

Briefing

Biodiversity, Governance

Keywords:
Equity, protected areas, UN Convention on Biological Diversity



UNIVERSITY OF
Southampton



Issue date
August 2016

Policy pointers

Social goals of conservation are important in themselves but are also instrumental in achieving conservation effectiveness.

Success with social goals of conservation will be better achieved through a shift in approach from a livelihoods framing to an equity framing.

An equity framing requires attention to recognition, procedure and distribution — all key determinants of the extent to which conservation interventions are perceived to be fair and legitimate.

Advancing equity can take a stepwise approach, starting with certain key elements of a protected area programme such as governance or benefit-sharing arrangements.

From livelihoods to equity for better protected area conservation

Meeting social goals is widely considered essential for effective biodiversity conservation. The dominant approach to meeting social goals has focused mainly on support for local livelihoods, but this has often proved inadequate for achieving either social goals or conservation effectiveness. A priority for the global conservation community now is to rethink its approach to social goals. This will require a shift in framing from livelihoods to equity, where equity integrates issues of protected area costs and benefits with protected area governance. This briefing explains why an equity framing is important and how, in broad terms, a move from a livelihoods framing to equity might be achieved.

Global efforts to reduce biodiversity loss have focused on expanding the network of protected areas (PAs). But the stark reality in many countries is that PAs — both new and old — are struggling to achieve and maintain conservation effectiveness in the face of drivers of biodiversity loss, which remain as strong as ever. At the same time, growing inequalities in societies are increasingly recognised as both an obstacle to sustainable development and a moral concern. This is reflected strongly in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which include a specific goal on reducing inequalities in society as well as other references to equity and inclusion. In line with this major shift in the development discourse, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)'s Aichi Target 11 calls for both an expansion of the PA network and an improvement in the effectiveness and equity of PA conservation.¹

What does equitable PA conservation mean?

In an earlier briefing on this topic² we outlined an equity framework for PAs comprising principles organised in three interlinked dimensions (recognition, procedure and distribution) embedded in a set of four enabling conditions. The following four paragraphs and Table 1 present a refined version of this framework based on further consultations, including field validation undertaken in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. Although the framework draws on work on both equity and environmental justice and rights, we use the term 'equity' to align with the language of the CBD and the SDGs.

Recognition. This means acknowledging — and respecting — the legitimacy of rights, values, interests, priorities and human dignity. Recognition is particularly important for groups with less voice, such as Indigenous Peoples and

In many situations, equity in protected area conservation may be best improved through a stepwise approach

women. In Tanzania, for example, cultural land-use practices confounded efforts to 'do no harm' and meant that women received less compensation than men for vacating land in the

Derema Corridor.³ In contrast, the explicit use of human rights-based approaches can reduce conflicts between communities and PA managers (Box 1).

Procedure. Procedural equity is built on the inclusive and effective

participation of all relevant actors; the negotiation of memoranda of understanding with elected institutions can be a good first step (Box 2). One key element is clear accountability for actions, others are ensuring that actions take place within agreed timeframes and that there is access to effective dispute-resolution mechanisms.

Distribution. Distributive equity is about how costs and benefits⁴ are distributed among stakeholders, and it can take various forms. When a PA imposes use restrictions on most households, for example, aiming to benefit all households may be the best approach — because it minimises the risk of favouring those who are more influential over those who depend most on the PA for basic needs — rather than spending resources on a complex process to target those who contribute most to conservation, incur the greatest costs, or are most vulnerable; in most cases, however, a more nuanced approach would be justified.⁵ Distributive equity includes consideration of how benefits are shared between different stakeholder groups — such as communities, park managers, local and national governments, and global stakeholders — and of how decisions made by present generations may affect opportunities for future generations.

Enabling conditions. The equity with which individual PAs are established, governed and managed may depend on enabling conditions beyond the control of PA managers. Acknowledging the full range of PA governance types identified by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) is important for

engaging diverse actor groups. Recognising customary rights to resources, aligning relevant national laws with international laws and coordinating policies on PAs with those on other land uses can all help in achieving greater equity in PA conservation.

Why is equity important for PA conservation?

