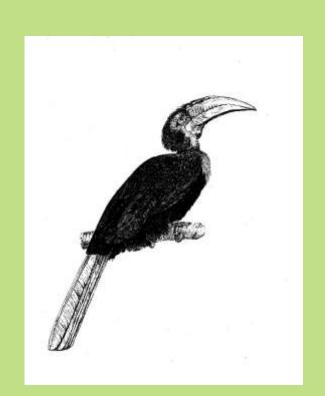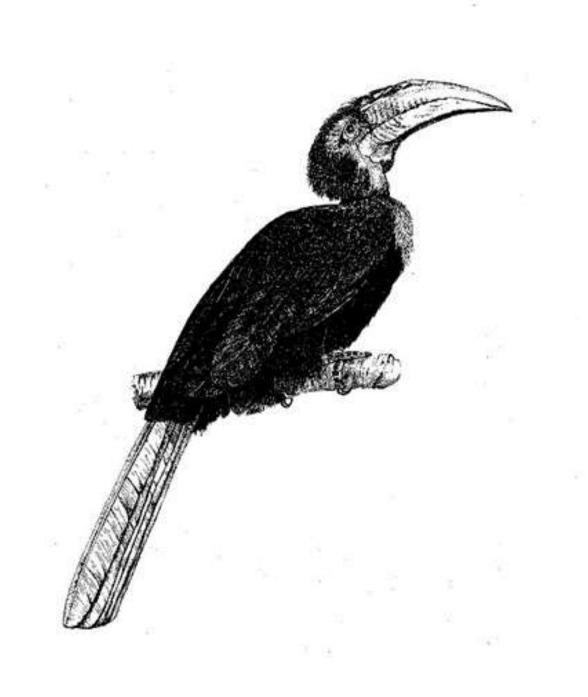# WORKING PAPER

Ecodevelopment in India

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Research, Assessment and Analysis Group

Narcondam hornbill   *Rhyticeros narcondami*

Introduction

Ecodevelopment, as a conservation strategy, bears a similarity to the ICDP approach prevalent in many parts of the world. This paper is an effort at describing ecodevelopment, its rationale, some of the issues that it throws up, and at tracing its genesis and progress. An effort will also be made to discuss the experience of ecodevelopment in India, in the context of the wider, global, debate on ICDPs.

The Definition of Ecodevelopment

In India, ecodevelopment is defined as a strategy for protecting ecologically valuable areas (protected areas) from unsustainable or otherwise unacceptable pressures resulting from the needs and activities of people living in and around such areas (Singh 1994).

It attempts to do this in at least five ways:
1. By identifying, establishing and developing sustainable alternatives to the biomass resources and incomes and other inputs being obtained from the protected areas in a manner, or to an extent, considered unacceptable.
2. By increasingly involving the people living in and around such protected areas into the conservation planning and management of the area, thereby not only channeling some of the financial benefits of conservation to them, but giving them a sense of ownership towards the PA.
3. By raising the levels of awareness, among the local community, of the value and conservation needs of the protected area, and of patterns of economic growth and development that are locally appropriate and environmentally sustainable.
4. By strengthening individual and institutional management capacities at the protected area and individual, institutional and systemic capacities at the local, state and national levels.
5. By attempting to integrate conservation concerns into national, state and local plans and activities.

Though, by their very nature, ecodevelopment initiatives will differ from area to area (and even from village to village), the three basic principles defining ecodevelopment are:
1. Site - specific, micro-level planning, assessing the adverse impact that PAs have on the local people and those that the local people have on the PAs, and identifying the options available.
2. Sectoral integration, especially of local level activities and investments.

3. People's participation, at all levels, especially in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the project and, through the project, in the management of the PA and in the planning and implementation of other related activities in the area.

Unfortunately, ecodevelopment has often been either blamed for not doing things that it never intended to do or for being something that it is not. Therefore, it is important to clarify not only what ecodevelopment is, but also what it is not.

Ecodevelopment is not solely or primarily an effort at rural development, nor is it solely or primarily directed towards the economic development of the rural population for its own sake.

Ecodevelopment is not solely or primarily an effort at enhanced policing of the PA in the sense that it does not seek to protect an area solely or primarily through the enforcement of laws aimed at excluding local people. Rather, it seeks to involve the local people in the process of protecting the park and provides them real options to do so. However, it concurrently strengthens PA management capacities so that deviant individuals or communities can be deterred.

Ecodevelopment is not primarily aimed at minimizing or negating pressures from commercial or development activities and projects. However, it is a reasonable expectation that, as the involvement and stake of local communities in conservation increases, there would be increased capacity to resist those projects and activities that are destructive to the area. The fact that ecodevelopment only seeks to address pressures posed by the local community should not be understood to imply that these are either the most prevalent, the most destructive or the most illegitimate of the pressures. On the contrary, the importance being given to ecodevelopment is a result of the recognition that pressures exerted by the local people are, mostly, the most legitimate of all the pressures and, as such, cannot be handled in the conventional, regulatory, manner but need a more humane and sympathetic approach so as to ensure that the subsistence needs of local communities are respected and provided for.

Ecodevelopment is not a strategy for revolutionizing wildlife management or even for bringing about fundamental changes in the way biodiversity is being conserved. As a strategy, it has been designed and applied with the understanding that it could, within the existing framework, help conserve critical ecosystems and species for a little while longer while minimizing the costs that local communities have to pay for such conservation. It is recognized that over the medium to long run more fundamental changes would have to be made in case biodiversity is to stand a chance of surviving. Some of these changes might involve redefining the role of local

communities in the control and management of wilderness areas and perhaps a redefinition of what biodiversity conservation involves. Therefore, ecodevelopment should not be seen as necessarily endorsing the prevalent paradigm of conservation but only as an interim measure aimed at minimizing social and environmental costs while a new paradigm is developed, accepted and applied.

There is a special need, in India, to develop a paradigm of PA management that does not presuppose the exclusion of all human use, especially use by tribals and other local communities. However, before that can be done, various questions of science and strategy, as discussed later, need to be satisfactorily answered. There also has to be a balancing between the needs of the weakest among human beings and those of animals and plants, who are essentially even more disempowered. Though the current debate seems to focus on the need to open up access to protected areas and to shift control and ownership to local communities, perhaps a concurrent effort needs to be made to rationalize the control and access of resources outside the PA system. If we could ensure a more equitable distribution, among different segments of the Indian population, of the 96% of land and land based resources outside PAs, perhaps the poorest of the poor would not be forced to commit ecological suicide by over-using the remaining 4 %.

The Rationale for Ecodevelopment

Debates about the objectives, methods and rationale of wildlife conservation had been a part of the development and social justice debate for the past three decades. However, by the mid 1980s, wildlife conservation in India had become exceptionally contentious. The incidence of conflicts and clashes between PA managers and local communities was on the rise. Also, in many PAs, the ability to regulate use and extraction to the levels prescribed by law was non-existent. This was primarily because:

1. There had been a steady increase in human population and a resultant increase in their need for land and natural resources.
2. There had been a concurrent and often a resultant decrease in wilderness areas.
3. Though there had also been much "development" and a consequent growth in economic opportunities and infrastructure, this was not equitable across categories of population, regions and the urban-rural divide.
4. Similarly, the costs and benefits of conservation were not equitably apportioned, the poor losing the most and gaining the least.

