

The case for integrating conservation and human needs

Although not a development agency, Fauna & Flora International (FFI) recognises that poverty and conservation are often intertwined and that there are both ethical and strategic reasons for a conservation organisation to address poverty alleviation.

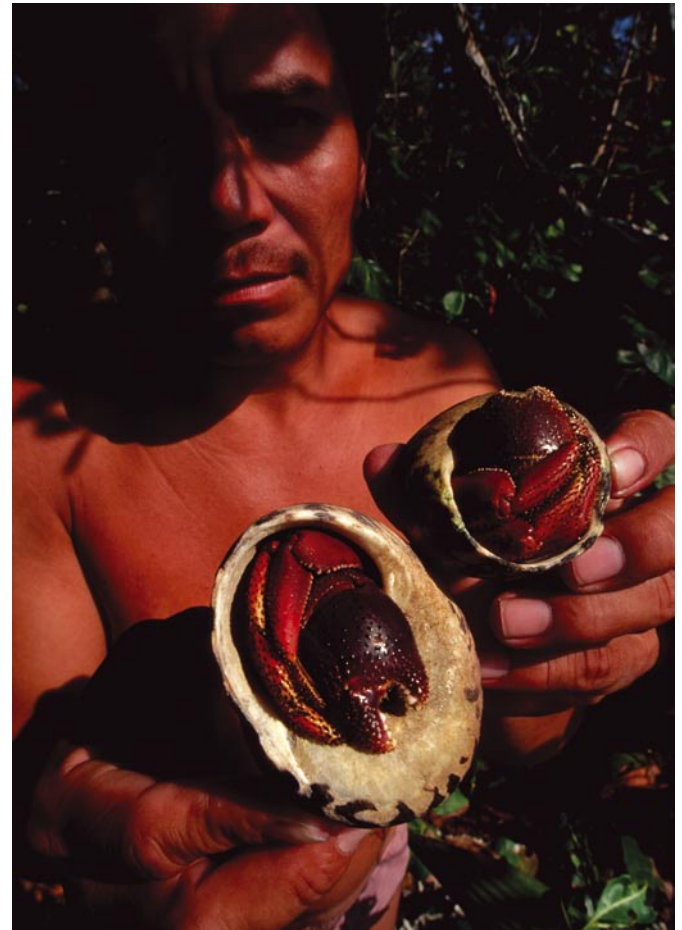
On the one hand, it is clear that unless people have sufficient means to support themselves in a sustainable manner, natural resources will be used unsustainably for short-term gain, resulting in the loss of biodiversity



and environmental security through such issues as degradation of water supplies, emergency food or housing materials.

On the other hand, it is also clear that protectionist conservation strategies can impose significant and disproportionate costs on local people that may reduce their support of conservation. FFI believes that conservation cannot succeed in the long term if it is perceived as contrary to the interests of ordinary people in developing countries.

FFI also recognises that local people can be excellent stewards of natural resources, but that poverty, disadvantage and a lack of voice often prevent them from fulfilling such a role. We are therefore committed to working with people to enhance local wellbeing, reduce disadvantage and encourage local responsibility for conservation. This is not about compromising conservation goals in the name of development: it is about how we achieve those goals.



FFI's approach

FFI will endeavour to ensure that its conservation activities do not disadvantage or undermine poor, vulnerable or marginalised people that are dependent upon or live adjacent to natural resources, and wherever possible will seek to conserve biodiversity in ways that enhance local wellbeing and social equity.

To help achieve this, FFI has established a livelihoods thematic programme to develop our technical credibility in this area and support our regional staff and partners in their work.

Fauna & Flora International

acts to conserve threatened species and ecosystems worldwide, choosing solutions that are sustainable, based on sound science and take account of human needs.



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The way we work

FFI's engagement with livelihoods and poverty reduction can be characterised in the following ways, and is illustrated through the case studies described here:

- Both ethical and strategic engagements.
- A three-pronged approach: direct interventions to improve livelihoods, strengthening civil society partners, and influencing external policy.
- A focus on strategic, cross-sectoral partnership development to fill the gaps in our own expertise and to enable us to influence other sectors that have an impact on biodiversity.
- A strong focus on lesson-learning and demonstration, adopting and adapting a range of complementary tools for monitoring and evaluation.



