

Participation

Involving local people in the management and conservation of biological diversity is essential if project activities are to be effective.

Today's biodiversity conservation initiatives recognize and accept local community participation as an essential ingredient for project success, but this is a recent phenomenon. For most of this century, the management of protected areas was essentially a policing task, and local people were seen as a management problem

(McNeely 1993). Most conservationists now question past efforts that separated people from nature. Conservationists increasingly support the view that people have always shaped and interacted with nature and recognize the wisdom in involving local people in biodiversity conservation projects.

Participation is an important step in identifying the values and needs of the different stakeholders, especially those usually excluded from decision making, such as village communities. It is also a major factor contributing to the success of

community-based natural resource management. While contributions by local stakeholders may differ from those of other stakeholders, all are equally valid and necessary for project success. Outside actors often provide the project with the necessary funds and sometimes with appropriate technical advice. Local communities contribute rights to land and local knowledge and are willing to take the risk to test new approaches, the success of which is not guaranteed. Participation helps to ensure that local people continue to choose how they live their lives and how they mold their future.



Increased community participation, such as this community discussing park management in Burkina Faso, leads to greater conservation project success.

Observations from the Field

LIFE's Community Based Natural Resource Management Project in Namibia's East Caprivi region provides an excellent example of the merits of involving local people in biodiversity conservation projects. Prior to the establishment of the project, there was much hostility from the people living in the area, resulting from the nondemocratic creation of two national parks and the subsequent treatment of poachers. Furthermore, villagers in the area saw wildlife as a source of trouble. They would often say, "Take your animals away; they give us too many problems."

As a result of a long process of negotiation with the communities, the project hired game guards who were members of the community, known as Community Game Guards (CGG), in an attempt to more effectively involve local people in the conservation of resources in their area. CGGs were appointed by the communities and were accountable to them through the traditional leaders. The Traditional Council (the Khuta) was responsible for taking disciplinary action against any CGG whose work and conduct was unsatisfactory. The community also selected an individual to collate the reports of the CGGs and to liaise between the community and the project managers.

The duties of the CGG were not to catch poachers but rather to stop poaching by weaving the concept of conservation into the community. The CGGs worked with the communities in all activities; for example, organizing them to control wild species, such as elephants, hippopotami, and predators, from destroying crops and livestock and mobilizing the communities to construct low-cost electric fences especially designed to keep elephants out. Each community had a number of CGGs, ranging from 5 to 48, depending on the wildlife resource potential and human densities in the area. The CGGs were required to present reports occasionally at a forum of the whole community. They acted as information sources in terms of what was happening in the community and in regard to the status of the wildlife resources.

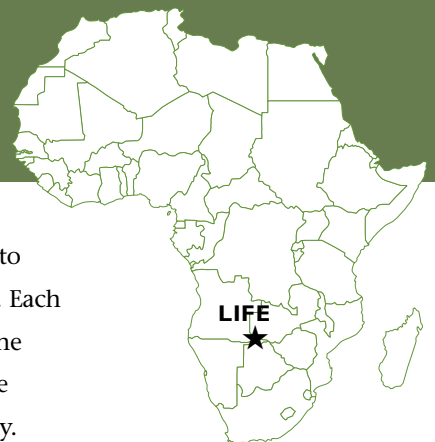
The approach used in the **LIFE** project and the system of CGGs created a sense of ownership for the wildlife resources in the area. The CGGs were more

The Living in a Finite Environment (LIFE)

project is located in East Caprivi, the strip of land in the extreme northeastern corner of Namibia. The project is coordinated by the World Wildlife Fund. LIFE's goals are to

- improve the quality of life for rural Namibians through sustainable natural resource utilization
- enhance sustainable development in East Caprivi based on sound natural resource management
- improve the natural resource base and build the capacity of local communities to manage their natural resources in partnership with the government and
- facilitate the return of direct social and economic benefits from natural resource management to local rural communities.

To learn more about the LIFE project, see page 82.



committed to managing the resources than the government game guards, and the villagers had more confidence in the CGGs, whom they viewed as their own people. This led to a considerable decrease in poaching incidents and an increase in wild animal populations.

The **LAKE MBURO** project offers another important lesson on the need to obtain the support and involvement of local people in biodiversity conservation projects. In 1983, Lake Mburo National Park (LMNP) was established by the Government of Uganda without consultation with the communities who lived in the area, and families were evicted without compensation. This naturally

resulted in hostility toward the park and its staff. When the government fell in 1986, the evicted families invaded the park, drove out the staff, and embarked on a slaughtering exercise aimed at clearing the park of all its wildlife so that the next government would find no reason to reestablish the park. Thousands of wild animals were wiped out in the process; the park became heavily settled by families who continued to extensively exploit resources in the area and stocked the park and surrounding areas with their livestock. When a new government came into power in 1987, it took much consultation before an agreement was reached to reestablish 60 percent of the original reserved area as national park. With this background, a major aim of the Lake Mburo National Park Community Conservation project was to develop good relations with the communities

surrounding the park. BIOME participants reported that this has been effectively done through initiating contacts with the 13 neighboring communities; mounting an environmental awareness campaign; forming community institutions, including local Conservation Committees, to facilitate community involvement in the park management; and sharing benefits and supporting community-initiated projects aimed at improving the quality of life for the people. As a result of these initiatives, the communities now see the park in a different light and are supportive of the management activities.