5. However, one effect of "development" was to raise the economic aspirations of people almost uniformly, thereby creating a greater demand for income and resources.

6. The establishment of a democratic process of governance, after India became independent in 1947, made people increasingly aware of their political and economic rights and gave them a voice that could not be easily ignored.

7. Historically, wildlife and forest management was primarily regulatory and was perceived to be oppressive and indifferent to needs and aspirations of the local people. Under the colonial regime, control and ownership of forests had been taken away from communities and usurped by the government. Therefore, there was a reaction against this.

8. Traditional cultural imperatives for conservation were losing ground, while scientific reasons for conservation were neither widely understood nor universally accepted.

The 1980s were also the period when a very large number of new protected areas were set up, raising the number from a little over 200 at the start of the decade to nearly 500 by the beginning of 1990. Therefore, the creation of all these new PAs, and the consequent inevitable deprivation for the local communities, further heightened the sense of unrest against this form of conservation.

By the time the process of formulating the eighth five year plan[1] was initiated in the Indian Planning Commission, in the early 1990s, it was clear that the current system of wildlife protection was not working and that not only were protected areas getting degraded at a very rapid rate but also there was widespread resentment against them. In fact, many political parties and people's representatives were locally voicing their discontent with the PA network. Added to that, there were many powerful lobbies, especially of miners, tourist operators, timber merchants, land developers, hoteliers, industrialists and contractors constructing dams and other infrastructure projects, that were working hard, especially through money power and political patronage, at diluting the PA network in India and getting access to the land and other resources within them.

The 1980s also saw Prime Ministers and national governments that were perceived to be sensitive to wildlife conservation, but by 1990 there were new Prime Ministers and new governments in power, who had no such pretensions. Consequently, pressures started building up to reverse the process of conservation and to dilute the various laws dealing with wildlife and forest conservation.

On the other hand, a survey of the status of national parks and sanctuaries in India, the first of its kind, had been published in 1989 (Kothari et. al. 1989) and it revealed that, despite stringent laws and an increasing network, a large proportion of the national parks and sanctuaries in India were not being managed as such and had all sorts of pressures within them. The survey highlighted the need to urgently tackle both pressures from commercial and development interests and those from local communities, and suggested various measures, including the development of an ecodevelopment type approach.

The Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India and the Planning Commission were, therefore, confronted on the one hand with pressures to lighten the regulatory process associated with wildlife and forest conservation and, on the other hand, with evidence that, even with the current levels of regulation, forests and protected areas were rapidly deteriorating. It was out of such a predicament that ecodevelopment emerged.

Evolution of the Idea

In analyzing the problems of wildlife management in India, it became obvious that the appropriateness of a protection strategy would be largely dependent on answers to three types of questions[2]. First, there were the scientific questions, about the level of human use and manipulation that was in consonance with biodiversity conservation and the size, number and variability of the areas required. Despite a growing disillusionment with the concept of large "pristine" areas with little or no human activity, the predominant conservation philosophy continued to espouse the "protected area" approach with large protected areas containing viable populations of mammals and of all other species. This was not only the predominant view within the wildlifers in the government but also among many non-governmental conservationists and scientific institutions. Of particular influence was a pioneering study done at the Wildlife Institute of India and published in 1987 (Rodgers and Panwar 1987), that identified the gaps in the protected area network and recommended adding new areas, expanding many of the existing areas and upgrading some areas from a sanctuary status to a national park status[3].

The second types of questions were the ethical questions. There were, of course, the usual "inter generational" ethical concerns with the imperative to leave for future generations a working planet. But, added to that, India's stratified society also raised important intra generational questions. Who benefited from conservation? Who paid the costs? Why? Clearly, any conservation strategy would have to take into

consideration these questions and ensure that both costs and benefits were more equitably distributed.

There were also related issues regarding the rights of communities over the rights of governments, especially over natural resources. Whereas, in the Indian system, national priorities tended to supersede individual or community rights, this was contentious especially where the poor or tribal communities were concerned.

There was also another set of ethical questions, especially relevant to the Indian condition, involving inter species issues. Compassion for animals was a characteristic of Indian thought (even though it might not always be a part of all Indian action) and wildlife protection had to be carried out in a manner that was sensitive to these sentiments.

Finally, there were questions of strategy, especially about levels of community control and ownership over wilderness areas. The success of joint forest management (JFM) in India had resulted in the expectation that a similar joint protected area management (JPAM) system would work for protected areas. However, prevailing legal and scientific expectations restricted human use of protected areas to a level that would make a JFM type of approach non-viable, leaving few options for community control and ownership of PAs[4].

The Ecodevelopment Debate

It was in this setting that ecodevelopment started being seriously debated in the early 1990s. Right from the start, the design of an ecodevelopment approach raised many issues and questions.

What role should different institutions play in the design and implementation of the ecodevelopment strategy? Whereas, the ecodevelopment scheme and projects were without doubt to be designed and implemented in partnership with the local communities, the role of NGOs, various government departments and especially the forest department, was much debated. There was a strong view that ecodevelopment should be handled by non-foresters. It was argued that development agencies were more sympathetic to the needs and aspirations of the local communities than forest departments.

However, the Planning Commission rejected this view, mainly because development agencies knew little about the real objective of ecodevelopment: biodiversity conservation. Also, to establish a link between restrictions on PA use and the alternatives provided, it was considered essential that both be managed by the same agency. As the forest department had the responsibility of enforcing the Wild Life Protection Act and thereby restricting access of the local communities, they were the

obvious choice. Also, the authority and willingness of PA managers to impose such restrictions, especially on the abjectly poor, would be greater if the alternatives provided for under ecodevelopment were theirs to offer.

There was also a demand from some quarters that, as NGOs were more sympathetic both to the requirements of biodiversity conservation and to the needs of the local community, were more flexible and had a better rapport with the local people, they should be the implementers. This was also not accepted by the Planning Commission partly because of the earlier stated reasons to work through the forest department and partly because NGO capacity to run such programmes was not considered adequate.

There was a major debate on whether or not people would stop using PA resources once alternatives and other inputs were provided and they felt a greater sense of ownership towards the PA. International experiences were studied (Singh 1995) and the problems with ICD projects analyzed. Four conclusions were reached.

First, that by just offering alternatives to the local communities it was unlikely that pressure on the PA would be reduced significantly. There needed to be a concurrent strengthening of management capacities, so that there was better enforcement. However, for such enforcement to be effective and just, it must be backed by viable alternatives to livelihood needs. Secondly, that PAs could not be sustained if they remained isolated islands of conservation without any influence on the landscape around them. There was, therefore, a need to set up appropriate coordination mechanisms (like project coordination committees, district/regional coordination groups), involving representatives of all major government departments in the area, to coordinate government activities towards conservation. The relevant provisions of the Environment (Protection) Act[5] also needed to be invoked to regulate pressures around the PA.