Conserving crocodiles and improving food security in Cambodia

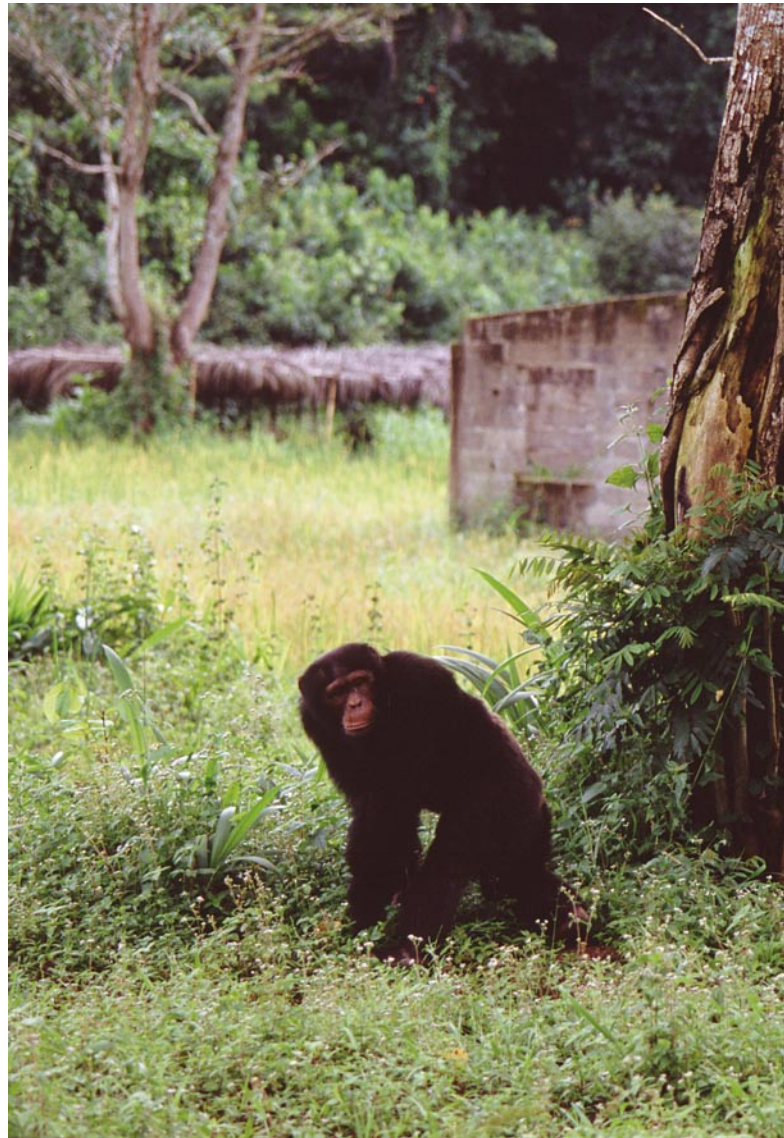
The last stronghold of the critically endangered Siamese crocodile is in the Cardamom Mountains of Cambodia, an area of outstanding biodiversity conservation value, but with scattered villages blighted by extreme poverty and hunger. Aid agencies were proposing to turn the crocodiles' marshland habitat into rice fields when FFI entered into partnership with local agricultural development NGO CEDAC to address people's needs as part of a strategy to enhance crocodile and wetland protection.

The establishment of the O'Som Natural Resources Management Committee has empowered the local population and increased social cohesion. The introduction of organic intensification methods has improved food security, tripling rice yields on existing farmlands and so decreasing pressure on crocodile habitat.

Strengthening a local voice for forest conservation in Liberia

In post-conflict Liberia, traumatised communities have little say over land and resources, and commercial logging and mining pressures threaten both conservation and local livelihoods. FFI has been working to influence national forest planning policies to ensure that both conservation and community needs are taken into account.

In Sapo National Park, one of the most intact and biologically diverse forest ecosystems in West Africa, FFI is building government capacity to manage the park and promote engagement with surrounding communities, whilst supporting traditional authority structures to rebuild livelihoods and reinstate communal forest management around the park.



Linking saiga conservation and local livelihoods in Central Asia

Populations of this unusual and critically endangered antelope of the Central Asian steppe have plummeted by 94% since the 1980s due to poaching and habitat destruction.

Research by FFI and partners has shown that in rural areas, where unemployment can reach up to 90%, poverty and the lack of alternative livelihoods is fuelling uncontrolled saiga poaching across the region.

FFI, alongside local partners, is working to address this root cause by providing support to local communities to establish small enterprises. Through alternative income generation the project aims to reduce the need for poaching.

Precaution and livelihoods

The Precautionary Principle has been widely incorporated, in different forms, in many international environmental agreements, including the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). Yet there is often controversy about its application in individual cases, including its implications for development and livelihoods.

