

# Précis



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## Building Biodiversity Governance Through Stakeholder Participation

According to the World Resources Institute, at current rates of deforestation and land clearance, 5 to 10 percent of tropical forest biodiversity will vanish over the next three decades. There are many pressures on biodiversity in developing countries, but the core of the problem is competition between resource uses. Protected areas often are endowed with natural resources as varied as timber, oil, and minerals. The land itself is coveted by farmers or herders crowded off existing cleared land or simply looking to expand. Protected areas are also often home to indigenous peoples and others who depend on forest resources for their livelihoods. The complexity of the governance issues involved in reconciling biodiversity conservation with competing interests makes it very difficult to manage protected areas and the resources they contain.

Growing international attention to biodiversity in the 1990s has brought governance issues associated with biodiversity conservation to the fore. At the same time, faith has diminished in the ability of the national conservation authorities—usually politically weak, understaffed, and underfunded—to take sole responsibility for the management of resources, and local communities, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and the private sector have been invited to share in the responsibility for biodiversity protection and management.

Since the early 1990s, projects funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and executed by the World Bank have used participatory planning, dispute resolution, and stakeholder joint implementa-

tion to strengthen national conservation authorities and enable them to meet the challenges associated with conservation. Two recent OED Project Performance Assessment Reports have examined the experience of two Bank-implemented/GEF-funded projects—the Bolivia Biodiversity Conservation Project (BCP) and the Ecuador Biodiversity Protection Project (BPP)—and their contribution to strengthening the National System of Protected Areas (SNAP).

Bolivia and Ecuador both have abundant biodiversity resources, and similar factors affect their conservation: petroleum exploration, lumber extraction, mining, and agricultural expansion, as well as reliance of the rural poor on those



resources. When the projects were being planned, the legal and regulatory frameworks of both countries were seen to be inadequate. Government institutions were weak, with little or no presence in protected areas. Both countries had recently formed their SNAPs, begun to build their biodiversity conservation authorities, and started to incorporate citizen participation in environmental and biodiversity policymaking.

The objectives of the two projects were essentially the same: to improve biodiversity conservation and to strengthen the institutional capacity and the overall policy and legal framework supporting adequate management of the SNAPs. Both projects included components and activities such as legal reform, staff training, public outreach and capacity building, improvement of park management, physical investments in parks, and information and monitoring systems. But project outcomes were very different. The Bolivia project helped strengthen the SNAP significantly, while the contributions of the Ecuador project were modest. The main difference in the projects resides in the ways and extent to which each project addressed governance and citizen participation. The issues can be divided into four main areas: building credible institutions, incorporating stakeholder needs and priorities, building alliances in support of conservation, and strengthening capacities to access and manage information.

### Building Credible Institutions

The credibility and institutional capacity of a national park authority are essential in attracting partners and allies. In both projects, commitment, vision, effective and transparent administration, and staff training and continuity directly affected outcomes. The National Division for Conservation of Biodiversity (DNCB) in Bolivia was strongly committed to biodiversity protection from the start. DNCB management rejected the intermediation of the central project unit (CPU) and made all project decisions, taking ownership for both project accomplishments and difficulties. The DNCB director had a clear vision of the SNAP as an integrated national system that was representative of the nation's biodiversity resources—and the vision remained constant for the duration of the project, despite a change in DNCB management in 1998. The director was well connected with the administration and was very effective at getting government, NGO, and donor support for DNCB initiatives. The DNCB also decentralized to allow park directors more flexibility in responding to local conditions, put in place staff training programs, and paid competitive salaries.

The Ecuador project was a sharp contrast. It lacked ownership, vision, and leadership. Divergent approaches to forest resource management divided the Ecuadorian Institute of Forestry, Natural Areas, and Wildlife (INEFAN). One approach, supported largely within the National Directorate of Protected Areas and Wildlife (DNAPVS), favored restricting the use of forest resources. In contrast, the rest of

INEFAN generally favored promoting their development. The incompatibility of these approaches created tension within INEFAN and undermined internal support for the project. Project decisionmaking was concentrated in the CPU, which came to be seen as an enclave within INEFAN. Lack of project ownership within the DNAPVS, the most likely institutional ally of the project, led to lack of support for—or even rejection—of the project's studies and recommendations. Centralized decisionmaking, low salaries, and delays in payments to field staff undermined morale and resulted in frequent staff turnover in the field.

