



**HIGHLIGHTS FROM FORUM '97
20 NOVEMBER 1997**

On Thursday, 20 November, Forum '97 participants attended a Plenary session on Culturally Conflicting Views of Nature, several simultaneous conference sessions and a closing Plenary.

CULTURALLY CONFLICTING VIEWS OF NATURE

Anna Tsing, University of California - Santa Cruz (US), discussed divergent concepts of conservation between North and South, social justice goals and bio-centric science objectives, and urban activists and village or tribal leaders. She underlined the importance of partnerships and stated that cultural differences provide diversity, dynamism and creative energy.

Terry Fringe, Inuit Public Conference (Canada), explained the struggle of Inuit populations to maintain traditional culture in the face of changing Arctic policy and their success in adapting to change by maintaining autonomy and retaining rights for oil and mineral extraction, harvesting and land management in their territories. He said the largest environmental threats to Inuit populations are climate change, the loss of animal product markets due to the animal rights movement and bio-accumulation from food source contamination. He stressed that Inuit culture provides protection to the Arctic and should be preserved.

Uallas Karanth, Wildlife Conservation Society (India), discussed the competing needs for large wildlife conservation and human agricultural, hunting and commercial activities in India. He stressed the importance of understanding the ecological needs and long-term population dynamics of large mammal communities in order to develop appropriate conservation programs.

Warrika Rose Turner, University of Adelaide (Australia), discussed the cultural heritage of indigenous Australians and contrasted indigenous views of caring for the land with non-indigenous views. She suggested that the conflict portrayed as one between the state and aboriginal peoples over land and resources is actually a conflict of world views, cultures and core values. She highlighted the success of cross-cultural awareness programs and stressed the need to identify the causes of conflict rather than simply continuing to treat the symptoms.

Amita Baviskar, University of Delhi (India), used eco-development in the Great Himalayan National Park in India as an example of cultural conflict over conservation. She described how the park's establishment created a conflict between wildlife conservation and the customary rights of local communities. She stressed the need for openness and dialogue to bridge the divides between the state and indigenous communities to change the politics of conservation.

In the ensuing discussion, participants emphasized that relationships between indigenous peoples, environmental organizations and the state vary significantly in different national political contexts. The importance of building alliances to bridge culturally conflicting views of conservation was stressed. One panelist pointed out that in some cases the campaigns conducted by environmental NGOs have engendered suspicion by indigenous groups.

CONFERENCE SESSIONS

Community-based Wildlife Management: Experiences from Africa and Latin America: Panelists discussed: the vast variation in wildlife use regimes, from commercial purposes to hunting for local demand; the variation of institutional capacity between countries; the differing organization and objectives of community-based management systems that originate spontaneously from the community or are fostered by the government; and the variability of pressure on biological resources depending upon, inter alia, human population density, extent of wildlife exploitation, the basis of local economies, wildlife use regimes and hunting techniques.

War, Peace and Conservation: Part II: A presentation on conflict in Chiapas, Mexico covered: the history of colonization, land tenure, conflict, resource extraction and conservation; the impact of war, including land invasions, deforestation to obtain land tenure, infrastructure building to accommodate armies and a decline in enforcement of environmental laws; the religious, ethnic and ideological characteristics of actors in the conflict; and resource value, cattle ranching, colonization and environmental degradation. Other presentations examined experiences and challenges to conservation in other war-devastated regions, documenting obstacles to natural resource reconstruction programs in Mozambique following sixteen years of war, such as refugee migration and resettlement, loss of social structure, landmines and weak government institutions, and the impact of conflict on wildlife populations in the Congo. Participants discussed: the potential environmental impacts of military efforts to control drug trafficking; the Mexican government's efforts to solve the land tenure problem; and the balance of responsibility between national governments and institutions.

Communication and Information Dissemination in Conservation and Development: Part II: Panelists gave presentations on: resistance to the shrimp farming industry through the use of information technology networks; the Journalists Environmental Association of Tanzania's efforts to raise public awareness of conservation and development issues; community media and forestry in Central Appalachia (US); and a case study of wildlife conservation education in India. Participants discussed problems with consumer boycotts, underscoring the need to recognize negative economic impacts on developing country producers and the danger of oversimplifying such complex issues in communicating environmental messages to the public. One panelist stressed that communicators must reflect the complexity of environmental and development issues when advocating for change. Participants highlighted the tension between objectivity and advocacy that communicators of environmental information often face. It was noted that the communication of global environmental issues has been deficient and ineffective to date, particularly on global problems stemming from destructive activities of the North.

State, Private Sector and Community Partnerships for Conservation and Development: The moderator noted that in the past, alliances between the state, private sector and community had been unproductive, however, recent evidence supports that these stakeholders can interact positively. Participants presented cases

studies on successful partnerships for conservation and development in: forest management in Mozambique; urban watershed management in the Philippines; the role of universities; and interactions between NGOs and public institutions in Brazil. Key factors for the establishment of successful and sustainable partnerships identified included: identification of mutual benefits and short-term and long-term objectives; ability to conduct continual assessment; and institutionalization of partnerships when warranted. Points were raised on the comparative advantages of universities in the establishment of partnerships due to their neutrality and long-term approach to education, research and capacity-building.

