

ITTO/IUCN International Workshop on Increasing the Effectiveness of Transboundary Conservation Areas in Tropical Forests

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Speaking notes on

'The role of Transboundary Protected Areas in Conservation and Sustainable Development'

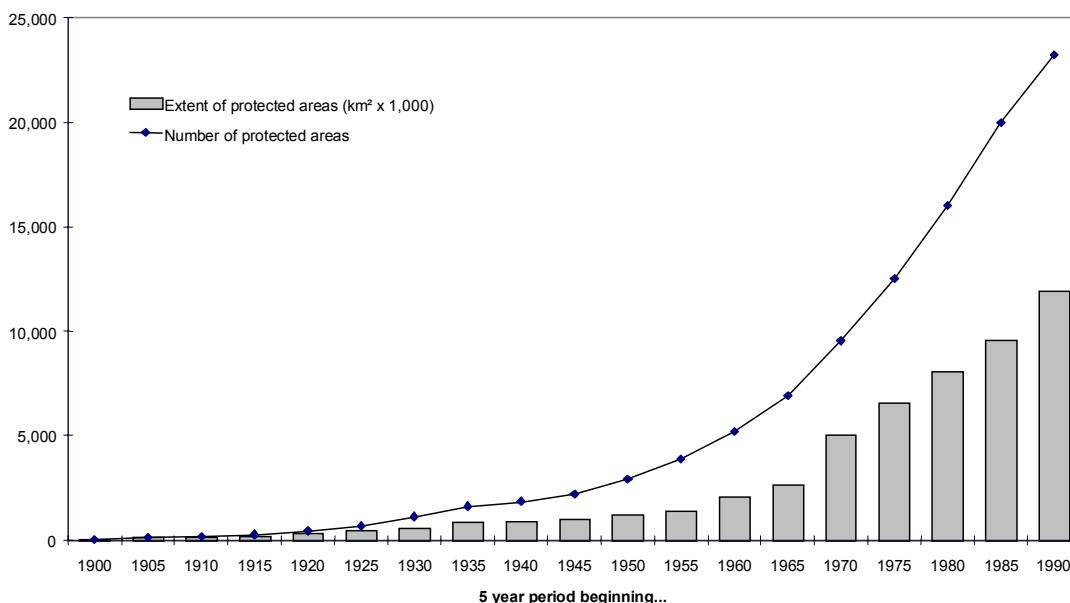
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Introduction

The international community is currently focused on issues such as geopolitical insecurity and the threat of war, economic recession, globalization and poverty eradication. All of these issues can and will impact on the lives of millions of people. However, if one looks at the long term wellbeing of people the above issues can only be resolved within the context of sustainable development. Furthermore, sustainable development is inextricably linked to the environment upon which human wellbeing ultimately relies. Thus, biological diversity, or biodiversity, is of critical importance for sustainable development in both industrialized and developing countries development as it provides foods, genetic materials for agriculture, medicines, building materials and recreational activities.

A crucial element of biodiversity conservation is a network of ecologically representative protected areas. Table 1 shows that there has been an exponential growth in the number and area of protected areas in the past 100 years. Today there are about 60,000 protected areas that cover about 10% of the earth's land surface (IUCN, 2002).



Source: IUCN

While progress with establishing protected areas around the world has been one of the major conservation achievements of the last century, there are still many challenges to face in terms of ensuring that natural resources are conserved and used sustainably. We have learned many lessons that are worth mentioning before we move on to discuss trans-boundary conservation areas. These lessons include:

- Protected areas are necessary, but alone they are not sufficient to conserve biodiversity or sustain ecosystem services that human life depends on;
- Species and ecosystems cross political boundaries;
- Many protected areas are not managed effectively;
- There is a need for more equitable sharing of costs and benefits of sustainable development and conservation; and
- The role of local communities in land use decisions needs to be strengthened.