It was also necessary to ensure a link or trade off in the minds of the people between PA related restrictions and ecodevelopment inputs. For the purpose, there needed to be ecodevelopment committees (EDCs) in each village, to sign, on behalf of the village, a memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with the forest department and the PA managers, laying down the rights and obligations of both parties towards the PA and its surrounds. These EDCs would also be the principal planning agency for village ecodevelopment.

Finally, that fixed term projects do not promote sustainability. Therefore, if the gains of ecodevelopment are to be consolidated, permanent institutional and financial arrangements have to be made. Consequently, in the long term, ecodevelopment

support should become an intrinsic part of regular PA funding, so that a sustained flow of resources becomes available from the state and central governments. However, as an immediate measure, village level and PA level trust funds should be set up, as revolving funds to support ecodevelopment activities beyond the project period.

Though the initial capital for these funds could come through ecodevelopment projects and programs, innovative methods of replenishing these trust funds should also be developed.

Initiating Ecodevelopment Projects

The first formal effort, by the Government of India, at introducing the ecodevelopment approach was through a centrally sponsored scheme on ecodevelopment, introduced in 1991. There was also an effort at introducing ecodevelopment as a part of all the externally aided forestry projects. Some NGOs, most notably WWF India and the Ranthambhore Foundation, had also initiated ecodevelopment projects. However, this paper deals only with the two ecodevelopment projects taken up with World Bank and GEF support.

The Forestry Research, Extension and Education Project
In 1992, the Government of India decided to include ecodevelopment as a component in the World Bank funded 'Forestry Research, Extension and Education Project (FREEP)'. Though the FREEP was in an advanced stage of preparation, at the request of the government, the World Bank agreed to include ecodevelopment around two protected areas. The Government of India requested the Indian Institute of Public Administration, in Delhi, to help design the project.[6]

One interesting feature of the planning process of the FREEP ecodevelopment project was that the World Bank insisted that it be a participatory activity. However, they also required that the project proposal document be complete in all respects and list every activity that was to be taken up in every village or location, along with the detailed costs. This created an interesting dilemma. The IIPA project planning team argued that it was neither fair nor efficient to develop such a detailed proposal at this stage. Essentially their argument was that it was insensitive to go into village after village and use the villagers time to sit with them and discuss, prioritize and collectively decide on what they wanted the most, when it was not known when the project would commence and, indeed, whether it would be approved at all. It was insensitive and disrespectful to raise people's expectations and to waste their time, only to tell them that if and when the project was approved and the money came

through, they might get what they had so painstakingly identified as their priority need.

Also, local conditions were likely to change in the time it ordinarily took for projects to be considered and approved. Consequently, the priorities determined today might no longer be relevant by the time the project was initiated.

The World Bank, on the other hand, seemed to require details of all activities and expenditures in order to even consider, leave alone approve, such a project. Besides, the World Bank argued, if a village-by-village exercise was not done in advance, it would be difficult to justify the proposed project budget, as it would have no empirical basis.

The Bank ultimately agreed to consider an indicative plan, which would be based on a participatory planning exercise covering only a small sample of representative villages in the project area. The budgets developed for these villages would be extrapolated to determine the overall project budget covering all the project villages. Also, the final project document would provide for an ecodevelopment fund, without a detailed breakup, and specify the method to be used in determining the details of expenditure. Essentially, micro-level planning teams, in consultation with village ecodevelopment committees (EDCs), would develop detailed budgets during project implementation. Each EDC would be given a pre-determined budget constraint within which it would develop its priorities for investments. This not only made prioritization more community driven but allowed for cost effectiveness and better over-all budget management. It also ensured that there was no sense of discrimination among different EDCs.

The India Ecodevelopment Project
Even as the FREEP was being processed, the Government of India decided to pose a larger ecodevelopment project, covering eight protected areas, to the Global Environment Facility for funding. They again asked the IIPA to help design this project. As indicative planning was now an accepted process, it was also used for the India Ecodevelopment Project (IEP).

In designing the IEP, the first task was the development of criteria for selecting project sites. The World Bank, which was the GEF implementing agency for this project, engaged a consultant[7] to work with the Indian government and the IIPA team and help develop such criteria. The debate soon settled around one critical issue: should the selected sites be those with poor management capacities and high levels of pressure, or should they be the better managed and less threatened ones. The former sites needed urgent attention and might not survive unless something was done

immediately. Also, it was thought that the chances of PA managers being enthusiastic about ecodevelopment were greater where traditional methods of conservation were proving inadequate. On the other hand, ecodevelopment was a new initiative and much had still to be learnt about it. By starting in very difficult situations there was a chance that the approach would be discredited without being given a chance to evolve. In the end, a compromise was reached and the eight areas selected were those that had good management capabilities, six of the eight being Project Tiger [8]areas. However, all these areas also had significant pressures that were, collectively, representative of the pressures faced by PAs across the country. Another consideration was to select not more than one site from any one state so that the ecodevelopment approach could be introduced in as many states as possible[9].

Once the sites were selected, the process of indicative planning started. Interestingly, at this point the World Bank decided, reportedly at the behest of some Indian NGOs and forest officials, that any financial input to a village must be matched by a financial contribution from the 'beneficiary' villagers. Presumably this was 'rural development' type of thinking where it was believed that the villagers will not value or own the project, unless they also had a financial investment in it.

The IIPA team argued that, whereas rural development projects involved outright investments for village development, in ecodevelopment villagers were being "compensated", and not always adequately, for foregoing their use of PA resources. Therefore, any insistence on financial contributions by villagers would be unfair and weaken their resolve to help conserve the PA. Besides, the benefits of the rural development projects went wholly or primarily to the village community, in ecodevelopment the benefits were not wholly or even primarily those of the villagers. In fact, the main benefit was biodiversity conservation, which was a benefit to the whole world. Therefore, if beneficiaries were required to contribute financially to the project then all the beneficiaries, especially the World Bank consultants working on the project, should contribute a part of their earnings!

Finally, as a compromise it was agreed that village trust funds would be set up and a small percentage of the wages to be paid to villagers for work done under the project, would be deposited into this trust fund. A matching amount would be deposited from the project budget and this fund would be used to sustain village ecodevelopment activities even after project completion. Unfortunately, the final World Bank Project Document did not correctly or clearly reflect this agreement.

Conceptual Issues

The IEP was perhaps the most widely debated wildlife project ever undertaken in India. It was both supported and bitterly criticised, from various standpoints. Broadly speaking, most opposition to ecodevelopment, especially to the IEP, came from two extremes of the ideological spectrum.

