concept of '*pro-poor conservation*'. Roe and Elliott (2003) defined this as “harnessing conservation in order to deliver on poverty reduction and social justice objectives”, while Fisher (2003) described it as “optimising conservation and livelihood benefits with an explicit emphasis on contributing to poverty reduction”. Scherl (2003) stressed that establishment and management of protected areas should at least not make the living conditions of poor rural and indigenous communities within and adjacent to these areas worse off than they are already (i.e., at least do no harm). IUCN states that pro-poor conservation is not just an ethical response but “an opportunity to contribute to the growth of the environmental sphere of sustainable development by proving its fundamental importance to economic and social outcomes in some of the world’s poorest but most biologically diverse regions” (IUCN 2003).

In the past, the material and ethical consequences to local communities of protected area establishment and management have rarely been considered: many protected areas were established and are still managed at the expense of the poor, who have forfeited traditional rights over resources, lost empowerment to participate in management decisions, and are denied fair compensation for their stewardship of resources and opportunity costs (Nelson and Hossack 2003; Geisler 2003; Shepherd 2004). Mindful of this, the V<sup>th</sup> IUCN World Parks Congress adopted as a principle the following statement:

*“protected area establishment and management should contribute to poverty reduction at the local level, and at the very minimum must not contribute to or exacerbate poverty”* (Recommendation 5.29, see Annex 1).

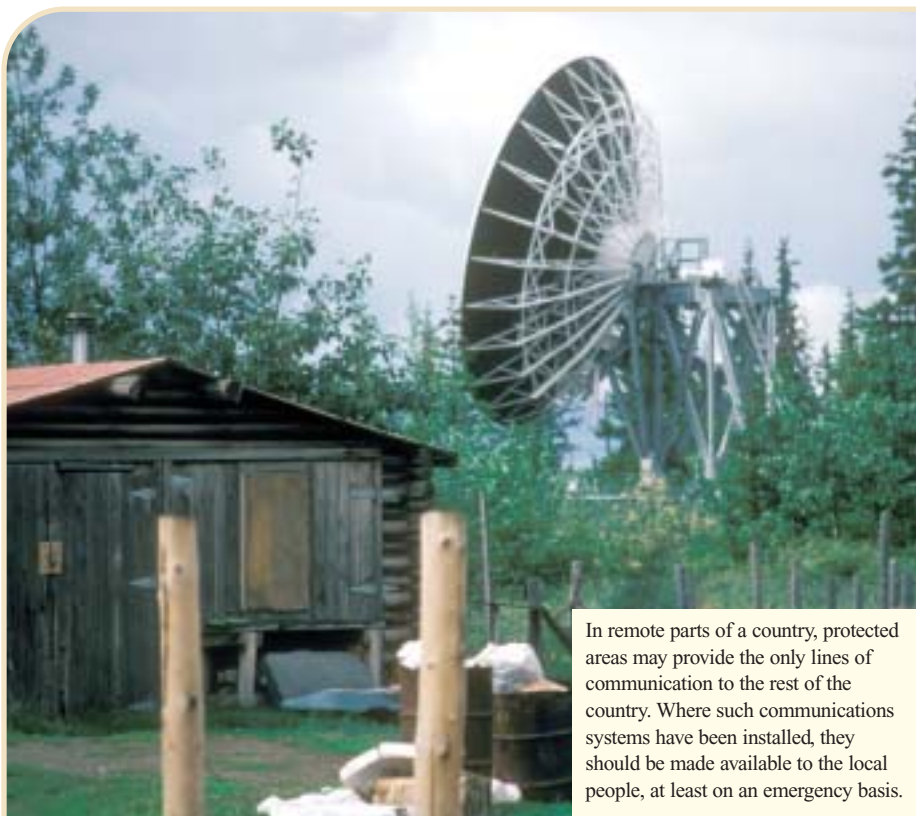
How can protected areas be expected to play a meaningful role in sustainable development by actively delivering on poverty reduction for local

communities? Most protected area managers in developing countries are already struggling to make ends meet in the face of limited financial and human resources. Even the issue of fair compensation for loss of traditional access to natural resources through protected area establishment is an ethical and judicial minefield (Wilkie, Redford and McShane, in prep.). The minimum principle of ‘at least do no harm’ embraced at the V<sup>th</sup> IUCN World Parks Congress may be difficult enough to achieve, especially in terms of on-going compensation to local communities for opportunity costs.

