

Articles on

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## Creating stakeholder ownership of biodiversity planning: lessons from India

by TEJASWINI APTE

### Introduction

This article is based on the findings of a year-long study of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) planning process in India. It draws on almost 200 interviews and was published as *An Activist Approach to Biodiversity Planning: a handbook of participatory tools used to prepare India's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan* (Apte, 2005)<sup>1</sup>. The main objective of the handbook is to describe and analyse some of the tools that went into eliciting participation in the NBSAP process. It is written for practical use. The tools described can be adapted for participatory biodiversity planning in other contexts. The study was conducted in four Indian states: Sikkim, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh.

A significant lesson that emerges from the NBSAP experience is the importance of creating stakeholder ownership of a participatory planning process, and the various ways and means through which ownership can be achieved (or lost).

<sup>1</sup> See the In Touch section for a review of this book and ordering details.

<sup>2</sup> The Convention on Biological Diversity was signed by 150 government leaders at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit. It was the first global agreement on the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. It aims to put the principles of sustainable development into practice. See [www.biodiv.org](http://www.biodiv.org) for more information.

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This article begins with a brief overview of the NBSAP to set the context, and then presents some of the lessons learnt with regard to creating ownership. It ends by discussing briefly the progress of the national biodiversity plan produced.

### Background to the NBSAP

The NBSAP was a project of the Ministry of Environment and Forests of the Government of India. All countries that are signatory to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) are required to prepare an NBSAP, which is meant to serve as the primary vehicle for national implementation of the CBD.<sup>2</sup> The Ministry appointed a national non-governmental organisation (NGO), Kalpavriksh Environmental Action Group, to prepare the NBSAP. In a context where government environmental policies are prepared predominantly in a centralised manner, the preparation of the NBSAP was visualised as a decentralised process covering all the states of India. What

Procession of women carrying traditional seeds at Deccan Mobile Biodiversity Agricultural Festival



Photo: Ashish Kothari

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followed was a unique process unlike anything that had happened before in national environmental planning, in terms of scale, ambition, decentralisation and people's participation. The NBSAP process lasted from 2000 to 2003.

The NBSAP approach was based on the premise that biodiversity has ecological, cultural, spiritual, as well as economic, value and impinges on every citizen. Planning for its conservation should therefore be owned and shaped by as many individuals as possible in an equitable process that allowed the most marginalised voices to be heard. The aim was biodiversity conservation as well as livelihood security. A key element of the approach was also the premise that the wider the ownership of the process, the greater the chances of the plan being accepted and implemented at a national and local level.

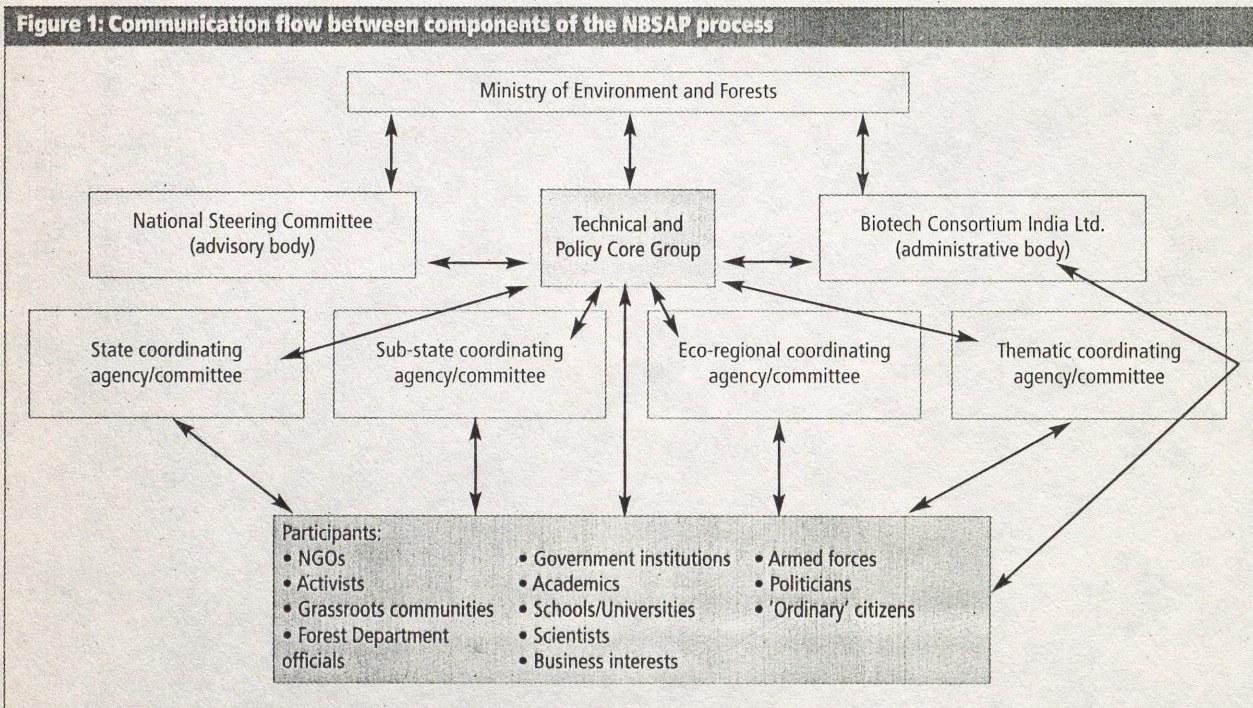
Most importantly, there was a consistent emphasis that the **process** of putting the plan together was as important as the final **product**. In other words, apart from what might come out of the final plan, the process itself was to yield results in terms of increased awareness of biodiversity,

empowerment through participation, local initiatives to begin implementation of local plans, and so on. In this sense, the NBSAP process was turned into a form of activism, as much as the putting together of a formal national plan.

Separate biodiversity plans were prepared at four levels across the country:

- State (in 33 states and union territories);
- Sub-state (at 18 selected sites to create more detailed local level plans);
- Interstate eco-regions (in 10 eco-regions cutting across state boundaries); and
- Thematic (13 themes relating to biodiversity, such as 'Culture and Biodiversity').

A coordinating agency was appointed for each location or theme – usually an NGO, government department or academic institution. A local committee of relevant persons/organisations was constituted to provide support to the coordinating agency. The agency was responsible for developing a plan for the relevant state, sub-state site, eco-region or theme. Each agency was required to elicit wide



public participation in the planning process, and was encouraged to use a range of participatory tools for the purpose. Guidance and support was provided to coordinating agencies by a national 15-member core team of NGOs, activists and scientists: the Technical and Policy Core Group (TPCG). The TPCG was central to the conceptualisation and day-to-day running of the NBSAP process.

A total of 71 plans were prepared across the four levels. Each plan was meant to be an independent, stand-alone document that would be directly referred to for implementation of strategies and actions in the concerned area. Key elements from all plans were finally integrated into a single National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP).

### Creating stakeholder ownership of a participatory process

Many of the lessons learnt from the NBSAP experience are to do with creating a feeling of ownership among participants. People need to identify with, and feel ownership over, a process in order to participate meaningfully and value the output. In different contexts, different things are likely to create ownership or alienation, e.g.:

- the type of coordinating agency selected;
- the kinds of resource materials or decorations used in a

biodiversity festival;

- the opportunity for teamwork; or
- the use of dialects.