The Ideological Divide
On the one hand, the project was criticised by those who were fundamentally opposed to the system of protected areas, as it existed, especially as it appeared to disempower local communities and prohibit or curtail their access to PA resources. The seeming premise of ecodevelopment, that local communities were often a cause for PA degradation, was also unacceptable to them. According to them, people should not be treated as "beneficiaries" but as the legitimate owners or right holders who have a preferred access to all PA resources. In general, they argued that the strategy to reduce dependency of local communities on PAs was based on a mistaken assumption that traditional use of forest and other wilderness resources, by the local communities, was harmful to wildlife conservation. They claimed that there were no studies to prove this. On the contrary, it was maintained that tribals and other villagers had been living in harmony with forests and wildlife for many generations and they were not the ones responsible for the loss of forest cover or destruction of wildlife. It was also argued that the local people were the best protectors of biodiversity and that they should be empowered to do so, rather than excluded, as the PA system aimed to do.

At the other extreme were those who thought that human use of PAs was disastrous for biodiversity conservation and that any compromise on this 'fundamental truth' was unacceptable. Some were explicitly antagonistic to the idea of stakeholder participation or empowerment of local communities and seemed to feel that all human population should forthwith be removed from PAs and PA management designed strictly along 'scientific' principles. Some of them also thought that any economic development around PAs was undesirable as it would encourage market forces around PAs. They also saw ecodevelopment as diverting, to rural development type initiatives, staff-time and money that should rightly be focussed on PA management.

Obviously, there were others who held positions between these extremes. However, all of them had their own answers, though not always coherent or internally consistent ones, to the three questions of science, ethics and strategy discussed earlier.

Specific Issues

Within this ideological divide, various specific issues were raised, some of which are discussed below.

Participation and Empowerment of Local Communities

The lead in attacking ecodevelopment from this perspective was taken by the Centre for Science and Environment, a well-known NGO based in Delhi. In their magazine, *Down to Earth*, they repeatedly published a full-page letter (see inset).

The CSE also initiated many other letters and appeals. In one such, signed by the director of the CSE and various prominent persons, including a former cabinet minister, it was stated that 'the first problem of forest based people is not poverty but disempowerment by wildlife laws and programmes and the erosion of their environmental right to use their habitat. By alienating the people, the transaction cost of management of parks will inevitably go up. And no amount of dole will help!' The letter contained the demand that the ecodevelopment project be 'immediately withdrawn' because it 'fails to address the present problems with the conservation policies and sees the people's involvement as only an appeasement strategy, rather than as a recognition of their rights and abilities'. (CSE 1996)

A somewhat more moderate interpretation of these types of objections was that though PAs were legitimate, they could not survive without involving the local communities in their protection. And, such an involvement was not possible unless the rights of local communities over PAs were recognised. The moderates

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An Open Letter To The World Bank President

Dear Mr James D Wolfensohn,

"People do not want charity; they want opportunity. They do not want to be lectured to; they want to be listened to. They want partnerships, **" So you have said.**

WE AGREE. **But your own staff does not.** The result is a Bank sponsored $ 68 million abomination like the Ecodevelopment Project which aims to protect India's wildlife.

Wildlife-our precious natural heritage-is facing destruction. **Our forests are habitats of our people and not wilderness areas.** Wildlife management, therefore, demands the active involvement of communities who live in these forests. The Ecodevelopment Project is fundamentally flawed as it is based on doling out charity and does little to make these communities equal stakeholders in the management of our sanctuaries.

"You participate in MY programmes!" That is how your staff defines people's participation.

Past experience shows that such an approach would further alienate people from their lands and turn them against wildlife. It would impoverish the people and the environment.

You have said, "When people are given a chance, the results are truly remarkable."
The Project does not give people a chance in hell!
(Issued in public interest by the Centre for Science and Environment)

criticised ecodevelopment because it was still essentially an exclusionary model. It focused, like conventional conservation had done, on excluding people from PAs rather than on integrating them. It departed from conventional conservation only insofar as this exclusion was not enforced coercively. Thus the net effect of ecodevelopment on biodiversity conservation was unlikely to be very different from earlier exclusionary policies.[10]

It was also argued (Kothari 1998), that one of the reasons for ecodevelopment initiatives remaining rather exclusionary was the inflexible nature of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, the principal legislation in India that facilitated wildlife conservation. The fact that the act permitted absolutely no resource use from national parks and only very restricted use from sanctuaries, implied that communities living inside such protected areas, or otherwise dependent upon such areas for meeting their livelihood needs, had no incentive to protect them because resource extraction from them was prohibited as soon as the areas were notified as national parks or sanctuaries.

Kothari (1998) also pointed out three broad areas where ecodevelopment as a concept, and the IEP in particular, failed to assign requisite rights and responsibilities to local communities, thereby undermining the capacity of such communities and, in the process, the success of the project. First and foremost, he pointed out that as there was no provision within the ecodevelopment framework to recognise the rights of local communities over the resources they use, it seemed to condone the colonial takeover of community lands and the denial of tenurial security to local people. Secondly, local communities were not vested with the power to take part in and be responsible for decisions regarding the areas inhabited by them. Provisions within ecodevelopment for local communities to participate in PA management planning and the implementation fell way short of any real devolution of power to these communities.

Finally, communities were given very little responsibility with regard to handling ecodevelopment funds. The flow of funds of various ecodevelopment projects remained heavily biased in favour of the forest department and this was reflective of lack of genuine empowerment of local communities in ecodevelopment projects.[11]

There was also much debate on whether the planning process itself, as envisaged in ecodevelopment schemes and projects, was participatory enough. Many NGOs and activists, and even some forest officers, felt that it was not. Essentially, the IEP and FREEP ecodevelopment components were planned for in two stages. First, there was an indicative plan, which laid down the broad parameters of the project, developed an

indicative budget and time frame, and described the methodology to be followed for building up the detailed, micro-level plans, and for implementing and monitoring the project. Once the project had been approved and initiated, the participatory, village level, planning process began.

Perhaps one reason why there was dissatisfaction with the planning process was because of the wide disagreement on how much participation is enough. Also, there was a somewhat unreasonable expectation in the minds of a few that democracy would suddenly appear in societies, overnight, where traditionally the social structure had been very hierarchical and stratified. Critics were not satisfied unless the participatory process they saw in reality conformed to the ideal scenarios they read about in text books.

The fact was that, in much of Indian rural society, decision making had been far from democratic. There were distinct caste, gender and age biases. Another significant barrier was the bureaucracy itself, which was a hierarchical and almost totally non-participatory system. To expect that people working in such systems would suddenly become totally democratic when they started dealing with the village communities was unrealistic. Ecodevelopment envisaged training and orientation for the PA staff. It also envisaged selecting PA managers who were more inclined to work in a participatory manner. However, it would be a long time before the expectations of many of the NGOs, especially the more radical ones, could be met on this count.

To try and minimise this problem, the project envisaged that at least one NGO, and where required more than one, would be involved in each PA, to facilitate the participatory process. However, even where consultations were managed by NGO representatives, the age old and well known divisions of caste, class, gender and age still made real participation difficult. Besides, NGO representatives had their own biases, which also fed into the process.

In short, to make the process genuinely democratic and participatory was perhaps the greatest challenge of ecodevelopment. Clearly, there were no easy answers. All that could be claimed was that the ecodevelopment project had taken some big steps towards a participatory model of decision-making, though there was still quite some distance to go.

