

CHAPTER 9

Biodiversity Conservation Strategies III: The Community Conservation Approach

*Erie S. Tamale,
World-Wide Fund*

INTRODUCTION

Over the last couple of years, biological diversity has received significant attention and different approaches to ensure its effective conservation and sustainable use have been proposed. Hitherto, the traditional approach to conserving biodiversity (at species and ecosystem level) has been "protected area management". Many protected areas (PAs) including national parks, forest reserves, game reserves, wildlife sanctuaries and others have been established in almost all countries. Unfortunately, most PAs were established with little or no regard to the local people living in or around them. Protected area management authorities emphasised a policing role and fencing off of the PAs to exclude the local "intruders" (Wells *et al*, 1992). Local people found themselves displaced and deprived of access to resources such as pastures, water, medicines, wild foods etc., vital for their survival (IIED, 1994). This, as expected, created direct conflicts between the local people and protected area managers (foresters, game wardens, park managers, etc.).

It is widely acknowledged that successful long-term sustainable management of biodiversity within and outside protected areas depends on the participation¹, co-operation and full support of the local people (Wells *et al* 1992; World Bank, 1992). Community conservation has been hailed as the plausible approach to meeting the needs of local people while ensuring conservation and sustainable utilisation of biological resources. Several experts have advocated for integrating local communities into protected area planning and management (Lusigi, 1981; Matowanyika, 1989; Kiss, 1990). It has been acknowledged that protected areas cannot co-exist with communities which are hostile to them and that when placed in proper context, PAs can make significant contributions to the welfare of the people living next to them (Hannar, 1992; Barzetti, 1993).

¹ Community participation is referred to here as the active process of "...empowering people to mobilise their own capacities, be social actors rather than subjects, manage the resources, make decisions, and control the activities that affect their lives" (Cernea, 1985).

PEOPLE AND BIODIVERSITY

Throughout the history of humankind, local people have had intrinsic relationships with the biological diversity around them. These relationships embrace, among other things, cultural identity, spirituality and socio-economic subsistence. Biological diversity has formed an integral part of very survival and well being. Until recently, however, the relationship between local people and protected areas such as national parks has often been ignored by resource managers. In the rush to conserve the remaining untouched areas, governments have decimated the indigenous rights of local people including their cultural diversity, customary land-tenure systems as well as their traditional knowledge and practices (Barzetti, 1993). People have been seen as "intruders" who are engaging in illegal, irrational and environmentally-destructive practices which are incompatible with the protected area management objectives.

Inevitably, direct conflicts between the local people and resource management authorities (including forest officers, park wardens and game guards) have emerged in many areas. Local people have continued to exercise their customary rights to the resources in the protected areas while resource managers, on the other hand, have striven to enforce the strict government resource management rules². Unfortunately, local people have continued to violate the rules, thereby rendering law enforcement less practical and too costly.

Even where some progress has been made in involving local communities in PA management, there are some unfair practices that need to be urgently redressed. For example, the intellectual property rights of the local people who are allowed to remain near or within the PAs are often violated. Ethno-botanists and other scientists have made several discoveries based on the indigenous knowledge and cultures of local people (including traditional healers, hunters, farmers, etc.). However, many scientists have patented their products without due compensation to the original owners of the knowledge (Barzetti, 1993).

The Convention on Biological Diversity recognises the close and traditional dependence of many indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles as well as their knowledge, innovations and practices which contribute to the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. It calls on countries,

²

For example, in Amboseli National Park and Tsavo West National Park in Kenya, park authorities have been at war with the Masai pastoralists (Wells, et al., 1992) in Lake Mburo National Park in Uganda the Bahima pastoralists were originally denied access to pastures in the park (Kamugisha and Stahl, 1993) while in Zakouma National Park in Chad, local people were obliged to re-settle to new areas (West and Brechin, 1991; IIED, 1994).

knowledge, promote their wider application and encourage the equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of such knowledge and innovations.

FORMS OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN CONSERVATION PROJECTS

The significance of community participation in conservation projects depends on **how** it takes place, **when** it occurs in the project cycle, at **what level** and *who among the community* participates. Therefore, in designing strategies for promoting community conservation, it is necessary to analyse the different dimensions and forms of participation, identify the different social actors and determine structural/functional constituents of the local communities as management units (Egger and Majeres, 1992; Cernea, 1995).