In a classic paper about the core values of conservation biology,⁶ Michael Soulé argued that both scientific understanding and societal norms should guide the goals of conservation. We would add that we should also be guided by evidence of what works. Each of these three sources of guidance — science, norms and evidence of effectiveness — changes over time. This is one reason why dominant narratives of conservation undergo periodic change, such as the shift from 'fortress conservation' to 'integrated conservation and development' in the 1980s and to 'market-based conservation' in the 2000s.⁷

Thinking on the social dimension of conservation has changed relatively little in the last 30 years: the general understanding is that conservation should at least do no harm, defined as a negative impact on livelihoods, and where possible it should have a positive social impact. When a conservation initiative is considered to impose costs on local people, therefore, the most common response has been to provide support for their livelihoods, usually in the form of 'alternative livelihoods' that are also designed to reduce demand for PA resources. In some situations this approach has been successful but in many others it has performed poorly. Focusing too narrowly on livelihoods has become part of the problem rather than the solution (as explained below), and a refocus on equity is overdue.

The science, norms and understanding of what works have all shifted to support this recommendation. We now summarise this shift in two arguments: 1) the moral argument for how equity can make conservation more legitimate and 2) the instrumental argument for how equity can make conservation more effective.

Moral argument. Also known as the normative argument, this argument flows from the need for PA policy to align with national and global commitments on human rights. The right to development is now seen as an inalienable human right, and conservation must attend to this. A key shift is evident in the evolution from the Millennium Development Goals established in 2000, which included a headline target of increasing income to more than a dollar a day, to the SDGs agreed in 2015, which widen the

Box 1. Issues of recognition in the forest sector in Kenya

The Kenya Forest Service has introduced training on rights-based approaches to tackle tensions in many forest protected areas between community members and rangers on the way in which law enforcement is conducted, including rough treatment and abuse of authority. The training covers general concepts and principles of human rights and their interpretation in the specific context of forest protection in Kenya.

commitment to addressing “poverty in all its forms.” The SDGs emphasise the importance of equity in rights, opportunities and outcomes, and strongly emphasise gender equality. In the context of PAs, we identify an ‘old’ normative argument in the outcomes of the World Parks Congress of 2003, which included the principle that “protected areas should strive to contribute to poverty reduction at the local level, and at the very minimum must not contribute to or exacerbate poverty.” The ‘new’ normative argument asserts a responsibility to address a broader set of rights that underpin human well-being and dignity. The international conservation community has made significant moves to respond to this new normative agenda, for example through the Conservation Initiative on Human Rights.⁸

Instrumental argument. This argument holds that equity is necessary for achieving and sustaining effective conservation. Again, there is a distinction between new and old arguments. The old instrumentalism argued that a lack of income forced local people into behaviours that conflicted with conservation. This powerful narrative was popularised in the 1987 Brundtland report, which stated that:

*Those who are poor and hungry will often destroy their immediate environment in order to survive... The cumulative effect of these changes is so far reaching as to make poverty itself a major global scourge.*⁹

What was needed, then, was a means of raising incomes through livelihood support. But the assumptions on which this approach was based were weak. For example, although the poorest in a community are often the most dependent on natural resources, their wealthier neighbours (as well as the global elite) often exert greater resource pressure.¹⁰ This is one reason why evidence soon emerged that simply providing income-earning opportunities (however desirable this might be on its own merits) does not in itself bring about improvements in conservation performance.^{11,12}

We now envisage a ‘new instrumentalism’ based on equity rather than poverty and livelihoods; it has a more compelling theory of change and increasingly strong evidence to support it. An equity-based instrumentalism still holds that economic benefits can increase conservation effectiveness, but this is not achieved with a scattergun approach to livelihood support. Evidence of effectiveness is strongest where economic benefits arise from the use of a PA or related resources, thus underpinning the legitimacy of the PA in the eyes of local communities. In an equity

Table 1. Equity framework for protected areas — equity principles and enabling conditions that apply to prior assessments and the establishment, governance and management of protected areas, and to other conservation and development activities directly associated with protected areas

