

Participants:

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Summary of main action points

- 1. Clarifying the overarching objectives of the Learning Group:** The strategic direction of the PCLG is not clear enough – which makes it difficult to judge the potential influence of different external forces such as climate change or international policy processes, and to decide on appropriate activities to pursue or support. Currently some of the activities are beyond the remit of a learning group and more in line with a programme, so we need to be clear about the limits of the Group. A table clarifying the overarching objectives, strategies and activities of the Group is included in page 10 of this report.
- 2. Establishing a small grants programme:** The Secretariat will revisit the current requests and evaluate future requests for support in light of criteria discussed during the meeting. The current flexible, responsive approach will be maintained – rather than a formal call for proposals, until full funding is secured. Part of the small grants budget for 2007 at least will be used to explore key issues at a regional level which may help scope a formal programme. The Secretariat will also continue to explore funding opportunities for securing £500,000 for a fully-fledged programme.
- 3. Regionalising the Learning Group:** There may be value in developing a more in-depth understanding of conservation-poverty issues at the regional level. The Secretariat will explore the interest in, and feasibility of a series of short regional overviews but maintaining the option that 1) not all may be feasible and 2) the regionalisation process may stop at this point if significant interest in the process is not generated. The Secretariat will also explore the scope for working with SASUSG as a pilot exercise for more in-depth regional work (on the assumption that SASUSG may make resources available for this).
- 4. Working as a Learning Group:** The Secretariat will encourage joint working as and when appropriate opportunities present themselves but will cease to be vexed by whether people are working together enough or learning enough!
- 5. Membership:** The Secretariat will undertake a more comprehensive mapping exercise to identify relevant organisations and promote the learning group. Regional analyses will be encouraged to include policy research institutes amongst their considerations of relevant players. The Secretariat will explore SASUSG interest in taking on an additional theme of poverty-conservation linkages as a pilot regional network.
- 6. Annual Meeting:** The Secretariat will circulate to the PCLG membership the suggested themes for the 2007 meeting and solicit feedback and then make a decision on which to pursue. The proposed date of 25-26th September will also be re-circulated and we will go with this unless there is significant disagreement. The Secretariat will also start to explore the options for a 2008 “end of phase 1” meeting(s).

1. Brief Overview of Terms of Reference and Activities to Date

The PCLG was conceived and developed over the period 2003-2005 – coinciding with increasing attention to social issues within conservation processes such as the World Parks Congress and CBD, an emerging debate in the literature on the status of biodiversity in development processes, and increasing public attention to the impact of conservation activities on local communities. The rationale for establishing the Learning Group was thus to address a number of issues:

- the continuing divide between conservation and development practitioners and policy makers on how - and whether - to link biodiversity conservation with poverty reduction;
- the potential duplication of effort by a number of different organisations grappling independently with the problem of linking conservation and poverty reduction;
- the lack of an established forum through which participants from a range of backgrounds can participate on an equal footing to share and analyse emerging experience in conservation-poverty linkages and identify knowledge gaps and research needs.

The overall vision of IIED in setting up this group was thus to create a multi-stakeholder forum that could promote organisational learning on the nature, extent and implications of the links between biodiversity conservation and poverty in order to:

- Strengthen organisations working on these issues
- Help build consensus on key issues
- Improve conservation and poverty policy and practice.

It's mechanisms for achieving this would be by:

- Maintaining an overview of ongoing initiatives – synthesising and interpreting findings of individual initiatives in a bigger context
- Making links and fostering learning between different communities of interest
- Collecting and disseminating information
- Facilitating thematic “learning activities”

The Learning Group was officially “launched” at a meeting in Cambridge in December 2005 but had only limited funding for the first 9 months. Activity during that period focussed on getting the website – povertyandconservation.info up and running (Irish Aid funded) and developing the monthly bulletin BioSoc (DGIS funded). More substantive funding was secured from the Ford Foundation in September 2006 (\$300,000 over two years) with an additional Euro 120,000 from Irish Aid over 2.5 years (ending April 09). Activities since September 06 have included the following:

A. Maintaining and overview of ongoing initiatives

- Establishment of a database of international poverty-conservation initiatives on the PCLG website
- Production of a newsletter – PCLG News – summarising latest developments in these initiatives
- Production of a monthly e-bulletin – BioSoc – highlighting new publications, research findings, conference proceedings etc.

