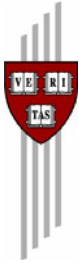


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Community-based Conservation and Leadership: Frameworks for Analyzing the Equator Initiative

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It is available at <http://www.cid.harvard.edu/cidwp/grad/002.htm>. However, as a work in progress, this does not constitute formal publication, and comments are especially welcome and may be directed to Vanessa Timmer via email at vtimmer@interchange.ubc.ca.

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This paper was written as part of the Initiative for Science and Technology for Sustainability (ISTS). The Initiative is an international, open-ended network with the goal of enhancing the contribution of knowledge to environmentally sustainable human development around the world. The Initiative was founded in late 2000 by an independent group of scholars and development practitioners gathered at the Friibergh Workshop on Sustainability Science. Since that time, it has worked to strengthen cooperation between two communities: practitioners involved in promoting human development and environmental conservation, and researchers involved in advancing science and technology relevant to sustainability. Funding for the Initiative has come from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation and the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Office of Global Programs, with additional support from numerous governments and institutions around the world. The Initiative's secretariat is based at Harvard's Center for International Development.

The Science, Environment and Development Group at Harvard's Center for International Development collaborates internationally on a variety of research projects and outreach activities that seek to improve society's understanding of interactions between human development and the natural environment, and to harness that understanding in support of a transition towards sustainability. The Group builds bridges between the local, place-based character of many sustainability challenges and the increasingly global context within which solutions to those challenges must be shaped. It is concerned with the role of "partnerships" among governments, civil society, the private sector, and academia in shaping solutions.

Further information on the Initiative and the Science, Environment and Development Group at Harvard's Center for International Development can be found at <http://sustainabilityscience.org/ists> and <http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/sed>, respectively, or by contacting Nancy Dickson at nancy_dickson@harvard.edu.

ABSTRACT

Reconciling human development requirements with the need to sustain healthy ecosystems is a challenge that has spurred debate across scales from local community management organizations to global decision-making bodies. Prior to the 1970s, global conservation objectives were pursued primarily through the establishment of a system of nationally protected areas; however, this strategy did not dedicate significant consideration to the effects of designating these areas on the communities that live in and near the protected areas and depend on them for their livelihoods. After the 1970s, a shift occurred in the conservation community with the emergence of “community-based conservation” efforts that combined the achievement of human livelihood goals and conservation goals and that became perceived as the solution to conservation concerns. It is in this context that the Equator Initiative has emerged to identify local partnerships for sustainable development that achieve poverty reduction and biodiversity conservation in tropical countries. This paper seeks to contribute to the Equator Initiative’s research and learning objectives by examining the debate surrounding community-based conservation. The paper then proposes that leadership should be analyzed as a factor that contributes to the effectiveness of community-based conservation initiatives. Five characteristics of leadership are identified as being critical to success: innovation, communication, learning, bridge-building and systems thinking. The paper concludes with recommendations to the Equator Initiative on how to facilitate leadership for local partnership.

Keywords: leadership, innovation, community-based conservation, environment, development, sustainable development, biodiversity, poverty, United Nations, Equator Initiative

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INTRODUCTION

Jok Jau Evong lives in Malaysia as a resident of Uma Bawang Keluan, a 100-person community that has settled alongside the Keluan River in the Sarawak rainforest.¹ He joins his community in their vision of development that combines meeting community livelihood needs with the sustainable use and conservation of natural resources. Jok Jau Evong is a leader in his community and serves as president of the Uma Bawang Resident's Association (UBRA). Since the community founded UBRA in 1989, they have been continuously innovative in the face of resource destruction and cultural erosion, and persistent in their objective to achieve their own vision of development. The members of UBRA initially organized road blockades to halt logging in their traditional area, but they have since engaged in a diversity of long-term projects, including agro-forestry ventures, pig-rearing and wet rice agriculture, that promote conservation while improving their level of income. One of UBRA's most successful long-term innovations is not based on farming but on village mapping. By May 1996, UBRA had produced a full-scale land map of Keluan project areas. The map is being used for devising and monitoring resource strategies, regaining control of areas of communal forest, and resolving land boundary disputes amongst community members. This map was instrumental in establishing and maintaining the customary land rights of Uma Bawang Keluan through the Malaysian court. It has since been converted into a Geographic Information System computerized map for planning natural resource management strategies. Jok Jau Evong and UBRA actively work to achieve their vision of development in order to ensure an equitable income for the residents of their community while managing the sustainable use and protection of the natural resources they depend upon.

Is it possible to combine human development and conservation objectives? This question concerns Evong and UBRA, and also continues to form the basis of debates at all levels of governance from the local level to the global level. Meeting human needs while ensuring ecosystem health is the challenge that triggered the launching of the Equator Initiative (EI) as part of the preparations for the World Summit on Sustainable Development and in support of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity. The Equator Initiative is a partnership amongst representatives of the United Nations, civil society, business, governments and local groups.² The initiative aims to reduce poverty while conserving biological diversity, and seeks to foster and strengthen local partnerships along the equatorial belt, including the Uma Bawang Resident's Association that Evong leads. Through the biennial Equator Prize, the Equator Initiative identifies and supports innovative approaches to achieving the dual goals of poverty reduction and of conservation and sustainable natural resource use at the local level. By analyzing local partnerships for sustainable development, the Equator Initiative has a broader goal of fostering local initiatives, creating enabling environments for these initiatives to emerge, and raising awareness about local solutions to sustainability. In 2002, the first prizes were awarded and Uma Bawang Resident's Association was selected to be amongst the seven award recipients.

Through the research, analysis and learning component established in the second phase of the Equator Initiative,³ the EI supports the study of prize finalists and nominations in order to gain a better understanding of the factors that lead to their effectiveness. This paper seeks to contribute to the research and learning objectives of the Equator Initiative by placing it within the context of the debates around community-based conservation and by focusing on the leadership within these local partnerships, such as the leadership exemplified by Jok Jau Evong. This paper is comprised of two parts. The first part places

¹ For more information about Uma Bawang and Jok Jau Evong, see *The Story of UBRA and the People of Uma Bawang*, <http://www.earthisland.org/borneo/news/articles/UBRAstory.html>.

² Further details and updates about the Equator Initiative can be found on the EI web site at <http://www.undp.org/equatorinitiative>.

³ For further information about the research, analysis and learning component of the Equator Initiative please refer to <http://www.undp.org/equatorinitiative/secondary/knowledge/index.html>.

the Equator Initiative within the context of the evolution of the global sustainable development agenda and the emergence of community-based conservation as a solution to the global biodiversity and social justice challenges. The second part focuses on the role of leadership within community-based conservation and outlines elements of an analytical framework for evaluating the leadership component of community initiatives. These leadership characteristics are explored further through detailed case studies of five of the Equator Initiative 2002 prize finalists in a companion working paper.⁴ This paper focuses on developing the analytical framework and developing recommendations as to how the Equator Initiative can support leadership capacity development for sustainable development.

PART ONE: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND THE EQUATOR INITIATIVE

The Global Sustainable Development Agenda

The World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) in their report *Our Common Future* posed an urgent challenge to policy-makers and society to achieve sustainable development through meeting human development needs while preserving the earth's life support systems.⁵ This report has come to symbolize a shift in the evolution of the global sustainable development agenda from a focus on raising awareness about global environmental problems at the 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment to a focus on sustainable development and the integration of environmental, economic and social imperatives.⁶ The WCED recommendation to the United Nations to host an international conference at the heads of state level led to the convening of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. At UNCED, the international community outlined fundamental principles of sustainable development in the *Rio Declaration* and a program of action for achieving sustainable development in *Agenda 21*.

The sustainable development agenda was further reinforced in the Millennium Report of UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan that highlighted environmental sustainability as an urgent challenge that requires "leadership at the very highest level...if we are to bequeath a livable Earth to our children — and theirs."⁷ Annan also noted the importance of the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) as a follow-up to UNCED.

It is my hope that the world's leaders will take advantage of the time remaining [until WSSD] to revitalize the sustainability debate and to prepare the ground for the adoption of concrete and meaningful actions by that time.⁸

The World Summit on Sustainable Development was held in Johannesburg, South Africa with the aim of building on the achievements of UNCED and implementing the goals outlined in *Agenda 21*. The resulting *Plan of Implementation* clearly stated that nation-states commit themselves "to undertaking

⁴ The reference for the companion working paper is Timmer, V. 2004. "Characteristics of Leadership and Five Equator Prize 2002 Finalists." CID Graduate Student Working Paper No. 3. Cambridge, MA: Science, Environment and Development Group, Center for International Development, Harvard University, <http://www.cid.harvard.edu/cidwp/grad/003.htm>.

⁵ World Commission on Environment and Development. 1987. *Our Common Future*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

⁶ Juma, C. 2001. "The Global Sustainability Challenge: From Agreement to Action." *International Journal Global Environmental Issues* 2(1/2): 1-14.