The examples presented above describe some of the ways protected areas are contributing to local livelihoods. But more can be done if new partnerships, governance structures, financing mechanisms and legal frameworks are developed. Discussions at the V<sup>th</sup> IUCN World Parks Congress made it clear that actions are needed at three levels to enable protected areas to play a greater role in sustainable development:



Many remote areas important for biodiversity are reachable only by foot, and protected area infrastructure such as roads can lead to new economic opportunities for the rural poor. They may find that the new access to markets opens up many new opportunities for economic advancement.



In remote parts of a country, protected areas may provide the only lines of communication to the rest of the country. Where such communications systems have been installed, they should be made available to the local people, at least on an emergency basis.

Photo: ©J.A.McNeely

**At site level, protected area authorities and managers could:**

- Undertake social impact assessments (including poverty impact assessments) during establishment, and during routine management effectiveness evaluations, of protected areas;
- Support integrated conservation and development programmes, using innovative approaches;
- Increase investment in capacity-building among local communities for protected area management;
- Encourage active participation by local communities in management.



**At national level, governments could:**

- *Put in place legal frameworks for the recognition of the right to tenure of land and other property (e.g., natural resources) by indigenous and local communities (Box 10);*

**Box 10.**

### **Indigenous groups' tenure of natural resources in the Philippines**

Sibuyan Island is one of the few remaining centres of biodiversity and endemism in the Philippines. Under the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act of 1996, indigenous people's groups have been granted 'Ancestral Domain' rights of access and security over natural resources. Sixty percent of these Ancestral Domains overlap with the Mt. Guiting-Guiting Natural Park. These communities are also being assisted with capital, credit, and training in natural resource management.

*Source: Tongson and Dino (2004)*

- *Develop mechanisms to evaluate ecosystem services provided by protected areas and factor these into national accounting systems, leading to incentives and rewards for stewardship of national public goods such as watershed protection. This will only contribute to poverty reduction where the poor have title to land and other property;*
- *Encourage inclusive protected area governance systems that recognise customary and traditional rights and give a voice and empowerment to disadvantaged groups. This was reflected in Recommendation 5.16 (on good governance) of the V<sup>th</sup> IUCN WPC;*

- *Strengthen and expand protected areas that are co-managed by, for example, government agencies, indigenous and local communities, NGOs or the private sector, or even among state governments as in the case of trans-boundary protected areas. This was reflected in Recommendation 5.25 (co-management) of the V<sup>th</sup> IUCN WPC;*
- *Give greater recognition and develop legal frameworks to support community conservation areas;*
- *Encourage the establishment of Category IV, V and VI protected areas, biosphere reserves, extractive reserves, etc., that allow for sustainable resource use;*
- *Compensate for reduced investment in public infrastructure and services in protected areas. Brazil, for example, has established a fiscal mechanism, the ICMS Ecologico, to compensate rural municipalities for loss of employment, value added and tax receipts associated with the creation of protected areas;*



Local people in many parts of Indonesia continue to harvest fruits, nuts, and other products from the forest.

Photo: ©J.A. McNeely



An important part of any protected area management enterprise is providing education to the younger generation, thereby building support and appreciation for the role played by protected areas in national development.

Photo: © J.A. McNeely

- *Integrate protected areas into larger scale land-use planning.* Land uses that complement and support each other can contribute to the long-term environmental, economic and social sustainability of a region (Redford *et al.* 2003). In fact, managed landscape mosaics, typical of protected areas in some European countries, may be a viable model for at least some tropical countries (Sayer 2000). Such landscape (or ecosystem) scale approaches offer the possibility of linking local initiatives such as community-conserved areas and extractive reserves with regional and national land-use planning. Appropriate institutions to manage protected areas and surrounding lands within complex landscapes need to be put in place, providing fora for the key stakeholders to come together, express their views and cooperate in new partnerships to develop and implement mutually-acceptable management strategies (IUCN, 2001; Wells and McShane, *in prep.*);
- *Give greater recognition of the role of protected areas in Poverty Reduction Strategies and the Millennium Development Goals.*

**At international level, governments, international aid agencies, NGOs and the private sector could:**

- *Better define the linkages between protected areas and poverty;*
- *Develop new financial mechanisms* to support stewardship of international public goods provided by protected areas such as watershed protection, biodiversity conservation, and carbon sequestration. The Global Environment Facility acknowledges that protection of wild resources is an international public good that places burdens on the poor, but it has so far failed to put in place compensatory mechanisms (LWAG 2002). New international financial mechanisms could take the form of payment for ecosystem services, biodiversity subsidies, debt-for-nature swaps, or conservation concessions or easements financed by international bodies (Box 11).