B. Making links and fostering dialogue

- Establishment of web-based database of organisations working on conservation-poverty linkages including information on current projects, geographic and thematic priorities
- Organisation of, or support to, multi-stakeholder meetings on key issues

C. Collecting and disseminating information

- Ongoing development of the PCLG website: www.povertyandconservation.info
- Support to, and dissemination of, relevant publications
 - Parks Journal special edition on community conserved areas
 - Policy Matters issue on Poverty, Wealth and Conservation

D. Supporting thematic events and activities

- Support channelled via FFI to a workshop held in Cape Town in September 06, bringing together NGOs, civil society organisations and government officials to explore a recent CITES¹ Resolution that livelihood issues should be addressed in CITES decision-making processes. As a direct result of the workshop a Proposal is to be submitted to CITES CoP 14 in June 07.
- Support to the establishment of a new taskforce under the World Commission on Protected Areas on equity and livelihoods. The taskforce will feed into the next meeting of the CBD Working Group on the Programme of Work on Protected Areas in February 2008. taskforce on equity and livelihoods
- Collaboration with the UNEP-WCMC “Vision 2020” initiative to explore the potential for developing poverty indicators to be associated with the World Database on Protected Areas. An analysis of existing poverty indicators as well as tools and methodologies for assessing poverty impacts of protected areas has been completed and a workshop held involving a number of PCLG participants in February 07. Further work is ongoing by the PCLG secretariat to collate lessons learned on different impact assessment methodologies in different protected areas.

2. Key Discussion Points

i. Contribution of activities to objectives: Many of the activities and outputs to date have been useful and well-received. However, it is difficult to judge if what has been done to date adds up to furthering the overall objective of the PCLG. Greater clarity is needed on the overarching objectives of the PCLG and the strategies by which it seeks to achieve those objectives. This will then help guide both the development and evaluation of activities. A number of activities – particularly the externally funded events – result in multiple spin-off activities. There may be a greater impact than that which we are immediately able to monitor or evaluate.

ii. Level and breadth of engagement: There is some concern that those that engage most actively with the Secretariat and who benefit from support for workshops, publications and so on are the “usual suspects”. The Secretariat noted, for example, how difficult it was to collect information on the international initiatives described in the PCLG Newsletter. This may, however, be a symptom of the problems of reliance on electronic communication rather than an indication of lack of interest in the Group. We do however need a strategy for broader outreach and for bringing into the debate those that are currently not involved – either those not yet thinking about these linkages or those in geographic regions where the debate may not yet be being heard and the hot issues not well articulated. We should also have clear criteria for which types of external activities we are able to support and aim for a diversity of applicants and initiatives. The Secretariat is about to implement a mechanism for monitoring hits on the website and this should give some indication of the level of interest we are generating and the breadth of the audience.

iii. Strategic use of PCLG funds: To date the funding for external activities has been used to facilitate broader participation at key meetings, to allow for wider dissemination of relevant publications and to generate added value from ongoing processes. This should continue – funding should only be catalytic seed funding and should not subsidise the budgets of large organisations nor be used for ongoing or recurrent expenditure.

iv. Geographic focus: The current focus of the Learning Group is largely international. It would be interesting, to extend the focus to the regional level but it is probably beyond the scope of the Group to act at the national level. This is something that member organisations – especially those with regional and national networks and partners – could be encouraged to take on. It would, however, be interesting to share information on who is working where, because people might not know who else is working on similar issues in nearby areas.