Recognition

1. Recognitionⁱ and respectⁱⁱ for human rights
2. Recognition and respect for statutoryⁱⁱⁱ and customary property rights^{iv}
3. Recognition and respect for the rights of Indigenous Peoples, women and marginalised groups
4. Recognition of different identities, values, knowledge systems and institutions
5. Recognition of all relevant actors^v and their diverse interests, capacities and powers to influence
6. Non-discrimination by age, ethnic origin, language, gender, class and beliefs

Procedure

7. Full and effective^{vi} participation of all relevant actors in decision making
8. Clearly defined and agreed responsibilities of actors
9. Accountability^{vii} for actions and inactions
10. Access to justice, including an effective dispute-resolution process
11. Transparency^{viii} supported by timely access to relevant information in appropriate forms
12. Free, prior and informed consent^{ix} for actions that may affect the property rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities

Distribution

13. Identification and assessment of costs, benefits^x and risks and their distribution^{xi} and trade-offs^{xii}
14. Effective mitigation^{xiii} of any costs to Indigenous Peoples and local communities
15. Benefits shared among relevant actors according to one or more^{xiv} of the following criteria:
 - Equally between relevant actors or
 - According to contribution to conservation, costs incurred, recognised rights^{xv} and/or the priorities of the poorest
16. Benefits to present generations do not compromise benefits to future generations

Enabling conditions

1. Legal, political and social recognition of all protected area governance types^{xvi}
2. Relevant actors have awareness and capacity to achieve recognition and participate effectively
3. Alignment of statutory and customary laws and norms
4. An adaptive, learning approach

ⁱ Recognition means acknowledging, and accepting the legitimacy of, a particular issue, right or interest, etc. / ⁱⁱ Respect means not interfering with the enjoyment of the right. / ⁱⁱⁱ Recognised within the country’s legal framework. / ^{iv} In a protected area context, resource rights include rights to own or use resources. / ^v Actors include both rights-holders and stakeholders. These are organisations (including the protected area authority itself), groups and individuals with relevant interests, rights or (in many but not all cases) influence. / ^{vi} ‘Full and effective participation’ means meaningful influence throughout a decision-making process. / ^{vii} Accountability incorporates social, political and financial accountability. / ^{viii} Transparency relates particularly to decision-making processes, responsibilities and actions, and financial flows. / ^{ix} Free, prior and informed consent is a process through which rights-holders are empowered to determine whether an activity that will affect their rights may proceed by giving, or having the right to withhold, their consent. / ^x The terms ‘costs’ and ‘benefits’ are used in the broadest sense to include all types of impacts on human well-being, whether or not they have monetary value. / ^{xi} Distribution includes: a) spatial — between actors at site level and also between site and other levels, and b) intergenerational — between youths and adults. / ^{xii} ‘Trade-off’ in this context refers to a situation in which decisions over the distribution of benefits and costs involve compromises between two competing objectives. / ^{xiii} Possible mitigation strategies include avoidance, minimisation, compensation (cash or in-kind, or support for alternative sources of livelihood), voluntary relocation and restitution, decided through an effective free, prior and informed consent process. / ^{xiv} In many cases, benefit-sharing strategies apply a combination of these criteria. / ^{xv} As determined by principle 2. / ^{xvi} Protected area governance types identified by IUCN — government, Indigenous Peoples and local communities, private and shared.

Box 2. Issues of procedure and distribution in the Amani Reserve in Tanzania

Tanzania's Amani Nature Reserve has negotiated memoranda of understanding with each of its 20 neighbouring villages. The adaptive negotiation process has provided villagers with increased access to the reserve for firewood, medicinal plants and labouring jobs, and a 20 per cent share of revenues from tour guiding.

Nevertheless, major inequities remain: replacement land for voluntary relocation has been delayed by as long as ten years, the proportion of tourism-derived revenue is very small (less than US\$200 per community per year) relative to the time invested by villagers, and a lack of transparency about the reserve's income means that the baseline for calculating the 20 per cent share is unclear.

approach, the distribution of benefits within communities is also crucial,¹³ for example to avoid the elite or male capture of benefits. Recognition and procedural equity — the main focus of work on PA governance — are other essential aspects of the new instrumentalism, to ensure not just more equitable decision-making processes but also better-informed decisions and greater social and political legitimacy for PAs. The issue of political legitimacy applies at all levels, from communities living in or near PAs to global policy processes, where the polarisation of views on the equity and justice of PA conservation has often been a major obstacle to progress.

