

## 4. MAKING ICDPS WORK FOR WOMEN AS WELL AS MEN

Lessons learnt from ICDPs (as well as some examples from CBNRM projects) have been described above. However, how can these lessons learnt be taken forward to achieve more successful links between conservation and a more *equitable* development of local communities? This concluding chapter attempts to answer this question, synthesise the main issues to take into account and suggest ways forward.

### 4.1 LINKING CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

As described above (Section 1.5) establishing the linkages between conservation and development is vital for the long-term sustainability of ICDPs and their objectives. This is difficult, however, and few ICDPs are managing to achieve it. It is particularly difficult when trying to link the more development-focussed components of ICDPs with conservation. In attempting to benefit women and their perceived needs (seen in the past as mainly practical rather than strategic), ICDPs have introduced a range of women's projects - mainly development-focussed. These have had few direct linkages with natural resource use and as such women have rarely understood the conservation-development concept that is the central crux of ICDPs.

Therefore one can question the value of ICDPs and whether such conservation-development linkages are actually possible. Indeed, a lack of faith in ICDPs has been expressed increasingly in recent years, reflected in reduced donor funding, particularly from development-oriented sources. As a recent DFID report on wildlife and poverty linkages states (Livestock and Wildlife Advisory Group, 2002: vi), there has been:

*"growing internal and external questioning of the extent of conservation-development win-wins; concerns about the negative impact of conservation on poor people; [and] the high transaction costs of community-based projects, particularly in remote and marginal areas."*

DFID now funds only two bilateral wildlife projects and a handful of wildlife-linked forestry projects.

Unfortunately however, there are few, if any, alternatives to the ICDP concept, particularly in and around protected areas and particularly where there is a vacuum of enabling legislation or institutional structures to support the wider scope of CBNRM. As such, the conservation of wildlife, forests, landscapes etc *must* be linked to local communities and provide them with sufficient benefits to justify their continued protection. Conservation of resources will not occur without the support of local communities. And, as the DFID report concludes:

*"community-based and co-management approaches to wildlife management can successfully help reduce poverty and improve livelihoods" (ibid: 23).*

Thus the ICDP concept must be made to work.

### 4.2 WAYS FORWARD

As described in more detail in the two regional studies (Africa and Asia) there have been some, albeit so far few, examples where a greater level of success has been obtained in achieving the goals of ICDPs, including contributing to more *equitable* development.

Lessons from these can provide some indication of ways forward. Components of these have been discussed above. Here, the key elements and issues will be summarised.

#### **4.2.1 A Long Time Frame is Essential**

Establishing linkages between conservation and development takes time. Such concepts are likely to prove alien, particularly to those who prioritise on a day-to-day basis. Many women are forced to do this being under immense pressure to provide for households' daily needs. Thus they have little time to think about, let alone contribute to, longer-term processes such as the conservation of resources. This is particularly true in contexts where communities are vulnerable to insecurities (including those related to food, conflict, environment and land/resources).

Therefore, time is needed to convince communities that investment in conservation practices and processes will pay off in the long term. This involves changing attitudes, and cannot be hurried. Once attitudes have changed, time is needed for these to influence and be reflected in action. Confidence and trust must be built up and a favourable and comfortable context for people to initiate change established. Where cultures and societies are not yet ready to experience such change, especially change pushed from the 'outside', interventions can be constantly blocked and are unlikely to be sustainable.

ICDPs and their components are highly complex. Myriad issues are encompassed and must be addressed. Attempting to incorporate gender issues and more equitable development only adds to the complexity. Adequate time is needed to do this, otherwise ICDPs will never be given the chance to succeed and their potential will remain undelivered. In the long-term it seems likely that more positive success will be achieved if support and investment is maintained. This needs to involve a broader policy-linked and community-wide programme of support.

#### **4.2.2 Women's Access to Resources and Decision-Making Processes Need to be Secured**

Increasing women's securities, whether through access to land, resources or involvement in decision-making processes, provides a better environment for encouraging involvement and investment in conservation. Again, achieving this is likely to take time and a high level of inputs, including a sound knowledge of local gender inequities and reasons for them, together with an identification of constraints to women's securities and ways to overcome them.