Many, including S. Deb Roy, a former Director of Wildlife Preservation, Government of India and a senior wild-lifer and forest officer, attacked the project from the opposite standpoint. In a letter to the MoEF, he stated: " … I don't see any necessity of consultation with the so called 'stake holders' as the prescription in the management plan should and must follow only one course, that of

ecological considerations and nothing else, as far as the core areas of the Tiger Reserves are concerned, which enjoy the status of National Park...Though it is true that the P.A.s are (directly or indirectly) adversely affected by biotic influences from near and far, yet no purpose will be served by consulting the people of the impact zone. On the other hand, scientific views are likely to be compromised in the process, which will dilute wildlife management interests" (Deb Roy 1994).

The response from the IIPA team went something like this. 'While people's participation and devolution of power are desirable ends in themselves, the process of invoking such devolution and participation has to be a gradual one. This is primarily because the Indian society continues to be stratified and hierarchical. It is also not prone, traditionally, to participatory decision making, particularly in terms of involving disadvantaged groups like the "lower castes", tribals and women. A sudden devolution of power could lead to the strengthening of the hegemony of dominant groups in a village, such as members of the so-called upper castes and those who are financially well off. Also, the forest department, like most bureaucracies, is itself hierarchical and has historically been non participatory. For such structures to become truly democratic and participatory, a fair amount of time is needed. Such a process cannot and should not be rushed, if it is to be sustained and genuine. What ecodevelopment does is to initiate this process. It attempts to achieve higher levels of participation and greater levels of empowerment than have ever been achieved in wildlife management in India. However, it would be a long time, if ever, before "perfect" participation and total empowerment is achieved.

'Besides, The debate on what human use should be allowed in PAs and, indeed, should there be protected areas at all, is an important one that still has a long way to go before it runs out of steam. Admittedly, the ecodevelopment project is designed within the context of the prevailing law and policy in India. When that law and policy changes, certainly all sorts of new possibilities will open up for ecodevelopment.

'To those who felt that the funds being used for ecodevelopment should instead have gone towards strengthening PA management, the response was that the objective was better management, and if they could show a more efficient way of doing this then, certainly, the funds should be used to promote that way. However, enforcement and regulation by itself had proved to be ineffective in the past and they were unlikely to succeed in the future.

'The ecodevelopment project does not attempt to change social norms, it only tries to get as much space as possible for animals, plants and human beings within

the existing norms. Perhaps the important thing is to ensure that it neither inhibits the debate on social justice, nor does it compromise the position of those who rightly believe that animals and plants also have rights' (Singh 1999).

Indicative Planning

As earlier mentioned, the MoEF proposed to plan for the IEP and FREEP in two phases. First, a somewhat quickly formulated indicative plan, on the basis of which the project would be approved. Then a set of more detailed and participatory PA and micro level plans.

By per suading the Bank to depart from its earlier practice of pre-planning for every *paisa* or cent, the Government of India had succeeded in introducing the sort of flexibility into Bank projects that had not been seen before. This also opened up the way for other projects and projects in other countries to demand and get similar flexibility.

The fact that all plans had to be developed in consultation with the local communities did not mean that there were no constraints on the local communities. The project plan prescribed certain guidelines that had to be followed in determining what types of activities could be supported by the project. The guidelines prescribed for income generation activities insisted that all such activities must:

- Demonstrably reduce pressure on the PA.
- Be economically viable and sustainable.
- Not be socially and morally oppressive.
- Not be illegal.

Interesting examples of activities that violated one or more of these conditions emerged during the initial planning phase. For example, from one village there was a demand that ecodevelopment funds be used to provide street lighting on the main street. This proposal was objected to because it was not clear how providing streetlights would reduce pressures on the PA. However, the village elders argued that many young villagers sneaked out at night to poach animals in the PA. If the streets were lighted, they would be more easily spotted and prevented!

Similarly, in a high altitude village, the villagers agreed to stop extracting resources from the PA if the project helped them in cultivating and marketing *charas (cannabis)*!

Displacement of People Living Within PAs

The Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 makes it incumbent on the government to shift out all human populations living within national parks. It allows, by the

amendment of 1991, some limited human habitation to continue within sanctuaries. Most of the PAs selected under the IEP and FREEP were national parks and this resulted in the apprehension that these externally funded projects would result in the displacement of hundreds of families, mostly tribals or non tribal poor, from PAs. Though the World Bank had already announced that only voluntary relocation would be allowed under the project or in the project areas and would be determined on a family-by-family basis, because of a general distrust of government and World Bank pronouncements in certain quarters, accusations and counter-accusations continued.

The conflict became especially heated in the case of three PAs, Simlipal National Park in Orissa, Nagarahole National Park in Karnataka and Gir National Park in Gujarat. In Simlipal, which had been selected as one of the eight sites under the IEP, the PA authorities decided to finish all the displacement prior to the start of the project, for they felt that once the conditionality of only voluntary displacement became applicable, it would be impossible to shift out many of the people living within. However, the World Bank took the view that this was a violation of the project conditions, even though the project had not been formally initiated. Consequently, Simlipal was dropped as a site under IEP. A battle was also brewing in Nagarahole. In an SOS email (June 1995) sent across the world and also to the World Bank and other concerned agencies, Walter Fernandes of the Indian Social Institute raised the alarm: " Dear Friends, You are probably aware of the situation in Nagarahole, in Karnataka. Based on the report of Shekhar Singh, the World Bank is funding a tiger reserve there and they seem to be determined to displace the tribals. The local tribals have worked out an alternative to it in which they are demanding joint sanctuary area management. But the World Bank does not seem to be prepared to listen to them.

"The sanction is expected to be given in early July. Once it is given it is extremely difficult to change it. So it is very important to create public opinion against it immediately. The plan worked out by the local tribals does not need World Bank funding…". (Fernandes 1996)[12]

Even 'voluntary' relocation was not acceptable to some, for they argued that the forest department 'resorts to a process of slow strangulation' of the populations living inside, in order to force them to volunteer (for example, Cheria nd). Similar objections were raised by many other organizations, both for Nagarahole[13] and for Gir.

On the other hand, there were people protesting against the project because it was making the shifting out of people from PAs too difficult. In a letter to the GEF, K Ullas Karanth, an Associate Research Zoologist with the Wildlife Conservation Society, New York, USA, working in the state of Karnataka, India, expressed his concern and echoed the concern of many others because "The urgent issue of reducing human population densities…inside the targeted parks through well planned and executed voluntary resettlement schemes is avoided by the GEF document. It is very likely that many ongoing resettlement schemes such as the one in Nagarahole Park, Karnataka will be shelved to comply with the GEF concerns. Under the GEF guidelines, resettlement cannot be based on group, or majority decision of the people who want to go out, but has to be on "a case by case basis". In reality this means is that (sic) even if one individual does not want to go, no resettlement scheme can begin to operate."(Karanth 1996)

In actual fact, the major problem was that the relevant Indian laws did not provide for voluntary relocation and the Wild Life (Protection) Act made it mandatory to shift out all human populations from national parks. The only loophole was that the Act did not specify a time frame within which relocation had to be completed[14].