Towards equitable PA conservation: a step-wise approach

There will always be a range of perspectives on what an equitable state looks like, and perceptions of equity will change over time (for example as people obtain more rights or become wealthier). Achieving equity may be a problematic ambition, therefore, but it is perfectly possible to achieve a broad consensus on practical steps to advance equity.¹⁴

In many situations, equity in PA conservation may be best improved through a stepwise approach. Rather than applying an equity lens to the entire range of activities associated with a PA, it may be more practical — and better for building stakeholder buy-in — to start with certain key elements, such as governance, provisions for resource access, and other benefit-sharing arrangements. A stepwise approach may also involve PA managers and other key stakeholders identifying a subset of equity principles as initial priorities within a longer-term process of advancing equity. That said, where significant synergies and trade-offs exist among equity principles, and between equity principles and management effectiveness priorities, as is often the case, these must be considered from the start.

Phil Franks, Adrian Martin and Kate Schreckenber

Phil Franks is a senior researcher in IIED's Natural Resources Group. Adrian Martin is a senior lecturer at the University of East Anglia. Kate Schreckenber is a lecturer at the University of Southampton.

The authors would like to thank the following for their inputs: Neil Burgess, Neil Dawson, Trevor Sandwith, and the participants of the 'PAs and equity' workshop in Nairobi (25–27 July) for their contribution to the revised equity framework.



Knowledge Products

The International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) promotes sustainable development, linking local priorities to global challenges. We support some of the world's most vulnerable people to strengthen their voice in decision making.

Contact

Phil Franks
phil.franks@iied.org

80–86 Gray's Inn Road
London, WC1X 8NH
United Kingdom

Tel: +44 (0)20 3463 7399
Fax: +44 (0)20 3514 9055
www.iied.org

IIED welcomes feedback via: @IIED and
www.facebook.com/theiied

This briefing is part of a project to develop a framework and tools for enhancing equity and justice in protected area management funded with support from the UK's Ecosystem Services for Poverty Alleviation Programme (ESPA).



Notes

¹ Although Aichi Target 11 refers only to protected area (PA) management it is widely understood that it also refers to PA governance. We use the term 'PA conservation' to imply both management and governance. / ² Franks, PC and Schreckenber, K (2016) Advancing equity in protected area conservation. IIED, London. / ³ Hall, JM *et al.* (2014) Ecological and social outcomes of a new protected area in Tanzania. *Conservation Biology* 28(6) 1512–1521. / ⁴ The terms 'costs' and 'benefits' are used in the broadest sense to include all types of impacts on human well-being, whether or not they have monetary value. / ⁵ Poudyal, M *et al.* (2015) Can REDD+ social safeguards reach the 'right' people? Lessons from Madagascar. *Global Environmental Change* 37 31–42. / ⁶ Soulé, ME (1985) What is conservation biology? A new synthetic discipline addresses the dynamics and problems of perturbed species, communities, and ecosystems. *BioScience* 35(11) 727–734. / ⁷ See, for example, Hutton, J *et al.* (2005) Back to the barriers? Changing narratives in biodiversity conservation. *Forum for Development Studies* 32(2) 341–370. / ⁸ See www.iied.org/conservation-initiative-human-rights / ⁹ World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) *Our common future*, p28. Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK. / ¹⁰ Cavendish, W (2000) Empirical regularities in the poverty-environment relationship of rural households: evidence from Zimbabwe. *World Development* 28(11) 1979–2003. / ¹¹ Salafsky, N and Wollenberg, E (2000) Linking livelihoods and conservation: a conceptual framework and scale for assessing the integration of human needs and biodiversity. *World Development* 28(8) 1421–1438. / ¹² Ferraro, PJ (2001) Global habitat protection: limitations of development interventions and a role for conservation performance payments. *Conservation Biology* 15(4) 990–1000. / ¹³ De Koning, F *et al.* (2011) Bridging the gap between forest conservation and poverty alleviation: the Ecuadorian Socio Bosque program. *Environmental Science & Policy* 14(5) 531–542. / ¹⁴ Franks, P and Small, R (2016) Understanding the social impacts of protected areas: a community perspective. IIED, London.