

Biodiversity IN Development

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Guiding Principles for biodiversity in development

Seven Principles for integrating biodiversity in development action have been compiled through consultation with experts in developing countries. The Guiding Principles are designed to ensure that development cooperation is sustainable and effective, and gives biodiversity proper consideration. The Principles are generic and robust, and relevant to a wide range of contexts. They correspond well with the 12 Principles of the ecosystem approach of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

The seven Guiding Principles are a distillation of the experiences and opinions of people from the EC, EU Member States and partner countries in tropical regions – from government, field projects, non-governmental and community-based organisations, and the private sector. Eleven case studies were reviewed and many other field experiences shared at five workshops (four regional and one international) to reach a consensus. The conclusions of this consultation are reported in *Guiding Principles for Biodiversity in Development: Lessons from field projects*. This Biodiversity Brief summarises the fuller report.

What is an ecosystem?

An ecosystem is defined in the CBD as a *dynamic complex of plant, animal and micro-organism communities and their non-living environment interacting as a functional unit*.

Principle A:

Adopt an ecosystem perspective and multi-sectoral approach to development cooperation programmes (taking into account the impacts on adjacent and downstream areas).

The ecosystem perspective moves away from a focus on single species, towards consideration of the connections within and between natural systems and the non-living environment. This gives more value to ecosystem functions that underpin human development, such as climate stabilisation and soil formation. The ecosystem perspective also encourages impact assessment over different time scales and spatial dimensions. Ecosystems, and their components, rarely correspond tidily with administrative boundaries, so natural resource management needs to be sensitive to species' movement, and the impact of interventions on adjacent and down-stream areas: for example, soil erosion, water pollution or effects on migrating animals.

The ecosystem approach is holistic and multi-disciplinary, and cuts across all sectors, integrating social, economic and biological issues. It is important to identify and reconcile conflicting objectives with the needs of different

stakeholders in a land use programme for a given ecoregion.

Appropriate management can minimise the irreversible loss of biodiversity. Fostering sustainable exploitation, or respecting protocols on the introduction of alien species or genetically modified organisms, can contribute significantly. Restoration of degraded ecosystems may also be necessary.

Principle B:
Promote fair and equitable sharing of costs and benefits from biodiversity conservation and sustainable use at all levels: local, national, regional and international.

The benefits of biodiversity conservation and sustainable use should flow back to the people whose livelihoods are affected, and who are often the real stewards of a natural resource. All too often benefits flow to administrative bodies, or to companies based outside the areas affected. Local people can benefit financially,

or from training, employment, infrastructure and equipment. Projects should build an appreciation of the long-term and intangible benefits of biodiversity (such as environmental security) which are difficult to see and measure.

Costs as well as benefits must be shared. Many stakeholders who live some distance from sources of biodiversity goods and services, benefit from them often at the expense of those who live nearby, especially poor communities. Unless some form of equitable cost and benefit sharing is set up, for example to offset the costs of being prevented from clearing watersheds supplying water to urban centres, local people are unlikely to see any reason to support new approaches to biodiversity management.

Those directly dependent on biodiversity resources are often the most vulnerable. Their unequal position in trade activities, and unclear ownership rights, can result in unsustainable use and rapid elimination of resources. Clear property rights, fair trade and fair prices are essential to support their livelihoods.

Economically viable alternatives take pressure off natural resource use, and can contribute to halting biodiversity losses. Experience shows that local communities are most likely to support sustainable use of natural resources when such activities are directly linked to the resource in question, and similarly, they are most likely to conserve wildlands if markets support their use for economic development (such as ecotourism).

Since biodiversity is concentrated in tropical countries, many of which are poor, investment from wealthier nations is necessary to reverse rapid declines in biodiversity. Global support needs to be offered to maintain global benefits. Only long-term investments will bring about the change in policy, institutions and actions that is needed for lasting improvements to biodiversity management and sustainable development.

Principle C:
Encourage full stakeholder participation, including partnerships between civil society, government and private sector.

It is generally accepted that projects work better and are more sustainable if all stakeholders participate in their design and implementation, taking into account local power relations, interests and understandings. Solutions generated at the local level are more likely to be

Biodiversity often plays an important role in the lives of local people, such as for ritual purposes (this Kayapo Indian in Brazil is collecting seeds for making red paint), and it can have important cultural significance. Development cooperation projects need to take heed of these values for long-term sustainability.