### Incorporating Stakeholder Needs and Priorities

Until the late 1980s the dominant view in Bolivia and Ecuador was that people and natural parks could not coexist—national policies were outright adversarial toward people living in and around parks. By the early 1990s this view was changing. The appraisal process for both projects was highly participatory and helped to build support for the notion of “parks with people.” Nevertheless, during implementation the two projects took very different approaches to citizen participation.

*Investing in building capacities and mechanisms for citizen participation.* The policy context in Bolivia was particularly supportive of citizen participation—in 1994 the country became the first in Latin America to adopt a far-reaching law of popular participation. Not surprisingly, citizen participation cut across most project activities. At the national level, the project supported consultations and seminars with civil society in the formulation of the proposal for the Biodiversity Law, as well as for various Presidential Decrees and Ministerial Resolutions. At the local level, the project adopted park management committees as the main instrument for incorporating the priorities of local peoples into park management and in obtaining local support for park protection. The management committees meet regularly to review the implementation of operational plans and to monitor park management. They also participate in the selection of park guards, who are generally from the local area, and help ensure transparency of administration and decisionmaking.

*Addressing the development needs of local populations.* In remote areas of Bolivia the park administration is the only permanent presence of the national government. The local management committee and park authorities thus become an important point of contact with other development agencies and for public services such as schools, health centers, roads, and water. The committees also function as forums for community negotiation of disputes over access to and use of resources in or around the park. In some areas the committees have brought together communities, local organizations, and municipalities to pool resources and undertake development activities that would not have been possible otherwise. Stakeholder involvement in project implementation was also an important project tool in gaining local support for conservation.

### *Homegrown rules and community enforcement.*

Through the management committees, some park administrators in Bolivia have developed local agreements and support for a set of rules for resource use and park protection. Around parks such as Ulla Ulla and Sajama, where local people have come to value the economic potential of wildlife and ecotourism, communities themselves identify and sanction local violators. Park wardens rarely prosecute local violators of park laws. Instead, they give poachers warnings and confiscate their weapons. This allows wardens to dissuade poachers, while keeping good relations with local people. Parks with strong management committees, such as Sajama, Ulla Ulla, and Kai Yaa, saw the largest reductions in poaching, illegal wood extraction, and agricultural burning.

*The costs of not investing in participation.* In Ecuador, neither the national policy context, nor INEFAN's management, nor the CPU was supportive of participation. INEFAN's management resisted giving NGOs a role in policymaking. When participation did take place, it was generally limited to selected parks or protected areas. Most of the legal and policy proposals produced did not benefit from the inputs and discussions of other stakeholders and did little to build vision and consensus on biodiversity issues. The project did incorporate citizen participation in Machalilla, Sangay, Yasuni, and Cayapas-Mataje by forming support groups to assist in the formulation of management plans, but only in Machalilla did the support group become a permanent consultative body.

### **Building Alliances for Conservation**

Most of the lasting impacts or major failures of these two projects relate directly to the degree of shareholder support for project outputs and processes, and the extent of their agreement to follow a set of rules for the management of the natural resources in protected areas.

*Incorporating stakeholders in policymaking and park management.* Over the life of the project and beyond, Bolivia's DNCB, and subsequently the Servicio Nacional de Areas Protegidas (SERNAP), its institutional successor, demonstrated significant resilience under political, social, and financial pressures. One source of DNCB's resilience is its reputation as a capable, well-managed, and transparent institution. Also, by including NGOs, local communities, and donors in policymaking and project implementation, DNCB has been able to meet some of the needs and priorities of these stakeholders, to develop allies, and to begin developing a shared vision of the SNAP with NGOs and local communities. The foundation the project helped build has supported SERNAP when it has faced powerful outside interests that threaten the integrity of a park. Local communities also have been important allies in confrontations between SERNAP and powerful encroaching interests.