In terms of implementation of the 71 individual plans, generating ownership was crucial: there was no in-built mechanism or guarantee of implementation from the government. At this stage it was purely a planning process. The idea was that ownership over the process would create a pressure or momentum for implementation by stakeholders.

I discuss below two aspects of the NBSAP – the selection of the coordinating agency and information dissemination – which offer lessons for creating stakeholder ownership. The lessons are greatly condensed here due to restrictions of space. For a more comprehensive discussion of the process, see Apte, 2005.

### Selection of coordinating agency

A key aspect that impinged heavily on the NBSAP process was the selection of coordinating agencies. This is not surprising, given that the process was a very decentralised one with independent decision-making by coordinating agencies. The criteria for selection were that the agency should be:

- relatively independent;

Decorating the bullock carts  
for Deccan Mobile Biodiversity  
Agricultural Festival



Photo: Ashish Kothari

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- not seen to be on any one side of the spectrum between conservation and livelihoods; and
- acceptable to governmental and non-governmental organisations.

This was a difficult set of criteria to meet for every selection, but the TPCG tried to find a reasonable balance within it.

A bureaucratic constraint in the procedure of appointing coordinating agencies was that once a state-level agency had been appointed it could not be changed, regardless of the quality of the process. This affected the possibilities of ensuring accountability of state coordinating agencies.

The following lessons emerged regarding coordinating agency selection.

#### Government or NGO?

Some interviewees were of the opinion that any government agency is the wrong choice to handle a wide-ranging, participatory process like NBSAP. It was felt that government institutions usually have their own agenda, are too bureaucratic,

and find it difficult to be self-critical and to understand or mobilise participation. Depending on the context of government-civil society relations, having a government agency in charge of a process may stifle the possibility of creating feelings of stakeholder ownership over it. However, while some NBSAP experiences supported this view, there were contrasting experiences as well. For example, in Sikkim, the Forest Department conducted one of the most participatory NBSAP processes in the country. Some factors to keep in mind when selecting a coordinating agency include:

#### • Who is in charge?

Much depends on the capacity and interest of the individuals in charge. When the right individuals are in charge, a government agency can show high levels of achievement because of the immense human resources and institutional back up that it commands.

#### • Accountability

The flip side is that when a government agency has little interest in a process, not much can be done to ensure its success. This is because there is frequently a lack of account-

ability within government institutions, or simply due to the slow workings of the bureaucracy. Non-governmental organisations are usually (not always) more approachable in terms of informality and openness to 'outside' ideas. At any rate they are more concerned about maintaining an image of efficacy and responsibility. Funds are not likely to be a lever for accountability of a government organisation unless the funding is a very large sum in relation to normal institutional resources (NBSAP funding was negligible in a large institutional context).

Action such as holding back funds to ensure accountability could perhaps make a difference to smaller, non-governmental institutions, which tend to rely on smaller amounts of funding. So coordinating agencies need to be selected keeping in mind that the type of agency will affect the possibilities of accountability.

- **Lack of continuity among personnel**

Personal relationships built up with stakeholders during a process may be disrupted due to personnel transfers. This is difficult to guard against in any organisation when dealing with a process over a few years. In a government institution though, it is almost inevitable due to routine transfers of officials.

#### Perception of coordinating agency amongst stakeholders

The perception of the coordinating agency amongst local stakeholders affects the extent to which the agency can involve people in a process. Therefore it is important to take into account local dynamics among stakeholders when choosing a coordinating agency.

For example, some interviewees in Andhra Pradesh felt that the state-level coordinating agency was the wrong choice because it did not have a record of handling successful participatory processes or links with local communities. Consequently, some people did not take the process seriously because of the institution heading the process.

At sites where interviewees were overall more positive about the coordinating agency, this reflected on their keenness to be part of the process. For example, for the Uttar Kannada sub-state and Karnataka state processes it was widely felt that the coordinating agency selections were good because both agencies were seen as 'neutral' and well networked amongst key stakeholders.

In short it seemed important for stakeholders and potential participants to have the perception that the coordinating agency was:

- neutral;
- well networked with key players in different sectors;
- capable of conducting a participatory process.

#### Box 1: Negative outcomes of insufficient prior information

- **Commitment levels remain low**

People need to know the implications and the benefits of participating in a process. If there are monetary benefits, these are easiest to communicate. The challenge is in communicating non-monetary benefits, for people to know that it is worthwhile to contribute their time and expertise.

This is particularly important when targeting smaller NGOs and institutes – these usually tend to be pressed for time and resources, and therefore need to make careful decisions about how to make the most effective use of what is available. A process that does not seem to have clarity in terms of information or purpose is likely to put off people who have too many other things to do.

- **Quality of inputs is directly affected**

If a meeting is called without distributing an agenda beforehand, people are likely to come out with knee-jerk reactions rather than coming mentally prepared for the meeting.

#### Information dissemination: build-up and follow-up

Receiving and exchanging information is crucial if participants are to develop a feeling of ownership over a process. In contrast, feeling 'left out of the loop', or 'not in the know' is likely to create disinterest, disillusionment or even suspicion.

It seems that there is no substitute for face-to-face contact, or the personal touch, as a tool for communication. Information and updates sent on email or by letter have less value when not supplemented by telephone calls, regular meetings or briefings. In some cases, invitations through a general email or letter, without personal communication, even caused offence or irritation.

Two common complaints across the sites studied were insufficient **prior information** (e.g. circulating an agenda prior to a stakeholders' meeting) and insufficient **follow-up information** afterwards (e.g. updates on further activity or implementation). Box 1 shows the negative effects of insufficient prior information.

The need for follow-up information seems to be especially under-estimated. Dissemination of follow-up information needs to be marked out in the work plan of a coordinating agency as a separate activity, requiring the allocation of time, resources and responsibility. Box 2 shows why follow-up information is needed.

#### What happened next?

The TPCG submitted the national plan to the Ministry two years ago, but since then the Ministry has refused to approve and release it. The Ministry was displeased with parts of the

**Box 2: Need for follow-up information**

• **Maximising impacts**

Follow-up is crucial in terms of maximising the initial impact of a festival or meeting, and 'cashing in' on its value by keeping people interested and involved. For example, attracting people to a biodiversity festival is only the first step in biodiversity awareness-raising. The event would only partially retain its value if not followed up by a strategy of further awareness-raising activities.

• **Creating feelings of empowerment and ownership over output**

In Sikkim, most interviewees were not aware of the fact that there had already been some implementation of the Sikkim biodiversity plan. The long information gap and the feeling that 'nothing was happening' had created some amount of disillusionment. There was no specific mechanism in place to ensure that people were made aware of developments in implementation. Another example of insufficient follow-up was that, after widespread and successful village-level planning meetings, villagers were not given copies of their own village-level plans in their own language. This would clearly impinge on ownership of the output, and any possibilities of local initiative to implement the plans.