**Box 11.**

## **Conservation International's Conservation Concessions**

Conservation International, a US-based NGO, has pioneered a concept of *conservation concessions* whereby payments are made directly to a developing country or its citizens to compensate for revenue or employment lost by not exploiting a given resource. In Guatemala, for example, local communities are being given incentives, including payments, scholarships and employment, to conserve dwindling forests in the Maya Biosphere Reserve.

*Source: LWAG (2002). See also Ellison (2004).*



## Conclusion

As parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, most of the world's governments have recognised the need to conserve natural resources for the benefit of present and future generations. Protected areas remain the strongest tool for managers interested in conserving biodiversity. Such programmes inevitably favour some individuals or groups of people more than others, and the rural poor have tended to be among those who are most strongly disadvantaged. In this, protected areas are no different from other resource-management approaches designed by central governments, including timber concessions, mining, dam construction, infrastructure development, and so forth. However, for developing countries, linking protected areas to poverty reduction enables a more convincing case to be made for greater investment in protecting the natural assets that can benefit both the rural poor and wider society. Further, protected areas leave more future options available than do more intensive changes of land use.

## Conclusion

A sincere effort by governments to reduce poverty will require fundamental changes in many government sectors. Protected areas can only contribute to poverty reduction, for example through the methods suggested in this paper, within the framework of such a broad sectoral reform. They must play a more significant role in addressing the needs of the rural poor by adopting socially responsible management approaches and by being fully integrated into national and international sustainable development and poverty reduction strategies. This said, protected areas exist primarily to maintain biological diversity, and maintenance of biological diversity is recognised in the Millennium Development Goals (MDG7) as an indicator of progress in reducing poverty. Protected areas by themselves will not generate the broad development benefits required to reduce poverty and should not be expected to. They will contribute by ensuring that the natural systems necessary for development are available and functioning for current and future generations.

The new generation of protected area professionals needs to work with colleagues from other professions who are together fully supportive of the needs to link protected areas more productively with social-economic development, accepting the challenge to provide leadership to achieve sustainable development across the landscape and in the hearts and minds of human society.



Protected areas often contain wild relatives of domesticated species. This is a wild jungle fowl in Thailand, which can be cross-bred with domestic varieties to enhance desirable qualities. This another under-appreciated benefit of protected areas.

Photo: © J.A. McNeely



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## V<sup>th</sup> IUCN World Parks Congress

### Recommendation on Protected Areas and Poverty (Rec. 5.29)

Protected areas play a vital role in sustainable development through protection and maintenance of biological diversity and of natural and associated cultural resources. Protected areas cannot be viewed as islands of conservation, divorced from the social and economic context within which they are located. Poverty, displacement, hunger and land degradation have a profound impact on bio-diversity and protected areas, and pose a very serious threat to their survival. Poverty is multi-dimensional (lack of assets/opportunities, vulnerability, and lack of power or voice), and protected areas have a powerful potential to make a significant contribution to poverty reduction and to the broader development framework established by the Millennium Development Goals and the WSSD Plan of Implementation.

Protected areas generate significant economic, environmental and social benefits. These benefits are realised at local, national and global levels. Unfortunately, a disproportionate amount of the costs of protected areas are borne locally. As with other forms of large-scale land use, many local communities have been marginalised and excluded from protected areas. Given that their natural and cultural wealth often constitutes an important asset for local communities, denying rights to these resources can exacerbate poverty. Protected Area establishment and management cannot be allowed to exacerbate poverty.

However, given the fact that many local communities living in and around protected areas have limited development opportunities, protected areas offer a currently untapped opportunity to contribute to poverty reduction while continuing to maintain their vital function in conserving biodiversity. Recognising the importance of people in conservation, we need to support poor communities to act as the new front-line of conservation. This implies new ways of working with local communities to act as custodians of biodiversity through working with Protected Area authorities, and to build their ability to manage their own areas.

