

Biodiversity conservation as a poverty trap, safety net, or route out of poverty

Craig Leisher and S. Neil Larsen

The Nature Conservancy

Our aim with this presentation is to summarize the various biodiversity conservation mechanisms that have empirical evidence of poverty impacts

Methodology

- 400+ poverty-conservation documents reviewed
- identified studies with empirical evidence of poverty impacts from a conservation initiative
- Highlighted studies with multi-site data and those widely cited by others

Poverty Traps

- Non-timber forest products with elite control of the resources
- Payments for environmental services with *de facto* compulsory participation

Safety Nets

- Non-timber forest products (NTFPs)
- Payments for environmental services (PES)
- Mangroves restoration
- Agroforestry
- Grasslands management

Route out of Poverty

- Community timber enterprises
- Forest tourism
- Fish spillover
- Marine tourism
- Agroforestry

Other Potential Mechanisms

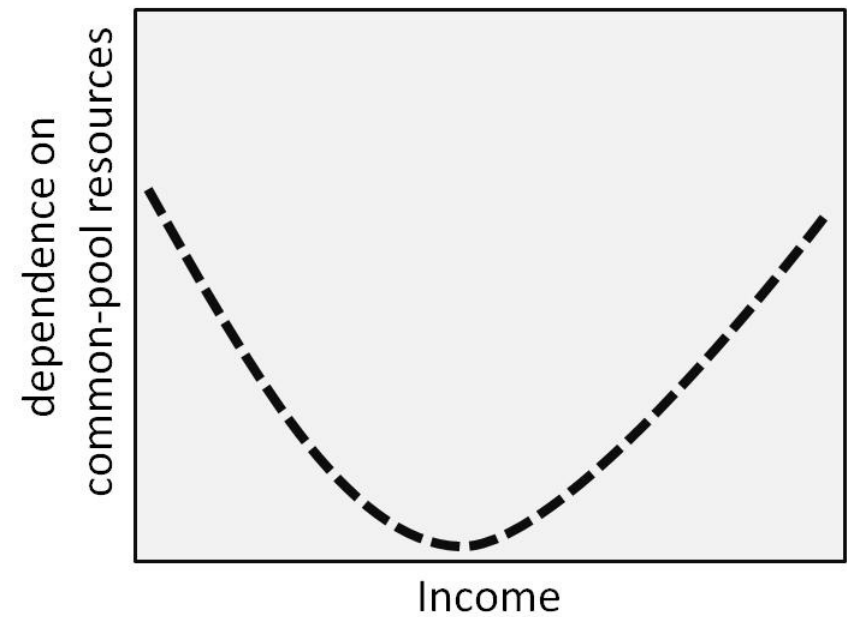
- Medicinal plants
- Bushmeat
- Woodcarving

Common Challenges

- Those with greater assets and levels of social capital are more likely to participate in a conservation initiative
- Elite capture of benefits
- Conservation projects sometimes led to a widening of income disparities
- Discrimination against women
- More cash may equal less resilience

Unexpected Findings

- In the near term, biomass matters more than biodiversity to the poor



Knowledge Gaps

- A lack of hard evidence-based studies on the impact of biodiversity conservation on poverty
- Lots of specific gaps within conservation mechanisms

Conclusions

- Optimism has waned as knowledge has increased
- At least nine conservation mechanism with some empirical evidence of poverty benefits
- Only a few mechanisms have been shown to be routes out of poverty