Pressures, particularly from donors, are placed on ICDPs to achieve short-term results. However if gender inequities are to be addressed there must be some acknowledgement and, if possible, some incorporation of 'larger' and more long-term issues such as land and resource rights. In agrarian societies, tribal or non-tribal, land is the critical resource that determines both socio-economic position and political power. Women's exclusion from land rights is typical in Africa and South Asia, where land is usually inherited through the male line. Women's legal rights are rendered ineffective both by traditional customs and government programmes. Therefore if long-term sustainability of ICDPs, including the achievement of a greater degree of gender equity, is the goal then such issues must be addressed.

Conflicts may arise as women or other marginalised groups begin to enforce their resource rights. This conflict should be anticipated and time and resources committed to help communities resolve the issue. It is important to recognise that there may be some resistance

from men to women being involved in conservation and development processes and initiatives. Ways to overcome this, such as public discussions, must be identified and implemented. Mediators may be necessary.

Conflicts can also exist between traditional and modern institutions and structures. In most countries in Africa and Asia there is legislation and institutional backing for more equitable gender representation and participation. However, such provision often conflicts with the still predominantly male-dominated traditional institutions that exist, particularly at the community level. Change cannot be forced, however it is possible to support more equitable decision-making processes by encouraging a recognition, acknowledgement and incorporation of elements of the modern within the traditional. Traditional institutions are not static and over time have developed and adapted to different pressures, including, for a large period of their development, to male-dominated colonial powers.

There is evidence to suggest that if women continue to be marginalised and have little control over their lives then they will be encouraged to withdraw and separate themselves from conservation and development processes. In Zambia, due to an ICDP there failing to include women, the sense that joint responsibility and cooperation over resource use could result in mutual long-term benefit has been lost, and a culture of dependency, apathy and helplessness has been cultivated. Many women now believe that initiative and ability to improve their quality of life comes only from others: men, extension workers, NGOs and/or donors.

#### **4.2.3 An Holistic, Integrated, Strategic, Participatory and Well Thought-Out Approach is Needed**

It has been indicated that women will be more supportive of projects once they see that their own short-term needs are being met. As such, it may be necessary to begin by focussing on these, but with longer-term aspects in mind. In well thought-out and integrated projects, both can be tackled simultaneously.

Some of the most successful components of ICDPs, for both women and conservation, are those that achieve a number of benefits concurrently. For example, the support of education has proved an empowering feature for women as well as providing a forum for promoting a conservation message and encouraging a better flow of information. In addition the support of gas stoves in trekking areas of Nepal means that time is saved from cooking; women's (and families') health is improved; a small business is established including employment for those distributing the gas; there is potential for gas to be produced from local waste; and the use of wood for fuel is reduced.

However as stressed in Section 3.4.5, to encourage the use of alternatives to natural resource use, such as through biogas stoves, the benefits of doing so must exceed the benefits of continuing resource use and/or the costs of transferring.

It is vital to think holistically and in an integrated way as to how gender issues and support for women can be incorporated into ICDPs. However, time and again, women's issues appear as an 'add-on' feature with little linkages to the central objectives of the projects and overall goals. As such they will continue to fail to achieve sustainability or utilise women's highly valuable potential contribution to ICDP success.

The advantages and disadvantages of 'women's projects' and a gender approach should be debated. In most contexts some combination of the two is most productive. How this is achieved should form the basis for a gender strategy and work plan. Gender mainstreaming

cannot be worked out by adding feminine endings to documents, or mentioning that everything will be done based on 'a gender perspective'. In practice, gender equity mainstreaming implies revision and redesign of all the relevant aspects of an ICDP. This revision can be started at any stage, but it is most successful when it is incorporated from the very outset.

Projects also need to link more effectively with the greater context in which they work, taking into account larger social, economic and political issues. Projects that take a more holistic and integrated approach to conservation and development tend to be those that are more successful in including and benefiting a greater proportion of the community. Projects need to be flexible and able to adapt to change as it occurs.