*Cashing-in on legitimacy and stakeholder support.* An objective not achieved by the Bolivia project was long-term financial sustainability. While the project did not mobilize

donor support through FONAMA, as anticipated during appraisal, the DNCB's good reputation and donor support allowed it to attract enough funds to continue essential operations for three years after the first GEF grant ran out, and before the second GEF grant began in 2001. Confident of SERNAP's strengths and achievements, donors have been willing to support the Foundation for the Development of the National System of Protected Areas. (FUN-DESNAP, a non-profit, private foundation, is expected to raise \$30 million during the five years of the follow-on project.) Only in the development of an information and monitoring system did the project fail to consult and cooperate with the appropriate stakeholders, and this was the least successful of the project's activities.

*Low stakeholder participation leads to low stakeholder ownership and lack of support to project outputs.* The low participation of Ecuadorian civil society in policymaking and project implementation, and excessive centralization of decisionmaking in the CPU, resulted in lack of project ownership and dissatisfaction among stakeholders. Thus, not only did the Ecuador project fail to build alliances among local communities, NGOs, and other key stakeholders, it also generated opposition to many of its initiatives. While some project activities involved the participation of local people (mainly the formulation of protected area management plans), most elements identified during appraisal as addressing development pressures in protected areas were either not carried out or were only partially carried out, in the form of studies. But those too were done with little or no systematic consultation with other ministries or stakeholders. The lack of attention to process, capacity building, and stakeholder participation undermined the potential to develop a shared vision of the SNAP among stakeholders, and instead turned potential allies into the opposition.

*Exclusion of the private sector.* Neither project had much private sector participation in project planning and implementation. Moreover, most of the relationships with the private sector were adversarial, as was quite common in Bank/GEF-supported biodiversity conservation projects during the 1990s. Nonetheless, the exclusion of these powerful actors resulted in missed opportunities to enhance project sustainability, and sometimes delayed project activities and undermined the achievement of project goals.

### **Strengthening Capacity to Access and Manage Information**

Information monitoring is critical to biodiversity conservation because it helps identify threats and their impacts, helps assess the effects of conservation work, and allows better targeting of activities. Nevertheless, most Bank/GEF projects have lacked the clearly defined and pragmatic indicators needed to prompt systematic data collection, either on the country's biodiversity or on the project. The Bolivia and Ecuador projects are no exception. While both included information-monitoring activities, neither had clearly defined, practical indicators that produced useful information.

Better monitoring and information systems would have improved project outcomes in several ways:

- Timely information would have indicated which conservation efforts were yielding results and enabled project management to make corrections as necessary. In Ecuador, a good monitoring and information system would have revealed the inefficacy of project activities, prompting modifications to ensure that outputs contributed to the project objectives.
- Good monitoring would also allow a better management of tradeoffs between the protection of nature and meeting people's needs. This would help restrict resource use in the most sensitive areas, while allowing freer resource use elsewhere. In Bolivia, timely monitoring of new mining and oil prospecting technologies would also help reduce risks of environmental destruction while responding to the pressures for development in parks and reserves.
- Good information on species recovery would have helped document achievements of the national park authority, bolstering its image and credibility as a capable and effective institution. This information would have been particularly useful to park authorities when they confronted powerful interests threatening biodiversity. In Bolivia, precise and timely information on the impacts of oil prospecting, wood extraction, or

illegal mining operations would have allowed SERNAP to quickly influence public opinion. Better use of information might also have led to the adoption a biodiversity law by the Bolivian Congress, one project promise that was not kept.

### Lessons

- A Bank-supported conservation operation is more likely to have a successful outcome when it builds alliances with stakeholders.
- Having national conservation authorities assist local populations meet their development needs helps build an effective collaboration between the government agency and local people.
- Building the capacity of national conservation authorities to help communities develop their own rules for access to and management of resources can ensure effective enforcement of biodiversity conservation.
- Implementing agencies can help ensure efficient management across vastly diverse conditions through the use of decentralized administrative systems.
- A more proactive approach to building partnerships and alliances with the private sector is needed.
- More attention is needed to the development of useful biodiversity monitoring and information systems.

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► This *Précis*, drafted by William Hurlbut, is based on “Project Performance Assessment Report, Ecuador,” “Biodiversity Protection Project” (Report Number 24605), and “Project Performance Assessment Report, Bolivia, Biodiversity Conservation Project” (Report Number 24604) by Andres Liebenthal, Lead Evaluation Officer, OEDST.

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