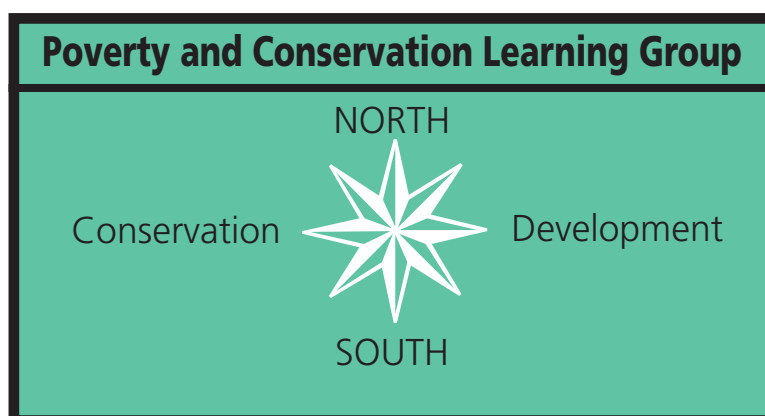


The Poverty and Conservation  
Learning Group:  
**Proposed Structure and Activities**

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September 2005



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## 1. Introduction

THE FORD FOUNDATION is providing support for IIED to coordinate the establishment of an international “learning group” on poverty conservation linkages. Since the launch of this initiative in November 2004, IIED has been working with a wide range of organisations to:

1. scope out the need and demand for such a Group;
2. identify potential members;
3. explore alternative models and structures for the Group; and,
4. investigate its potential research, learning and communications activities.

5. document the development of the conservation-poverty debate over time;
6. map the ongoing initiatives of existing institutions and networks;
7. conduct a preliminary review of on-the-ground experience in linking conservation and poverty reduction.

Based on these activities, this paper presents our proposal for the establishment, structure and functioning of the Learning Group over the next three years – after which time the future of the Group will be re-assessed in line with the continuing needs of its members.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. Learning Group Objectives and Issues

The Poverty and Conservation Learning Group is intended to address a number of problems:

- The apparently growing divide between conservation and development practitioners and policy makers on how – and whether – to link biodiversity conservation with poverty reduction;
- The potential duplication of effort by a number of different organisations that are grappling independently with the problem of linking conservation and poverty reduction;
- The lack of an established forum through which participants from a range of backgrounds can participate on an equal footing to share and analyse emerging experience in conservation-poverty linkages and identify knowledge gaps and research needs.

The goal of the Learning Group is thus to facilitate learning on conservation-poverty linkages between and within different communities of interest. In order to achieve this goal the Learning Group will fulfil two major – but different – functions:

1. promote good practice amongst *policy makers and practitioners* through information provision and dissemination via an open access website
2. facilitate dialogue and mutual learning amongst different types of *organisations* actively working on conservation-poverty linkages (including those who are often under-represented in international debates) through provision of a programme of “learning activities”.

Overall, as time progresses and relationships within the Group develop we see the nature of the learning activities moving from sharing of experience; to

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<sup>1</sup> A separate paper sets out our conceptual framework for analyzing conservation-poverty linkages (including definitions of key terms). The outputs of activities 5-7 will be published on our website –

identifying best practice; to building consensus; to advocacy around common positions.

The consultations for the Learning Group have identified a number of priority issues – as perceived by different stakeholders for the Group to address. These include:

1. The need for better understanding.

- What is the empirical body of knowledge? Which components of biodiversity are most important for poverty reduction? Which groups of the poor are (1) most dependent and (2) most likely to benefit from interventions?
- What are the incentives for making the conservation-poverty link? To what extent does poverty really undermine conservation success and to what extent can biodiversity really contribute to poverty reduction?
- What is a “rights-based approach”? What does this mean in practice for both conservation and development agencies?
- How can conservation really make a difference where decades of rural development have apparently failed?
- What is the overall impact of international conservation programmes on indigenous and other local people?
- What are the implications for North-South financial flows?

2. The need for practical tools and methodologies

- What strategies for linking conservation and poverty reduction have worked on the ground – and what are the criteria for success?
- What mechanisms can be used to translate sound evidence into organizational/policy change?
- How can power imbalances be addressed when deciding trade-offs, approaches, objectives?

### 3. Constituting the Poverty and Conservation Learning Group – A Proposed Way Forward

One of the challenges in designing the Poverty and Conservation Learning Group is to find the right “model” in terms of its structure and the activities supported. The following proposal is based on a review<sup>2</sup> of existing models, our analysis of which elements of those models appear to be particularly effective and suit the needs of the Learning Group; and our consultations and discussions with different organisations and individuals who have different priorities and perceptions but a shared interest in the Group.

- How can existing small-scale successes be scaled up?
- How is “best practice” defined in different conservation contexts (protected areas, community conserved areas, co-managed areas etc)?
- How can “pro-poor” conservation be financed and who will cover the costs?