It is important to have a vision of what the project is ultimately to achieve. This should be realistic and achievable given local contexts and circumstances (including gender issues). The pathway to this vision should include a viable and well-planned exit strategy. This should focus on sustaining activities and maintaining (and indeed expanding) the links between conservation and development.

#### **4.2.4 A Focus on the Use of All Resources, Not Just Wildlife, is Vital**

In Africa in particular there is still an emphasis within ICDPs, particularly in areas of big game, to focus on community wildlife management. Because of cultural, social and physical constraints women are less likely to be able to participate in such management. Thus an emphasis on other resources, such as plants and smaller wildlife, needs to be included. This will not only provide room for the greater participation of women, but also benefit conservation by taking a more holistic and integrated approach that can only prove more sustainable in the long run.

In Namibia a strong linkage has been promoted between conservation and rural development. Admittedly, this would not have been possible without the recently introduced supporting legislation which allows communities and private landowners authority and 'control' over land and resources, defined within a 'conservancy' area. This has provided a good foundation for building CBNRM-linked projects including the relatively successful women-led CRM (Community Resource Monitors) scheme. This innovative scheme has linked sustainable use of resources for income-generation projects (such as the sale of thatch grass for tourist lodges and palms and natural dyes for handicrafts) with community monitoring of the resources and environmental education and training programmes. Rights to resources have been linked to responsibilities for their management and conservation.

#### **4.2.5 'Gender' Must Be Demystified, De-threatened and Mainstreamed**

The differences between men and women have been a central focus of this research project. However it should be stressed that firstly, there are also many commonalities and secondly, differences due to gender should not be seen as a cause of separation of men's and women's worlds. These worlds are highly connected, often complementary and sometimes less strictly divided than might be first perceived.

For example, an important step towards the process involving equity building between genders is to demythologise the common belief that men possess the 'scientific' knowledge, whereas women possess the 'practical' knowledge. Both genders possess both types of knowledge, but perhaps from different perspectives. Both should be valued equally.

The need for the inclusion of gender issues should be something that has been realised by all involved in ICDP planning and implementation. It should not be included merely to appease donors and/or certain individuals. Otherwise it is more likely to be something that people have little interest in becoming involved in, or even a threat.

A process may be needed to reach such agreement, including achieving a common understanding of what gender means and why it should be included. Training and space for an exploration of the issues may be required. This should link gender directly with the ICDP and natural resource management. There should be room for continual feedback, reflection and adaptation throughout the life of the project. If an 'outside expert' is required to facilitate such a process she/he should be aware of local specifics and be in a position to continue to work with the project throughout its development. Gender training and input should not be a one-off activity.

Sensitivity is needed when addressing gender issues, as well as respect for local culture and religion. However, this should not be used as an excuse to indulge in cultural stereotypes or generalisations. As such, it is important to recognise that every local situation is different and project staff must try to remain objective and rational in relation to this area of work.

In addition it should be recognised that societies and culture are not static but continuously changing and adapting to both external and internal pressures and influences. Indeed, the cultures that have vitality in these modern times are those that are able to change and adapt to the circumstances of the time. The relationships between men/women and natural resources and/or conservation are also dynamic, as culture, communities, environments and local/national political economies change. Livelihoods are becoming more complex and opportunities are arising for women to become more involved in 'productive' economic processes. How beneficial such changes really are to women are not yet fully understood. However, where such changes and resulting 'windows of opportunities' for women can prove beneficial they should be recognised and utilised. A flexible and adaptable approach is vital.

Gender relations are about power as well as difference; and conflict as well as cooperation. However they should not be viewed in a negative light, but be seen more as means to initiate a process of transforming negative aspects of society (and its relationship with the environment) to positive and enabling ones.

Conservation organisations in particular need to move forward in mainstreaming gender throughout their institutions. This must begin by making firm and concise commitments to gender issues within policies and strategies. A programme of focussed gender awareness and planning must be put into place with adequate resources, back-up support and technical stop-gapping available.