Lake Mburo National Park was established in Uganda in 1983 without consultation with local communities. The project is coordinated by the Ugandan Wildlife Authority and the African Wildlife Foundation, an international NGO. The project was established to help restore and maintain the wildlife and plants within the Park and to reduce conflicts between residents of the area and park management by involving local communities in the conservation and management of resources within and outside the park.

To learn more about the LAKE MBURO project, see page 80.



Types of Participation, with Examples from BIOME Projects

Type	Characteristics	BIOME Projects' Context and Activities
Passive Participation	People participate by being told what is going to happen or what has already happened. This tends to be a unilateral announcement and people's responses are not taken into account.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  DZANGA-SANGHA: Declaration of the national park and zonation of the area  Pre-LIFE: Declaration of Mamili and Muduma Parks  Pre-LAKE MBURO: Declaration of the Lake Mbuoro National Park
Participation by Giving Information	People participate by answering questions designed by researchers and project managers. They do not have the opportunity to influence proceedings as the findings are neither shared nor checked for accuracy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  AMCFE: Involvement of local people in research on useful plants
Participation by Consultation	People participate by being consulted, and external agents listen to views. External agents define both problems and solutions, and may modify these in the light of people's responses. People do not share in decision making as their views may or may not be taken on board.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  KENGO: Research to identify and document indigenous vegetable and fruit trees
Participation for Material Incentives	People participate by providing resources (e.g., labor in return for food or cash). Such people are not involved in the experimentation and have no stake in maintaining activities when incentives end.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  MADAGASCAR WETLANDS: Use of local people as support staff in projects  DZANGA-SANGHA: Use of Ba'Aka people as forest guides
Functional Participation	People participate by forming groups to meet predetermined objectives related to the project. Their participation tends to occur at later stages of a project after major decisions have been made. They may become self-dependent but are initially dependent on external facilitators.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  NATURAMA: Formation of village clubs to support management of the Kaboré Tambi National Park  VIE ET FORÊT: Formation of committees for development to manage village clinics  MADAGASCAR WETLANDS: Formation of village pharmacy management committees
Interactive Participation	People participate in joint analysis, which leads to action plans and the formation of new local groups or the strengthening of existing ones. Groups take control over local decisions; thus, people have a stake in maintaining structures or practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  LIFE: Management of wildlife on communal lands  CAMPFIRE: Community natural resources management initiatives
Self-mobilization	People participate by taking initiatives independent of external institutions to change systems. They may or may not challenge existing inequitable distribution of wealth and power.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  LIFE: Establishment of the Caprivi Arts and Culture Association  GACON: Establishment and protection of sacred groves

Conclusions

The importance of the participation of local communities in conservation projects is now widely accepted within conservation circles and particularly within the growing areas of integrated rural development and natural resource management projects, community-based biodiversity conservation initiatives, and parks and people projects. Still, participation is not a “one size fits all” principle. Instead, the level and form of participation vary with the stakeholders’ capacity to participate and the issues that need to be addressed by stakeholders to manage natural resources successfully. Types of participation by stakeholders range from passive participation, in which people are simply told what is going to happen or has happened already, to active participation, where people take responsibility for and actively contribute to project planning, design, and implementation.

The 11 BIOME projects demonstrate clearly how the meaning of participation varies across projects. (See *Types of Participation, with Examples from BIOME Projects on page 21.*) Often, communities who are affected by conservation projects are expected to change the way they use resources. Project staff in BIOME have learned that, if communities are expected to change their resource use patterns, in order for the community to remain in support of the project, it must be engaged in decision making regarding the design, implementation, and monitoring of the project. It is true that not all projects necessarily require the most involved level of participation of project communities to be successful.

Community-based natural resource management projects like **LIFE** and **LAKE MBURO** certainly require maximum support and involvement of community members; however, other projects, like **AMCFE**, which have little or no adverse impact on the livelihoods of subsistence communities, may only need the local people’s agreement and passive support. BIOME participants observed that the greater the change desired in resource users’ behavior, the greater the level of community participation required.

Observations from the BIOME projects suggest that, in the short term, attempting to reconcile as equitably as possible the various needs and priorities of all stakeholders by promoting effective participation is likely to be considerably more time-consuming and require considerably more compromise than “command and control” measures that are often unilaterally imposed by single stakeholders (e.g., the parks department). Though effective participation is likely to have substantial up-front costs associated with taking into consideration people’s needs and values, in the long term it is likely to result in more successful resource conservation projects.