The IIPA team expressed the view that the only practical way was to resettle those who were willing, and to do it so well that others would also soon become willing. Even if some elected not to shift, the pressures on the PA would be significantly reduced because many others have left.

In reality, this approach was not as difficult as it might sound, for in each of the PAs selected there were invariably at least a few families who want to shift out. In order to induce the remaining to voluntarily move out it had to be ensured that these few, initially rehabilitated, families are so well provided for that their experience tempted the rest.

Involvement of local NGOs, as monitors and contact agencies, was seen as the way of ensuring that people living inside the PA were not forced to 'volunteer' by the PA managers, by making their life inside difficult. NGO involvement would also ensure that people were not officially shown to be willing to shift out, even when they were not.

To prevent people from being forced out because of deprivations, it was also proposed to make those who opted to stay inside the PA, eligible for some of the benefits of ecodevelopment. Obviously these benefits would have to be in consonance with the requirements of a wildlife PA. Also, the young people living

inside a PA could be helped to develop skills such that they would have much greater chances of employment and incomes outside the PA. This would encourage at least the younger generation to seek a life outside, thereby gradually but surely solving the problem.

Apart from the high financial costs of such an approach, which were certainly justified, the main problem was the reaction of the host communities. In order to compensate the displaced people for all they had left behind once they relocated, they had often to be provided with a level of lifestyle that was higher than that of the host community or of people living outside the PA. This could create social tension and encourage members of the host community to encroach into the PA and then demand to be relocated.

This was not to suggest that all those living within PAs were encroachers. Many of them, or their ancestors, had been brought and settled there by the government in order to assist in 'working' the forests. Some of them, especially the tribals, probably lived there from much before the forests were taken over by the government and certainly from much before the PA was constituted.

The host community problem was sought to be minimised by ensuring that ecodevelopment benefits flowed to the host communities also, so that even though they might not get as much as the relocated families, at least there was some lessening of the gap between the two. (Singh 1999)

Economic Development and Conservation
Another attack on ecodevelopment came from those who believed that one could not have both economic development and conservation. They believed that ecodevelopment promoted a market economy around PAs, thereby encouraging consumerism, which was among the greatest threats to conservation. Some also demanded that communities living around PAs should be allowed only traditional, low consumption, lifestyles, like their fore fathers, so that they were less of a threat.

One champion of such a viewpoint was Bittu Sahgal, a well-known environmentalist, member of the Project Tiger Steering Committee of the Goevrnment of India and the Editor of the popular magazine *Sanctuary Asia*. He wrote repeatedly to the MoEF, criticising the project.

"The underlying premise of the IIPA seems to have been that it is both possible and desirable to integrate economic growth with the preservation of natural resources." (Sahgal 1994, para 4)

A similar point was made by him in the comments on the draft GEF-ecodevelopment projects drawn up by IIPA, that he had sent on February 22,1994.

S Deb Roy, former Director of Wildlife Preservation, Government of India, in a letter to the World Bank made a similar point when he said " Conservation and market economy forces are, in effect, invited through this plan. This will surely raise the level of consumption of renewable resources. This is exactly opposite of the underlying aim of this plan." (Deb Roy 1996)

Responding to the point about conservation and development, the IIPA team had the following to say.

"It is true that the integration of economic growth with conservation of the environment is a premise of the document. In my mind, it is a premise of ecodevelopment itself…The alternative that seems to be suggested, appears to be very dangerous. If we were to work with the assumption that these two cannot be integrated then we are presenting, to the local communities and to the nation, an either/or choice: Either economic growth or environmental conservation. Surely an ideology that offers only one of the two cannot be conducive to conservation. "(Singh 1994a)

About 'market forces', the response was:

'… in actual fact the market economy and the consequent forces of consumerism have penetrated almost all parts of India, without the help of ecodevelopment. In these circumstances, all that ecodevelopment can attempt to do is to help provide the people living around PAs with a legitimate way of earning their living, so that they can satisfy their market needs without adversely impacting on the PA.

'However, even more significantly, the local communities living in and around PAs must have the right to decide what type of a lifestyle they want to live. It is not for ecodevelopment planners, NGOs and officials, most of whom are themselves willing members of the consumerist society, to foreclose options for others.' (As quoted in Singh 1999)

External Aid and the Debt Trap
Apart from these, there were also objections from those who opposed taking money from external sources, especially the World Bank, primarily because they felt that such lenders attached unfair conditions to loans and, in meeting these conditions, countries often compromised their own interests. These groups and individuals also raised the spectre of the debt trap and expressed the worry that when these loans were paid back, the wildlife sector would have little or no money left for its regular activities.

The objection to external funding, *per se*, was a larger ideological issue that could not be resolved in the context of any one specific project or sector. In so far as the

Government of India thought fit to accept external resources, the real questions were, should they be accepted for the wildlife sector and, specifically, for ecodevelopment.

Whatever be the experiences of other countries, or other sectors and projects, the design of the ecodevelopment project was almost completely Indian.
The task manager from the World Bank was especially sensitive to this point and there was hardly any occasion when she asserted the views of the Bank over those of the Indian planners. Besides, the view taken by the Indian planners was that Indians were not especially gullible or corruptible. Therefore, it was wrong to think that, even if the donors wanted to impose their own agenda, this would have been acceptable to the Indian Government. Besides, in the overall size of the Indian budget, the inputs coming for these projects were too small to give any special leverage to the World Bank and the GEF, even if they wanted such leverage.

It was also factually wrong to think that the repayment of the loan component would be at the cost of future fund availability in the wildlife sector. Loans were not recovered from specific-sector allocations but from the consolidated funds of the Government of India. Also, given the fact that the loan component came form the country committed funds of the World Bank, if these funds were not channelled to the wildlife sector, they would most likely have gone to make dams or other infrastructure projects, which would have further depleted biodiversity.

The apprehension about the debt trap was also misplaced. In various responses to NGOs in India, who had expressed similar misgivings, the World bank task manager, Jessica Mott, explained the situation as follows: " Total project costs (for the IEP) are estimated at US$67 million, of which US$20 million would come from a Global Environment Facility (GEF) grant, and US$28 million from an International Development Association (IDA) credit (IDA credits have soft terms which give them the equivalent of an 80 percent grant content) to cover the US$48 million incremental portion of the costs…"(Mott 1996)

In a subsequent letter to the Centre of Science and Environment, she goes on to clarify that "…In other words, the project financing involves the equivalent of US$42.4 million in foreign grants, and US$ 5.6 million as loan (which is less than 10% of the total project costs)." (Mott 1996a)

The Magnet Syndrome
Considering ecodevelopment strategies resulted invariably in investments around the PA, some felt that such investments would encourage the immigration of poor people

from elsewhere. The resultant increase in population around PAs would heighten rather than lower pressures on the PA.