¹ Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora

v. Value-added of PCLG: The first issue of PCLG News highlights a huge range of initiatives addressing poverty-conservation linkages. The PCLG needs to ensure that it is not simply another initiative to add to the long list, but rather that it adds value by keeping up to date with the other initiatives and keeping PCLG members informed; highlighting the potential for synergies between different organisations and initiatives; horizon-scanning for new policy developments or emerging issues; identifying blank spots that are currently under-researched – either thematically or geographically.

vi. Value/utility of specific activities and outputs:

- **BioSoc** is very useful, quick and easy to read. **PCLG News**, on the other hand, is too long and not really a newsletter. The kind of analytical material intended for PCLG News should be produced as briefing papers that are posted on the web with an email alert that takes readers to the relevant site. Civicus is a good example of a newsletter format we could follow.
- The **website** contains a huge amount of information and will need significant resources to keep it up to date. We may need to consider contracting parts of it out in the future (eg the bibliographic database to an academic institution) or generating additional resources by offering to update and expand parts of the website as a service to others – eg the Poverty Environment Partnership, the CBD Clearing House Mechanism.
- The **sponsored events and activities** have potential for impacts beyond the event itself. For example, as a result of the CITES and Livelihoods workshop, a formal proposal is due to be submitted to the next CITES CoP. There is great value in being able to be responsive and identify interesting opportunities as they arise which may further the overall mission of PCLG. We should, however, better articulate the criteria we use to choose what we support.

vii. The changing context for PCLG: When the PCLG was conceived and established (2003-2005) the background context was an increasingly vocal debate on the impacts of conservation practices – particularly protected areas – on local communities; the increasing financial influence of international conservation organisations, and the apparent demise of biodiversity on the development cooperation agenda. That context - or at least some aspects of it - has changed somewhat now. In particular biodiversity does seem to be enjoying some resurgence on the political agenda – particularly, but not exclusively, within Europe:

- The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment published in 2005 highlighted the role of biodiversity in underpinning the delivery of a range of ecosystem services upon which long-term human well-being depends.
- April 2006 saw the first meeting of OECD countries' environment and development ministers since 1991. The resultant *Framework for Common Action Around Shared Goals* emphasises the centrality of environment in meeting the MDGs. Biodiversity is specifically mentioned in the context of identifying and developing policies and instruments for better integration of global environmental objectives into national and local development plans and policies.
- In May 2006 the European Commission adopted a Communication on *Halting the Loss of Biodiversity by 2010 – and Beyond* with a Action Plan including detailed measures for mainstreaming biodiversity in EU and member states' development assistance programmes.
- In June 2006 the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs produced a new action plan for development cooperation emphasising the importance of making environmental concerns integral to all development cooperation and prioritising biodiversity as a major focus for Norwegian funding.
- The Organisation of African States science summit in February 2007 prioritised biodiversity in its 12 point agenda for future research activities.
- The German presidency of the G8 included, in March 2007, a call for a biodiversity review along the lines of the Stern review on the economics of climate change.

Other issues likely to affect discussion on the links between conservation and poverty include climate change, Chinese investment in Africa and the continuing scourge of HIV/AIDS. We thus

need to ensure the Learning Group is following these trends and addressing the right set of issues. To date we have focussed quite a lot of our resources on the protected areas debate and need to ensure that we are also looking forward and tracking emerging issues. At the same time, this is still a current debate – especially as it concerns impacts and indicators – so it will be important to maintain our engagement on this issue.

3. Reviewing the overarching objectives and strategies of PCLG

The strategic direction of the PCLG is not clear enough – which makes it difficult to judge the potential influence of different external forces such as climate change or international policy processes, and to decide on appropriate activities to pursue or support. Currently some of the activities are beyond the remit of a learning group and more in line with a programme, so we need to be clear about the limits of the Group.

Key issues:

- A learning group should be neutral and not pursuing a political advocacy agenda. It should provide a forum for documenting the state of knowledge of particular issues or on changing processes, exchanging information, and providing opportunities for *informing* rather than influencing policy. Importantly, it should seek inputs from a set of diverse perspectives rather than allowing the most opinionated to drive the agenda.
- There is a difference between pointing out contentious issues or blank spots and adopting a position about them. *Mapping* issues or different perspectives, documenting changing policy contexts and so on would be a valuable function of the group.
- It is likely that the majority of this analytical work would be carried out by the Secretariat in order to inform the group. Where members of the group lead on particular activities care should be taken to ensure that we are not appearing to promote or endorse one specific agenda.
- It has always been an intention that the Learning Group should seek, though a process of better understanding, to build consensus amongst members on key issues. At the same time it is important to remember that we don't necessarily have to agree on everything in order to work together as a group. Indeed, it is important to maintain a variety of opinions within the group.
- We should make explicit that we are focussing on learning among organisations and practitioners (otherwise it could be understood as an university programme).