⁷ Annan, K. 2000. *We the Peoples: the Role of the United Nations in the 21st Century*. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's Millennium Report to the General Assembly. A/54/2000, <http://www.un.org/millennium/sg/report>.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

concrete actions and measures at all levels and to enhancing international cooperation.”⁹ The task of implementing the global sustainable development agenda was broadened beyond the international policy arena “to involve all relevant actors through partnerships, especially between Governments of the North and South, on the one hand, and between Governments and major groups, on the other, to achieve the widely shared goals of sustainable development.”¹⁰ In addition to the expected outcome of agreements amongst national governments, WSSD adopted a unique approach that differed significantly from previous UN summits through its recognition of bilateral partnerships and partnerships amongst governments, the private sector and civil society (Type II agreements) as official outcomes of the Summit. The Equator Initiative is a response to the call to operationalize sustainable development and is a registered Type II partnership.

Operationalizing sustainable development requires the reconciliation of ecological sustainability and human development goals. The global sustainable development agenda established the interconnectedness of the goals of conserving and protecting biological diversity and ecosystem habitat and the goals of reducing hunger and poverty and ensuring social justice. Prior to a reevaluation in the 1970s and 1980s, the conservation community perceived nature protection as requiring the establishment of national protected areas and this often involved halting human use of protected areas for livelihood needs. These conservation efforts historically have been driven by political elites, tied to colonial administrations, and often included the exclusion and even forced removal of communities of people from the designated protected areas.¹¹

In the 1970s, a significant shift took place within the conservation community towards community-based conservation. This shift was motivated by discomfort with the social injustice of conservation efforts combined with demands for strategy change from the donor community. The combination of these factors led to a reevaluation of the connections between conservation and human development. Conservation efforts that neglected to take into consideration local people and other stakeholders affected by the establishment of protected areas were failing to achieve conservation goals and were perceived as being illegitimate in the face of human development needs.¹² Park boundary enforcement came to be seen as being effective only if combined with a strategy of bringing together stakeholders, including the local community, to participate in decision-making processes and to negotiate the costs and benefits of conservation efforts. There was a need to link “protected areas together with human needs [to] support ecologically sound development which takes on practical meaning for governments and local people.”¹³ Human development and biodiversity protection had become perceived less of a zero-sum game of

⁹ World Summit on Sustainable Development. 2002. *Plan of Implementation*. New York: United Nations, p. 1.

¹⁰ World Summit on Sustainable Development. 2002. *Plan of Implementation*. New York: United Nations. *Agenda 21* identified nine major groups who have roles and responsibilities to participate in policy-making and the implementation of the sustainable development agenda: women, children and youth, indigenous peoples, non-governmental organizations, local authorities, workers and trade unions, business and industry, scientific and technological communities, and farmers.

¹¹ Wilshusen, P. R., S. R. Brechin, C. L. Fortwangler, and P. C. West. 2003. “Contested Nature: Conservation and Development at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century.” In S. R. Brechin, P. R. Wilshusen, C. L. Fortwangler, and P. C. West, eds. *Contested Nature: Promoting International Biodiversity with Social Justice in the Twenty-first Century*. Albany, NY, USA: State University of New York Press.

¹² *Ibid.*; Wells, M. and K. Brandon. 1992. *People and Parks: Linking Protected Area Management with Local Communities*. Washington, D.C.: The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, The World Bank; Dudley, N., B. Gujja, B. Jackson, J. Jeanrenaud, G. Oviedo, A. Phillips, P. Rosabel, S. Stolton and S. Wells. 1999. “Challenges for protected areas in the 21st Century.” In S. Stolton and N. Dudley, eds. *Partnerships for Protection: New Strategies for Planning and Management for Protected Areas*. London, UK: Earthscan Publications.

¹³ McNeeley, J. 1989. “Protected Area and Human Ecology: how national parks can contribute to sustaining societies to the twenty-first century.” In D. Western and M. Pearl, eds. *Conservation for the Twenty-First Century*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 150-7.

tradeoffs and more of a set of mutually reinforcing goals. Local communities shifted from being perceived solely as threats to conservation to being perceived as stewards and a significant part of the solution to the biodiversity crisis. Operationalizing sustainable development and achieving global biodiversity and social justice goals were seen to require place-based solutions in order to effectively implement global goals at the local level. As will become evident below, community-based conservation and the accompanying assumptions of win-win opportunities in meeting human development and environmental protection objectives has also become problematic and required re-evaluation. In recent years, there has been an acknowledgement that although achievement of gains in human development is not possible without gains in environmental protection, there are frequently tradeoffs that need to be reconciled in making development and conservation decisions. Clear win-win situations, such as the restoration of habitats for the benefit of biodiversity and community, are rare, and decision-making bodies need the capacity and knowledge in order to negotiate difficult tradeoffs between human development and biodiversity protection objectives.¹⁴

What kind of knowledge is necessary for making conservation and development decisions and negotiating tradeoffs? A key part of the shift away from national protected areas included a movement away from making conservation and human development decisions using solely scientific knowledge and knowledge of experts predominately based in industrialized countries. Traditional ecological knowledge of indigenous peoples and local communities has been recognized by the international community as being important in informing sustainable development decisions as a complement to scientific methodologies and knowledge.¹⁵

Social Learning

Both expert and traditional knowledge systems are critical to effectively implementing the complex and knowledge-intensive global sustainable development agenda. In the United Nations Secretary-General's Millennium Report, Kofi Annan referred to the gap that exists between the nature of the task and society's ability to respond:

We must face up to an inescapable reality: the challenges of sustainability simply overwhelm the adequacy of our responses. With some honorable exceptions, our responses are too few, too little and too late.¹⁶

The gap between the growing complexity of the sustainable development challenge and our capacity to cope and respond to the task has been termed the "human gap"¹⁷ and the "ingenuity gap."¹⁸ Bridging this gap requires humanity to draw on its ability to learn. The centrality of learning stems from the fundamental uncertainty about the nature and consequences of the sustainable development challenges

¹⁴ Wilshusen, P. R., S. R. Brechin, C. L. Fortwangler, and P. C. West. 2003. "Contested Nature: Conservation and Development at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century." In S. R. Brechin, P. R. Wilshusen, C. L. Fortwangler, and P. C. West, eds. *Contested Nature: Promoting International Biodiversity with Social Justice in the Twenty-first Century*. Albany, NY, USA: State University of New York Press.

¹⁵ Howitt, R. 2001. *Rethinking Resource Management: Justice Sustainability and Indigenous Peoples*. London and New York: Routledge; Potvin, C., J. Revéret, G. Patenaude and J. Hutton. 2002. "The Role of Indigenous Peoples in Conservation Actions: A Case Study of Cultural Differences and Conservation Priorities." In P. G. Le Prestre. *Governing Global Biodiversity: The Evolution and Implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity*. Hampshire, UK: Ashgate Publishing Ltd.

¹⁶ Annan, K. 2000. *We the Peoples: the Role of the United Nations in the 21st Century*. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's Millennium Report to the General Assembly. A/54/2000, <http://www.un.org/millennium/sg/report>, p. 56.

¹⁷ Botkin, J. W., M. Elmandjra and M. Malitza. 1979. *No Limits to Learning: Bridging the Human Gap*. A Report to the Club of Rome. Exeter, UK: A. Wheaton and Co. Ltd.

¹⁸ Homer-Dixon, T. 2000. *The Ingenuity Gap*. New York: Knopf.

and from the recognition that the knowledge and skills that are required to address these challenges are shifting rapidly. The construction of knowledge systems to guide implementation strategies increasingly requires the sustained, iterative development of ideas and conceptual frameworks, and the participation of a diversity of actors that influence and are affected by the decisions being made.

Learning to implement the sustainable development agenda is a social process of knowledge acquisition, distribution, interpretation, and retention and of action based on this knowledge across multiple actors in society. The term “social learning” has emerged to encompass this type of learning within larger collective entities in society.¹⁹ Bill Clark reviews the use of the term “social learning” in his contribution to the *Encyclopedia of Global Change*.²⁰ In this review, Clark defines social learning as an “emerging family of perspectives that strives to take seriously the simultaneously science-laden and politically charged character of society’s encounter with global change, and to contribute to a more adaptive, reflective management of that encounter.”²¹ For the analysis of the Equator Initiative cases, this paper undertakes the assumption that societies as a whole can learn to manage global social, economic and ecological problems through transformations in regulatory institutions, in value systems and in underlying cognitive and cultural beliefs and assumptions.²² This process of social transformation takes place through shifts in the patterns of interaction amongst stakeholders and shifts in the guiding norms and principles of society.

The Equator Initiative was launched within the context of the international community striving to learn how to reconcile social justice and biodiversity goals and how to facilitate the valuable contribution that local communities can make in achieving sustainable development. This initiative is part of a larger movement in recognition of and in support for implementing sustainable development at the local level. Although broad national and global policy agreements and enforcement mechanisms are essential for effective local implementation, it is at the local level where policy becomes operationalized.²³ For the Equator Initiative, the emphasis is on local-level implementation in tropical countries along the equatorial belt. These countries have the greatest concentration of biological diversity but are also beset by the disempowerment of local and indigenous communities and by increasing poverty. It is in these countries that the Equator Initiative is searching to identify innovative approaches to achieving the goals of poverty reduction and the sustainable use and conservation of biodiversity at the local level. The Equator Initiative’s flagship activity is the biennial Equator Prize. This awards program is aimed at supporting these local examples of sustainable development in action. Out of the 420 nominations submitted for the 2002 inaugural Equator Initiative Prize, 27 finalists were chosen by a Technical Advisory Committee to be evaluated by an eminent international jury for the selection of the 6 award recipients.