In contrast, the coordinating agency of the Deccan sub-state process (Andhra Pradesh) ensured thorough follow-up to its mobile biodiversity festival meetings. The following year, thousands of Telugu language plan summaries were distributed to participating villages. The plan was also read out and presented as the outcome of the previous year's festival, and feedback was solicited. This was key to building on empowerment and ownership created by the meetings.

plan, including the statement that India's current development paradigm is environmentally unsustainable. In Parliament, the Ministry stated that the plan contained inaccuracies and would embarrass India internationally. But neither did it want to negotiate any changes with the TPCG. It simply suppressed the plan, and there was a breakdown in communication. This led to the TPCG independently releasing the plan to the public in October 2005. It is believed that there has been an overall change of heart in the Ministry and a growing antipathy to participatory or empowering processes. The Ministry is likely to submit its own version of the plan to the government.

In this context, the consistent emphasis that the **process** of preparing the plan was as important as the final **product**

**Call for participation brochures translated into different Indian languages**

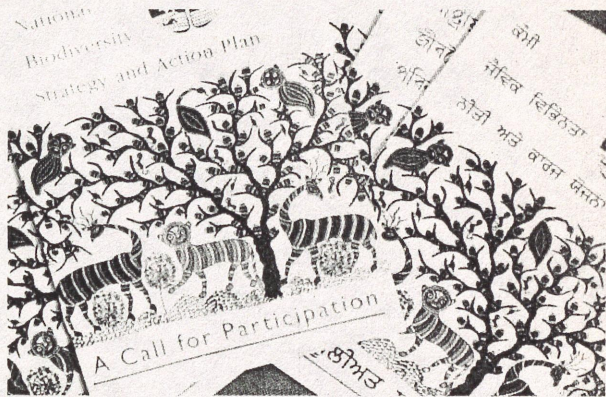


Photo: Ashish Kothari

**Box 3: Some innovative participatory planning tools used in the NBSAP process**

• **School Biodiversity Registers**

Forty-nine schools in 14 districts mapped the area around the schools and interviewed local residents to compile local biodiversity information as inputs for the Karnataka state plan.

• **Interactive Radio Drama**

Weekly radio dramas in the Kannada language were broadcast state-wide over 14 weeks. Episodes were interactive, to solicit public inputs for the Karnataka plan and raise biodiversity awareness. More than 800 responses were elicited; 9.4 million people heard the series.

• **Mobile Agricultural Festival**

In Andhra Pradesh, bullock cart processions travelled through 62 villages over 32 days. The carts were decorated with exhibits of 75 varieties of traditional seeds, crop diversity rituals and traditional crop recipes. People sang and danced in celebration of crop diversity. Public meetings were held to get inputs for the Deccan sub-state plan. About 20,000 farmers participated in the meetings and 50,000 people saw the exhibition.

emerges as the principle strength of the NBSAP. States possess independent plans, many of which have a stakeholder support base built up during the process. NGOs and government departments are free to implement plan recommendations. There are already examples of local-level implementation. Valuable offshoots of the process include new networks, awareness and capacity building. Thus the **planning process** itself created the potential to achieve at least some of its goals of biodiversity conservation.

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THEME SECTION

# Power tools for participatory learning and action

by SONJA VERMEULEN

## Power tools for policy change

This special issue is about tools – techniques, tactics or tips – for achieving positive policy change. Its emphasis on methods, on ways of doing, places it in a strong lineage of past issues of *Participatory Learning and Action*. But do we really need more tools? Surely there are more than enough methods, resources, manuals and toolkits to equip every last participatory tool user in the world?

In the recent anniversary issue of *Participatory Learning and Action* (PLA 50), Robert Chambers gave a thoughtful evaluation of our collective progress in approaches to participation, in its broadest meaning. One observation was that tools do indeed deserve ongoing attention and development, as part of a broader process of social learning. But there are several areas to which we don't yet pay enough attention. Power is chief among these.

The articles in this special issue focus on the intersection between power and tools – specifically on how tools can have a deliberate goal of raising the power of people who have been excluded from decision-making that concerns them. Of course, all legitimate methods for participatory learning and action work to change power relations – but many do not describe their aims in this way. Previous issues of *PLA* have used other terms to express the same funda-

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mental aims and processes. Examples are **social transformation** (Pimbert, 2004) and **people-centred advocacy** (Samuel, 2002). Similarly, using concepts of **rights, participation and power** to inform institutional practice entails more or less the same tools (Pettit and Musyoki, 2004). In all cases, the central principle is that excluded people do not wait to be invited to participate in external processes. Rather, they use their power to create their own policy space, demanding and generating participation on their own terms.

## Source and structure of this special issue

The articles in this theme section are all written by partners in the IIED-coordinated Power Tools initiative (under a project entitled 'Sharpening policy tools for marginalised managers

of natural resources' funded by DGIS and BMZ, with additional funds from DFID). The Power Tools initiative involved about 35 partners across Africa, Asia and Latin America over five years. Each partner was working on real and pressing policy problems in their own context. What united the work internationally was a common goal to develop and share policy tools relevant to people who are normally excluded from playing a part in local and national policy around natural resources. We have used a broad view of policy as 'what organisations choose to do', be they government, businesses or local institutions.

The most important output has been progress on problems of equity and marginalisation in land, agriculture, biodiversity and forestry policy wherever this has been possible through application of the methods and tactics. To spread these gains more widely, a set of 26 tool write-ups appear on the Power Tools website ([www.policy-powertools.org](http://www.policy-powertools.org)) in English, French, Spanish and Portuguese. These write-ups try to avoid being too prescriptive and formulaic, but rather try to share experience of both what did work and what did not. In this special issue of *Participatory Learning and Action*, eight partners have taken their learning from the Power Tools initiative one step further, reflecting on the wider contexts and implications of their policy tool as a means of securing meaningful and sustainable participation. Before each article we have included summary versions of the policy tool write-ups by these partners.

Interested readers can follow up full versions of these tools by visiting the Power Tools website. On the website are a further 18 tools that are not represented in this issue: tools for organising, understanding, engaging with and ensuring policy influence (see Box 1 for the full set). The website also contains other useful resources, including partners' longer written work and a directory of websites that offer methods, tactics and guidance for participatory policy (see e-participation in the In Touch section of this issue).

### Thinking about tools and power

The term 'power tool' conjures up a vision of whirring drills and chainsaws. This analogy is of course deliberate, reminding us that tools are functional and versatile, but they are also potentially very dangerous in ill-meaning or novice hands. A focus on policy tools, rather than on policy problems or policy stories, is useful because it attracts practical people, encouraging us to think not just about what we want to change, but how to do it. On the other hand, too much of an emphasis on tools can promote rigid, repetitive behaviour – ticking off the boxes rather than coming up with imaginative solu-

"Hierarchy", drawn in a workshop during use of the Power Tool Community trade-offs assessment



Credit: Anonymous artist, North Rupununi District Development Board, Guyana

tions. The trick is to share ideas and to spark people's enthusiasm and optimism, but to avoid the impression that there are sure-fire methods that work anywhere anytime. We suspect too that there are no 'new' policy tools, only shinier versions of old favourites.