Action: Following the discussion, the table below has been developed by the Secretariat to clarify the links between PCLG's mission, its strategies for pursuing that mission, and the activities it conducts or supports.

Table 1: Poverty and Conservation Learning Group: Mission, Strategies and Activities

<i>Mission: To promote better understanding on the links between conservation and poverty linkages in order to improve conservation and poverty policy and practice.</i>			
<i>Strategies</i>	<i>Activities</i>	<i>Outputs</i>	<i>Outcomes</i>
Maintaining an overview of relevant poverty-conservation activities and outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documenting and summarising progress in relevant international initiatives. • Tracking changes in policy and practice of relevant organisations • Identifying and investigating apparent blank spots in geographic or thematic coverage • Disseminating information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newsletters – PCLG News • Monthly research briefing - BioSoc • Ad hoc briefings and other publications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PCLG participants better aware of activities and events with which they may have synergies. • PCLG participants better able to set own activities in context of others
Informing international and regional policy processes ²	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining a watching brief over emerging processes • Identifying emerging key issues • Feeding in relevant information and learning outcomes • Supporting members activities and events that help to inform relevant policy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ad hoc briefing papers and other publications • Inputs to MEAs and other policy processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International and regional conservation and poverty reduction policy takes better account of poverty-conservation linkages. • Existing processes linking conservation and poverty take into account new or emerging issues
Promoting dialogue between and within different communities of interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting regional and national learning processes • Organising an annual meeting of Learning Group members • Organising or participating in meetings on key issues • Providing catalytic or seed funding for members' activities or events³ • Facilitating exchange of information and experience between practitioners. • Identifying opportunities for promoting collaboration between PCLG member organisations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting reports • Regional and thematic presentations at international Learning Group meetings • Practitioners exchange forum established on PCLG website 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing volume and quality of dialogue on poverty-conservation linkages • Better understanding of different perspectives on key issues. • Practice informed by broader exchange of experience • Effectiveness of members activities increased
Collecting and disseminating information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying and capturing relevant documents for bibliographic database. • Documenting case studies of local level efforts to link poverty and conservation. • Identifying and profiling organisations and initiatives addressing conservation-poverty linkages. • Documenting useful tools and methodologies for assessing and addressing conservation-poverty linkages • Supporting dissemination of relevant publications of PCLG member organisations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing development of the poverty and conservation website • Ad hoc briefing papers and other publications • Special issues of existing publication series focussed on poverty-conservation linkages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PCLG participants better informed. • Policy and practice reflects new learning

² National processes are specifically excluded here as being beyond the scope of the current Learning Group but it is hoped that participants in the Group may be encouraged to develop spin-off activities that focus at the national and local level.

³³ Qualifying criteria apply

4. Proposed small grants programme

IIED would like to raise an additional £500,000 in order to establish a small grants programme, available to PCLG participants. We have already noted from the activities supported to date, that small amounts of funding can make a major difference to the diversity of participation at key meetings or to the outreach of key publications. Small amounts of seed funding are often able to catalyse bigger initiatives with significant impacts. A small grants programme could also be a very effective way of financing activities of small organisations in developing countries. We should, however, be aware of the potentially high administrative burden of a small grants programme

Currently decisions over which activities to support have been made in a rather ad hoc way and it is anticipated that a more structured programme would enable a more strategic allocation of funds.