There are a number of motivations behind the award scheme. The prize honors innovations in local partnerships to combine poverty reduction efforts through sustainable use of natural resources. There is also a social learning goal inherent in identifying these innovations, as they are demonstrations of the possibility of integrating conservation and human development goals. As Alvaro Umana, Principal Advisor and Leader of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)’s Environmentally Sustainable Development Group, stated:

¹⁹ Clark, W.C. 2001. “Social Learning.” In Goudie, A. S. and D. J. Cuff, eds. *Encyclopedia of Global Change: Environmental Change and Human Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Scott, W. Richard. 2001. *Institutions and Organizations*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA, USA; London; and New Delhi: Sage Publications, Inc.

²³ The importance of local implementation is also evident in the focus on local villages as key sites for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Further information is available on the MDGs web site: <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>.

Local communities from throughout the tropical developing world are charting a path towards true sustainable development. Their work is proof that biodiversity conservation and poverty reduction are mutually inclusive aims. The Equator Prize is designed in part to focus global attention upon these local success stories.²⁴

The Equator Initiative aims to create a “worldwide movement” that enables the lessons learnt from the Equator Prize recipients to result in increased awareness and improved capability of social systems to be sustainable. Sean Southey, the manager of the Equator Initiative, expressed this goal by stating that the Equator Initiative strives to “lead the way to a better understanding of how conservation efforts can support wider work to achieve sustainable human development,” which will be accomplished “through dedicated efforts to promote linkages between biodiversity conservation and poverty reduction.”²⁵ As highlighted above, the international conservation and development communities have shifted towards a focus on community-based conservation as the solution to establishing these linkages and encouraging participation by those who depend on natural resources directly for their livelihood. Through its focus on partnerships between local people and supportive external actors in creating community-based conservation schemes, the Equator Initiative is a manifestation of this shift in conservation and development strategies. The next section of the paper seeks to inform the Equator Initiative’s approach by examining the debates surrounding community-based conservation and some of the potential mistakes that can be made if local communities are romanticized and if community-based conservation is perceived as a sufficient solution to implementing global sustainable development objectives. One limitation has already been mentioned in the discussion above on tradeoffs between development and conservation goals, and the section below will illuminate other potential pitfalls. The second part of the paper then examines one aspect of community-based conservation in depth. The paper focuses on the role of leadership within these community-based conservation initiatives.

Community-based Conservation

The goal of reconciling nature conservation and human welfare needs has led to efforts that are referred to by a diverse array of terms including “community-based conservation, integrated conservation and development, collaborative, joint and co-management, sustainable resource utilization, participatory natural resource management and self-mobilized conservation initiatives.”²⁶ In this paper, the term “community-based conservation” will be used to discuss local partnerships aimed at combining conservation and social justice goals. When first adopted in the 1990s, community-based conservation appeared to have enormous promise by taking into account the social processes and legitimate concerns of people adversely affected by conservation efforts while simultaneously implementing global biodiversity goals. With its new focus on the welfare of local communities, the conservation community also gained access to financial resources available for rural development aid and were able to increase their efforts through this additional funding.²⁷ Instead of using policing and enforcement measures to guard protected areas, community-based conservation efforts engaged a wide array of stakeholders including local people in biodiversity-rich areas in the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources for their livelihoods. Alternatives to exploitative use of natural resources were introduced, including the extraction of non-timber forest products, agroecology, and ecotourism. Local communities

²⁴ Quoted in UNDP Newsfront, 13 June 2003, <http://www.undp.org/dpa/frontpagearchive/2003/june/13june03/index.html>.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Jeanrenaud, S. 1999. “People-oriented conservation: progress to date.” In S. Stolton and N. Dudley, eds. *Partnerships for Protection: New Strategies for Planning and Management for Protected Areas*. London: Earthscan Publications, p. 126.

²⁷ Wells, M. P. 2003. “Protected Area Management in the Tropics: Can We Learn from Experience?” *Journal of Sustainable Forestry* 17(1/2): 67-79.

transformed from being perceived as threats to conservation efforts to being perceived as harmonious stewards of traditional sustainable resource practices and wisdom.

There have recently been significant critiques of the community-based conservation approach. The involvement of local communities in conservation efforts has not proven to be the solution to the biodiversity and human development challenges that it was believed to be.²⁸ Both the concepts of “community” and of “involvement” have given rise to debate. First, the vision of the community as “an organic whole, as small and territorially fixed, as under siege and eroding, or as standing in opposition to markets and states” and the belief that a local community has integrated and shared “locally evolved norms to manage resources sustainably and equitably” fails to stand up to reality.²⁹ Ignoring differences in values, perspective and power within a community and differential access that community members have to layers of political decision-makers leads to inaccurate assumptions about the ease by which collective decisions at the community level can be made. It is not simply a question of altering terminology, but altering analytical perspectives. If the heterogeneous nature of a local community is recognized, the term “community” can still be used to indicate a local population dependent on a natural resource base in a particular locality; however, a heterogeneous perspective is essential in the design of institutions for managing natural resource use. Resurrecting traditional institutions or creating new community organizations aimed at conserving sustainable development does not necessarily lead to egalitarian decision-making processes. Assumptions that local communities have effective conflict resolution mechanisms that ensure that common interests are being met do not take into account the existence of marginalized groups and of multiple interests within a community.³⁰ Designing effective natural resource management organizations requires an understanding of these internal interactions amongst community members as well as the ways in which traditional practices have needed to change in light of shifts in the larger political and social system. Traditional institutions that have not adapted their approaches have unraveled in the face of internal and external pressures.³¹ Evaluating the effectiveness of traditional community organizations requires a broader perspective that takes into account the multiple interests within a community and the cross-scale policy interactions that can enable or disable a community organizational process.

Second, community-based conservation efforts were frequently guided by an assumption of the local community as historically in harmonious interaction with their local environment and natural resource

²⁸ For example: Agrawal, A. and C. C. Gibson. 2001. *Communities and the Environment: Ethnicity, Gender, and the State in Community-Based Conservation*. New Brunswick, NJ, USA and London: Rutgers University Press; Kellert, S. R., J. N. Mehta, S. A. Ebbin and L. L. Lichtenfield. 2000. “Community Natural Resource Management: Promise, Rhetoric and Reality.” *Society and Natural Resources* 13: 705-715; Wells, M. P. 2003. “Protected Area Management in the Tropics: Can We Learn from Experience?” *Journal of Sustainable Forestry* 17(1/2): 67-79; Oates, J. F. 1999. *Myth and Reality in the Rainforest: How Conservation Strategies are Failing in West Africa*. Berkeley, CA, USA: University of California Press; Campbell, B., A. Mandondo, N. Nemarundwe, B. Sithole, W. De Jong, M. Luckert and F. Matose. 2001. “Challenges to Proponents of Common Property Resource Systems: Despairing Voices from the Social Forests of Zimbabwe.” *World Development* 29(4): 589-600; Brosius, J. P., A. L. Tsing. 1998. “Representing Communities: Histories and Politics of Community-Based Natural Resource Management.” *Society and Natural Resources* 11(2).

²⁹ Agrawal, A. and C. C. Gibson. 2001. *Communities and the Environment: Ethnicity, Gender, and the State in Community-Based Conservation*. New Brunswick, NJ, USA and London: Rutgers University Press, p. 12; Agrawal, A. and C. C. Gibson. 1999. “Enchantment and Disenchantment: The Role of Community in Natural Resource Conservation.” *World Development* 27(4): 629-649.

³⁰ Agrawal, A. and C. C. Gibson. 2001. *Communities and the Environment: Ethnicity, Gender, and the State in Community-Based Conservation*. New Brunswick, NJ, USA and London: Rutgers University Press, p. 12; Agrawal, A. and C. C. Gibson. 1999. “Enchantment and Disenchantment: The Role of Community in Natural Resource Conservation.” *World Development* 27(4): 629-649.

