

# Policymaking

*Including a representative cross-section of stakeholders in policymaking is important if local people are to support conservation initiatives.*

**P**olicies are simply formal and informal frameworks for deciding how people should interact with one another and with the environment. In this sense, all conservation projects are bound to be guided by a set of policies that determine who has access to resources within a given area, and what uses of the resources within the area are permissible.

Whether a conservation policy is good or bad is relative and depends on one's viewpoint. For example, policies that place quotas on fishing are good for the conservation of fish but bad for the consumer, as the price is likely to rise. The same policy may be neutral for the fisherman, as he sells fewer fish but gets more money per fish.

Stakeholders are apt to differ in their views of natural resource conservation policies because each is likely to have different interests that span different time frames. Local individuals who rely upon the resources tend to look at policy from the perspective of "how does this affect me in the short term" (e.g., hunting restrictions). Nations look at how policies (e.g., resource exploitation subsidies) are likely to affect their citizens, as well as the domestic and international businesses that invest in their economies in the next 5 to 10 years (i.e., the average time between elections). International organizations often view policies from a global perspective over a time frame of 10-50 years (e.g., global climate change). When moving from local to global policymaking, the spatial and temporal scale of policies tends to get larger and longer. Individuals want policies that benefit them now, nations want policies that benefit them soon, and global institutions want policies that do not jeopardize the benefits that future generations can hope to receive.



*Stakeholder consensus, developed through cooperation and compromise, forms a solid basis for natural resource management policymaking.*

The challenge to achieving effective biodiversity conservation policy at each level is, therefore, to reconcile the scale and time-frame differences. The role of policymakers and policymaking at the local, national, and international level is to reconcile the trade-off between resource overexploitation for short-term economic gain and the irreplaceable loss of biodiversity.

In the best circumstances, natural resource management policymaking is based on consensus and compromise because, given the different needs and priorities of all stakeholders, only when the majority of the people that a policy affects are equally “happy” can a policy be said to be good. From the opposite perspective, a bad policy is one that fails to address the concerns, needs, and priorities of stakeholders who have the ability to prevent or subvert effective implementation of the policy.

Given present and projected demand for natural resources, policies to conserve biodiversity are likely to impose resource use restrictions that may impact adversely on the economies of some stakeholders in the short term. Conservation by its very nature imposes short-term costs for long-term benefits and often results in short-term sacrifices to meet long-term local, national, or international needs. Therefore, since it is often the local communities who rely most on natural resources and who suffer most from the implementation of restrictions on their use, local communities should be considered one of the most important stakeholders in natural resource management policymaking.

Land and resource tenure systems determine who has land and resource use rights and the level of security of these rights, both of which are key factors that influence whether natural resources are used at sustainable levels. Land tenure within Africa and Madagascar today is determined by both modern and customary laws. Traditional tenure systems were merged with or dramatically changed by colonial systems, which varied with the colonizer; in some cases, all land was made state land; in others, there was a mixture of state, private, and customary land. At the time of independence, some countries at least partially reinstated customary law while others did not.

Modern law is established by international conventions, national laws, and national or local regulations. Customary law is expressed through the traditional authority structure of the society (land chief or tingsoba in Burkina Faso, traditional chief in Ghana, chief of lakes Tompondrano in Madagascar), traditional land management practices, and resource use taboo systems (sacred groves, totem and tabooed species, closed seasons, and so on). Nontraditional (Christianity or Islam) and traditional religions, as well as progressive integration into the global market economy, increasingly influence land tenure systems, often replacing

the sacred value of land and traditional beliefs regarding acceptable uses of the land with other values and priorities.

Land tenure and resource security are often (although not always) indispensable for biodiversity conservation. Land tenure security does not require individual ownership of resources, but it does require that resource users have explicit rights to use resources within a defined area over a defined period, and, most importantly, to exclude others from illegally extracting resources.

## Observations from the Field

In all 11 BIOME projects, new national policies and policy reforms have either directly or indirectly contributed to their success. In many cases, these new policies were designed and lobbied for by the projects who saw them as a necessary step to enhancing their capacity to conserve biodiversity. Projects like **CAMPFIRE** (Zimbabwe) and **LIFE** (Namibia) would not exist were it not for policy reforms that now permit shared ownership and co-management (local communities and central government) of wildlife and other natural resources. In Burkina Faso, new government policy emphasizing government partnership with NGOs and the private sector allowed **NATURAMA**, in collaboration with local communities, to assist with the management of the Kaboré Tambi National Park. The **GACON** project in Ghana benefited from the fact that traditional village chiefs represent both customary and state authority that together provide a policy framework for land management. Similarly, though the **KENGO** indigenous plants project in Kenya did not need specific policies regarding access and use of indigenous crops to plan and implement its activities, it could not have done so without government policies permitting the establishment of NGOs.

