

THE 3C'S WORKSHOP
Constituents, Conflicts and Corruption:
Adapting Democratic Governance Tools to Conservation Situations
May 15, 2001,
Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
Washington, D.C.

WORKSHOP BACKGROUND

The May 15 3C's workshop was envisioned as the capstone event for BSP's Environment-Democracy/Governance Linkages Initiative. Its primary target was an audience of conservation NGOs. It was intended to build upon the relationships and lessons learned during the two-year initiative and broach discussion on topics of critical importance to conservation.

WORKSHOP HIGHLIGHTS

The 3C's workshop had three objectives:

- To explore connections between democratic governance and conservation results.
- To learn about useful tools for analyzing and addressing governance issues, and meet colleagues who can provide guidance on the use of democratic governance approaches to reach conservation objectives.
- To benefit from group and expert feedback on specific constituency building, conflict resolution and corruption issues that affect conservation.

PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

1. Framing the Issues

Avoiding politics at your peril. Thinking politically is not the same as partisan politics. Rather, it means thinking about different scales and about who has the power to consolidate or derail conservation. What strategies are needed to engage these people? Because community members are more than conservation stakeholders, conservationists need to better understand people's ties to a broader social and political landscape of affiliations, interests, networks and alliances. Faced with the implications of decentralization and democratization, many conservationists will need to embrace the political dimensions of conservation.

Politics, Democracy and Conservation. These relationships are not simple. However, environmental degradation tends to be higher when there is a low level of democracy. Therefore, good environmental governance should be viewed as an essential part of sustainable conservation.

Conservationist need to work with the world as they find it. Conflicts and corruption are commonplace in many biodiversity-rich areas of the world. Conservation is a social and political process and cannot be accomplished in a vacuum. While every biodiversity vision is based on biological underpinnings, conservation success is achieved through political action. Rather than just applying "Band-Aids," conservation organizations need to devote more resources to systemic DG issues (e.g., NGO registration acts, freedom of information acts).

Think strategically, think ahead. For DG issues relevant to conservation, we need to think in 10-15 year time frames and think across scales. What happens if our eco-enterprises are successful? Who will try to capture the benefits and what political changes will take place at the local level? What are short-term, intermediate and long-term steps to take to build conservation constituents, manage conflict and fight corruption? When do we allocate conservation funds to systemic DG reforms such as access to information, rights to participate, NGO rights and rule of law reforms?

2. Civil Society Strategies For Constituency Building

Re-thinking common conservation misconceptions. Conservationists sometimes undermine their own successes by mistakenly viewing politicians - particularly local government officials - as obstacles and yet seeing technocrats as free agents rather than as beholden political appointees. Many policy and contextual factors influence conservation successes and failures, beyond direct conservation policies.

“If you have two ENV dollars, spend one on ENV and one on democracy; if you have two democracy dollars, spend one on ENV and one on DG...if the governance work includes NGO capacity building, then consider spending even more ENV funds on governance.” A reallocation of funds within ENV and DG programs for shared issues and partners may be the best way to achieve ENV and DG objectives.

Long-term systemic issues versus short-term projects. Constituency-building, conflict resolution and anti-corruption are three high-profile areas that require long-term processes of systemic change. These time frames need to be reconciled with the normal three-to-five year life span of conservation project funding. Conservation projects could benefit from the application of short-term analytical tools and capacity building approaches from DG, including country assessments and country corruption profiles, political/institutional mapping, advocacy training, policy communication and arbitration/mediation.

Conservation and advocacy. While many international conservation organizations identify themselves as non-advocacy organizations, they often work with NGO partners who are advocacy organizations. To improve the effectiveness of advocacy, international conservation organizations can help local partners in several ways. They can help them to improve their skills in fact-based advocacy and data analysis. They can support their struggles for basic procedural rights (e.g., rights to information, rights to participate, rights to sue) and systemic DG changes. They can raise awareness about basic human rights and identify tactics to avoid the dangers associated with advocacy (e.g., negative government attention, struggles with corporate security forces and local elites). When supporting advocacy networks, international conservation organizations should look for member diversity, credibility, effectiveness and breadth of perspectives.