The Power Tools initiative worked predominantly with allies and supporters to develop tools jointly with people who are sidelined, less powerful or less experienced in natural resources policy. The roles of those supporters and allies are a major factor in whether a particular tactic or technique really does help people empower themselves, or just reinforces unequal power relations. While policy tools can be used to transform – or at least nudge! – power relations, they also have power themselves. Much of the learning from the Power Tools initiative concerned how to get third-party roles to work well, deftly responding to local viewpoints and priorities with relevant (and locally legitimate) innovation from the

**Box 1: Power Tools for policy influence at [www.policy-powertools.org](http://www.policy-powertools.org)****Getting started**

Overview of what is involved in improving policies and institutions for the benefit of poor people, based on international experience.

**Assessing 'public' information**

Set of approaches and tactics to obtain and use information from public agencies, based on experience in India.

**Appeal to ethics**

Use of ethics-based international agreements and standards to develop dialogue, based on experience in Ethiopia and Vietnam.

**Associations for business partnerships**

Activities to help smallholders engage with, compete in, and benefit from market economies, based on experience with migrant smallholders in Brazil.

**Avante consulta! Effective consultation**

Steps to empower communities in negotiation processes, based on experience in Mozambique.

**Better business: market chain workshops**

Workshops for direct and indirect participants in market chains to share knowledge and inform policy, based on experience in Vietnam.

**Community organisations**

Organisational options for community groups (cooperatives, trusts etc), based on international experience.

**Community trade-offs assessment**

Activities for communities to assess different development options in terms of local worldviews and aspirations, based on experience in Guyana.

**Connecting communities to markets**

Tactics to market independently certified community forest products, based on experience in Brazil.

**Family portraits**

Description, analysis and communication of how a given family organises labour and other assets, based on experience in Mali.

**Good, average, bad: law in action**

Framework for scrutinising and improving the practical outcomes of particular legislation, based on experience in Mozambique.

**Improving forest justice**

Approaches to improve the administration of justice in the timber supply chain, based on experience in Uganda.

**Independent forest monitoring**

Assessment of the opportunities for IFM to raise accountability, based on experience in Cameroon.

**Interactive radio drama**

Use of radio to gain public participation in natural resources policy, based on experience in biodiversity conservation in India.

**Legal literacy camps**

Interactive sessions to familiarise people with legal concepts and current legislation, based on experience with tribal people in India.

**Local government accountability**

Ways to help rural citizens bring local authorities to account, based on experience in forestry in Malawi.

**Media and lobby tactics**

Tactics to get national policy to work for small-scale farmers, based on experience in Grenada.

**Organising pitsawyers to engage**

Framework for developing organisations and business partnerships for small-scale producers, based on experience in Uganda.

**People's law**

Advice on understanding and utilising law in land and natural resources campaigns, based on experience in Ghana.

**Speaking for ourselves**

Steps for communities to express their priorities and constraints in professional development language, based on experience with pastoralists in Ethiopia.

**Stakeholder influence mapping**

Method to examine and visually display the changing policy influence of various social groups, based on experience in Costa Rica, UK and Kenya.

**Stakeholder power analysis**

Techniques for understanding stakeholder relationships and capacity for change, based on international experience.

**Targeting livelihoods evidence**

Steps to link natural resources policy with poverty reduction strategies and to develop appropriate monitoring, based on experience with forestry in Uganda.

**The four Rs**

Framework to clarify and negotiate respective stakeholder roles, based on experience in Zambia and Cameroon.

**The pyramid**

Framework to stimulate participatory assessment and target-setting in forest governance at national level, based on experience in Brazil.

**Writing style: political implications**

Approach and checklist to analyse how pieces of writing challenge or support inequalities, based on experience in Zimbabwe.

outside. Positive relationships acknowledge and even benefit from power differences, making use of allies' different abilities and spheres of influence.

Changing power requires understanding power. The partners in the Power Tools initiative did not use or endorse any single analytic framework for thinking about power, as that did not make sense given their varied practical goals and contexts. Indeed, one reason that 'power' is a useful term is because it has a commonsense meaning rather than a difficult academic definition. There are many different ways of looking more closely at power – some useful categories are given in Box 2 (see Vermeulen, 2005 for further references).

Importantly, everyone has power. People who are subordinate possess sources of power absent among elites – such as knowledge, social capital and means of production. People can use this 'counter power' in a variety of ways to oppose, evade or resist oppression.

Along the continuum of approaches, counter power can work in cooperation rather than opposition. Many of the policy tools in this special issue aim at engaging with rather than resisting powerful bodies such as companies and government agencies, albeit engaging tactically rather than playing along with the naïve idea that if stakeholders just sit down and talk, it will all be all right. Using cooperative

**"Changing power requires understanding power. People who are subordinate possess sources of power absent among élites – such as knowledge, social capital and means of production. People can use this 'counter power' in a variety of ways to oppose, evade or resist oppression"**

power, as opposed to 'power over', different people can work together to achieve shared goals. The notion of cooperative power is very attractive, but we shouldn't lose sight of the fact that it is hard to achieve this kind of 'win-win' between very disparate groups. For most people who are excluded from mainstream decision-making processes, any gains in power must be hard fought for, and require more powerful agencies to relinquish some of their control.

**Learning from power tools in action**

The articles in this theme section discuss real-life experience with power tools, taking the opportunity to reflect on what has worked to promote meaningful participation and policy influence, and what hasn't worked. Each tool evolved with time and learning to address a specific 'policy' need, be it in the realm of local organisation and decision making, regional and national policy formulation, legislation and its applications, or implementation of both policy and law. The resulting spread of policy challenges and associated tools covered here reflects the huge range of barriers faced by less powerful people who want to influence policy – and the many alternative routes and methods for achieving progress. To navigate this diversity, the eight articles included here have, in hindsight, been divided into three sets, described in turn below.

**Build power to act**

Power can be gained by amassing, constructing and coordinating sources of power (see Box 2). A crucial source of power, especially in the modern context of rapid communications across great distances, is information. Two articles here look at how less powerful people have gained access to information to claim their legal rights to greater policy influence and self-determination. In Article 3, Bose and co-authors chart the experience of Indian civil society movements, including groups of poor people working without

**Box 2: Unpacking power**

Power is generally understood as an ability to achieve a wanted end in a social context, with or without the consent of others.

**Positions of power.** The simplest typologies of power are in terms of dualities in relationships, e.g. empowered/disempowered, central/marginal, oppressor/oppressed, dominant/subordinate. These are useful shorthand but they provide only a crude basis for analysing power, because they do not capture the complexity or fluidity of actual power relations, and they deny the power of 'less powerful' people. Understanding positions of power in terms of roles, e.g. various characters in a play, can be more helpful.

**Mechanisms of power.** Understanding how power operates in a particular situation is very useful, allowing us to find strategies to maximise or counter that power. Most simply, power can work through rewards, penalties or conditioning. Conditioned power is especially important as it is institutionalised and often hard to recognise. But it can be either positive (cooperative power to achieve shared goals) or negative (hegemony, in which oppressed people collude in their own oppression).

**Sources of power.** Key sources of power are capital (financial, natural, physical, social, human), means of production (labour power), consumption, culture, location and geography, information, technology, physicality (e.g. age, sex, health or physical ability) and personality (e.g. charisma or skill). The various sources of power are often also the rewards of power.

