

Creating New Platforms for Dialogue

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Introduction

The impact of globalization has forced us to question the economic, social, and institutional development path we have followed during the past decade. We have witnessed tremendous progress in some arenas of development, while in other areas we seem to have retreated, leading to growing conflicts and adversity. There is a need to experiment with alternative mechanisms to address some of the pertinent economic, social, and environmental challenges facing scientists today and to strengthen our collective capacity to act and respond. The current global environmental architecture, for example, has emerged from a sectoral- and response-driven process. The number of multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and processes has increased considerably in the last few years. The expansion of MEAs, often as separate entities and in isolation from relevant non-environmental treaties and processes – most notable as MEAs relate to economic and social processes – has resulted in inconsistencies and even contradictions among them. This has made it extremely difficult for governments, especially in developing countries, to participate effectively in and to coordinate decision-making processes in their efforts to address local development needs.

Nevertheless, moving beyond the intricacies of MEAs and other international governance instruments, there exists an imperative to influence practice and outcomes at regional, national and local levels to bring about a greater understanding of the complexity and the multi-dimensional nature of factors decision-makers must address.

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Individual sectors and institutions have limited capacity to create solutions for each and every environmental and development challenge. Organizations and individuals are not able to participate in activities that do not address their needs or help them work in their own contexts. A more useful approach is to target collaboration, by region, for example, or by country or issue.

Such collaborative efforts offer a mechanism to deal with the impediments of a sectoral approach, providing opportunities to transcend established boundaries – be they geographic, sectoral or interest group-based. However, partnerships per se will not bring about the desired outcomes, unless the stakeholders or participants adhere to the “rules” of engagement.

Partnerships for Change

The development process – which includes global policy processes – needs to evolve with governments working in partnership with the private sector and civil society in recognition of the relative means – but also responsibilities – of the respective sectors. The obvious challenge to any newly found partnership would be to find ways to harmonize the very different ways of “doing business” inherent in each of the sectors.

Four fundamental principles for partnerships are inclusiveness, transparency, understanding each others’ rights and risks, and capacity-building.

Inclusiveness. If the aim is indeed shared responsibility, and eventually joint accountability in sustainable development, representatives of the full spectrum of stakeholders need to be included in the process. The goals and objectives of collaboration need to be shared among the partners, in addition to shared knowledge of each of the parties’ roles and responsibilities.

Transparency. The transparent use and exchange of information is the foundation of building trust and protecting the credibility of the partnership. Information about the partnership, the partners, and their performance against the declared goals should be available for review.

Understanding Rights and Risks. Each partner brings to the table an inherent set of rights and risks that provide the rationale for its engagement in the process. A clear understanding of these quantifiable and non-quantifiable rights and risks creates the negotiation platform necessary to resolve conflicts or recognize risks.

Capacity-building. A fair and transparent process recognizes the obstacles posed by varying degrees of institutional and financial capacity. As with transparency, broad access to information provides significant empowerment to individual partners to contribute to the process.

Partnership Experiences: Inclusiveness

The Water and Nature Initiative

In 2000, IUCN launched the Water and Nature Initiative (WANI) to advance a new paradigm for water resources management that would benefit both ecosystems and humankind. WANI implements actions defined in a number of international agreements, and involves a wide range of organizations, including community-based groups, governmental institutions, multilateral agencies, and global networks. A core set of principles guides WANI to ensure that it is:

- Participative: to empower all stakeholders to participate in water management;
- Strategic: to have the maximum possible effect;
- Transparent: to have transparency in decision-making and management;
- Catalytic: to influence, facilitate and initiate action;
- Innovative: to develop knowledge within projects and share it with the widest audience possible.

Many of the partnerships nurtured by WANI's inclusive nature take the form of close collaboration within specific projects. Others will build on the water dialogues at national and catchment levels and evolve into national or water-basin networks.

Partnership Experiences: Policy Frameworks for Sustainable Development*Forest Landscape Approaches*

IUCN is working with members and partners inside and outside of governments to develop and implement a Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR) approach. FLR shifts the emphasis in forest management from a site-based approach to a landscape level to ensure that forests have the necessary mix of forest goods and services to fulfill both conservation and development objectives. This approach operates at a scale where the consequences of tradeoffs between land uses can be negotiated, understood, and agreed upon by the people most directly affected.

As a result, FLR has been incorporated within the Convention on Biological Diversity programme of work on forests, and has been made a priority by the UN Forum on Forests. International organizations such as the Centre for International Forestry Research, UNEP, and the International Tropical Timber Organizations have also incorporated the FLR approach.

Government and NGO partners are field-testing FLR approaches and developing supportive policy frameworks. In the lower Mekong River countries of Vietnam, Lao PDR, and Cambodia, IUCN is helping governments to identify appropriate approaches for the approximately 21 million ha of forest that could benefit from restoration. In Eastern Africa, IUCN facilitates the documentation and sharing of lessons learned about effective forest restoration among Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Ethiopia. In each case, concrete action is enabled through innovative partnerships.

It is worth noting that any given partnership requires a convening force to assemble the diverse groups of actors and initiate a dialogue on the issues addressed. IUCN has a long history in playing this role, which has led to the generation of not only partnerships, but also of innovation in other areas, such as international environmental law.

IUCN's Experience

IUCN-The World Conservation Union is an example of institutionalizing participation, and of fostering multi-sector collaboration. In its own decision-making process – with governments and non-governmental organizations – the IUCN Congress is a prime example of an international democracy for environmental policy. Decisions are taken on the policy and the priorities of its world-wide program – fostering collective action by diverse organizations.

Partnership Experiences: Convening Power

The World Commission on Dams

In 1997, conflicting views of the appropriateness of dams worldwide had resulted in a significant stalemate in development planning. IUCN and the World Bank, realizing that no single group could resolve the conflict alone, convened a meeting of representatives of diverse interests to discuss the role of large dams. Out of this dialogue emerged the independent World Commission on Dams, an international multi-stakeholder process to address the controversial aspects of large dams.

The WCD's multi-stakeholder nature and partnership approach permitted a global public policy process that overcame the constraints of unilateral and bilateral organizations. It covered five continents irrespective of political milieu, sectoral interest, administrative arrangement, and power relations. This approach amplified the WCD's ability to collate a state of the art knowledge base, learn from experiences worldwide, and, ultimately, to develop a common understanding of international experiences with large dams and associated options for water and energy resources management.

The Union's 1000-strong membership of states, government agencies and NGOs, 10,000 volunteer scientists and experts in six Commissions, and staff of 1000 in 42 offices around the world, enable us to build bridges between North and South, developed



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and developing countries, governments, civil society, and the private sector. We work where conservation meets development, where natural science meets social science, and where global interests meet local reality.