As a planning exercise, experiences from other parts of the country and from other countries were reviewed (Singh 1995). It was recognised that immigration could be a major problem where surpluses are created because of large investments in infrastructure projects. Such projects created a demand for labour that could not be met locally, thereby facilitating immigration.

However, a study done as a part of the planning exercise for the IEP established that most often areas around PAs were much less economically developed than the rest of the region. Historically, forested areas had got less than their share of development inputs and this itself, in many cases, was the reason why some wilderness survived there. Consequently, the investments that came through the ecodevelopment project would not even bring the PA surrounds at par with the larger region, leave alone make them into magnets.

Another way of preventing the magnet syndrome from operating was to keep investments under ecodevelopment as low as possible and certainly of the sort that did not suddenly create a large number of jobs or wealth.

Tradeoffs versus 'Additionalities'

The basic philosophy of ecodevelopment was that local communities, who negatively affected PAs because of livelihood imperatives, should be helped to develop alternate, environmentally and socially sustainable, sources of incomes and biomass, of their own choosing, <u>so that they could phase out their dependence on the PA</u>. However, in order for this to happen, ecodevelopment inputs had to be seen as alternate, and not as additional, to PA resources. The fact that most PA dependent communities were desperately poor and would remain so even after ecodevelopment, made their wanting to consider all inputs as additional both likely and understandable. Unfortunately, it also meant that the PA would continue to be degraded.

One way in which this was to be prevented was, as discussed earlier, by entering into a memorandum of understanding with villages. If the village went back on the MOU, it would not only lose the inputs but would be subject to action under the law, and detection and prosecution would be much more likely as the PA management had, in the meantime, been strengthened and the number of villages violating the law had been significantly reduced. Obviously this threat could work only where a small proportion of the villages violated their agreement. However, in the long run, only if the local communities had a stake in conserving the PA, could it be saved. For this purpose, it was not only important to minimise the deprivations they faced because of

the PA, and to involve them in its management, but also to ensure that they were the first and primary beneficiaries of the revenue forthcoming from the PA, primarily through tourism. This would give them a further stake in the PA and its maintenance.

The Sustainability of Financial Support

Very early in the design phase it became obvious that, given the different conditions in each of the selected PAs and the varying constraints and advantages, it would be impossible to ensure that all the sites successfully completed ecodevelopment at the end of the five-year project period. However, the life cycle of the project was finite. Therefore, it was suggested by the IIPA team that, apart from the village level trust funds described earlier, there should be a national level trust fund where project funds could be deposited. This would, on the one hand, help ensure that expenditure was made according to real needs and frugally, and not wastefully, as is often the case when there is a threat of unspent funds lapsing. A trust fund would allow flexible funding, enabling continued support even after project completion. Also, if there were savings, these could be used for other areas.

The quantum of funds committed for the project had also become an issue because the initial budget prepared by the IIPA team was about a quarter of the budget that was finally agreed to between the World Bank and the Government of India. There was, therefore, the apprehension that either much of the funds would be wasted, or they would remain unutilized. This apprehension seems to have been well founded, for the latest assessment of the IEP reveals that the disbursement under the project remains below 25% with more than 60% of the time spent. The mid-term review goes on to say that it would expect that the Government of India would request 'cancellation of approximately $12 million (25% of the original grant/credit) now" (IEP MTR 2000). It is unlikely that most of the remaining 50% would also be spent in the last part of the project.

Unfortunately, efforts to set up an ecodevelopment trust fund were frustrated by the Ministry of Environment and Forests itself, where the old guard had changed and the new set-up did not appear to be either as supportive or as knowledgeable about ecodevelopment, as their predecessors were.

Miscellaneous Issues

Some of the other issues that were raised from time to time included the issue of:

- *Scale of the project.* Should the project cover all villages impacting on the PA, or only a few? If all villages were not covered, it was likely that the PA resources freed by the villages covered by ecodevelopment would be

"expropriated" by those not so covered, with no residual benefits to the PA. Also, there could be resentment from both those covered and those not covered, for the former could resent this selective regulation of access to PA resources, while the latter could resent being denied ecodevelopment benefits.

- *Integration between different government departments and sectors*. In India, as perhaps elsewhere, different government departments do not always work well together. An Indian activist has described the Indian Government as an organisation that has vertical loyalty but horizontal animosity! Yet, for the success of ecodevelopment, inter departmental coordination was critical. Consequently, apart from the earlier described coordination mechanisms, it was also proposed that the project implementation team should have, on deputation, professionals from other relevant departments. These professionals could help solve many of the coordination problems with their erstwhile departmental colleagues.

- *Integration of resources*. For ecodevelopment to succeed, development inputs of various departments had to be applied in a focussed and integrated manner so that they could do most good. The age-old practice of thinly spreading available resources and, thereby, achieving nothing anywhere, had to be avoided. Of course, this was a difficult proposition. As one politician remarked, while discussing the ecodevelopment approach, 'politically, if one has enough resources to dig one well and provide a pump to pull out water, it makes sense to dig the well in one village and to provide the pump to another one. This ensures that both villages vote for you, partly in the hope that if you got re-elected you would provide each with the missing component and, partly, out of gratitude for what you had provided'.

In Retrospect

FREEP ends in 2001 and IEP in 2002. Though it is too soon to judge the long term and sustained impacts of the projects, some preliminary assessments can be made.

Based on the mid-term reviews and various other reports on the progress of the two ecodevelopment projects, it can be said that:
- The budgets sanctioned for the project were far too large and it is very unlikely that, by the end of the project, even 75% of the budget will be spent
- One critical precondition of the project, that there be adequate staff posted for the implementation of the project and that all the staff be oriented and trained, was not fulfilled.

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- Baseline data were not collected and monitoring and evaluation systems were mostly not in position.
- There was poor supervision from the Government of India, primarily because of inadequate staff and facilities.
- The strengthening of PA management was focussed on more than the village level ecodevelopment activities.
- Micro-level planning at village level was mostly behind schedule.
- Though NGOs were identified and in some cases appointed to assist with the micro-level planning and village level implementation, they mostly performed poorly. This might have partly been due to the selection of inappropriate NGOs and partly because of unclear or inadequate supervision.
- Most of the research and professional inputs to be provided by institutions and consultants was not commissioned in time or not commissioned at all.
- In some PAs there were problems regarding the disbursement of funds, which inhibited project implementation.
- In some other PAs there were protests by local NGOs and community groups, mainly around the issue of rehabilitation, and this also inhibited the progress of the projects.
- The ecodevelopment concept and project details were not effectively disseminated to field staff and community institutions, despite provisions for translating the project document into local languages.

However, on the plus side what emerged was that in those PAs, and parts of PAs, where micro-level planning was done and activities started, there appeared to be significant achievements. Though the absence of baseline data and a systematic monitoring of the biological, socio-economic and institutional parameters did not allow for definitive comparisons in terms of before and after the project, there were many indications that the pressures on these parks had significantly reduced and that the economic situation of the villagers had improved or, at worst, not deteriorated as a result of ecodevelopment.

Most important, in those areas where ecodevelopment actually got started, there was a significant and positive change in the interaction between the PA staff and the local communities, and in the perceptions of the local communities towards the PA.

