

CONNECTING THE DOTS

Biodiversity, Adaptation, Food Security and
Livelihoods



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Livelihoods**

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Connecting the dots : Biodiversity, Adaptation, Food Security and Livelihoods

Purpose of the present report

As mentioned in the preface of the 2008 interim report on the economics of ecosystems and biodiversity (TEEB), we are still learning about the nature of the value of biodiversity as we broaden the concept of capital to encompass not only human and social capital but also natural capital. In the same vein we are struggling to delineate the value of nature. Global efforts to overcome the sustainability challenge are still relatively weak and generally not very successful as indicated by the recent UN report on achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (UNDESA 2010). By contrast, local and indigenous communities – and other ecosystem-based initiatives active on a local scale – are demonstrating success at the poverty-environment nexus. Local and indigenous communities rely on their natural capital for food security, medicine, shelter, nutrition and livelihoods and are advancing innovative solutions in biodiversity conservation, poverty alleviation and adaptation to climate change

This report seeks to explore the state of knowledge on the linkages between biodiversity conservation, climate change adaptation, food security, and sustainable livelihoods and aims to address a longstanding knowledge gap on how local action could contribute to policy making. The report documents best practices and lessons learned from community-based projects that synergistically address biodiversity conservation, poverty reduction (sustainable livelihoods), and adaptation to climate change. The report aims to demonstrate the co-benefits resulting from local biodiversity conservation projects – e.g. for sustainable livelihoods, food security, climate change adaptation etc – to “make the case” for investing in local and community-based initiatives, and to communicate lessons learned to policy makers that might facilitate better informed decisions and interventions in environment and development policy formation.

Introduction

Biodiversity, the variety of life on Earth, provides millions of people with livelihoods besides helping to ensure food security and is a rich source of both traditional medicines and modern pharmaceuticals. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment clearly and unequivocally identifies the immense importance of biodiversity, ecosystems and ecosystem services to human well being and sustainable human development (MA, 2005). The biodiversity crisis and the associated challenges biodiversity loss poses to deepening poverty and climate change, is now well understood as a human development crisis as much as an environmental one.

The global community has signalled its commitment to achieving a significant reduction in environmental degradation, and notably to meeting the challenge of biodiversity loss. The 2010 Biodiversity Target (also known as the “Biodiversity Challenge”) has been hailed as “one of the most important declarations ever to be made in support of environmental protection for sustainable development” (UNEP-WCMC 2003). However, the third edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook (SCBD, 2010) indicates that countries have failed to meet this challenge.

Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) such as the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) constitute important guiding global frameworks, under which national governments have developed strategies and implementation plans to deal with environment. Similar multilateral agreements and national implementation plans exist for global and national poverty reduction and development objectives. Review of these frameworks and implementation plans reveal, however, administrative structures and reporting mechanisms do not overlap in relevant and meaningful ways, resulting in limited communication among them. There seems limited coherence at the national level, making duplication of efforts and inefficiencies very real and pressing concern. Given wide recognition that development and environmental management are mutually reinforcing, it is important to ensure that development and environmental strategies work hand-in-hand to address poverty-environment linkages on the ground level.

There is overwhelming consensus among policymakers that biodiversity conservation, poverty reduction and development should be mainstreamed. At the country level, however, governments and development agencies are still slow to accept biodiversity and environment conservation as integral elements of development strategies. Similarly, some conservationists and academics are

hesitant to accept poverty reduction, small enterprise development, health and social development as a part of the conservation mandate.

This study is intended to provide local examples of successful initiatives and to make the case for investing in the scaling up of local good practice in biodiversity conservation, which has co-benefits for poverty alleviation, climate change adaptation, food security, health and others.

At the local level, relatively little has been done to systematically document how communities are involved in activities to accrue benefits and co-benefits from conservation and development action. Despite growing recognition that access to biodiversity and the sharing of its benefits are fundamental to poverty reduction efforts among many of the world's poorest communities, documentation from the local level has been largely anecdotal, which in turn limits the reach and efficacy of policy recommendations to scale-up local good practice at the poverty-environment nexus.

Learning from local ecosystem-based initiatives

Biodiversity loss is recognized as an important global challenge, as now reflected in global frameworks and national action plans. Such a loss of ecosystem goods and services and biodiversity contribute to climate change, loss of livelihoods and food security beside destabilizing communities.

Given this there is consensus that biodiversity is not just an environmental issue, but a serious development issue with vast implications for poverty reduction, food security, population health, sustainable livelihoods, particularly among the world's poorest and most vulnerable populations. Despite acknowledgment of the linkages between biodiversity conservation and human development co-benefits, there remain significant obstacles to mainstream biodiversity into effective policy development. Central among these are:

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