We would need, however, very clear criteria concerning the allocation of funds:

- It is not appropriate for the Learning Group to subsidise the budgets of large organisations and funding should be provided for one-off activities not ongoing programmes of work.
- There should be a criteria on the number of activities funded for each organisation to avoid the requests for funding being dominated by the same organisation.
- We would need a mechanism to ensure we don't focus too much on one issue – eg protected areas – but also monitor and address other themes.
- While wishing to be strategic in our allocation of scarce financial resources we should also recognise that there is value in being able to respond flexibly to new opportunities which may present themselves outside of a formal call for proposals – as long as we are clear these opportunities further the learning group mission.

We currently have a small amount of funding from Irish Aid which we have used to fund external activities to date and which could be used to pilot a small grants programme in advance of full funding being secured. A number of requests have already been received. These include:

- Support for a symposium and workshop on conservation and human rights at the Society for Conservation Biology meeting in South Africa, July 07
- Support for the dissemination of a special issue of Policy Matters on conservation and human rights at the same meeting in South Africa.
- Ongoing collaboration with UNEP-WCMC to explore tools and methodologies for assessing protected area impacts – including a follow up workshop in September 07 as part of the PCLG annual meeting.

Not all of these may meet the criteria discussed above, however. There may also be other potentially valuable options for using the Irish Aid funds. Rather than a full-scale pilot at this stage we might be better to continue an ad hoc responsive programme (albeit with clear criteria) and allocate some additional funding to a series of regional studies (see below).

Action: The Secretariat will revisit the current requests and evaluate future requests for support in light of criteria discussed during the meeting. The current flexible, responsive approach will be maintained – rather than a formal call for proposals, until full funding is secured. Part of the small grants budget for 2007 at least will be used to explore key issues at a regional level which may help scope a formal programme. The Secretariat will also continue to explore funding opportunities for securing £500,000 for a fully-fledged programme.

5. Regionalising the learning group

An alternative to piloting the small grants programme would be to run a number of regional consultations which could then help to scope the priorities of a future programme. There are a number of risks and opportunities associated with this:

- Commissioning a series of “quick and dirty” regional overviews of key players and key issues in the conservation-poverty debate would help us identify common themes as well as clarifying differences in regional priorities.

- The regional overviews could also be the starting point for the development of a set of regional workshops, or study tours, bringing different stakeholders together to discuss key issues. These regional activities could then be presented at the annual meeting of the Learning Group as a means to foster cross-regional learning.
- Better regional understanding would allow us to be much more coherent in our way of working. Also Ford have regional offices which may be willing to co host/cosponsor these meetings.
- We would have to be careful to ensure broad consultation to avoid presenting a biased opinion or only involving the “usual suspects”.
- Regional overviews could become very academic and could also be idea-driven instead of demand-driven. Many processes like these are already ongoing and we run the risk of duplication as well as being another unclear, not very well structured process.
- We may run the risk of duplication with other overviews and not add any value.
- We could commission a series of regional essays from prominent individuals and then post these on the website and solicit responses from Learning Group members. However e-fora are notoriously difficult to get people to input to and we run the risk of only getting comments from academics. Furthermore the current Learning Group membership is dominated by international rather than regional or national organisations.

A potential way forward would be to commission the reviews, but as a short term task – not major studies, review the results and then decide whether this regionalisation approach should be taken any further. In Southern Africa, the Sustainable Use Specialist Group has some resources for this kind of activity. We could explore with SASUSG their interest in acting as a pilot for regionalising the Learning Group.

Action: The Secretariat will explore the interest in, and feasibility of a series of short regional overviews but maintaining the option that 1) not all may be feasible and 2) the regionalisation process may stop at this point if significant interest in the process is not generated. The Secretariat will also explore the scope for working with SASUSG as a pilot exercise for more in-depth regional work (on the assumption that SASUSG may make resources available for this).

6. Working as a Learning Group

To what degree do we need to get members of the Group working together – as opposed to the current model of the Secretariat analysing and disseminating information and supporting activities that involve some members only? Furthermore, to what extent can we ensure organisational learning?