Discussion

What lessons can be learnt from the IEP and FREEP? The Indian experience suggests that ecodevelopment as an approach has great possibilities, for

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wherever it was implemented with even a little diligence it seems to have had dramatic results, at least in the short term. However, it is possible that certain specific conditions in India have made this so. Perhaps the most important of those are that, mostly, rural communities are themselves inclined to conserve forests and wildlife. Many of them are either vegetarians or do not eat wild animals, and most of them have cultural and religious links with forests and other wilderness areas and have strong traditions of protection and even worship of nature. Essentially, all they need is the real option to conserve, a situation where they can both meet their basic needs and also protect their forests and rivers. Ecodevelopment, where it is properly planned and implemented, provides them this real option.

Secondly, the forest department in India, as a rule, is committed to safeguard the PAs. In fact, the most common criticism against them is that they are more concerned about wildlife than they are about people! Therefore, the strategy of both strengthening PA management and providing alternative resources to the local people seems to be the right approach. Without ecodevelopment, the ability and willingness of PA managers to protect the area is not adequate to offset the resolve, born out of desperation and real need, of the communities to get access to PA resources. In those few cases where PA managers, without access to ecodevelopment inputs, try and stop the access of local people, it usually results in violent clashes which are not only by themselves undesirable but also have political ramifications which are rarely in the interest of conservation. Ecodevelopment provides that narrowing of the gap between the desperation of the local people to access the resources and the capacity of the PA managers to regulate and control such access.

And, finally, India has a vibrant democracy with strong and articulate groups espousing all possible perspectives and viewpoints. Though this might slow down the process of decision-making and occasionally disrupt implementation, it ensures that every aspect of ecodevelopment is closely monitored and errors highlighted.

The major weakness has been the relative apathy and disinterest of the higher echelons of bureaucracy, especially those who do not have to face the day-to-day conflicts involved in PA management. There seems to have been relatively poor support from the centralised bureaucracies at the central level and, especially in the matter of flow of funds and coordination, from the various

departments in the state governments. There has also been poor appreciation of the value of research and monitoring.

At the field level, the major weakness appears to be the relatively poor effort at developing the individual, institutional and systemic capacities needed to implement ecodevelopment. In those instances where adequate and appropriate staff was provided right from the start, as in the case of Kalakad Mundunthurai Tiger Reserve, the results have been very good. However, even there, as elsewhere, the orientation and training of field staff and the building up of suitable institutions could have been better. This is especially true about the involvement of NGOs. Despite there being a large number of very committed NGOs in India, it appears that most of the NGOs engaged to assist in the ecodevelopment projects did not perform up to expectations. There are many reasons for this, and one could be the fact that as the two ecodevelopment projects became very controversial, many NGOs did not want to be associated with them, as they did not want to become controversial. However, there are other, more fundamental reasons.

What is the way forward? Clearly the Government of India must make up its mind whether it wants to go forward with ecodevelopment and, if it so decides, than it must develop its resolve and capacity to support the programme vigorously. Innovative institutional and procedural mechanisms must be developed to resolve some of the more important constraints to the success of ecodevelopment, that have emerged through the lessons learnt so far. It must also be recognised that ecodevelopment is a new approach in many ways and especially in the way local communities and protection are to be looked at. In order to make it work, the implementers, mainly forest officers and NGOs, have to be re-oriented and trained. In fact, even the planning process must not be initiated till officers and NGOs with the correct perspectives have been identified and given the skills and knowledge that they would need to plan for and implement the programme.

A national debate must be initiated, involving all relevant sectors and departments of the government, both at the central and state levels, and NGOs and other concerned and interested persons, including local community groups, to ponder over the experience of ecodevelopment and to discuss and decide upon what is the best way to conserve biodiversity. Alternative strategies must also be critically examined and a final consensus, though not necessarily unanimity, be arrived at.

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[1] The development process in India is steered by five-year plans based somewhat on the Soviet model of planning

[2] For a more detailed discussion of these questions, see Singh et al 2000, Chapter 3.

[3] Under the Wild Life Protection Act, sanctuaries have a lower kevel of protection and various human use activities, including grazing, can be allowed there, while in national parks no human use activity is allowed – they being somewhat like the strict nature reserves of the IUCN categorisation.

[4] For a more detailed discussion of this point, see Singh et al 2000, Chapter 5.

[5] Under the Environment (Protection) Act of 1986 activities in any specified area can be restricted or banned subject to the clearance of an authority appointed for the purpose.

[6] Of course, the design of the ecodevelopment projects was significantly influenced by past experiences within the country. One of the earliest attempts to use an ecodevelopment approach for conserving a protected area was perhaps in the Kanha National Park, in the state of Madhya Pradesh where, in the late 1960s, HS Panwar, the then Director of the Kanha National Park, had moved villagers living in the heart of the PA to the periphery or, in some cases, to outside the PA, and also made an effort to ensure that, as a consequence, they did not suffer economically.

[7] Dr WA (Alan) Rodgers was hired for the purpose. Dr Rodgers had extensive experience in India and had spent over ten years at the Wildlife Institute of India as an FAO consultant. He had been the lead author of the very influential report "*Planning for a Protected Area Network in India',* and had contributed immensely to developing the capacity of Indian PA managers. He was, therefore, the happiest of choices.

[8] The Government of India initiated Project Tiger in 1972 and Tiger Reserves under this project were provided additional financial support by the Central Government. Consequently, they usually had better management capacities than other PAs.

[9] Of the eight areas selected, only one was selected on political considerations extraneous to the project. Though this area was not unsuitable for ecodevelopment, it might ordinarily not have featured in the list of eight.

[10] See, for example, Kothari 1998.

[11] Though this was a valid criticism of the project document, in practice all ecodevelopment investment funds started flowing through EDC accounts in all but one (Buxa) of the IEP PAs and one (Kalakad) of the two FREEP PAs, within a year of project initiation.

[12] The author subsequently wrote to Walter Fernandes asking him to specify where and how the "report' prepared by the author suggested displacement of tribals from Nagarahole. In a reply sent on 1st October, 1996, Walter Fernandes stated: "Dear Shekhar, It is a long time since I received your letter saying that I had stated in my email that based on your report the World Bank has worked out an ecodevelopment project which will displace people. You wanted to know where in your report you had stated that people should be displaced.

"As you have quoted correctly from my message, I have only said that the project of the World Bank which is based on your report, will displace people. Nowhere have I stated that your report suggests or in any way encourages displacement of the tribals.

"With best wishes I remain sincerely yours, Walter Fernandes."

[13] The World Bank Inspection Panel looked into the charges of inappropriate rehabilitation practices in Nagarahole National Park. Though the Inspection Panel's report recommended further investigation, the World Bank management did not agree with this. Serous doubts were raised, in various quarters, about the methodology and recommendations of the inspection panel.

[14] A subsequent order of the Supreme Court of India made it incumbent on all state governments to clear human habitation from national parks within a period of one year. However, this order was never fully implemented.