More positive encouragement should be given for women to take up positions within organisations at senior managerial and field levels. Recruitment and selection processes should be assessed in view of gender concerns. Organisations should play a clearer advocacy role in promoting gender equity, particularly in relation to environmental processes. This can be achieved by producing materials for the media; participating in discussions and workshops; developing alliances and partnerships on gender; and ensuring that all documentation has a gender sensitive approach and language.

The responsibility for mainstreaming gender issues and ensuring representation and participation of women throughout organisations' policies and projects must be clearly

defined. How best such responsibility should be divided may be a matter of debate, but eventually a decision should be made as to how it can be established and taken forward.

Organisations must be clear about what donors require and expect in relation to gender issues. In addition they need to understand how these requirements might affect projects; what constraints are likely to arise; and how best to take such demands forward into practice. They should act as a link between donors (and their demands) and project/field staff (and their results or problems) and provide clear, concise, adequate and timely information for both parties.

#### **4.2.6 Partnerships and Collaborations Should Be Established**

Partnerships and collaborations with local organisations (including NGOs; government organisations; research institutes; development agencies and CBOs) can have a positive facilitating role in addressing gender issues and at the same time greatly improve sustainability. Strong partners can focus on issues that may be beyond the remit or strengths of conservation organisations. Local organisations are often more aware of and capable of coping with local issues such as those specific to a given culture. They can also provide new entry points for interventions.

The capacity-building of partners or potential partners should be a priority area of ICDPs to increase awareness and support action. Policy implementation depends on sufficient institutional capacity. If enabling and supportive policy exists, but lacks the institutional structures to facilitate its implementation, then it proves useless. Building linkages amongst and between actors and groups at different scales through coalitions, alliance building and networking can strengthen equitable and effective resource management. Such linkages and partnerships constitute a bridge between external opportunities and local initiatives.

Outsiders can often play an important role in identifying problems and constraints; providing a strong role model to villagers and staff; and facilitating partnerships and networking. Foreigners, for example, are often more able to move freely with little criticism. However, one can argue that local facilitators can play an equally, if not more productive role, especially if they are trusted and respected members of the local community.

ICDPs could put a much greater effort into linking with local groups as well as working with those who have more experience in addressing gender issues and encouraging a better participation of women. Such linking would have the advantage of making a better use of scarce resources; drawing on experience, knowledge and skills of a more diverse group; encouraging the acceptance of the conservation/development organisation at the local level (i.e. overcoming suspicion, even contestation); ensuring better accountability and transparency; and in all likelihood meaning a better chance of success for the projects.

### **4.3 CONCLUSION**

ICDPs do offer potential for integrating the conservation of natural resources and the development of local communities. However, the achievement of positive results has been slow. Though there are some examples of projects and elements of projects that have made some progress in alleviating poverty through development such as income-generation projects, these are rarely linked to conservation processes and the protection of the environment. In addition there is, as yet, little evidence to suggest that ICDPs have contributed to more *equitable* long-term development in local communities. Indeed within

ICDPs in general, gender is still seen as an issue that is too political, too sensitive and too time- and resource-consuming for inclusion.

If ICDPs are to be truly community-based then the gender inequities inherent in communities and institutions must be understood, recognised and addressed. Though this may involve tackling sensitive issues such as 'power relations', it may be the only way forward to move beyond the lip-service paid to addressing women's needs, rights and responsibilities that has been seen so far.

In addition, there is a continued failure (excluding rare examples) of local communities (both women and men) making the necessary link between their development and the conservation of natural resources, as well as rights to, and responsibilities over, such resources. This undermines the whole premise on which ICDPs have been built and therefore questions the entire ICDP approach. Unless more effort and resources are put into building up this link then ICDPs will not be sustainable.

At the same time ICDPs must not work in a vacuum but understand the relationships and linkages between the projects and 'external' factors including social, political, cultural and economic pressures and/or change. Adaptability, flexibility and a long-term focus are vital. Issues such as gender equity cannot be addressed over night but require commitment, time, resources and sensitive, well-informed interventions.