**Arenas of power.** People may have different power relations in different, but overlapping, fields of activity: social, political and economic. Within the social arena, people may behave differently in public (outside the home), private (at home and among friends) and intimate (within the self) realms of power. Economists distinguish ability to set prices (market power) and ability to withdraw from a transaction (bargaining power).

external support, to access what is meant to be 'public' information. Getting hold of relevant reports and statistics has recently been enabled by new freedom of information legislation in India, in tune with an international trend (e.g. in the UK) to pass law that improves citizens' access to information about the activities of government and public agencies. Indian civil society groups have been especially imaginative and tenacious in their pursuit of facts and figures that government departments prefer to keep to themselves. In turn there have been many successes in holding agencies to account and securing better service delivery and good governance for poor people.

Article 5 turns to one state in India, Rajasthan, where indigenous tribal people have in the last decade benefited from new rights to self-rule under national law. Many villages have not yet taken full advantage of this law, partly because

**"Wow, John, what a difference! How did our community change so much?"**

**"It's a long story, Joseph. Come on, I'll show you how it all happened..."**

From *Mercados para comunidades certificadas* (part of the Power Tool *Connecting communities to markets*)



Cartoon: Rubens de Toledo Frizzo, Imatiora, Brazil

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of ignorance or misunderstanding and partly because of feet-dragging at state level. Upadhyay explains how he and fellow Delhi lawyers crossed the divide with tribal communities to enable people to understand the law in their own contexts and to make practical use of it, for example to draw up utilisation certificates that are legally watertight. The experience of *panchayat shivir*, or interactive legal literacy camps, is very much one of learning and adapting on both sides as the process unfurled.

One of the greatest tools that subordinate people have against the prevailing economic, institutional and political bedrock is collective action. Getting organised is a critical feature of successful people's movements around the world. In Article 7, Macqueen and co-authors look at how association has helped small-scale forest enterprises (which are often one person working alone) to make the best of different forms of organisation in Brazil. They offer practical advice for those in forestry and beyond who want to increase their economic power or reach other mutual aims by clubbing together.

### Claim the tools of the powerful

Many useful tools, including those designed to facilitate participation, remain in the hands of powerful agencies. Two articles describe the experience of development professionals in their successful endeavours to transfer control of policy tools to the people who are intended to benefit from them. The tools thus become mechanisms of power: communication techniques that express the self-analysis and priorities of marginal people in their own terms but in a language that outsiders comprehend. In Article 9, Belay and co-authors report how communities in Ethiopia have adapted and used the 'sustainable livelihoods' framework to present government agencies with coherent and evidence-based demands for support to their self-development. Article 11 by Cochrane describes how a similarly effective communication tool, known as family portraits, works to counter simplistic caricatures (e.g. of ethnic groups and genders) that prevail among policy makers at all levels. Through learning and training the tool was usefully updated to fit the needs of families in Mali, Kenya and Tanzania.

### Take hold of participatory processes

Participation often carries the paradox of being introduced from outside. Even with good intentions, implementing agencies, not intended beneficiaries, retain ultimate power over not just the tools but the entire process. One process that tried to tackle this from the start was development of the Indian National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan. In Article 13, Apte reviews the strategies and tactics that worked – and those that failed – in achieving active ownership of the process by actual biodiversity users and managers. Indeed, this external process created an unintentional space for all kinds of local activism around biodiversity (Apte, 2005). Kazoora and co-authors take a close look in Article 15 at how forest law enforcement, not traditionally an arena for participation, has come to use rewards

as well as punishments to establish more just outcomes. Notably, participation has not been given easily – people have had to lobby for it.

### Final words

Individual tools may seem too specific and too polite given the scale of power inequities and the radical actions we perhaps need in response. But for many people who live outside of the privileges of police protection, opportunities for legal redress and other services, to find safety and reduce risks to life, livelihoods and reputation can be primary concerns. Hopefully readers will find in this special issue some fresh ideas and refreshed inspiration to keep on making the most of the channels that do exist for change – and creating those that don't.

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*"Ptilinopus Swainsonii, Swainson's Fruit Pigeon"*

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# Reconfiguring Discourses: National Transformations of the Global Convention on Biological Diversity

Nikhil Anand, MEdSc 2004

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## Introduction

Approved at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, the Convention for Biological Diversity (CBD) has been widely heralded as a landmark in the establishment of a global environmental governance regime. While the United States is still to ratify the CBD, over 188 nations are now party to it. The CBD requires national governments to put in place national and regional plans for the conservation of biodiversity. This article makes some observations about this process in India, based on fieldwork I conducted from June through August 2003.

Motivated by the imperative to conserve genetic diversity, the CBD draws on an intellectual tradition of environmentalism that emerges from critiques of industrialization.<sup>1</sup> This discourse of conservation is predicated on the need for careful science to protect nature from human destruction. Within its narrative, a particular notion and valorization of 'indigenous peoples' is also constructed.

Non-government organizations (NGOs) working on India's national biodiversity action plans adopted the uncritical valorizations of indigenous peoples embedded in the CBD. However they also placed at the forefront the roles of Indian farmers and others in the creation and propagation of agricultural biodiversity – a constituency missing from the language of the Convention. In so doing, global ideas of conservation that had traditionally separated people from nature were critically reconfigured.

## Global Conservation Discourse

The Convention for Biological Diversity emerges from a Northern environmental tradition

that Guha (2000) characterizes as a "response to modernity" – a rebuttal of industrialization. The Articles of the Convention can be categorized into three distinct components. The first privileges and expands the activities of a global pool of trained conservationists (Articles 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14). The second focuses on a set of strategies centered on education, training, awareness building, and local-level conservation incentives (Articles 11, 12, 13). And the third (Articles 5, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19) governs the transfer of genetic resources across national borders.

The first two components of the CBD are based on the premise "that biological diversity is being significantly reduced by certain human activities" (CBD Preamble 1992). Focusing primarily on forested areas, effective biodiversity conservation is implicitly envisioned as a process that attempts to scientifically manage and distribute the benefits of a productive and fertile nature. Behind its language on the need for awareness building and education is the presumption of unenlightened popular cultures that are destructive to biodiversity and that need to be controlled for its preservation.

This is not to say that the CBD does not reference local people in a positive light in respect to nature and biodiversity in its text. It recognizes "the close and traditional dependence of many indigenous and local communities *embodying traditional lifestyles* on biological resources" (CBD 1992, emphasis added). That these particular categories of people have been described as close to nature (while many others, such as agriculturalists, remain invisible) is not accidental. In *Modern Forests* (2002), Sivaramakrishnan urges us to

examine distinctions that have placed environment in the public domain while agriculture remains the private concern of agriculturalists. Zimmerer (2000) also urges our attention to system boundaries that, as conceptual constructions, determine what is and what is not considered part of the environment.