Community participation in biodiversity conservation projects can take different dimensions and can occur at different levels depending on: (i) the phase of the project cycle in which the community is involved; (ii) project functions and tasks; (iii) degree of control in decision making; and (iv) methods or procedures used (Tobisson and Rudqvist, 1992).

On the basis of different stages of the project cycle, local communities can participate in the following major activities namely: information-gathering; planning and design; consultation; decision-making; implementation; monitoring and evaluation (Cohen and Uphoff, 1977; Paul, 1987).

Secondly, people can participate in different tasks of a project such as provision of manual labour, for pay, in physical activities such as construction, machine operation, protection and control (e.g. forest protection) etc., or they can be involved in executive management of the project, for example in the maintenance of project assets.

Thirdly, but rarely, local people can be "requested" to participate in decision-making in different ways, including provision of information and viewpoints (e.g. needs/problem identification; priorities and ranking; design of activities; distribution of benefits); making choices between different alternatives/options; having conventional decision-making power with respect to all project aspects; and sharing responsibility for management and control over project resources (Tobisson and Rudqvist, 1992).

---- *Strategies for Protection and Conservation* ----

Finally, participation can take different forms depending on the procedure and method used, e.g. consultation; public meeting; workshop; PRA or participatory research (Salmen, 1987, Chambers, 1992).

CONVENTIONAL APPROACHES TO COMMUNITY CONSERVATION

Since the early 1980s, several participatory approaches to biodiversity conservation have been developed, ranging from passive participation where people have little input into decision-making and control, to active participation where local people are given a chance to take part in joint problem analysis, development of action plans and decision-making. (Pimbert and Pretty, 1994)

Passive community participation approaches are characterised by involving local people in externally-formulated plans or projects to enlist their support to achieve the project objectives, rather than enabling them to share power in decision-making and control (West and Brenchin, 1991). These approaches are aimed at conserving biological resources by minimising opposition by local communities to protected area management legislation and tenure arrangements. Participation is often limited to consultation of local people to provide information or to employment of local people as cheap labour.

Passive participatory approaches have been typified by schemes such as income-generating projects, compensation schemes, revenue-sharing, re-settlement schemes, substitution of traditional practices with modern technologies, and conservation education. (IIED, 1994)

The compensation approach is based on the principle that people will protect wildlife if they are paid to do so or if they are compensated (through cash payments, donations, provision of better services or otherwise) for the loss of access to the park resources. It is assumed that by providing compensation, the economic incentive to exploit wildlife illegally will be eliminated.

The second approach that has been widely employed is the creation of job opportunities and provision of alternative income-generating activities (such as bee-keeping, silk farming, tanning, blacksmith, handcraft-making, etc.) for local people near protected areas. This approach is often complemented by providing revolving credit schemes, low interest loans, skills training and community capacity building. This approach is based on the premise that providing other sources of income will remove or minimise the incentive for illegal commercial exploitation of wildlife resources. This approach is currently being experimented in areas surrounding Bwindi Impenetrable National Park in Uganda.

---- *Gender and Biodiversity Conservation in Africa* ----

The revenue-sharing approach is also widely employed in many national parks in Africa such as Maasai Mara and Amboseli National Park in Kenya (Talbot and Olindo, 1990). Revenue-sharing activities involve the distribution of cash and non-cash incomes (derived from tourist entrance fees, sport-hunting, game-cropping, etc.) to local authorities to undertake development activities which benefit the whole community (IIED, 1994).

Another commonly-used approach is the substitution of traditional resource management/land-use practices with modern appropriate technologies. This approach is based on the premise that where access to wildlife resources (meat, firewood, timber, water, land etc.) has been denied, provision of alternatives will remove the pressure on the protected area. Some of the modern technologies which have been introduced include agroforestry; new high-yielding crop varieties; zero-grazing; domestic water-harvesting; energy-saving devices and others.

Finally, conservation education has been widely used as an approach to raising dialogue and awareness about the need to conserve and sustainably utilise wildlife resources. It is based on the principle that local communities will be encouraged to practise conservation if they understand and appreciate the importance of doing so. (IIED, 1994)

All these conventional participation approaches have aimed at "compensating" local people for the loss of access to natural resources in the park by providing alternative sources of livelihood and by doing so it is assumed that the economic incentive to exploit wildlife resources will be removed. Furthermore, in all these approaches, local people are treated as passive beneficiaries and are rarely consulted during the planning and implementation of these schemes. This, in the short-term, has provided some positive response from the communities but in the long-term, however, there is little guarantee that such incentives will prevail if the political and economic circumstances change over time. Already, experience has shown that the benefits are rarely equitably distributed, compensation is seldom proportionate to the economic and social benefits forgone and the services provided do not adequately meet the real needs of the people. Therefore, such approaches seem to provide temporary remedies to the problem. The real solution lies in establishing mechanisms for ensuring active and functional community participation.