These lessons have influenced the development of more systemic approaches to conservation, including the development of the ecosystem approach. In recent years there has been a shift from establishing 'islands' of protected areas as the primary focus, to a more integrated 'ecosystem approach'. The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) calls for the application of the ecosystem approach that is in turn based on the following assumptions:

- Land use and management has on-site and off-site impacts on ecosystems and people
- Viable species populations and healthy ecosystem processes cannot be contained within small units of land and; and
- Conservation and development planning and action must take place across whole landscapes and involve multiple interest groups

Transboundary conservation areas are an important aspect of the ecosystem approach.

Definitions

A transboundary protected area is 'an area of land and/or sea that straddles one of more boundaries between states, sub-national units such as provinces and regions, autonomous areas and/or areas beyond the limits of national sovereignty or jurisdiction, whose constituent parts are especially dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity, and of natural and associated cultural resources, and managed co-operatively through legal and other effective means.' (Sandwith et al 2001)

Peace parks are transboundary protected areas that are formally dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity, and of natural and associated cultural resources, and to the promotion of peace and cooperation.' (Sandwith, et al 2001??)

The term Transboundary Conservation Areas is used in this paper to mean a transboundary protected area including the associated buffer zones and adjacent land uses.

But why do we need a transboundary approach to conservation? I will briefly examine three key reasons for transboundary conservation areas (TBCAs), these are:

- The Ecological argument
- The peace argument, and
- The Socio-economic argument

The **ecological argument** for TBCAs is based on at least two key factors; first, an effective conservation strategy needs to consider that biodiversity and non-living natural resources (eg water) cross political boundaries, and second, TBCAs can increase resilience of ecosystems to disturbances such as weather related events, fires, human use and climate change.

A number of transboundary areas have been important elements of negotiating and maintaining **peace** between states. This is likely to become increasingly important as the linkages between natural resources and security between countries become increasingly apparent, particularly in relation to issues such as water resources. TBCAs that include 'peace parks' can provide symbolic value for peaceful co-operation between nations. Since 1997 IUCN has promoted a Parks for Peace initiative as a tool to enhance regional co-operation for biodiversity conservation, conflict prevention, resolution and reconciliation, and sustainable regional development

TBCAs are also promoted for **socio-economic** reasons including their role in supporting livelihoods and eradicating extreme poverty, their value in conserving cultural, aesthetic values, and their ability to provide eco-tourism opportunities and enhance the economic value of ecosystem services (e.g. water).

However, the reasons for establishing TBCAs do not appear to have been systematically applied and often political reasons appear to have been the driving force for developing many TBCAs. Not surprisingly, TBCAs face many challenges, not the least, co-operating across borders can increase the complexity of conservation efforts and cost of management due to:

- different interests and unequal power relationships between states
- inequitable sharing of benefits between interest groups and between states
- the tendency for the management of some TBCAs to be centralized due to transnational nature
- the complexity of dispute resolution and different legal regimes
- the sites are sometimes used for smuggling, illegal migration and illegal trade

Moreover, many TBCAs coincide with areas of poverty and the economic and social benefits for local people are often more rhetoric than reality.

I do not profess any expertise in TBCAs, but it would appear to me that we need to find ways to:

- keep the costs of TBCAs proportionate to their benefits and in particular to ensure equitable sharing of costs and benefits between states and between different interest groups. In particular, local communities and indigenous peoples are often expected to bear many of the costs of TBCAs and reap few of the benefits. This is not only inequitable, but likely to be unsustainable,
- ensure effective participation of all interest groups, and particularly local communities and indigenous peoples, in land use decisions that affect the wider landscape;
- maintain and enhance political will and long-term commitment (particularly outside the environment sector) to TBCAs;
- manage conflicts fairly;
- better understand the link between TBCAs and poverty. TBCAs can and do have positive and negative impacts on poor people. These impacts need to be analysed and documented and used to guide future interventions in existing and proposed TBCAs; and
- continue to improve the effectiveness of management of TBCAs

To achieve this will require a questioning and learning approach designed to lead to improved site level operational management, improved institutional arrangements and enhanced enabling environments – policies, laws and financial instruments for TBCAs as well as forging links between these levels.

References

Sandwith, T., Shine, C., Hamilton, L. and Sheppard , D. (2001) Transboundary Protected Areas for Peace and Co-operation. IUCN, Gland, Switzerland and Cambridge, UK. xi + 111pp.