Categorized as 'traditional' and completely divorced from modernity, indigenous peoples have often been idealized as 'natural' allies of the environment.<sup>2</sup> Environmental organizations frequently ask their audiences to make connections between images of the indigenous and those of a pristine nature, battling against the destructive programs of state-led 'development'. "The use of the term environment to represent autonomous nature, divorced from the agrarian landscape, facilitates dichotomous understandings of a Northern produced industrial ethic of destruction, and Southern, 'indigenous', pre-industrial populations in balance with nature" (Agrawal and Sivaramakrishnan 2000: 7). As manifest in the CBD, the global discourse of conservation maintains these dichotomies. Consequently, it reinforces the divide between nature (and the indigenous people that are part of it), and all other people, including non-indigenous farmers, who cannot but act against it.

Conklin (1997) shows that these essentialisms both fix indigenous people within certain landscapes as well as give them a platform from which to argue for particular privileges and rights. This is reflected in the exceptional visibility of indigenous people in the CBD (and also in the Indian National Plan). At the same time, the CBD renders farming communities invisible. Though people have been selecting and breeding crop varieties for generations, there is little space in the Convention for those whose lifestyles encompass both biodiversity and engagement with the modern market economy. Manifest in the first two sections of the CBD, therefore, is a discourse that is not sympathetic to a majority of India's agrarian populations. Furthermore, it negates the creative roles that these populations have played in the existence and

multiplicity of agricultural biodiversity.

As a large international agreement, the Convention consciously asserts that biodiversity "is a common concern for humankind," thereby placing it as a resource in a global commons to be managed by global experts (CBD Preamble 2002). With most biodiversity in the global South, governments in these countries worry that this language of the commons will be used by transnational interests to claim common heritage and thereby rights to the biological resources contained within their borders.

Arguably, some of the more commercially valuable biodiversity resources are in agricultural crops. The Indian state is allied with its agriculturalists in arguing for national regimes of property within the global discourse of conservation of agricultural resources. It has recently fought a series of high profile cases in international and U.S. courts on the appropriation of patent rights by private industries with respect to rice, turmeric, and neem. In these cases, Indian farmers and the State have used the language of national development to argue for a fair share to the benefits of biodiversity.

A dynamic tension therefore emerges between the language of the global commons and that of national sovereignty. The third section of the CBD, which describes the protocols for transnational transfer of biological resources, is thus critical because it provides ways in which nation states like India can re-territorialize their resources. It marks a small moment of rupture in the language of a global commons, as it delineates the need to regulate and compensate countries and peoples that have created and managed these resources.

### Conservation Conventions in India

In 1999, the Indian Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) handed over the coordination of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) to Kalpavriksh, a non-government organization long engaged in people-centered environmental projects. There are a number of reasons that may have prompted the ministry to take such a step, one of which is the increased trend

towards decentralization in planning and a parallel rise in the influence of NGOs in India.<sup>3</sup>

This shift towards decentralization emerges from demands by local and global contexts for greater transparency and participation in state functioning. These demands come as much from those arguing for free market capitalism managed by 'good governance' as from widespread populist struggles against neoliberalism itself. However, the expanding discourses of democracy and participation across the political and economic spectrum are the subject of a different study. For our purposes here, it would suffice to say that state bureaucrats, as participants in these local and global processes, are simultaneously influenced by these discourses.

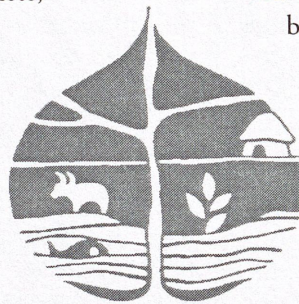
The NBSAP process provided a suitable test case for state actors to examine the effects and impacts of a decentralized and NGO-coordinated process. In comparison to other state plans, biodiversity is relatively low on the agenda, and the Ministry of Environment and Forests is weaker than most other state ministries. Even within the ministry, other interests, like forestry, are far more important than biodiversity.

This set of factors was appropriate to situate the biodiversity plan as a state 'performance' of democratic and transparent plan making (Ajay Gandhi, *pers. comm.*). Significantly, it was showcased at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg. In a report prepared for the summit, the Ministry of Environment and Forests described the NBSAP as "India's biggest environment and development planning process" (MoEF 2002a: 1). Central in its presentation of the NBSAP was that, "for the first time, government has handed over the responsibility of developing this entire plan to a non-government organization" (Ibid: 1). In a different report, also prepared for the meeting in Johannesburg, entitled *Empowering People for Sustainable Development*, the Prime Minister's foreword reads, "I hope that the

document would serve as a useful input into the pursuit of sustainable development in India – and be of some use to other countries as well" (MoEF 2002b). The audience for India's policy processes therefore, is not only the Indian public, but also a larger transnational public such as the one present in Johannesburg.

To both publics, Kalpavriksh is an organization with considerable credibility. It first emerged in the early 1980s as an urban youth movement to conserve Delhi's urban forest, but has since taken radical positions on a variety of development and environment projects. It engages with a considerable network that spans state bureaucracies, conservation foundations, human rights organizations, and social movements, both in India and around the world. Kalpavriksh committed itself to a decentralized process of plan formation. Rejecting the idea that a single plan could comprehensively address the different regions and dimensions of biodiversity, it identified the need for over seventy plans at sub-state, state, ecoregional, and thematic levels, though all seventy could also be considered as stand-alone documents. For each of these plans, a nodal coordination agency was identified. In some cases, this was the Forest Department; in others, it was an NGO or a university.

A Technical and Policy Core Group (TPCG) was convened to facilitate the communication and coordination of state plans, as well as to draft language for the national plan. Constituted by Kalpavriksh in consultation with the Ministry of Environment and Forests, the TPCG also contained tribal activists and other representatives from movements that find the term 'conservation' very contentious.<sup>4</sup> To engage with these, and other human rights groups, the TPCG was very clear that neither livelihood security nor ecological security would be compromised in the plan. Moreover, they insisted that biodiversity was not contained solely in



Indian National  
Biodiversity Strategy and  
Action Plan logo

forests, and that its value went beyond the aesthetic values of charismatic large mammals or the ecological services of natural systems.

The decision to include agriculture in the process was made by the TPCG soon after it first convened. For the coordination of the ecoregional, state, thematic, and substate plans, nodal agencies were given guidelines by the Group. Prominent in these guidelines are two subsections: the first dealing with "wild biodiversity" and the second with "domesticated biodiversity" (livestock breeds and crop varieties). Thus, the TPCG created a space in which the importance of livelihoods and biodiversity could simultaneously be considered. By recognizing a biodiversity commons, and those protecting it (such as indigenous peoples), the TPCG criticized Forest Department programs that did not recognize the land rights of these groups. In this respect, it drew from and enhanced the global biodiversity discourse that is manifest in the CBD.

But the Technical and Policy Core Group also picked up elements of a national development agenda that valorized the creativity, initiative, and value of agrarian populations in biodiversity conservation. Thus in India, the TPCG interpreted the Convention with a range of actors and actions that had previously been ignored by the international biodiversity community. The NBSAP recognized the relationship between natural and wild diversity by placing human resource systems in relationships with both domesticated and wild biodiversity. For example, the National Plan proposes strategies such as "understanding the links between cultural diversity and biodiversity" (Chapters 7.1.1.3 and 7.2.1.4, MoEF 2004) and "secure tenure over natural resources" (Chapters 7.1.5.1 and Chapter 7.2.5, *Ibid*).