TOWARDS LEGITIMATE COMMUNITY CONSERVATION

Community participation in biodiversity conservation projects and programmes needs to go beyond the classical passive participation approaches which simply attempt to minimise local community opposition or simply encourage local people

---- *Strategies for Protection and Conservation* ----

to participate in implementing already designed conservation plans and projects. It should aim at achieving active participation of local communities, particularly women.

Active participation entails enabling local people to contribute to and influence decisions on conservation projects, policies and action plans. It attempts to establish equitable partnerships, so that all stakeholders have an equal opportunity to control and benefit from wildlife resources.

Active participation should have the following characteristics, among others:

- There should serious attempts to establish equal partnerships. Local people should be treated with respect as equal partners and not just "targets" of conservation activities.
- Stakeholders should be given chance to take part in joint appraisal and problem analysis, development and implementation of action plans as well as joint evaluation of performance.
- Decision-making should be shared.
- Local people should be empowered to influence plans and decisions affecting their well-being.
- Building of local institutional capacity should be emphasised.
- Ownership and access rights should be fully transferred to the local people.
- The participatory process should propagate a sense of ownership and strong internal motivation among the local people to contribute to sustainable use of wildlife resources.
- Needs of the less powerful members of the community should not be suppressed by the most powerful.

By and large, four broad principles should guide active community participation in park management and decision-making:

1. Recognition and respect of local community rights and cultures;
2. Local institutional capacity building to enhance the ability of local communities to plan and implement their own initiatives;

---- *Gender and Biodiversity Conservation in Africa* ----

3. Equitable sharing of benefits from wildlife;
4. Local empowerment to enable local people to take a leading role in project design, implementation, evaluation and decision-making.

Furthermore, there is need to critically examine the validity of opposing views and interests of the different stakeholders and develop mutually agreed guidelines to existing conflicts. There is also need, on part of resource managers, to fully understand the needs of local communities and how they make resource-use decisions. Community involvement should begin at the project conceptualisation stage and not at the implementation stage.

Moreover, active participation requires joint partnerships rather than the usual quick public consultation ploys; it needs mutual respect for each other's views and interests as well as equality in the decision-making processes. The process of dialogue, collaboration and co-ordination with local communities should be an integral part of the planning and management activities (Barzetti, 1993).

Besides, achieving *bona fide* participation requires resource managers to know the social structure of the community to ensure that as many members of the community as possible are involved and not only the leaders, the rich and local élites (Midgley *et al*, 1986). Conventionally, decision-making and executive action has tended to be taken by small, self-perpetuating cliques of local élites who often act in their own interest and not those of the wider community. It is imperative, therefore, to identify the various stakeholders, including the disadvantaged people in society (the poor, women, children and the disabled) and evolve mechanisms to involve everybody equitably (Cernea, 1991). Strategies are needed to safeguard the participatory process from being dominated and manipulated by the rich, the local élites and the affluent politicians and bureaucrats.

CONCLUSION

The task of re-building the relationship between local communities and resource management authorities after a long history of exclusion, policing and repression, is not an easy task. However, with commitment, on part of resource managers and project planners, to develop and implement strategies that will create long-term incentives and mechanisms for authentic community participation in park management and decision-making, things can change for the better. While continuing to pursue the conventional passive participation approaches as the preliminary step, all effort should be made to realise legitimate community participation by building the local institutional capacity; devolving decision-making

--- *Strategies for Protection and Conservation* ---

power and responsibility to the local community; maintaining constructive dialogue; ensuring equitable sharing of benefits; and respecting local community's rights, cultures and indigenous knowledge.

FURTHER READING

Bamberger, M. (ed.), 1988. *"The Role of Community Participation in Development Planning and Project Management,"* EDI Policy Seminar Paper No. 13, Washington, D.C., World Bank

Barzetti, V. 1993. *Parks and Progress: Protected Areas and Economic Development in Latin America and the Caribbean*, IUCN/Edwards Brothers Inc. USA

Bebbington, A. and Farrington, J. 1993. "Governments, NGOs and Agricultural Development: Perspectives on Changing Inter-Organisational Relationships", *The Journal of Development Studies*, 29(2) pp 199–219

Boyle, P.G. 1981. *Planning Better Programs*, New York: McGraw-Hill Publishing Co.