Avoiding assumptions about shared interests when building constituencies. Sustainable conservation requires local constituencies. However, the interests of communities and international and national conservation groups do not always coincide. Indigenous peoples will support conservation when it is clear that protection of cultural diversity is linked to protection of biodiversity.

3. Conflict Resolution – Issues and Tools

Conflict resolution/management and third parties. What is the appropriate role for a third party? Because we are trying to balance conflicting needs and interests for valuable resources, conservation-related conflict is inevitable. While resolution may not be possible, we can anticipate and respond strategically by managing conflict. While viewed by some as a crisis, conflict can also be an opportunity to resolve issues and threats and improve working relationships with government, NGOs and other communities. Conflict management is typically a

very long-term process involving a change in attitudes. Less powerful stakeholders need more capacity and power to participate effectively in conflict management.

Tools for conflict analysis. The causes of any conflict can be represented as data, interests, structures, values or relationship issues. The influences on conflict include the natural environment, institutions, world views, history, politics and culture. Relationship, procedural and substantial issues determine stakeholder satisfaction with conflict management processes.

Natural resources – cause and solution for conflicts. Many conflicts involve natural resource disputes between local communities and political and business elites. However, natural resources are often a good focus for opening up dialogue and are sometimes a bridging issue to help resolve other types of conflicts. Rights-based approaches can resolve some conflicts. Conflicts can be exacerbated by decentralization and when there are not legitimate venues for resolving conflict (weak rule of law), then people are more likely to make a grab for power and resources.

Conflict management training. Trained NGO facilitators can train regional and local conflict facilitators. Abstract ideas about conflict and human rights need to be combined with community-level observation and practice. Community training is tailored to the balance of power and awareness level about conflict. Education about conflict, and conflict analyses are the appropriate first steps when there is unbalanced power and little awareness of the causes of a conflict.

4. Anti-Corruption – Issues and Tools

Who's who in international anti-corruption work from the ENV side? On the ENV side, there are already a few groups such as Global Witness and Global Forest Watch (WRI and local partners) who are working on natural resources corruption. Global Witness is working with oil companies to encourage public disclosure about the company royalties paid to host country governments, etc. Other groups such as Earth Rights International (ERI) are pursuing law suits against US-based corporations in US courts, helping expatriate Burmese advocate for change and organizing a coalition of 200-plus organizations for an International Right-to-Know Law for international corporations with US activities (www.irtk.org). Other environmental organizations are discussing how to abolish all corporate secrecy laws related to natural resources enterprise so that the extent of bribery and corruption can be revealed.

Who's who in international anti-corruption work from the DG side? Transparency International (TI) and its network of independent, national chapters are at the forefront of systemic anti-corruption efforts. TI is trying to create "islands of integrity." TI requires its chapters to focus on systemic change (e.g., judicial integrity, free media, information access) rather than on particular acts of corruption. The chapters cannot become involved in partisan politics to avoid being misrepresented. Since TI's establishment in 1993, it has succeeded in legitimizing the discussion of corruption issues on the international agenda. Besides chapter work, their education programs include a new forestry project, a Financial Action Task Force working with corporations and banks on "dirty money" and bank secrecy and human rights and social justice work with multilateral bodies. TI's funding comes from multilateral and bilateral aid organizations, private foundations and U.S. and European corporations. Also, the World Bank has a project on best practices of corporate responsibility by oil companies. OECD is working on corruption regulations for its member-states.

Corruption and conservation choices. Conservation International (CI) has chosen not to work inside Burma but does work on Burmese issues with Burmese citizens living outside of Burma. World Conservation Society (WCS) has decided to remain in Burma to work on tiger conservation. However, some people believe it is impossible to work in Burma without endorsing the military dictatorship, contributing to corruption and legitimising the on-going repression of Burmese citizens.

Corruption and decentralization. Decentralization can lead to closer contacts between local government and citizens about issues and budgets. However, decentralization is also in the interest of local elites (mini-Suhartos) who view it as an opportunity for personal gain.

Anti-corruption strategies – corporate shareholding. For corporations based in North America, individuals can become company shareholders to find out more about the practices and deals of the corporation. They can obtain ballots and vote on shareholder decisions. Shareholders can be influenced by negative publicity campaigns.