At the state and sub-state levels, the planning process was more creative. Coordinating the process in this region, the Deccan Development Society organized bullock cart biodiversity *yatras* (festivals) where native seed varieties were on display. Their success at interacting with farmers about agricultural biodiversity gained tremendous media coverage.

Other plans, like those made in Munsiri, Uttaranchal state, listed different livestock breeds threatened by state-managed animal husbandry extension programs (Foundation for Ecological Security 2003). The sub-state plans of Nahikalan and also the plan in Munsiri provided detailed descriptions of agricultural practices that demonstrated important ways in which human communities actively create and propagate biological varieties. The Nahikalan Sub-State Plan describes the state agricultural and livestock extension programs, in which indigenous breeds are replaced with unsuitable exotic varieties and chemical inputs, as a threat to agricultural biodiversity (Vividhara 2003). The Plan argues that this policy has resulted in nutritional deficiencies and livelihood insecurity in Nahikalan village. In doing so, the Nahikalan Plan, like the national and state plans, selectively draws on and critiques different dimensions both of global conservation efforts and of government actors.

By broadening its understanding of 'environment' to incorporate agriculture, the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan envisions and represents a peopled nature. In so doing, the Plan makes a vital link between India's mountains and forests (which is where biodiversity was isolated in the human imagination) and the densely populated agricultural heartlands of the country (see Agrawal and Sivaramakrishnan 2000). As a result, the NBSAP in effect reconfigures the divide between nature and culture whose artificiality has been the subject of recent critical attention in social ecology (see Tsing 2003; Dove 2003).

By assuming that forests were not the only repositories for biodiversity, the national discourse of biodiversity conservation provided an important space for non-government organizations and farm workers to make strong critiques against industrialized agriculture.<sup>5</sup> Rejecting state agriculture development paradigms that favor monocultures, fertilizers, and pesticides over multi-cropped organic landscapes, the NBSAP argued for market and institutional incentives for non-chemical-based polyculture farming.

Given the strong criticisms directed at it, it is not surprising that the Ministry of Agriculture did not respond. This lack of political support from the Ministry for the implementation of the national biodiversity process highlights both the practical and the conceptual limits of participatory planning. Those pushing the NBSAP were constantly required to negotiate compromises with powerful bureaucracies. To do so they used the planning processes of the Indian state itself, and the global commitments that the Indian state had made to biodiversity. Yet, when the biodiversity plan itself did not fit in with the priorities of the Ministry's vision of agricultural development, the agency could not be forced to participate.

### Conclusion

As a global environmental regime, the CBD envisions a professionalized conservation, implemented by international and national bodies of conservation and management experts. Supportive of the state's sovereign claim to biodiversity contained within its borders, Indian non-government organizations took the opportunity of the Convention's national planning process to make explicit the existence and significant value of domesticated biodiversity. In so doing, they highlighted the roles of modernizing, agrarian populations in the conservation of agricultural biodiversity – thereby blurring the boundaries of nature and culture.

Non-government organizations were also using the 'ecological tribal' of the global environmental discourse to secure rights and entitlements for local agrarian populations, such as the right to practice livelihoods and land rights within state forests. Thus we can see these Indian civil society groups selectively employ the global imaginaries of the sustainable indigenous person to critique state processes of marginalization and eviction. At the same time, Indian non-government organizations use the language of nation states to critique the notion of the global commons – thereby securing rights of farmers to their seeds. The NBSAP was a

process through which, by mixing up tribes and peasants in the same plan, indigenous people made claims to land rights and social justice, even as peasants made claims of customary forest and biodiversity management (see Tsing 2003 for an example of this in Indonesia).

Though the Ministry of Environment and Forests found the process too contentious for its liking, its desire to be seen by the international community and its domestic constituencies as an agency that respected biodiversity and participation made it difficult for the ministry to reject non-government organization efforts entirely. Therefore, when presenting the process to the international community, the ministry took ownership of the effort as a landmark process, signaling its acceptance of a state process that was critical of itself, while simultaneously making visible for the international community a reconfigured national biodiversity discourse that included both people and nature.

### Acknowledgments

To the different participants of the NBSAP process in India, who are seeking innovative ways to understand the complex issues of people living in their environments. Special thanks to Ashish Kothari, Kanchi Kohli, Bhopal Singh, Ajay Mahajan, E. Theophilus, and Arun Kumar. Though we occasionally speak in different languages, we share the goals of environmental and social justice. Thanks also to the Tropical Resources Institute, the Career Development Office and the Program in Agrarian Studies for supporting this research.

Finally a big and special thanks to Amity Doolittle and the editors of the TRI Bulletin for their consistent and patient support.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Emerging from a Foucauldian perspective, I understand discourse to mean a particular language of knowledge through which only particular things can be said or even imagined.

<sup>2</sup>For examples of pre-modern/anti-modern

writings on indigenous peoples, see journals such as *Cultural Survival Quarterly*, *The Ecologist*, and also the thrust of different environmental campaigns by groups such as Rainforest Action Network.

<sup>3</sup> This trend has been much critiqued in recent literature. Decentralized plan making might, for example, also be read as an effective way for the state to cut costs (Mosse 1997). However, there is an inherent danger in ascribing unity and purpose to state actions (Starn 1999). The actions of state actors are better understood when placed in the context of multiple and competing discourses of environment, governance, and development in which state officials are also situated through their participation and engagement with both citizen populations and transnational actors. As such, states are more a "set of practically mediated relations" than "a coherent imposition" (Sivaramakrishnan 2002: 78), or, as I would prefer to argue, a practically mediated set of impositions.

<sup>4</sup> Globally, there is a significant history of displacement of indigenous peoples from areas deemed to have conservation value.

<sup>5</sup> It is important to note the absence of these critiques from the CBD.

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# Coffee, Cattle, and Colonialism: Historical Effects of Markets and Agricultural Policies on Cloud Forests in Central Veracruz, Mexico

Alexandra Ponette, PhD candidate

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## Introduction

Conservation of tropical montane cloud forest (TMCF) fragments in Mexico is vital for the protection of watersheds, soils, and biological diversity (Hamilton et al. 1995). These unique forest types provide human settlements and adjacent fields with valuable environmental services, such as water capture, storage and filtration, soil preservation, and erosion and flood control (Bruijnzeel and Proctor 1995; Vogelmann 1973). Currently restricted to just 1 percent of the country (Rzedowski 1996), TMCF face many conservation challenges.

Nowhere are the challenges greater than in human-dominated landscapes where population growth, agricultural expansion, and urbanization simultaneously contribute to forest loss and fragmentation. Highland Veracruz, for example, illustrates the synergistic effects of these processes on the spatial distribution and abundance of montane forests. Once an area that harbored the fourth largest proportion of TMCF in Mexico, today cloud forests in Central Veracruz remain as small isolated patches in a matrix of shade coffee plantations, cattle pasture, sugar cane fields, and urban areas. Major drivers of this large-scale environmental transformation include: (i) colonization and settlement of the town of Xalapa and environs in the sixteenth century; (ii) historical dependency of local communities on global export markets for livelihoods; and (iii) implementation of policies favoring agricultural industrialization over traditional practices.