³¹ Wells, M. P. 2003. “Protected Area Management in the Tropics: Can We Learn from Experience?” *Journal of Sustainable Forestry* 17(1/2): 67-79.

base. From this perspective, the purpose of conservation and human development efforts becomes the nurturing and reintroduction of traditional sustainable practices. There are a number of problems with this assumption. Local community traditional practices are not necessarily aligned with global biodiversity goals. For example, local communities have been found to exclude rare and endangered species from protection if they do not have instrumental or spiritual value for the community, or if they present a health hazard or danger to the community.³² Species that are considered icons of the global biodiversity cause, such as elephants, are rightfully perceived as dangerous and destructive hazards by many of the communities that live alongside them. Local community needs can also come into conflict with the goals of the global conservation community when those purporting to represent the global biodiversity cause, such as representatives of international non-governmental organizations and university institutions, declare a state of emergency for particular cases of biodiversity protection.³³ For example, there are situations where the destruction and disappearance of habitats is occurring at such a rapid rate that the global biodiversity community demands an immediate response and tough decisions rather than time-intensive multi-stakeholder dialogues that balance tradeoffs between human development and biodiversity protection. Conservationists argue that it is unethical to be engaged in dialogue for long-term conservation while the last remaining habitat for a given species disappears. This remains a controversial stance because unlike governments removing civil liberties when declaring a state of emergency and simultaneously being ultimately accountable to these citizens “it is unclear what degree of responsibility the international conservation community has to the broad array of groups that are impacted and served by biodiversity protection interventions...The real test of biodiversity protection’s future rests on the degree of legitimacy that the conservation imperative will take on for all impacted groups, but in particular those resource-dependent populations whose livelihoods and oftentimes survival depend upon nature’s vitality.”³⁴

An additional consideration in the delicate balance between global biodiversity goals and local livelihoods is the need to develop regional-level strategies. The focus on local community-based conservation projects can undermine global biodiversity and human development goals when they are not combined with regional ecological corridors and efforts to shift detrimental broader political and economic forces.³⁵ In the realm of biodiversity protection, there has recently been a shift towards landscape and ecoregional approaches to conservation; however, there is equally a danger in these approaches if they are not complemented by participation and empowerment strategies adopted under community-based conservation.³⁶ These are real tensions. The solution may lie in combining community-based conservation efforts and long-term multistakeholder processes with short-term

³² For an analysis of this conflict in perspective involving global non-governmental organizations, international donors, and local NGOs and communities with examples from the experience in Zimbabwe conservation efforts, please see Duffy, R. 2000. *Killing for Conservation: Wildlife Policy in Zimbabwe*. Harare, Zimbabwe: The International African Institute in Association with Weaver Press. Bloomington, IN, USA: James Currey and Indiana University Press.

³³ One example of such calls of emergency and for immediate action is the concern as to the long-term survival of the great apes. The following two sample press releases demonstrate this sense of urgency: “Many Fellow Primate Face an Uncertain Future as Humanity’s Forgotten Cousins” (<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/pr/00/04/primates.html>) and “Orangutans Doomed, say Experts, unless Immediate Action Taken” (<http://www.orangutan.org/press/news.php?id=81>).

³⁴ Wilshusen, P. R., S. R. Brechin, C. L. Fortwangler, and P. C. West. 2003. “Contested Nature: Conservation and Development at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century.” In S. R. Brechin, P. R. Wilshusen, C. L. Fortwangler and P. C. West, eds. *Contested Nature: Promoting International Biodiversity with Social Justice in the Twenty-first Century*. Albany, NY, USA: State University of New York Press, p. 22.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

³⁶ Brosius, J. P. and D. Russell. 2003. “Conservation from Above: An Anthropological Perspective on Transboundary Protected Areas and Ecoregional Planning.” *Journal of Sustainable Forestry* 17(1/2): 39-65.

enforcement of endangered protected areas.³⁷ This mixture of different approaches to managing human interactions with nature would ensure both an equitable process while also achieving short-term urgent conservation objectives.

Another critique of a community-based conservation approach is concerned with the importance placed on alternative livelihood schemes. Experience with community-based conservation projects has highlighted that there is an overemphasis on the potential of alternative livelihood schemes, including ecotourism ventures, harvesting non-timber forest products, extractive reserves, and multiple-use forestry, to adequately support local communities.³⁸ There are concerns both with the social justice issues that arise from excluding people from extracting protected area resources in light of human development needs, and with the long-term sustainability of extracting non-timber forest products. Eco-tourism ventures are vulnerable to shifts in tourism from factors that are often beyond the community's control. These shifts are driven by such diverse factors as changes in tourism fads to the outbreak of civil war and the resulting decline in visits to the country to the decline in air travel and tourism after the terrorist attack on 11 September 2001. Communities that depend on a steady tourist stream can be severely and quickly disabled by these changes. In addition, alternative livelihood schemes are frequently financially supported by external organizations including international non-governmental organizations and their donors. The question then becomes whether the alternative livelihood schemes can sustain themselves without the infusion of external financial support.³⁹ The ability of the natural resource base to support a local community is also altering as traditional practices shift and the demographics of the community change.⁴⁰ The acquisition of technologies, such as guns for hunting, has enabled an increased impact on natural resources. In addition, population pressure has driven migrants into biodiversity-rich areas and changed the composition of local communities that obtain their subsistence from the natural resource base. Migration can also increase to areas that establish alternative livelihood schemes and increase the income of the local peoples. This can have the effect of undermining human development and conservation advances with the increased demographic pressure. The focus by community-based conservation efforts on particular local communities can also have the effect of creating "mini development poles that in some cases vastly increase local populations and resource use demands."⁴¹

Community-based conservation strategies have emphasized the need to secure land tenure and usufruct rights for local community members as a key component for enabling biodiversity conservation. Secure land rights and ownership are anticipated to lead to greater interest and responsibility in maintaining a sustainable resource base while ensuring human development; however, this assumption has not always held. The decentralization of power and land ownership from the state to the local community has already led to examples of certain local groups negotiating with and signing their land rights to private interests for commercial gain and profit.⁴² The negotiation of land ownership rights can also exacerbate

³⁷ Wells, M. P. 2003. "Protected Area Management in the Tropics: Can We Learn from Experience?" *Journal of Sustainable Forestry* 17(1/2): 67-79.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Terborgh, J. 2001. "Why Conservation in the Tropics is Failing." In D. Rothenberg and M. Ulvaeus, eds. *The World and the Wild: Expanding Conservation Beyond its American Roots*. Tuscon, AZ, USA: University of Arizona Press, pp. 81-89.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Wilshusen, P. R., S. R. Brechin, C. L. Fortwangler and P. C. West. 2003. "Contested Nature: Conservation and Development at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century." In S. R. Brechin, P. R. Wilshusen, C. L. Fortwangler and P. C. West, eds. *Contested Nature: Promoting International Biodiversity with Social Justice in the Twenty-first Century*. Albany, NY, USA: State University of New York Press, p. 9.

⁴² Sekhran, N. 1996. *Pursuing the 'D' in Integrated Conservation and Development Projects (ICADPs): Issues and Challenges for Papua New Guinea*. ODI Rural Development Forestry Network Papers 19b. London: Overseas Development Institute. As cited in Jeanrenaud, S. 1999. "People-oriented conservation: progress to date." In S.

local inequalities if not conducted within a framework that exposes informal power structures and seeks to identify alternative tenure systems that benefit marginalized people.

The potential pitfalls of community-based conservation described above focus on the assumptions about the notion of “community.” There are also critiques that are focused on creating a better understanding of the term “involvement.” In order to assure legitimacy in human development and conservation efforts, participation by local peoples and stakeholders has become central for achieving sustainable development aims. A key distinction has been made between participation as a means and participation as an end. This distinction highlights two extremes in a spectrum of ways in which participation can be sought.⁴³ These range from simply being informed about a decision-making process, to being consulted, to being involved, to collaborating, and, finally, to being empowered. Participation as a means refers to participatory processes wherein the objectives have already been set before participation is sought. For example, a conservation effort can have a pre-determined goal of establishing a protected area, and then involves local people as a tool or resource for achieving this goal. This is more of a manipulative approach to participation. Participation as an end involves a facilitative approach for empowerment wherein local people are engaged because it is their right to be involved in decision-making that affects their lives. Empowerment requires that decision-making power is shared and that those involved in the process have the power to implement decisions. This requires traditional holders of power to share power and decision-making as equals with other parties working towards a commonly agreed upon goal. This voluntary sharing of power can be distinguished from processes of self-empowerment of marginalized groups in which marginalized groups gain empowerment through struggles for political and economic power.

The shift towards community-based conservation has elements of both empowerment and self-empowerment. “Top-down” recognition of the legitimacy of local populations to have a voice in natural resource management and biodiversity conservation decision-making by international conservation and development organizations and nation-states is also a recognition of the need for an empowerment process. Local people cannot be “given” power but must “stand as an equal and have the desire, skills and legal mandate to share that power.”⁴⁴ In addition to this top-down recognition, empowerment is also happening from the “bottom-up” as local people are self-empowering and demanding a voice in decision-making about their livelihoods and natural resource utilization. Securing the involvement of local communities in conservation efforts relies on stakeholder analysis; however, this process of defining who in the community will participate and how they will be involved can exacerbate existing power inequalities in the community. Local elite can use the conservation effort as a way of solidifying their interests and this can have negative effects on marginalized groups within the community.⁴⁵ Recognizing community heterogeneity is essential for avoiding this potential pitfall.

As is apparent from the discussion above, the Equator Initiative’s focus on local partnerships and communities is not without its controversies; however, supporting local expressions of sustainability remains a worthwhile endeavor as long as the Equator Initiative remains aware of the potential problems with the approach and avoids idealizing local communities. For the Equator Initiative and for those

Stolton and N. Dudley, eds. *Partnerships for Protection: New Strategies for Planning and Management for Protected Areas*. London: Earthscan Publications, p. 129.

⁴³ Jeanrenaud, S. 1999. “People-oriented conservation: progress to date.” In S. Stolton and N. Dudley, eds. *Partnerships for Protection: New Strategies for Planning and Management for Protected Areas*. London: Earthscan Publications, p. 126; Seymoar, N. K. 2001. “Empowerment and Public Participation.” In International Centre for Sustainable Cities (ICSC). *Sustainable Cities*. Publication #1. Vancouver, Canada: ICSC.