- There was a common perception from the advisors that it was beyond the scope of the group to ensure people are learning. Learning is a very complex issue because it is perceived differently at the different levels of an organisation and by different people within an organisation. Our role is thus to make information widely available so as to inform organisations at both policy and practice levels.
- In terms of getting the Group to work as a whole, this is likely to involve starting with a small core and growing slowly with those that are most interested.
- As much as working together there is value in the Group is simply providing people with the opportunity to identify synergies and develop partnerships.
- One way of promoting joint working could be to encourage the development of some joint papers – this might happen through the regional review process or we could commission some thematic papers to feed into the annual meeting.
- Organising or supporting activities that only involve a sub-set of the group is fine as long as the outputs and outcomes are made available to the other members.

Action: The Secretariat will encourage joint working as and when appropriate opportunities present themselves but will cease to be vexed by whether people are working together enough or learning enough!

7. Membership

The membership of the Group is currently dominated by international organisations. To some extent this has been intentional as it is beyond the scope of the Group to reach out to every region and/or country. It has been a stated policy of the Secretariat to encourage membership by networks and regional or national organisations that have their own capacity to develop spin-off activities and to further disseminate information at the regional, national and local level.

The regional consultation processes will be a natural way of building up the membership but we should continue our policy of trying to identify networks that already exist rather than creating new ones. The Ford regional offices are an obvious starting point, as are the regional or country offices/partners of member organisations. PCLG could support these networks, and become a new theme for these networks. Southern Africa could be a good starting point for exploring this approach - but not in the sense of excluding all other regions.

Previously we have deliberately not sought to engage with academic institutions for fear of being swamped with students and consultants, thus diluting our focus on organisations that make, shape or are affected by conservation and poverty policy. Some academic institutions are, however, making valuable contributions to policy-oriented research and we should seek to identify these (again these are most likely to emerge at the national level) and involve them in the group.

Even at the international level, however, we have significant gaps in our membership. We should at least identify and make contact with all the relevant international organisations even if they then chose not to engage with the Group.

Action: The Secretariat will explore SASUSG interest in taking on an additional theme of poverty-conservation linkages as a pilot regional network. The Secretariat will undertake a more comprehensive mapping exercise to identify relevant organisations and promote the learning group. Regional analyses will be encouraged to include policy research institutes amongst their considerations of relevant players.

8. Annual Meeting

Our workplan currently includes provision for two annual symposia – tentatively scheduled for September 2007 and 2008. We need to avoid holding meetings that have no clear objective or hot issue to discuss. However, we have already had the suggestion of focussing on protected area impacts for the September 07 meeting but there may be other themes – for example climate change, carbon trusts, payments for ecosystem services. We may also want to focus on reporting back the outcomes of the regional analyses depending on what comes out of these.

It will also help strengthen the identity of the Group if we make it a principle to hold an annual meeting for members. This should include some time devoted to administrative issues, reports from the Secretariat on work undertaken and from grantees on activities and outcomes – much like a typical annual general meeting. It is important for members to know they have an opportunity to meet every year and to input to the planning of the Group's activities. This could then be combined with a day devoted to a key issue as well as a meeting of the advisors group.

In September 08, which is the end of the Ford grant, we may want to do something more substantial to highlight what the Group has achieved over the two years. One option for this is to hold a 2 day

symposium at the Zoological Society of London, where members could present joint analyses of the current state of knowledge on key issues. The advantage of this is that ZSL provide all the organisational and administrative support as well as a venue. A drawback is that this is not necessarily the right setting within which to present the outcomes of the first two years of the Learning Group. We should explore opportunities for linking into key international processes such as the 2008 World Conservation Congress, CBD Conference of Parties etc. The disadvantage with these big processes is that side events end up competing for an audience. Another alternative might be to explore with Ford their willingness to host this meeting in New York with an invited audience. In reality we may want to look at a combination of different options. We should also identify opportunities for feeding into regional processes.

Action: The Secretariat will circulate to the PCLG membership the suggested themes for the 2007 meeting and solicit feedback and then make a decision on which to pursue. The proposed date of 25-26th September will also be re-circulated and we will go with this unless there is significant disagreement. The Secretariat will also start to explore the options for a 2008 “end of phase 1” meeting(s).