How should forest conservation efforts proceed in landscapes with a historical legacy of human use for agriculture? In highland Veracruz, the most

feasible and cost efficient way to retain forest remnants as integral components of the land mosaic is to involve local communities in the management of cloud forests and the surrounding agroecological matrix. For this to occur, it is key to have an appreciation of how inhabitants of Central Veracruz have viewed and interacted with TMCF patches into the present day. As this case study will demonstrate, a general understanding of the social, economic, and political factors affecting human-environment interactions is needed to realistically assess possibilities for future conservation. This multi-step process of 'contextualization' involves detailed assessment of societal goals, historical trends and conditions, and future scenarios and alternatives (Clark et al. 2001). Applying this approach to the case of cloud forest fragmentation in Central Veracruz reveals how knowledge of regional environmental history can aid scientists in designing research questions and forest management plans that are place-based and relevant to conservationists and the needs of local communities.

This article reviews the historical drivers (i.e., trends and conditions) of landscape change in Central Veracruz from pre-colonial time to present. It tells the stories of two land uses, coffee and cattle, that directly compete with cloud forests for human valuation and space, with a view to demonstrating the role of markets and agricultural policies in land use/land cover trajectories. An interpretation of past events and their effects on current and future conservation efforts are also discussed.

## Study Description

The Xalapa-Coatepec region lies between 900 m. and 1500 m. above sea level (asl) along the eastern

# National Biodiversity strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP)

India's most comprehensive compilation on biodiversity!



Dr. Ashish Kothari launches the NBSAP document at Hornbill House, BNHS, also seen is Dr. Parasuraman, Director, Tata Institute of the Social Sciences.

Pic: M. Zafar-ul-Islam

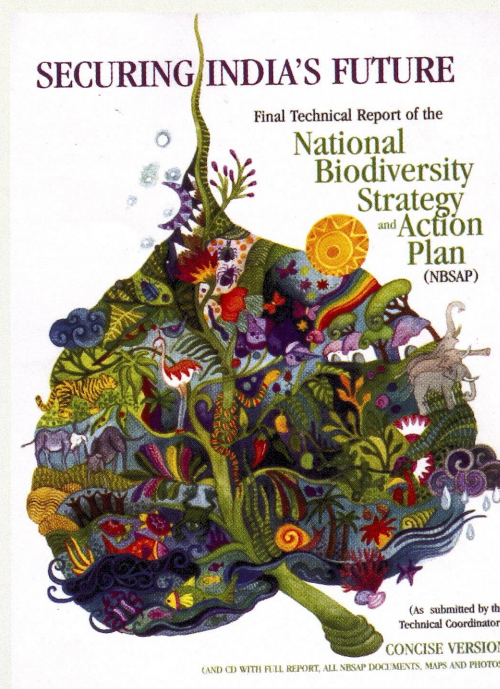
The NBSAP technical report was first released in Delhi on 4th October, 2005, by a group of women farmers from the Zaheerabad area of Andhra Pradesh. These women, members of the Deccan Development Society, had taken a lead in highly participatory local planning for agrobiodiversity, as part of the NBSAP process. The release event also featured the screening of a film on the NBSAP process, an introduction to the report by Ashish Kothari coupled with a press conference, and a panel discussion by Dr. Raghunandan Singh Chundawat, Kanhaiya Gujar, Dr. Amita Baviskar, and Shri Shekhar Singh.

In Mumbai, the event was organised on 7th November at the BNHS. The report was released by one of India's seniormost botanists, Prof. Meher-Homji, and expert comments were provided by Dr. Parasuraman of Tata Institute of Social Sciences and Asad Rahmani of BNHS. Prior to the release event, a press conference was also organised at which Ashish Kothari and Asad Rahmani spoke.

Other than Delhi and Mumbai, the NBSAP report has been released and discussed at Hyderabad, Guwahati, Pune, and Bangalore, and there are plans for release events at Chennai, Bhubaneswar, and other sites.

The NBSAP full report is in two volumes, which contains the following information:

- Over 100 site-specific and thematic reports totaling several thousand pages
- Detailed strategies and actions on conservation, sustainable use, and equity



- Documentation of a unique nation-wide consultative process
- Guidelines and concept notes
- Glimpses of India's biodiversity

The continuing destruction of biological diversity and natural resources in India, and its impact on several hundred million people, requires an urgent and bold response. This publication is the result of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) process for India, which was aimed at evolving such a response. The printed book is the Concise Version of the Final Technical Report of the NBSAP process as submitted by its technical coordinator. It also contains a CD with the full technical report, along with several other key outputs of the process.

The NBSAP process was initiated with UNDP/GEF funding by the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF), in late 1999. It constituted a 15 member Technical and Policy Core Group (TPCG) to carry out the project, coordinated by Kalpavriksh, a 25-year-old NGO based in Delhi and Pune. The administrative coordination was by Biotech Consortium India Ltd. (BCIL), Delhi.

This process looked at biodiversity in all its forms: natural and agricultural ecosystems, species of wild plants and animals, microorganisms, crops and livestock, and the genetic diversity within these. Aspects of conservation, sustainable use of biological resources, and issues of economic and social equity, have also been covered. Two bottom lines were emphasized: the ecological security of the country and of specific regions within it, and the livelihood security of communities dependent on biodiversity.

The process was highly participatory in nature, reaching out to village organizations, people's movements, NGOs, academics and scientists, government officers from various line agencies, the private sector, the armed forces, politicians, artists, mediapersons, and others. Over 50,000 people were involved in public hearings, local consultations, field research, biodiversity festivals, rallies, and formal workshops. The entire process has also been documented in visual and written form, to enable effective learning.

The NBSAP outputs contained in the CD include:

- Full national level report (with features listed below)
- 71 Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans (BSAPs) at local, state, ecoregional, and thematic levels
- 32 sub-thematic review papers
- 20 methodological and guideline notes
- Process Document

The full national report contains:

- Profile of biodiversity in India, including evolution, current status, socio-cultural and economic aspects;
- Proximate and root causes of biodiversity loss in India;
- Ongoing initiatives and gaps in conservation, sustainable use, and equity;
- Strategies and actions, including for national planning and natural resource governance;



Dr Ashish Kothari speaks during the NBSAP release function held in Delhi.

Pic: Kalpavriksh

- A mechanism to implement the NBSAP;
- Lists of participating people and organisations, and of contributors to this document;
- Summaries of the local, state, ecoregional, and thematic BSAPs, and of the sub-thematic review papers;
- Charts showing the strategies common to the national report and the local, state, ecoregional action plans

This report has gone through widespread review by several hundred people, including institutions, experts, government officials, NGOs, and activists. The report and other documents in the enclosed CD, provide an enormous wealth of information and analyses relevant to conservation, livelihoods, and development in India.

#### Contributory amount:

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Rs. 150; US\$ 15.

CD alone (containing all documents): Rs. 100; US\$10.  
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#### Also available

*Securing India's Future: On the Trail of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan.*

A 46-minute film by Vijendra Patil. Contact: vppatil@vsnl.com or vijendra.patil@gmail.com