Increasing the benefits of protected areas and reducing their costs to local people can help mobilise public support and reduce conflicts and the enforcement costs of Protected Area management, particularly in areas of widespread poverty. The long-term sustainability of Protected Area networks (including their growth through new forms of protected areas) and the achievement of poverty reduction are inextricably linked. The practical implications of realising this linkage will require new investment to enhance benefits and reduce costs.

There is a need for strengthening existing and developing new financial mechanisms that can provide fair reward for stewardship of nationally

and globally important biological resources. The convergence of the poverty reduction and Protected Area agendas represents a real opportunity to generate new and additional resources for conservation.

Therefore, PARTICIPANTS in the Stream on Building Broader Support for Protected Areas at the V<sup>th</sup> IUCN World Parks Congress, in Durban, South Africa (8-17 September 2003):

1. **CALL ON** governments, inter-governmental organizations, private sector and civil society to adopt the following overarching principles on the linkage between protected areas and poverty:
  - a. In order to achieve their potential both to conserve biodiversity and to assist in reducing poverty, protected areas should be integrated within a broad sustainable development planning agenda;
  - b. Protected areas should strive to contribute to poverty reduction at the local level, and at the very minimum must not contribute to or exacerbate poverty;
  - c. Biodiversity should be conserved both for its value as a local livelihoods resource and as a national and global public good;
  - d. Equitable sharing of costs and benefits of protected areas should be ensured at local, national and global levels;
  - e. Where negative social, cultural and economic impacts occur, affected communities should be fairly and fully compensated; and
  - f. A gender perspective should be incorporated that encompasses the different roles of women and men in livelihood dynamics, thus contributing to equitable benefit sharing and more effective governance systems;

**2. RECOMMEND** that local actors, communities, governments, Protected Area authorities, inter-governmental organizations, private sector and conservation agencies develop policy, practices and forms of inclusive government for Protected Area management that enhance opportunities, reduce vulnerability, and empower the poor and vulnerable, especially in areas of severe poverty, based on:

- a. Building partnerships with poor communities as actors and shareholders in Protected Area development;
- b. Strengthening mechanisms for the poor to share actively in decision making related to protected areas and to be empowered as conservators in their own right;
- c. Developing pro-poor mechanisms to reward environmental stewardship, including payments for environmental services, minimise and mitigate damages to both biodiversity and to livelihoods, and provide fair compensation for losses incurred from human-wildlife conflicts and from restricted access and decreased environmental services;
- d. Respecting and recognising customary ownership, use and access rights for local people, particularly for the poor, during the negotiation and decision making processes, and preventing further loss of customary rights;



Protected areas often contain fruits, medicinal plants, and other products that are of economic importance to the local villagers.

Photo: © J.A. McNeely



In some parts of Africa, local villagers have become very sophisticated at providing handicrafts to visitors to the protected areas. This provides a welcome source of cash income that otherwise would not be available.

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- e. Improving accountability and transparency of decision making processes related to protected areas;
- f. Developing more inclusive interpretations of Protected Area categories that reflect the interests and initiatives of the poor, including the role of community conserved areas;
- g. Fostering programmes of restoration to deal with modified and degraded areas that yield biodiversity benefits as well as providing goods and services to improve livelihoods within protected areas and in the landscape surrounding them; and
- h. Encouraging governments to reflect the above principles regarding local rights and opportunities related to protected areas in their legal and regulatory frameworks;

**3. RECOMMEND** that Governments, donors and other development partners consider how to maximise the contribution of protected areas to sustainable development, and in particular poverty reduction efforts, by:

- a. Mainstreaming protected areas into national and international development planning and policy, particularly poverty reduction strategies and the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals;
- b. Develop innovative financial and governance systems to optimise synergies between Protected Area management and poverty reduction efforts;
- c. Increasing financial resources available for rewarding poor communities and poor countries for their stewardship of global public goods; and
- d. Improving knowledge and understanding of linkages between protected areas and poverty reduction, and specifically the impact of protected areas on the livelihoods of the rural poor, negative and positive; and

**4. RECOMMEND** that the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity:

- a. Develop guidelines on the management of protected areas based on the principles mentioned in paragraph 1 and 2, and ensure that National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans are aligned with poverty reduction strategies; and
- b. Extend the principle of equitable benefit sharing to include all components of biological diversity.







## **IUCN – The World Conservation Union**

Founded in 1948, The World Conservation Union brings together States, government agencies and a diverse range of non-governmental organizations in a unique world partnership: over 1000 members in all, spread across some 140 countries.

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