⁴⁴ Seymoar, N. K. 2001. “Empowerment and Public Participation.” In International Centre for Sustainable Cities (ICSC). *Sustainable Cities*. Publication #1. Vancouver, Canada: ICSC, p. 12.

⁴⁵ Agrawal, A. and C. C. Gibson. 2001. *Communities and the Environment: Ethnicity, Gender, and the State in Community-Based Conservation*. New Brunswick, NJ, USA and London: Rutgers University Press.

working in partnerships with local people, social mapping is necessary to identify the different interests within a community and the processes and means by which interests are pursued.⁴⁶ This is particularly important for facilitating marginalized subgroups that seek support from other actors inside the community and external stakeholders in order to organize and secure a voice in decision-making.⁴⁷ As part of its program, the Equator Initiative is focusing on facilitating enabling policy environments for local partnerships. This is also part of the solution to ensuring that community-based conservation is supported within a broader human development and conservation program.

Exposing problems associated with a community-based conservation approach does not require a search for an entirely new approach to reconciling human and ecosystem needs as there is clear value in involving local constituencies in making decisions about their livelihoods. However, in balancing tradeoffs between global and local development and biodiversity goals, difficult questions need to be posed. “Who decides how biodiversity conservation will occur and at what social cost? and, Who benefits from biodiversity conservation?”⁴⁸ As a manifestation of society’s endeavor to learn how to reconcile human development and conservation goals, the Equator Initiative will be faced with these questions and will need to encourage ongoing dialogue and compromise in light of inevitable debates. The second part of this paper shifts from an analysis of the context within which the Equator Initiative operates towards a contribution to the analysis of the factors leading to effective community-based conservation efforts. The focus is on leadership in community-based conservation and poses the question whether there are characteristics of effective leadership that can be drawn from the literature and Equator Prize cases.

PART TWO: LEADERSHIP AND THE EQUATOR INITIATIVE

The context outlined above is critical for evaluating the analytical strength of leadership as a factor in determining the effectiveness of community-based conservation initiatives such as the Equator Prize 2002 finalists. Determining effectiveness and success requires attention to multiple factors including the form of community organization, the linkages across scales, the potential for scaling-up impact, the transferability of the approach, and the measurement of outcomes including biodiversity increases and poverty reduction. This paper seeks to add to the analysis of effectiveness of community-based conservation initiatives by focusing on leadership. “Leadership and Community Empowerment” was one of the criteria by which the Equator Prize finalists were analyzed. The jury sought to identify “initiatives demonstrating leadership that has inspired action and change consistent with the vision of the *Equator Initiative*, including policy and/or institutional change and local people’s empowerment, especially that of marginalized groups.”⁴⁹ After examining the debate surrounding leadership as an analytical factor for determining the success of community-based conservation efforts, this paper proposes a set of characteristics of effective leadership and a set of recommendations for the Equator Initiative in nurturing and supporting leadership.

⁴⁶ Jeanrenaud, S. 1999. “People-oriented conservation: progress to date.” In S. Stolton and N. Dudley, eds. *Partnerships for Protection: New Strategies for Planning and Management for Protected Areas*. London: Earthscan Publications.

⁴⁷ Agrawal, A. and C. C. Gibson. 2001. *Communities and the Environment: Ethnicity, Gender, and the State in Community-Based Conservation*. New Brunswick, NJ, USA and London: Rutgers University Press.

⁴⁸ Wilshusen, P. R., S. R. Brechin, C. L. Fortwangler, and P. C. West. 2003. “Contested Nature: Conservation and Development at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century.” In S. R. Brechin, P. R. Wilshusen, C. L. Fortwangler, and P. C. West, eds. *Contested Nature: Promoting International Biodiversity with Social Justice in the Twenty-first Century*. Albany, NY, USA: State University of New York Press, p. 16.

⁴⁹ See <http://www.equatorinitiative.org>.

Leadership as an Analytical Factor

This paper draws on the academic discussions on the role of leadership within the literature on community-based conservation, rural development, social and civic entrepreneurship, and the private sector. It also is based on an analysis of the Equator Prize 2002 finalists and an investigation into the role leadership plays in the effectiveness of these initiatives. Leaders can emerge from within a community or from outside of the community including from within a non-governmental organization, government agency, research institution, or private sector company. In addition to focusing on both internal and external actors as leaders, this paper recognizes both individual leaders and leadership teams.

Local leadership has been identified as being a determining factor in the success of community initiatives; however, this conclusion has been a controversial one. Strong leaders are also capable of undermining democratic processes and relationships between the community and external actors during the establishment of a community project and organization.⁵⁰ On the other hand, there is evidence that inspired local leadership, either individuals or small teams of people, is important particularly in initiating community projects, in establishing an organizational structure, and in building networks to external actors. “In this process, the main leader need not be the founder; sometimes the second or third leader becomes the key. What is needed is a strong personality with enough commitment and drive to give the organization a central focus and, equally important, external legitimacy and alliances.”⁵¹ Anil Gupta in his research on local community development uses the term “grassroots innovator” to discuss the role of the individual in producing innovative solutions to social and environmental challenges.⁵² The assumption is that leadership plays an important role in identifying problems and challenges, in determining possible solutions, and in producing a compelling vision that inspires others. Once this initial vision has been created, leaders can play a role in managing the process of achieving a set of agreed upon goals, in gathering resources and establishing organizational structures to address the problem, and in experimenting, learning and adapting to changing circumstances.

As stated above, leadership for local initiatives can emerge from the community itself or from outside of the community. Those initiatives launched from outside a community often seek leaders within the community to form partnerships in developing the initiative. In many conservation efforts, local people are engaged in order to assist in the management of protected areas and vulnerable ecosystems. As highlighted in the previous section of this paper, the assumption that the community is a homogenous unit can lead to an inadvertent favoring of local elite and an undermining of marginalized groups. When the local elite is launching local initiatives, a similar concern arises.

Self-mobilized conservation initiatives come from groups which are usually highly motivated and organized with strong local leadership, and promise to be socially sustainable in the long term. While they may not share the same final goals as conservationists, they often share many common interests and often approach agencies for financial and technical assistance. However, self-mobilized groups are not necessarily concerned with equity issues. Support of local elites can influence local economic and political dynamics, with potentially negative impacts on

⁵⁰ Carroll, T. F. 1992. *Intermediary NGOs: The Supporting Link in Grassroots Development*. Connecticut, USA: Kumarian Press, p. 142; Narayanasamy, N., M. P. Boraian, M. and A. Jeyaraju. 2000. *Corruption at the Grassroots: The Shades and Shadows*. New Delhi, India: Concept Publishing Company.

⁵¹ Carroll, T. F. 1992. *Intermediary NGOs: The Supporting Link in Grassroots Development*. Bloomfield, CT, USA: Kumarian Press, p. 1422; Seymour, N. K. and J. P. de León. 1995. *Creating Community Unity: Models of Self-Empowerment – 50 Award Winning Communities*. Canada: Friends of the United Nations.

⁵² Gupta, A, Riya Sinha, Dileep Koradia, T. N. Prakash, P. Vivekanandan and other members of Honey Bee Network. 2001. *Building upon Grassroots' Innovations: Articulating Social and Ethical Capital*. Paper invited for presentation at the World Social Forum Workshop, Brazil, 25-30 January 2001. IIMA WP No.2001-02-06.

marginal groups.⁵³

For actors outside of a community, the solution to avoiding this bias lies in creating social maps and undertaking extended stakeholder analysis that identifies the composition of the community and allows for marginalized voices to be identified and heard. These additional voices can provide insight as to how to develop community initiatives that take into account the interests of all members of the community and how to adapt traditional practices to present-day circumstances. Supporting marginalized groups within a community does not necessarily exclude the involvement of local elites. When external actors encounter local elites, Judith Tendler makes the argument that co-opting local elites is a better strategy than creating situations of confrontation.⁵⁴

There is a movement within the literature on leadership to incorporate a dynamic dimension into the understanding of leadership itself. Rather than success or failure resting on the shoulders of an individual leader, leadership is perceived as a give and take amongst members of a community. “Leaders mobilize people to face problems, and communities to make progress on problems because leaders challenge and help them to do so.”⁵⁵ The leader illuminates a problem, engages in dialogue with others to determine if the problem is worth addressing and the best course of action to follow, and then joins together with others to find a solution. The ultimate success or failure rests on the shoulders of all those stakeholders who become involved, and the solutions are found through partnership. Leaders encourage the leadership capabilities in all of the engaged community and encourage participation in building the relationships and processes for tackling challenges. This dynamic approach to analyzing leadership is important for understanding changes in leadership as an initiative evolves over time. The leader who launches an initiative may not necessarily be equally effective at managing the initiative. Gupta makes a similar point in his analysis of grassroots innovators.⁵⁶ A local initiative can shift its goals, tasks, scope and capacity in response to the constantly shifting internal and external factors. Local partnerships for sustainable development that include capacity building as part of their work have also often been focused on developing leadership capacity within local communities to scale-up the impact of the initiative.