Engaging Communities in Conservation and Development of Coastal Resources: The panelists presented papers on: an overview of community-based conservation: establishing North-South and South-South linkages; monk seal conservation on the Turkish coast; community-based coastal conservation and management in Sri Lanka; and NGO experiences in coastal conservation projects in Turkey. A panelist listed the conditions that are necessary to ensure success: appropriate institutions; trust among the parties; protection of local rights; and economic benefits for the community. In Sri Lanka, local fishermen have set up a system where access to the best fishing grounds is rotated among three communities and allocated among the individual fishermen. In Turkey, success has been achieved by protecting a critical habitat of the endangered Loggerhead sea turtle, but institutional obstacles to integrated management of the coastline remain. The conservation of monk seals in Turkey has been a success in one area but a failure in another. The ensuing discussion reflected the difficulty of engaging the local fishermen in conservation without compensating them.

Community Water Management: Participants discussed the findings of the International Secretariat for Water from research and workshops conducted on water management in different regions of the world. Participants agreed that lessons learned on successful water management entailed: the involvement of all stakeholders in decision-making processes; the integration of economic, social and environmental concerns; the consideration of indigenous water systems and knowledge; and the establishment of adequate institutional and regulatory frameworks. Water as a political, ethical and gender issue was discussed. Points were raised on the need to involve women in decision-making given their traditional role as water gatherers and users.

Community Participation in Protected Areas Management in Post-Apartheid South Africa: Presentations were made on: a new policy for the management of national parks in South Africa based on a community-based approach to conservation and problems posed by land restitution policies and laws with respect to protected areas. A case study was presented on community involvement in the definition of policies for the control and protection of elephant population in the Kruger National Park. Participants discussed the opportunities and challenges to protected area management posed by the shift to a democratic system in South Africa. It was noted that key aspects of the new political system, such as broad community participation and equitable distribution of power and economic wealth, had influenced the approach to protected area management. A panelist mentioned recent laws for the restitution of land tenure to communities and indigenous populations that had been deprived of their rights during the apartheid system. He said that land that had been appropriated by the state in this way had often been converted into national parks or protected areas. He pointed to the conflict that now arises between the conservation of protected areas and land restitution laws that are implemented.

Engaging Communities in Conservation and Development: Case Studies III: Participants presented case studies covering: the design of sustainable resource management models at the community level in Costa Rica; the reintroduction of nutritionally valuable indigenous wild food plants, indigenous agriculture knowledge systems, cash crops, food from woodlands and medicinal plants in Kenya; civil action for environmental preservation, combat of erosion and forest fires and restoration of environmentally degraded areas in Turkey; and conservation and development of island mangrove ecosystems in India.

Landed Property Rights in Mountain Regions: A panelist highlighted the important role of the market and the difficulty in counteracting it to ensure that property rights are assigned to support sustainable use of natural resources. It was noted that recreation and tourism are not always appropriate and in some cases should be prohibited. One panelist stated that conflicts over rights are often related to agriculture and that in the past, wars were waged to protect agricultural investments. Participants wondered how to adopt a more consensual approach and noted that the opportunity costs of not cooperating should be examined.

State Policy and Community Participation in Forest Management and Conservation in Mainland Southeast Asia: Panelists presented case studies on: the role of Dai traditional beliefs in biodiversity management in southwest China; conflict management in the Nangunhe nature reserve in Yunnan Province, China; and forestry policies and local communities in Vietnam. Participants discussed problems ensuing from privatization and decentralization, such as the destruction of common property regimes caused by privatization of forest land. The differing enforcement mechanisms of the state and communities and the unpredictability of tenure were highlighted as forces hindering sustainable management of forested land. It was noted that while the recent creation of several nature reserves in the region reflects an increasing concern for conservation, local people are being deprived of their rights to resources.

Creating Community-based Coastal and Marine Conservation in Northwest Mexico: Panelists gave presentations on: indigenous community-based marine conservation; communities and conservation in coastal marine areas of northwestern Mexico; and the Upper Gulf of California biosphere reserve. Participants discussed aquaculture projects, programs to assign marine tenure rights to indigenous communities, issues involving women in eco-tourism and building local capacity. Participants agreed that four issues need to be addressed: selecting a diversity of project sites; building capacity of local NGOs and communities; creating a coalition of NGOs, local stakeholders and government to formulate an agenda for action; and determining the funding requirements of these actions.

CLOSING PLENARY

Steven Sanderson, Conservation and Development Forum (US), thanked the organizers and supporters of the conference, the CDF Board, Forum participants and the people of Turkey. He stated that the social question has become global and the ecological component has been added, and both have situated themselves in societies in flux. He highlighted some of the key themes of the Forum -- knowledge, power, stories and discovery; the incommensurable contexts of truth; the professionalization of conservation and development; the contradictions of success; "siren songs" of development; the remapping of the world; and the missing link of economics in conservation and development -- and how they surfaced through conversations undertaken at the conference. He asked participants to consider how the Forum might progress as an organization after the conference. He appealed to participants to be self-aware and self-critical and to invest in new linkages in conservation and development both by recommending courses of action and by claiming a role in the Forum's future.

The Plenary was then opened for comments. Several participants remarked on the success of the conference and the value of international cross-pollination. Some noted that developing countries and civil society were underrepresented, and some expressed hope that future conferences would be more participatory and open to the public. Participants called for conferences to be held at the grassroots and regional levels. Others highlighted the need to promote sustainable consumerism as an element of conservation; stressed the importance of incorporating population concerns in discussions on conservation; suggested holding conferences to inform people about how to access funding; and underlined the need to relate international conventions, meetings and negotiations to the local level. Participants agreed that the powerful partnerships forged at the Forum must be maintained and cultivated, and stressed the importance of furthering the experience by taking the spirit of the Forum home and sharing it with colleagues, friends and family.