FFI has worked with partners to develop the Guidelines for Applying the Precautionary Principle to Biodiversity Conservation and Natural Resource Management. Several of these guidelines address the relationship between precaution and livelihoods, including Guideline 11. This states that when applying the Precautionary Principle 'where decisions would have negative impacts on the poor or vulnerable, explore ways to avoid or mitigate these'.



Creating opportunities for forest-based enterprise in Belize

In Toledo District, the poorest in Belize, both forests and livelihoods were devastated by Hurricane Iris. FFI is supporting a local Mayan organisation, the Ya'axche' Conservation Trust, to rehabilitate and manage the forests of the Golden Stream Watershed, part of the Maya Mountain Massif, and to assist surrounding communities developing small-scale biodiversity-friendly enterprises such as organic cacao production and a wood craft workshop that depend on a healthy forest for success.

By providing access to product design and business expertise, and facilitating links to fair trade manufacturers, the project is working to ensure that enterprise development is both successful and sustainable.

Working with others

Many attempts to develop win-win solutions for both poverty alleviation and conservation have achieved limited success, and the global record of conservation in relation to poverty alleviation and human rights has been tarnished as a result. FFI does not claim to have all the answers, and managing conservation areas so that local people benefit too is a complex challenge.

We recognise that many others are also considering these issues, and we are following the ideas being developed and adopted by the CBD, The World Conservation Union (IUCN) and the international community regarding poverty, conservation and human rights, whilst maintaining a constructively critical position using lessons from our own practical experience.

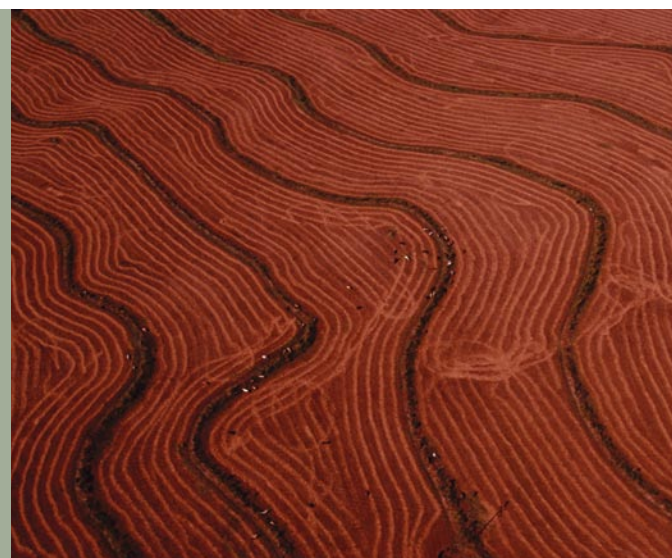
FFI is closely engaged in a number of collaborative initiatives including the Poverty and Conservation Learning Group, a multi-stakeholder forum intended to promote organizational learning on the nature, extent and implications of linkages between biodiversity conservation and poverty.



FFI's Livelihoods Programme

The livelihoods programme is currently supported by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DGIS) through a four-year project entitled 'Resources for Improved Livelihoods'. This is enabling us to reflect on how and why we are addressing human needs; to improve our monitoring and analysis of our achievements, and to develop best practice to ensure that we achieve our mission effectively and universally.

FFI's work on cross-sectoral approaches to biodiversity conservation is supported by a cooperative agreement under USAID's Economic Growth and Trade (EGAT) programme. This is enabling us to enhance and develop strategic partnerships for conservation and poverty reduction, particularly in the wake of natural disasters and human conflict.



About FFI

FFI is the world's longest-established international conservation body. FFI is active in over 40 countries around the world, developing, implementing and managing biodiversity conservation projects in partnership with host-country organisations, to protect and conserve species and ecosystems using a genuinely participatory approach, based upon a strong commitment to building local capacities and to long-term sustainability of conservation achievements.

Contact:

This is one of a series of leaflets produced by the Biodiversity and Human Needs team at FFI. For more information contact livelihoods@fauna-flora.org

Photos: Front cover: Clearing land for farming on the border of the Virunga National park, DRC (left); Maya indian with hermit crabs, Belize (right) Juan Pablo Moreiras / FFI. Inside spread: Juvenile Siamese crocodile (left); Chimpanzee, Bossou, Guinea (centre) Jeremy Holden / FFI. Embera indian manufacturing a traditional canoe in Pijibazal, Darién, Panama (right) Juan Pablo Moreiras / FFI. Back cover: Aerial view of the rural farmscape in central Nicaragua (left); Pine plantation worker, Mexico (right) Juan Pablo Moreiras / FFI.