Characteristics of Effective Leadership in Community-based Conservation

The literature on local initiatives recognizes that leaders play only one part in an array of factors that lead to the success or failure of the initiative. There are certain characteristics of leadership that have emerged as being associated with potential success and these have been summarized in the five characteristics below. The literature indicates that leaders or leadership teams that are innovators, communicators, learners, bridge-builders, and systems thinkers are characteristic of successful local initiatives. The following chart highlights the key elements of each of these characteristics and the paper continues with a more in-depth examination.

⁵³ Jeanrenaud, S. 1999. “People-oriented conservation: progress to date.” In S. Stolton and N. Dudley, eds. *Partnerships for Protection: New Strategies for Planning and Management for Protected Areas*. London: Earthscan Publications, p. 128.

⁵⁴ Tendler, J. 1982. “Rural Projects through Urban Eyes.” *World Bank Staff Working Paper No. 532*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Agency for International Development.

⁵⁵ Heifetz, R. 1994. *Leadership without Easy Answers*. Cambridge, MA, USA: Belknap Press, p. 15.

⁵⁶ Gupta, A, Riya Sinha, Dileep Koradia, T. N. Prakash, P. Vivekanandan and other members of Honey Bee Network. 2001. *Building upon Grassroots’ Innovations: Articulating Social and Ethical Capital*. Paper invited for presentation at the World Social Forum Workshop, Brazil, 25-30 January 2001. IIMA WP No.2001-02-06.

Leader as Innovator ⁵⁷	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embraces uncertainty and takes risks • Creates value through gap-filling, pulling elements and people together in a new way
Leader as Communicator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expresses a clear and compelling vision centred around common values • Facilitates an open and interactive dialogue amongst stakeholders and harnesses the leadership capacity of stakeholders
Leader as Learner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adapts to shifting relationships and circumstances • Actively promotes learning as a core value • Establishes mechanisms for monitoring progress and learning structures
Leader as Bridge-Builder ⁵⁸	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understands and works with diverse stakeholders • Creates networks of stakeholders to together address a challenge across boundaries and scales • Has the ability to manage conflict in a constructive way
Leader as Systems Thinker ⁵⁹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sees interrelationships and processes and focuses on areas of high leverage • Distinguishes amongst different kinds of complexity • Moves away from blame and avoids symptomatic solutions • Surfaces underlying assumptions and mental models

Leader as Innovator

Throughout human evolution, local communities have been challenged with adapting to environmental conditions and developing social systems to enable their survival. Leaders that are motivated to be entrepreneurial and seek a resolution to the social, economic and ecological problems they encounter are innovators. This first characteristic of leadership focuses on innovation because “innovation is often a function of experienced and imaginative leadership...[and is the ability] to live with uncertainty and take risks, to engage in long-term planning and to consider the possibility of failure at least initially as a learning experience.”⁶⁰ The notion of “entrepreneurship” has been borrowed from the business literature and applied in a social context to capture the ability of leaders to create value through innovation. The terms “social entrepreneurship,”⁶¹ “civic entrepreneurship”⁶² and village entrepreneur⁶³ have been used in

⁵⁷ Alvord, S. H., L. D. Brown and C. W. Letts. 2002. “Social Entrepreneurship and Societal Transformation: An Exploratory Study.” Hauser Center Working Paper No. 15, http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/hauser/active_backup/PDF_XLS/workingpaper_15.pdf; Banuri, T. and A. Najam. 2002. *Civic Entrepreneurship: A Civil Society Perspective on Sustainable Development*. Islamabad, Pakistan: Gandhara Academy Press.

⁵⁸ Alvord, S. H., L. D. Brown and C. W. Letts. 2002. “Social Entrepreneurship and Societal Transformation: An Exploratory Study.” Hauser Center Working Paper No. 15, http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/hauser/active_backup/PDF_XLS/workingpaper_15.pdf.

⁵⁹ Senge, P. 1990. “The Leader’s New Work: Building Learning Organizations.” *Sloan Management Review* 32(1).

⁶⁰ Carroll, T. F. 1992. *Intermediary NGOs: The Supporting Link in Grassroots Development*. Connecticut, USA: Kumarian Press, p. 142.

⁶¹ Alvord, S. H., L. D. Brown and C. W. Letts. 2002. “Social Entrepreneurship and Societal Transformation: An Exploratory Study.” Hauser Center Working Paper No. 15, http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/hauser/active_backup/PDF_XLS/workingpaper_15.pdf.

this context and emphasize the “gap filling or *bricolage* – which aims to produce social capital” that innovators and entrepreneurs use to address a challenge. Innovation “involves newness, a new way of pulling things together, new ways of mobilizing resources, building legitimacy, engendering collective action, stimulating economic activity, or adapting technology” rather than adopting a blueprint approach.⁶⁴ This is also part of Schumpeter’s definition of a business entrepreneur.⁶⁵

The Schumpeterian entrepreneur is not necessarily the inventor or the manager or financier – it may just as easily be someone who adopts somebody else’s idea, borrows money from a bank, and hires a manager to put the idea to practical use in a business or factory. Without entrepreneurship, ideas or inventions cannot impact development, sustainable or otherwise. The entrepreneur has the *imagination* to see the potential for profit from the innovation (i.e. the practical application of the technique), the *initiative* actually to carry out the task of introducing the innovation, and a *willingness* to take the calculated risk that the effort might fail and lead to a loss rather than a profit.⁶⁶

As highlighted above, the leader as innovator can adopt and resurrect traditional practices and adapt them to present conditions. Although the traditional practices are not new, the innovation lies in their resurrection and adaptation. In a sense, an innovator is a designer that works to influence the subtle architecture of life without an expectation of how the design will unfold.⁶⁷

What is important to see is how [local projects] usually begin very modestly, starting with an idea and a conviction on the part of one person or a few friends. They were then nurtured by people at many levels of the resulting organizations, people who shared an understanding of how outside resources could be used to bring forth indigenous resources, how to make these combined resources productive, and how to make the provision and use of such resources sustainable by meeting people’s needs in realistic, flexible and respectful ways.⁶⁸

Leader as Communicator

A critical aspect of a successful leader is the leader’s ability to communicate effectively to stakeholders whose interests and resources are necessary for the success of the initiative. This characteristic of leaders is often associated with the idea of the “charismatic leader” that provides a compelling vision and motivates others to join in addressing a challenge. There has been considerable debate as to the long-term effectiveness of an initiative led by a charismatic leader. If the leader remains the central focal point of the initiative, the internal democracy of any initiative may suffer, the expectations placed upon the leader can be unsustainable, and other stakeholders can avoid taking ownership and personal responsibility of the initiative over time. The benefit of having a charismatic leader, particularly at the beginning of an

⁶² Banuri, T. and A. Najam. 2002. *Civic Entrepreneurship: A Civil Society Perspective on Sustainable Development*. Islamabad, Pakistan: Gandhara Academy Press.

⁶³ Broehl, W. G., Jr. 1978. *The Village Entrepreneur: Change Agents in India’s Rural Development*. Cambridge, MA, USA: Harvard University Press.

⁶⁴ Banuri, T. and A. Najam. 2002. *Civic Entrepreneurship: A Civil Society Perspective on Sustainable Development*. Islamabad, Pakistan: Gandhara Academy Press.

⁶⁵ Schumpeter, J. A. 1951. *Essays: On entrepreneurs, innovations, business cycles, and the evolution of capitalism*. Edited by R.V. Clemence. Cambridge, UK: Addison-Wesley.

⁶⁶ Banuri, T. and A. Najam. 2002. *Civic Entrepreneurship: A Civil Society Perspective on Sustainable Development*. Islamabad, Pakistan: Gandhara Academy Press, p. 4 – emphasis in original.

⁶⁷ Senge, P. 1990. “The Leader’s New Work: Building Learning Organizations.” *Sloan Management Review* 32(1): 11.

⁶⁸ Krishna, A., N. Uphoff and M. J. Esman. 1997. *Reasons for Hope: Instructive Experiences in Rural Development*. Bloomfield, CT, USA: Kumarian Press, p. 290.

initiative, is that other actors are drawn into the vision and goals expressed by the leader and these stakeholders can provide resources, such as funding and support, to a clear representative of the initiative.