The **DZANGA-SANGHA** project realized that protected areas in Central African Republic (CAR) were too small to provide sufficient habitat for wide ranging species, such as elephant, buffalo, and bongo. Yet, asking the government to set aside huge areas of the forest as parks was untenable because most of the forest is inhabited by farmers and foragers, and logging provides an important source of

**The Dzanga-Sangha project**, located in southwestern Central African Republic, is engaged in the management of natural resources within a multi-use protected area, comprising the Dzanga-Ndoki National Parks and the Dzanga-Dende special forest reserve. The project, coordinated by World Wildlife Fund, aims to

- 🌿 conserve the forest's abundant and diverse plants and animals
- 🌿 develop the ecotourism potential of the area and
- 🌿 protect the socioeconomic rights of the indigenous Ba'Aka people, for whom the wildlife resource of the area is their source of livelihood.

*To learn more about the DZANGA-SANGHA project, see page 74.*







local and national revenue. CAR law at that time only allowed for national parks with no human occupation or resource use, so the project worked with the government to create a new type of protected area called a special forest reserve; it allowed for different uses of resources and types of residence within different zones. At the time of writing, **DZANGA-SANGHA** remained unique in CAR as the only multi-use protected area that included areas zoned for consumptive use (i.e., logging, safari hunting, agriculture, and subsistence foraging) and nonconsumptive use (i.e., tourism and research). Without the legal reforms that created the special forest reserves, the **DZANGA-SANGHA** project would be unable to attempt to balance conserving biodiversity and maintaining local livelihoods.

Executive branch legislation by the Ministry of Tourism in Namibia provides for collaborative wildlife management between the government and local communities and formally devolves authority and rights over wildlife to the local community. This legislation was promoted by the **LIFE** project and has placed community-based natural resource management as an official policy of the Namibian government. In so doing, this legislation strengthens the capacity of the **LIFE** project to conduct its conservation efforts. This policy also provides for the establishment of community-level wildlife conservancies, where wildlife can be managed by local communities and, through partnerships with private tourism and safari hunting enterprises, can be used to generate revenue.

In Burkina Faso, **NATURAMA** and communities around the Kaboré Tambi National Park would not have had legal authority to become directly involved in management of the park were it not for new national legislation developed by the Ministry of Environment and promoted and advocated by **NATURAMA**.

### Fondation des amis de la nature

**(NATURAMA)**, a national NGO in Burkina Faso, is working with local residents to conserve and restore the Kaboré Tambi National Park. The goals of the project are to  foster the regeneration of park resources by raising local community awareness  facilitate the transfer of authority and responsibility for park management to local communities  promote income-generating activities in the villages and the park and  develop a sustainable and participatory park management system.

*To learn more about the NATURAMA project, see page 88.*



## Conclusions

**A**lthough situated in different countries and within varying socioeconomic, ecological, and political contexts, the 11 BIOME projects demonstrate that a few key policies have immediate and far-reaching impact on the success of biodiversity conservation and development projects in Africa. Policies that legalize NGO and local community participation in the management and use

(consumptive and nonconsumptive) of and authority over natural resources are central to the success of the majority of BIOME projects. Policies that facilitate private-sector involvement (decision making and direct resource ownership) in the use and management of wild plants and animals have also been important in establishing economic enterprises that provide either direct or indirect financial returns to local communities that manage their natural resources for sustainable production. Policies that authorize local communities to benefit financially from the revenue generated within protected areas have been very successful in raising community support for the protected areas. Policies that place the responsibility for resource monitoring on the communities that directly benefit from using the resources have also contributed to the success of the **LIFE** project in Namibia.

Using the 11 BIOME projects as examples, we are also able to examine how communities and project managers are involved in the policymaking process. Not surprisingly, given that African society is still largely organized around oral communication and discreet consensus building, the key strategy used by individuals at all levels of policy advocacy is informal contacts with decision makers. Yet, this no longer is the sole venue for policy advocacy. Communities and project staff are increasingly participants in official meetings and workshops, and the press and specialized lobbying groups are beginning to have a greater voice as freedom of the press and of speech become more common within the rapidly democratizing nations of Africa. Furthermore, more Africans are able to lodge legal complaints, file formal petitions against some laws, use NGO networks to advocate for policy reform in international fora, and address government directly. Projects are also increasingly involving policymakers in study tours designed to enhance their understanding of the complexities of local conservation and development actions and to provide concrete examples, in the field, where policy reforms have had profoundly positive impacts on local community welfare and the conservation of biodiversity.

Yet, though local communities are being encouraged to participate in determining how national parks and protected areas are to be managed, BIOME participants have observed that the policies to establish and retain protected areas are determined largely at the national or even international level. Furthermore, as discussed above, given present and projected demand for natural resources, all policies to conserve biodiversity inevitably result in the imposition of resource-use restrictions that are likely to adversely affect the economies of some stakeholders in the short term. Conservation, by its very nature, imposes short-term costs for long-term benefits, and results in local impacts to meet national or international needs. Understanding who suffers the impacts and characterizing what other stakeholders can do to minimize these impacts are important steps to effective biodiversity conservation policymaking.