Cernea, M. (ed.), 1985. *Putting People First: Sociological Variables in Rural Development*, New York: Oxford University Press

Chambers, R. 1992. *Rural Appraisal: Rapid, Relaxed and Participatory*, IDS Discussion Paper No. 311, Brighton: Institute of Development Studies (IDS), University of Sussex

Cohen, J.M. and Uphoff, N.T. 1977. *Rural Development Participation: Concepts and Measures for Project Design, Implementation and Evaluation*, Rural Development Committee Monograph 2. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University, Centre for International Studies.

Delbecq, A.G., 1967. "The Management of Decision Making within the Firm: Three Strategies for Three Types of Decision-Making", *Academy of Management Journal*, 10(4), pp. 329-339, cited in Boyle, 1981

Egger, P. and Majeres, J. 1992. "Local Resource Management and Development: Strategic Dimensions of People's Participation", In Ghai, D. and Vivian, J. (ed.), *Grassroots Environmental Action: People's Participation in Sustainable Development*, New York: Routledge, Chapman and Hall, Inc.

---- *Gender and Biodiversity Conservation in Africa* ----

Ghai, D. and Vivian, J. (Eds), 1992. *Grassroots Environmental Action: People's Participation in Sustainable Development*, New York: Routledge, Chapman and Hall, Inc.

Hannar, L. 1992. *African People, African Parks: An Evaluation of Development Initiatives as a Means of improving Protected Area Conservation in Africa*. USAID, BSP/CI Report

IIED, 1994. *Whose Eden? An Overview of Community Approaches to Wildlife Management*, London: Russell Press

Jakson, L. 1970. "Toward a Planning Ideology in Planning Education", In Ernest, E. (ed.), *Urban Planning in Transition*, New York, Grossman Publishers, pp. 266–275

Kamugisha, J. and Stahl, M. 1993. *Parks and People: Pastoralists and Wildlife*, Nairobi: Regional Soil Conservation Unit, SIDA

Kiss, A. (ed.), 1990. *Living with Wildlife: Wildlife Resource Management with Local Participation in Africa*. World Bank, AFTEN

Lawry, S.W. 1990. "Tenure Policy Towards Common Property Resources in Sub-Saharan Africa", *Natural Resources Journal*, **30** (2): 402–422

Lusigi, W. 1981. "New Approaches to Wildlife Conservation in Kenya", *AMBIO* 10(87)

Matowanyika, J. 1989. "Cast Out of Eden: Peasants versus Wildlife Policy in Savanna Africa". *Alternatives* 16(30)

Midgley, J., Hall, A., Hardiman, M. and Narine, D. 1986. *Community Participation, Social Development and the State*, London: Methuen

Paul, S. 1987. *Community Participation in Development Projects: The World Bank's Experience*, Discussion Paper No.6, Washington, D.C.: The World Bank

Pimbert, M. and Pretty J.N., 1994. "Participation, People and Management of National Parks and Protected Areas: Past Failures and Future Promise", UNRISD/IIED/WWF mimeograph

---- *Strategies for Protection and Conservation* ----

Salmen, L.F. 1987. *Listen to the People: The Participant-Observer Evaluation of Development Projects*, New York: Oxford University Press

Talbot, L. and Olindo, P. 1990. "Amboseli and Maasai Mara", In Kiss, A. (ed.), 1990. *Living with Wildlife: Wildlife Resource Management with Local Participation in Africa*. World Bank, AFTEN

Tobisson, E. and Rudqvist, A. 1992. *Popular Participation and Natural Resource Management*, Working Paper No. 11, Popular Participation Programme, Dept. of Social Anthropology, Stockholm University

United Nations, 1971. *Popular Participation in Development: Emerging Trends in Community Development*, New York: United Nations

Wells, M., Brandon, K. and Hannah, L. 1992. *People and Parks: Linking Protected Area Management with Local Communities*. Washington DC: The World Bank, WWF, USAID

West, P. and Brechin, S.R. (ed.), 1991. *Resident Peoples and Resident Parks: Social Dilemmas and Strategies in International Conservation*, University of Arizona Press

World Bank, 1992. *World Development Report 1992: Environment and Development*, Oxford: Oxford University Press