The ability of the leader to communicate such a vision is critical, but it is not only charismatic leaders that have the ability to communicate. Leaders can also adopt a more facilitative role in developing an initiative. In this case, the ability to communicate is the leader's ability to translate across diverse stakeholder groups, and to communicate the intention and vision behind the initiative while engaging other constituencies in fully defining the objectives and strategies. This facilitative approach is closer to the bridge-building ability described below and can lead to the "buy-in" of a larger stakeholder constituency in seeking solutions to the identified challenge. This type of leader is a servant to the people rather than being primarily focused on authority and control.⁶⁹

The facilitative approach does not preclude the leader from communicating a clear vision. The leader can be characterized by the motto "let's do it together." In this approach, the leader presents a clear vision of the overarching goal of solving the problem while ensuring that stakeholders can develop a common vision and implement strategies together.⁷⁰ Finally, there is an ethical dimension to a leader's communication. One task of an effective leader is bringing stakeholders together around a common set of values.⁷¹ Ultimately, the ability to communicate is a skill that can assist leaders in drawing others around an identified challenge and vision, and harnessing the leadership capabilities in others.⁷²

Leader as Learner

Leaders engaged in establishing a local initiative and in nurturing its development over time have to take into account the dynamic context in which they are operating. Changing circumstances require leaders to revisit original goals and strategies, to provide new visions, and to shift organizational structure to accommodate these changes. This may require the leader to establish a leadership succession strategy in order to enable the emergence of appropriate leadership for different phases of the initiative. For example, if the participants in a local initiative want to scale-up their efforts and expand their impact, the founding leader may not remain the most effective person for leading the initiative through the changes and coping with the challenges that emerge from this new phase. For Alvord, Brown and Letts, this dimension of leadership is the leader's "adaptive skills that enabled them to recognize and respond to changing contextual demands over a long term" and can be analyzed by the ability of a leader to "successfully catalyze initiative adaptation to internal and external changes or organize successions to deal with challenges over the long periods required for scaling-up these initiatives."⁷³ This conclusion corresponds with findings in the for-profit context about the need for adaptive leaders that identify the challenge and set a learning tone within an organization.⁷⁴ Likewise, learning leaders in a local partnership can set a tone of experimentation and adjustment, confront people with adaptive challenges they would rather ignore, and encourage adaptive behavior within an initiative.⁷⁵

The continuous adaptation and innovation within the context of shifting circumstances requires the leader

⁶⁹ Greenleaf, R. 1973. *The Servant as Leader*. Cambridge, MA, USA: Center for Applied Ethics.

⁷⁰ Goleman, D. 1998. "What Makes a Leader?" *Harvard Business Review*. November-December.

⁷¹ Fairholm, G. W. 1991. *Values Leadership: Towards a New Philosophy of Leadership*. New York: Praeger.

⁷² Spiker, B. K. and L. L. Brown. 2000. "First, Break All the Rules: What the World's Greatest Managers do Differently." *Management Communication Quarterly: McQ* 14(2): 322-329.

⁷³ Alvord, S. H., L. D. Brown and C. W. Letts. 2002. "Social Entrepreneurship and Societal Transformation: An Exploratory Study." Hauser Center Working Paper No. 15, http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/hauser/active_backup/PDF_XLS/workingpaper_15.pdf, p. 147.

⁷⁴ Heifetz, R. 1994. *Leadership without Easy Answers*. Cambridge, MA, USA: Belknap Press.

⁷⁵ Hailey, J. and R. James. 2002. "Learning Leaders: the Key to Learning Organisations." *Development in Practice* 12(3-4).

to adopt an iterative relationship between the knowledge system they hold and the actions they take. In his analysis of professionals in the book *The Reflective Practitioner*, Donald Schön makes this distinction when he differentiates between technical knowledge and Reflection-in-Action.⁷⁶ Schön argues that complex problems cannot be addressed by applying technical rationality and technical knowledge but requires a process of Reflection-in-Action. In complex situations, the professional, or leader, is involved in “setting the problem” and “framing the context” of the problem and then conducts experiments to test assumptions and understanding of the problem. The process of Reflection-in-Action does not differentiate between the implementation of a strategy to address a problem and inquiry as to its effectiveness. Knowledge building, strategic decision-making, and implementation are closely integrated in the context of everyday practice. The professional accepts the uncertainty and unique nature of the problems and, rather than simply wanting to understand a problem, the professional is actively engaged in transforming the situation and advancing positive change. Leaders as learners embrace the shifting nature of their work and are engaged in iterative processes of scanning the environment, knowledge acquisition and interpretation, strategy formulation, implementation and monitoring and adjustment. Knowledge and action are interconnected.

As the leader initiates a process of creating institutions and mobilizing resources to address a problem, a learning approach is critical for continued effectiveness. The literature on innovations in development projects and on learning processes can inform the analysis of this process. The centrality of learning is a response to the nature of the problems the leader is faced with. The landscape of actors and their actions is constantly shifting and knowledge about the problem and possible solutions is partial. Social and ecological problems are too complex, dynamic, and interconnected and the outcomes and context too filled with uncertainty to adequately pre-plan and forecast. Blueprint, predetermined strategies are not the answer. Instead, an effective leader adopts a learning and adaptive management strategy and creates guidelines for flexible learning processes that emphasize reflection, assessment, scanning for trends, monitoring, adjustments, and institutionalizing the lessons learnt. An adaptive management approach integrates “design, management and monitoring to systematically test assumptions in order to adapt and learn.” This enables internal learning and adjustments as the innovation proceeds.⁷⁷

David Korten argues that there are a series of higher order phases that can be identified in the development of a successful initiative.⁷⁸ The leader of the initiative must adopt a learning approach in order to adapt to this evolution. The initiative begins with a phase in which it is “learning to be effective.” During this phase, the leader is testing out assumptions, experimenting and implementing a variety of strategies to find one that suits the nature of the challenge. The leader iterates through the conceptual and action steps outlined above. Once an effective strategy is identified, the leader and stakeholders involved in the initiative move into the phase of “learning to be efficient” in which those effective strategies are routinized by establishing institutional structures that carry out the effective strategies. Korten’s final phase is the phase of “learning to expand” from the initial initiative size to scale-up the activities to a broader stakeholder constituency. When an innovation is deemed to be effective, it is replicated and imitated by other communities or the lessons are transferred into policy. Throughout these phases, the leader as learner is critical to the success of an initiative by establishing learning and adaptation as core principles for the initiative.

⁷⁶ Schön, D. A. 1983. *Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*. London: Temple Smith.

⁷⁷ Salafsky, N., R. Margoluis and K. Redford. 2001. *Adaptive Management: A Tool for Conservation Practitioners*. Washington, D.C.: Biodiversity Support Program, p. 8.

⁷⁸ Korten, D. C. 1980. “Community Organization and Rural Development: A Learning Process Approach.” *Public Administration Review*. Sept/Oct: 480-511.

Leader as Bridge-Builder

In searching for solutions to social and ecological challenges and in establishing an initiative, leaders encounter a diverse variety of stakeholders that have interests and that control resources that are critical to the initiative's success. In cases where leaders have been successful in establishing and developing an initiative, the leader "had backgrounds and experiences that enabled them to build effective links with very diverse actors."⁷⁹ An effective leader is one who has the ability to bridge across these various stakeholder constituencies and understand and work with the diversity of perspectives and approaches that each stakeholder brings to the initiative. In fact, the ability to build bridges and partnerships across diverse stakeholders has become increasingly important in light of the complex nature of stakeholder relationships, the tasks they seek to accomplish, and the context within which they are operating.⁸⁰ External to the initiative, stakeholders include community representatives, development agencies, non-governmental organizations, government representatives, and competing interests such as industry seeking to extract the community's natural resources. Some of these interests are complementary to the community's interests while others are in conflict and require careful negotiation. In addition to building bridges with these external actors, bridge-building is also crucial with internal stakeholders that are part of the initiative, such as with the members of the community that become involved. These different members inevitably come with their own particular perspectives and interests that need to be brought together under a sense of common vision, purpose and approach.

The skills necessary for building bridges across stakeholder constituencies include conflict management and negotiation skills that enable effective and constructive processes amongst diverse constituencies. Active listening skills are critical as is the ability for leaders to identify stakeholders and possible partners and learn to perceive their points of view.

Not only must leaders see new opportunities and capitalize on them, but they must also do so with a clear understanding of the partners needed along the way. Not only must leaders be able to create new meaning in their own community, but they must also successfully negotiate that meaning with others... They also need to be effective learners if they are to understand deeply the assumptions and beliefs of their partners, appreciate the nature of the joint opportunity, and have a systemic perspective of the facts and data behind the opportunity.⁸¹

Bridge-building requires the capacity to span a diversity of boundaries that have been established including those between cultures, and between science and policy in an environment of trust, interdependence and mutual respect. Bridge-building is also required across scales. Local initiatives are affected by policy, legal and financial decisions made at the national, regional and international scales. This requires leadership that is capable of linking across these multiple levels in order to ensure a supportive environment for the initiative.⁸²

Whether local leaders are bridging across interests that are internal or external to the community-level initiative, a critical skill is the ability to nurture bridge-building capacity in the stakeholders they work with. This involves a willingness to devolve power and perceive themselves as "partners in a network"

⁷⁹ Alvord, S. H., L. D. Brown and C. W. Letts. 2002. "Social Entrepreneurship and Societal Transformation: An Exploratory Study." Hauser Center Working Paper No. 15, http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/hauser/active_backup/PDF_XLS/workingpaper_15.pdf.

⁸⁰ Segil, L., M. Goldsmith, and J. Belasco, eds. 2003. *Partnering: the New Face of Leadership*. New York: American Management Association.

⁸¹ Rosenblum, J. and C. Oates. 2003. "The Learning Leader as Partner." In Segil, L., M. Goldsmith, and J. Belasco, eds. *Partnering: the New Face of Leadership*. New York: American Management Association.

