

# **Species conservation and poverty reduction**

**Experiences from African great ape conservation**

**Dr. Chris Sandbrook**

# What is species conservation?

- Recent interest in 'landscape' conservation
- But many organisations and projects are still focused on species
- Species chosen because they are:
  - Charismatic
  - Critically endangered
  - Supported by a famous champion
  - 'Flagship species'
- What difference does this make for poverty reduction?



# African great apes and poverty reduction

- Focus of this talk is on African great ape conservation
- Based on a recent review for IIED of linkages between great ape conservation and poverty reduction in Africa
- African apes are a special case:
  - Very popular and marketable in developed countries
  - Live in some of the world's poorest countries
- Should be an ideal test case for the impact of species conservation on poverty

# The influence of apes

- The presence of great apes attracts attention from:
  - Ape and other conservation organisations
  - Tourists
  - Donors
  - Private sector
  - Politicians
  - Celebrities
  - Researchers
- This can bring in more money, and influence the likelihood of different activities taking place
- Being studied by CIFOR

# The rationale of species conservation

- Species conservation is focused on protecting species
- The status of poor people only of direct interest when they are considered a threat
- Where poverty is an obvious threat, ape conservation organisations try to address it
- Where it isn't, they don't
- Poverty seen as a conservation constraint
- **The underlying rationale is not poverty reduction**

# Approaches to conservation & poverty at ape sites

- Many different approaches taken at great ape sites
- Most are likely to be covered by other presentations, so no detail here
- *Examples include...*
- Tourism
- ICDP methods
- Forms of community based natural resource management (CBNRM)
- Human health and family planning
- Payments for ecosystem services
- Strategies to reduce human/wildlife conflict
- Working with the forestry industry
- Law enforcement

# Does great ape conservation reduce poverty?

- Some of the activities associated with ape conservation programmes can reduce poverty for some people
  - Employment & revenue (particularly in tourism areas)
  - Infrastructure & healthcare
  - Empowerment
  - Long term resource protection
- But they can also have negative poverty impacts
  - Increased law enforcement restricting livelihoods in short term
- Lack of data to draw overall conclusions
- Can only identify factors influencing outcomes

# Factors influencing outcomes

- 1) The role of poverty as a driver of conservation threat
  - Species conservation more likely to attempt poverty oriented projects where it is seen as a threat to species
  - But also more likely to step up enforcement at the same time
- 2) The scale of poverty
  - Very difficult to have a poverty impact in areas with huge poor populations
  - SACOLA in Rwanda



# Factors influencing outcomes

- 3) The availability of economic alternatives
  - Where tourism is possible it can generate meaningful benefits
  - In remote areas with no tourism or market access, very difficult to achieve reduction in income poverty
  - Could PES / REDD be the answer?
- 4) The governance regime
  - Community based governance better for poverty than strict PAs
  - But income benefits often unlikely
  - Species conservation starting to catch on – over 50% apes outside PAs

# Factors influencing outcomes

- 5) The level of local capacity
  - Opportunities to benefit from revenue sharing, PPP or CBNRM undermined by lack of local capacity
  - Species conservation organisations can help fund this, but power imbalances a problem
- 6) The scale of focus
  - Species conservation projects tend to be very focused on ape habitat
  - But non-local factors like policy can be crucial
  - Lessons being learned on this issue in bushmeat projects

# Factors influencing outcomes

- 7) The availability of development skills
  - Many species conservation NGOs do poverty related work with few skills
  - Repeat naive assumptions
  - Working with specialists goes better
- 8) The quality of available information
  - Linkages between conservation and poverty can be very complex
  - Good baseline research is very helpful, but normally lacking
  - Species conservation can help by attracting research interest

# Factors influencing outcomes

- 9) The level of cooperation among stakeholders
  - High profile species can attract a lot of different actors to the same place
  - Can lead to competition for funds and lack of cooperation
  - Communication across sectoral boundaries helps
- 10) The way benefits are accessed and distributed
  - Valuable benefits often end up in the hands of a small local elite
  - Minimises poverty impact, and may undermine conservation goals

# Overall conclusions

- Species conservation is most likely to contribute to poverty *reduction* when:
  - 1) Poverty is an obvious driver of threat
  - 2) Poverty is on a manageable scale
  - 3) There are opportunities to generate benefits from conservation
  - 4) The governance regime gives space for local interests. Not a strict PA
  - 5) There is local capacity to fight for, manage, and fairly distribute benefits
  - 6) Programmes are at an appropriate scale
  - 7) Appropriate development skills are available
  - 8) Good information on poverty / biodiversity linkages is available
  - 9) There is good stakeholder cooperation
  - 10) Benefits are accessible to the poor
- These things rarely come together. When they do, species conservation can make a positive contribution to poverty reduction or alleviation
- But winners and losers, and important negative impacts
- Poverty reduction is not the rationale for species conservation, and it should not be seen as a major strategy to reduce poverty

# Acknowledgements

- Thank you to:
  - Dilys Roe & IIED
  - The other symposium organisers
  - All the people who responded to the survey or met me in person
  - Arcus foundation for funding the research

