

Biodiversity, Climate Change, and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)



BIODIVERSITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE: A GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR DEVELOPMENT

Climate change is threatening biodiversity, compromising the achievement of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Biodiversity conservation and maintenance of ecosystem integrity are essential to the reduction of people's vulnerability to climate change and to the achievement of the MDGs.

MDG 8: DEVELOP A GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR DEVELOPMENT

Millennium Development Goal eight is key for the achievement of all other MDGs, as it calls for the establishment of a global partnership for development. In this regard, MDG 8 specifically calls for open, rule-based trading and financial systems, special attention to the needs of the least developed and landlocked countries, and small island developing States, assurance of sustainability, the expansion of opportunities for youth employment, and adequate access to medication and new technologies.

Biodiversity and global partnerships for development

Biodiversity has both a local and a global value. At the local level, biodiversity is necessary for the maintenance and enhancement of biodiversity-based livelihoods. At the global level, biodiversity contributes to the regulation of ecosystem services, such as water and nutrient cycling¹, and to the development of products such as food and medication.



Maasai women within the community conservation area. Photo courtesy of Franz Dejon.



Il Ngwesi and Lewa Community Conservation Areas, examples of good local development through community-based tourism and value-added alternative livelihoods based on sustainable use of biodiversity resources. Photo courtesy of Colby Lyons.

The management of biodiversity is dependent upon actions at all levels: local, national, sub-regional, regional and global. At the local level, actions to conserve biodiversity address threats such as habitat loss and over-harvesting. These actions are often linked to local development through projects such as community-based tourism and value-added alternative livelihoods based on the sustainable harvesting of biodiversity resources.

An example of one such project is the Il Ngwesi Community Conservation Area, the first community owned and managed tourist destination established in Kenya². The Il Ngwesi project specifically aims to enhance local economic opportunities while ensuring the conservation of important biodiversity.

Actions at larger scales — from national to global — have been put in place to address global threats to biodiversity, such as invasive alien species, climate

1 Millennium Ecosystem Assessment. Biodiversity Synthesis. 2005

2 Lewa Wildlife Conservancy. Online at www.lewa.org

change, and pollution, threats that also impact human health and well-being. Examples include the Global Invasive Species Database³ and the Kyoto Protocol⁴.

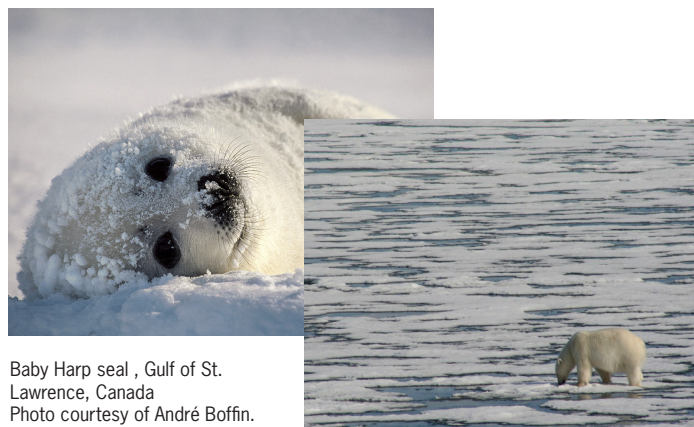
Climate change and global partnerships for development

Climate change is increasingly being discussed within the framework of global development as exemplified by Britain's Prime Minister Tony Blair when he declared, "climate change is the greatest long-term threat facing the world today."⁵ As such, climate change, like biodiversity, is generating a number of global partnerships that are being implemented in close collaboration with local development efforts. Climate change adaptation and mitigation plans are being developed at the local level as key components of development planning. While climate change mitigation plans are being developed locally, the benefits are seen as an endeavour that requires global commitment and coordination.

In addition to being an issue that is encouraging global partnerships, climate change also presents a threat to the sustainability and effectiveness of ongoing development projects and programmes. Organizations such as the World Bank⁶ and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)⁷ are integrating climate change risk analysis into project development and planning. Through such actions, climate change is beginning to be fully integrated within global development policies and plans.

Biodiversity and climate change considerations for the achievement of MDG 8

The links between climate change and biodiversity have already acted as the catalyst for the development of a number of global partnerships. In addition to being addressed under the Convention on Biological Diversity's (CBD) cross-cutting issue on biodiversity and climate change, the Rio Conventions⁸ have recognized that global synergies are key to the successful implementation of common objectives linking biodiversity, climate change and sustainable land management. To this end, a joint liaison group has been established specifically to



Baby Harp seal , Gulf of St. Lawrence, Canada
Photo courtesy of André Boffin.

Polar bear searching for food, Arctic.
Photo courtesy of Amanda Graham.

explore options and opportunities for the development and implementation of mutually supportive activities addressing biodiversity, climate change and desertification.

In order to address the development needs of vulnerable communities, as called for under MDG 8, special attention has been paid to global partnerships for climate change and biodiversity in the Arctic and small island developing States.

The Arctic Climate Impact Assessment⁹ is the outcome of international collaboration within the framework of the Arctic Council, comprised of eight Arctic nations: Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden and the United States of America. The Assessment reveals that recent climate change poses significant threats to the resilience of Arctic species, particularly Polar bears and ice-dependent seals, and the four million inhabitants of the Arctic, many of whom rely on biodiversity as the basis of their livelihoods. The Assessment also emphasizes the global nature of climate change and biodiversity. This is based on the fact that climate change in the Arctic is almost entirely driven by activities taking place outside the Arctic region and on the anticipated negative impacts that climate change in the Arctic will have on biodiversity throughout the world.

Similar work in the Caribbean, under the Caribbean Planning for Adaptation to Climate Change project¹⁰ and the subsequent Adapting to Climate Change in the Caribbean project, has brought together 12 countries in an international partnership to address climate change, biodiversity and development.

3 Global Invasive Species Database. Online at www.issg.org/database/
4 UNFCCC, 1998. Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Online at unfccc.int/kyoto_protocol/items/2830.php
5 Quoted from the 11 May 2006 letter from Tony Blair to David Miliband.
6 Burton, I and M Van Aalst, 2004. Look Before You Leap: A risk management approach for incorporating climate change adaptation in World Bank operations. The World Bank Group, Washington DC, USA. Online at www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/main?pagePK=64193027&piPK=64187937&theSitePK=523679&menuPK=64187510&searchMenuPK=64187283&siteName=WDS&entityID=000160016_20041006165241.
7 Online at www.oecd.org/departement/0,2688,en_2649_34361_1_1_1_1_1,00.html
8 The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)

9 Hassol, S. J, 2004 The Arctic Climate Impact Assessment. Cambridge University Press.
10 Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat. Caribbean Planning for Adaptation to Climate Change (CPACC) Project. Online at www.caricom.org/jsp/projects/macc%20project/cpacc.jsp