Anti-corruption strategies – World Bank Group. For corporations receiving money from the Bretton Woods institutions (e.g., World Bank, IMF, IFC), projects can be stopped using audit protocols for environment, human rights and labor issues.

Anti-corruption strategies – media and advocacy. Issues like corrupt gold mining in Tanzania are opportunities to bring attention to the fundamental problems of the systemic political systems and the limited roles of citizens. To gain support from constituents for reform, mining and other issues need to be deconstructed and re-packaged as ENV, human rights, and local government revenue issues. It is also important to raise awareness about the negative costs of corruption. A genuinely stronger civil society and NGO sector can help secure more favorable royalty arrangements for local government and communities.

Anti-corruption strategies – look for champions, allies and enemies. To tackle corruption, you need to work at both the local and national level at the same time. Stakeholder assessments help to identify friends and foes for reform, within the public and NGO/grassroots sector. Often, these champions will need capacity building related to monitoring data collection and advocacy tactics. New federations of local groups, as with the community forest user groups (CFUGs) in Nepal, often need help with effective advocacy strategies.

Anti-corruption strategies - third party monitoring/auditing and risk. Increasing transparency and accountability tend to decrease corruption. There is now certification for forest products, marine products and for social accountability. However, third party monitors must have both capacity and political credibility.

NEXT STEPS

BSP will end in December 2001. It is hoped that other organizations come forward to continue facilitating DG/ENV dialogue and relationships and follow up on these next steps:

1. Conservation organizations should meet as a group to discuss how to:

- ◆ share agreed-upon standards for working with, and influencing the private sector, including the mining industry (e.g, certification, principles of sustainability, monitoring/auditing standards to benchmark performance of corporate partners in areas such as social accountability auditing),
- ◆ influence multilateral and bilateral donors in the areas of transparency and accountability (e.g., improve information flow and access, promote consultative processes, hire consultants to synthesize information/input from NGO and other stakeholders and facilitate access of NGO/stakeholders to the bilateral and multilateral institutions),

- ◆ develop partnerships and initiatives related to natural resources corruption with the international and national chapters of Transparency International and other anti-corruption groups working on systemic DG reforms,
- ◆ integrate conflict analysis into conservation strategy planning,
- ◆ encourage the United Nations and member countries to monitor the environmental impacts of international armed conflict,
- ◆ become involved in USAID and U.S. Government contingency planning exercises overseas,
- ◆ share ENV sector lessons with conflict (identifying, preventing and ameliorating the environmental impacts of geopolitical armed conflicts; contingency programming/maintaining protected areas during armed conflict; conservation priority setting after conflict; reducing conflict through environmental governance and environmental diplomacy; conflict management and dispute resolution techniques, DG tools for conservation in conflict settings).
- ◆ Follow up on the 3C's topics with smaller working group meetings to address thematic issues specific to each region and focus on proactive strategies.

2. Conservation organizations and DG experts/organizations should collaborate on:

- ◆ Applying DG rapid assessment methodologies to assess the political framework and political power distribution at the corridor and landscape scales and incorporating conservation/ENV considerations into DG rapid assessment methodologies.
- ◆ Building the capacity of field-level conservation staff to understand democracy-governance contexts and tactics for analysis, priority setting and action.
- ◆ Identifying credible, capable and accountable field partners, including indigenous peoples organizations, that can help conservation organizations be more effective at building constituency, negotiating conflict and reducing corruption,
- ◆ Understanding the connections between foreign investment in the mining sector with corruption, human rights and environmental impacts.

3. Conservation organizations and development organizations from other sectors should explore partnerships to:

- ◆ More fully integrate cross-sectoral developmental and social objectives into biodiversity conservation work and develop a more coherent, realistic and appealing vision of conservation (and development) outcomes,
- ◆ Address how the development concerns and rights of indigenous and other local people can be addressed through cross-project collaboration,
- ◆ Learn about conflict management in other sectors (e.g., education, health) and how constituencies are formed to resolve/manage them,
- ◆ Define standard criteria and conditionalities for support to government agencies, including 'metrics' that benchmark actual environmental, social & economic conditions through independent/3rd party methods (e.g., certification).