⁸² Cash, D. 2001. "'In Order to Aid in Diffusing Useful and Practical Information': Agricultural Extension and Boundary Organizations." *Science, Technology and Human Values* 26(4): 431-453.

rather than as “managers leading in a hierarchy”.⁸³ Although the leader plays a key role in bridge-building, the involvement of other stakeholders as bridge-builders ensures greater synthesis of expertise, interests and approaches. This is the image of leadership as partnership rather than as a heroic individual.

In this view, leadership is not what one person provides another, but rather it is what emerges from the reciprocity of relationships, from the quality of interaction of at least two people, sometimes more. It is the understanding that leadership is an activity that happens in and comes from a collective. Rather than seeing leadership as an expression of a single extraordinary individual, this understanding suggests that it is a process shared by many ordinary people.⁸⁴

This is particularly necessary as the array of knowledge required for successfully implementing a community-level conservation and development initiative is more than can be handled by one individual. Complexity requires the decentralization of decision-making and authority to enable partnering and bridge-building amongst different stakeholders in an initiative.⁸⁵ Bridge-building also enables the articulation of a vision that can be shared by all. With this approach, power, accountability for actions, and responsibility is spread throughout the partnership rather than embodied in the leader. The leader is a bridge-builder but ultimately the stakeholders and the leader together formulate the vision, formulate and implement strategies, and are accountable for their actions.

Leader as Systems Thinker

Organizational theorist Peter Senge has identified systems thinking as a key component of successful leaders. Although he hypothesizes that effective leaders are intuitively systems thinkers, he suggests a number of key skills that this type of leadership entails:

- Seeing interrelationships, not things, and processes, not snapshots;
- Moving beyond blame;
- Distinguishing detail complexity (when there are many variables) from dynamic complexity (when cause and effect are distant in time and space);
- Focusing on areas of high leverage (where small, well-focused actions can produce significant, enduring improvements, if they are in the right place); and
- Avoiding symptomatic solutions that only create short-term solutions to deeper system-level problems.⁸⁶

The type of leadership needed in the ever-present context of shifting challenges and dynamic, changing circumstances is one in which the focus is not only on individual problems but on creating a holistic, systemic vision of what could be within the context of layers of interacting systems. In order to create a motivation for change, effective leaders follow the principle of creative tension, that “an accurate picture of current reality is just as important as a compelling picture of a desired future.”⁸⁷ The leader steers attention away from a problem-focused orientation towards creating a distinction between a desired vision juxtaposed with the current reality. Problem-focus directs attention at one part of the system, whereas leading with creative tension pulls the focus towards the system as a whole and requires backcasting from a holistic vision to present reality. Peter Senge highlights this systems thinking ability in his description of

⁸³ Goldsmith, M. 2003. “The Changing Role of Leadership.” In Segil, L., M. Goldsmith, and J. Belasco, eds. *Partnering: the New Face of Leadership*. New York: American Management Association.

⁸⁴ Moxley, R. S. and J. R. Alexander. 2003. “Leadership-as-Partnership.” In Segil, L., M. Goldsmith, and J. Belasco, eds. *Partnering: the New Face of Leadership*. New York: American Management Association.

⁸⁵ Pinchot, E. and G. Pinchot. 2003. “Leading Organizations into Partnership.” In Segil, L., M. Goldsmith, and J. Belasco, eds. *Partnering: the New Face of Leadership*. New York: American Management Association.

⁸⁶ Senge, P. 1990. “The Leader’s New Work: Building Learning Organizations.” *Sloan Management Review* 32(1).

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

a leader as a teacher. This is not the authoritarian teacher that dictates a vision and expects the students of the communication to act on this vision.

Rather, it is about helping everyone ... oneself included, to gain more insightful views of current reality. This is in line with a popular emerging view of leaders as coaches, guides or facilitators... this teaching role is developed further by virtue of explicit attention to people's mental models and by the influence of the systems perspective. The role of leader as teacher starts with bringing to the surface people's mental models of important issues... what we carry in our heads are assumptions. These mental pictures of how the world works have a significant influence on how we perceive problems and opportunities, identify courses of action, and make choices.⁸⁸

Assisting others to uncover their mental models about the way the world works and also uncovering the leader's own mental models enables a process of developing clearer strategies on how to bring about change in a system and have influence over different aspects of the social, economic and ecological systems. The key is not necessarily in getting a complete picture of the system that one is trying to influence but in fostering strategic systemic thinking. It is the "need to achieve insight into the nature of the complexity and to formulate concepts and world views for coping with it."⁸⁹

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper has placed the Equator Initiative within its historical context and identified its focus as being part of a larger movement towards facilitating community-based conservation. The first section of the paper reviewed current critiques of community-based conservation programs and encouraged the Equator Initiative to remain aware of both the opportunities and problems that accompany this approach. Within this context, the paper has then examined the literature on the role of leadership in successful community-based conservation and local initiatives. The paper outlines five characteristics of effective leadership: innovation, communication, learning, bridge-building, and systems thinking. In light of the objective that the Equator Initiative has outlined of triggering a worldwide movement to impact policy at the local, national and global levels and to create an enabling environment for the implementation of sustainable development, this paper concludes with recommendations on how the Equator Initiative can nurture leadership as one way of facilitating the creation of local, effective community-based conservation projects.

In an analysis conducted by the International Development Research Centre on the 2002 Equator Prize finalists, the leadership capacity-building needs were similarly highlighted:

The needs expressed by the 27 finalists are focused in the area of capacity-building, including in ... education and training leaders and community members in effective project management.⁹⁰

The Equator Initiative can provide leaders of local community-based conservation initiatives with support

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Mason, R. and I. Mitroff. 1981. *Challenging Strategic Planning Assumptions*. New York: John Wiley and Sons, p. 16.

⁹⁰ Nagahuedi Mbongu S. Jonas. 2002. *An Equator Initiative Working Paper – Key Factors Leading to Successful Sustainable Community Livelihoods: Lessons Learned and Research Options based on a Desk Analysis of Winning Equator Prize 2002 Projects*. Canada: IDRC.

akin to the support that entrepreneurs in the business world receive from incubators.⁹¹ “Incubators provide services such as office space, coaching, seed funding, information technology, public relations, recruiting, legal advice, accounting services, pooled buying programs, and organized networking to budding entrepreneurs.”⁹² Taking the stance of an incubator, the Equator Initiative can also encourage entrepreneurs and leaders and target funding in a manner similar to the way that venture capitalists encourage entrepreneurs by investing in people, ideas, innovation, experimentation and change despite the risk. The Equator Initiative’s current programs on eco-entrepreneur mentoring and learning exchanges indicate that it is already playing a role in serving “as networks of support and encouragement for tomorrow’s generation of civic entrepreneurs” and leaders.⁹³ The learning exchange grants provide the finalists of the Equator Prize the opportunity to share lessons learnt and best practices with other communities in the tropics. The eco-entrepreneur mentoring program aims at providing small sustainable business startups with business and financial advice.⁹⁴ Part of nurturing effective local partnerships for sustainable development is encouraging a new generation of leaders amongst the youth in the tropics. The Equator Initiative is beginning a youth exchange program and this is a critical part of being an incubator for leadership that can be expanded to reach a larger audience of young people.

Leaders in local partnerships can only be effective within an enabling policy environment that facilitates their actions. The Equator Initiative is contributing to nurturing leaders by connecting community interests to policies and enabling local community initiative representatives to have a voice in policy-making and decisions within national governance institutions and in the donor community. For Anil Gupta, “grassroots innovators” have not had these types of networks of influence, resources and institutional and policy support that they require to be able to innovate and they need to be supported by risk capital and enabling policies.⁹⁵ In providing resources and learning exchange opportunities, the Equator Initiative has to maintain a clear understanding of the stages and phases of local initiatives in order to identify where a particular innovation is within its evolution in order to provide timely assistance. Recognizing the dynamic nature of local initiatives is critical to providing support for leaders and the initiative as a whole. The leaders of local partnerships can also provide the Equator Initiative with clear focal points for public awareness campaigns and broad educational campaigns to promote sustainable community practices.

The Equator Initiative is a manifestation of society’s aim to learn how to simultaneously address human development needs and preserve Earth’s life support systems. The initiative is contributing to this learning process by identifying local innovations that have successfully combined conservation and poverty reduction goals. In addition to raising the profile of these innovations, it is actively engaging in learning from their successes, facilitating exchanges amongst the practitioners, and in disseminating the story of their innovation to other communities and policy-makers. This analytical framework encourages the Equator Initiative to remain aware of the potential problems with a community-based conservation approach and also presents the notion of “leadership” as being central to understanding the success of the innovations nominated for the Equator Prize. The Equator Initiative has a role to play in continuing the critical debate surrounding community-based conservation and in encouraging the emergence and nurturing of leaders.

⁹¹ Banuri, T. and A. Najam. 2002. *Civic Entrepreneurship: A Civil Society Perspective on Sustainable Development*. Islamabad, Pakistan: Gandhara Academy Press.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 124.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ See <http://www.equatorinitiative.org>.

⁹⁵ Gupat, A. 2003. “Learning from Green Grassroots Innovators: How does a tail wag the dog?” Keynote lecture presented at the International Conference on Innovations in Technology and Governance, organized by the Ash Institute of Democratic Governance and the Science, Technology and Public Policy Program, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, Cambridge, 30-31 October 2003.