GLYN DAVIES

It is important that wildlands converted for agricultural purposes – such as the tea plantations shown here in Kenya – are suitable for the purpose in terms of rainfall, soil quality, access to markets etc.

acceptable than those developed elsewhere. Participation encourages the use of local knowledge, skills and resources in the development process whilst ensuring respect for local values and customs.

The participatory process should involve not only consultation but also shared responsibility. Donor agencies may be required primarily as facilitators, leaving implementation to local institutions. These, however, are not necessarily perfect partners for participation in projects, and participation is not equally possible with all groups. Some groups may be marginalised (for example, women, landless or indigenous peoples), and special efforts will be needed to involve them.

Conflicts will often arise, and will need appropriate conflict management measures at the local level. Successful biodiversity and development projects generally benefit from high-level political and administrative support, which provides essential backing to managers in resolving local conflicts and agreeing boundaries and land-use rules.

Principle D:

Ensure that institutional arrangements are effective, transparent, accountable, inclusive and responsive.

This Principle refers to good governance which is necessary to bring about the lasting change in behaviour that leads to improved integration of biodiversity into development. There was concern that many communities, or sections

of communities, do not have the capacity to participate in natural resource management. Civil society capacity building has been the focus of many development cooperation projects, but as civil society has to interact with government and the private sector, this needs to be complemented with building private sector and government capacity also. This will require training in techniques such as facilitation, participatory management and conflict resolution.

Principle E:

Ensure that development cooperation projects and programmes are consistent with the wider policy framework, and/or changes are made for supportive policies and laws.

Experience shows that international investment in conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity will be successful only if there are enabling and supportive policies, backed up with effective legal framework.

Where the existing policy framework does not support conservation and sustainable use, assistance to develop new policies may be appropriate. For example, insecure property rights are an oft-cited cause of biodiversity loss, especially when large areas are considered common property (open access) resources. This lack of ownership and rights tends to lead to over-exploitation, and a lack of investment – nobody feels responsible for the resource, which remains vulnerable to 'land and resource grabbing' by powerful groups.

The workshop participants were also concerned about the negative impact of market forces, trade policies and incentive measures on the poor and the environment, and felt that developing country interests were not adequately advocated in international fora. It was also noted that donor countries supporting conservation and sustainable use can have domestic policies, such as regulations on the import or export of certain goods, which have negative impact on developing regions.

Principle F:

Provide and use accurate, appropriate, multi-disciplinary information, accessible to, and understood by, all stakeholders.

The sharing of information is central to policy and programme development and project success. Project and programme transparency and accountability require a good flow of information between stakeholders at a local or regional level, and from local to national levels.

Crucial links can be established between projects and stakeholders by various means, from the gathering of data by local guides with indigenous knowledge, to public meetings for the discussion of questionnaires. This enables the interplay and interaction of local knowledge with technical and scientific information, which can be built upon by working with local research institutions.

Data gathering and monitoring systems should not be expensive and over-technical, and they should be sustainable during periods when external assistance is not available.

International partnerships (especially for technical and information exchange and technical and management capacity building) can be important for supporting local projects with training, information and ideas.

Principle G:

Development cooperation investments should be sensitive to, and complement, local and national structures, processes and capacities.

This Principle makes clear that the selection of projects and programmes is too often driven by development cooperation agency agendas.

There is evidence that projects perceived to be externally-driven have lower chances of success. Insufficient use of local consultants, lack of full stakeholder participation and insensitivity to local contexts all contribute

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to this. Another issue raised was that delays in agreed funding payments can be severely damaging, as project and programme continuation cannot be ensured and staff motivation declines.

Furthermore, many procedures for accessing development cooperation funds make it difficult for local NGOs, small-scale projects, and those with few partners in donor countries to obtain support.

Further information

- The full report *Guiding Principles for Biodiversity in Development: Lessons from field projects* can be found on the website below.
 - reference to other Biodiversity Briefs is denoted as (see BB#).
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Website

All Biodiversity Development Project (BDP) documents can be found on the website: <http://europa.eu.int/comm/development/sector/environment>