3. The need for an appreciation of externalities

- What are the implications of China – and other rapidly industrializing countries – for biodiversity?
- What are the implications of continuing urbanization?
- What are the likely impacts of continued infrastructure development both for local communities and for conservation?
- What is the role of external policy conditions (trade, MEAs, etc) in helping or hindering poverty-conservation links
- What is the role of the private sector?
- How can markets be made to work for local communities?

We recognize that many more issues are likely to emerge as the Group develops and new members – with different priorities – join. We also recognize that there are already many initiatives that are covering parts of the conservation-poverty agenda and addressing some of the issues above – including a number that are considering conservation as part of a broader poverty-environment agenda, those considering poverty as part of wider “social justice” agenda, and those focused on specific sectors (forestry, wildlife, wetlands). One role of the Secretariat will be to synthesise some of the outputs of these other initiatives and set them in the context of the conceptual framework. Over time this will allow for the identification of prevailing knowledge gaps and new research needs.

#### 3.1 Structure

##### 3.1.1 Membership

One of the comments from the first consultation meeting held in Bangkok November 2004, was that the Learning Group should be open to everyone and no-one should be excluded. While we respect this desire for non-exclusivity, we think we need to balance this with a need to be practical and to provide value to those

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<sup>2</sup> See Annex

organizations that are actively working and seeking to learn in this field rather than those who are just interested (for example individual students, consultants and so on). An ultimate goal of the Learning Group is to influence policy change so that conservation policy takes better account of poverty concerns; development policy takes better account of biodiversity concerns; and both pay attention to human rights. **We therefore propose to focus our targeted learning activities on organizations that develop – or have the capacity to influence – policy, while engaging practitioners in sharing experience and promoting good practice.**

The Group will be deliberately small so that learning activities can be tailored to the specific needs of the members and so that interaction between members can be maximized. Members will initially be invited to join the Group based on the following criteria:

- (a) They represent an organization (e.g. government, community organizations, networks, NGOs, donor organizations, private sector) – and have the mandate of that organization to participate in the Learning Group
- (b) The organization they represent is actively working on – or affected by – poverty-conservation linkages
- (c) The organization is willing to share its experience – positive and negative;
- (d) The organization wants to learn from others and is committed to the learning process.<sup>3</sup>
- (e) The Group as a whole represents the range of organizations with an interest in conservation-poverty linkages. Particular efforts will be made to identify member organizations that could facilitate regional or national level learning processes that will feed in to the international Group.

Other organisations, not yet identified by the Secretariat, may request to join on the basis that they meet the criteria above.

### 3.1.2 Facilitation

The Group will be convened and facilitated by IIED. IIED has a reputation for independence and as an “honest broker” experienced in facilitating multi-stakeholder research and dialogue processes – examples include the Mining Minerals and Sustainable Development initiative and the Forest Governance Learning Group. IIED will act as a secretariat to the Group, organize and facilitate learning events and activities in consultation with the Group and will moderate discussions and other information exchanges within the Group.

The IIED Secretariat will be supported by a small steering committee. This will comprise up to 6 individuals with the time, experience and commitment to provide oversight and guidance to the Secretariat. Steering committee members will include those with experience of running learning groups as well as those with experience of conservation-poverty linkages.<sup>4</sup>

### 3.1.3 Public Engagement

As discussed above, for practical purposes the Learning Group will be deliberately small and will focus on organizations with the potential to influence conservation and development policy. However, a website ([www.povertyandconservation.info](http://www.povertyandconservation.info)) is currently being established to house relevant information resources and to assist in information exchange and dissemination (see below). This will be an open-access resource. In addition, once the learning agenda has been agreed by the Core Group it is anticipated that a number of the learning events organised that will be open to wide participation – depending on their thematic and geographic coverage.

We anticipate that the majority of individuals in this category will signify their interest by subscribing to a newsletter. This will enable us to review where the interest lies (both geographically and by type of individual subscribing).

### 3.1.4 Future Developments

As the Learning Group evolves, we will seek regular feedback from both core and open members on the structure – and we will continue to evaluate experience from other groups and networks. Changes to the structure will be made as necessary. The first year will be a period for designing, testing and fine-tuning. Subsequently the Learning Group may wish to implement more radical changes. The Group may, for example, spawn a series of sub-groups that operate at the national level. This should be a demand-driven process and not something that is pushed by the Secretariat in response to a potentially inaccurate perceived need. Where the membership includes several individuals from a particular country we will explore with them whether or not a more focused initiative might be something the Learning Group could help to facilitate. We will also explore the potential for country-country learning – again dependent on the interest the Learning Group generates and the geographical location of its core and open members.

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<sup>3</sup> This commitment will include responsibility for providing written and verbal inputs to learning activities; providing feedback from inputs from others; participating in at least two events.

<sup>4</sup> Individuals who have provided informal advice to date and would be good candidates for the steering committee include: Steve Bass,

IIED; Bill Adams, University of Cambridge; Ashish Kothari/Grazi Borrini-Feyerabend, TILCEPA; Alejandro Argumedo, Indigenous Peoples' Biodiversity Network, Marcus Colchester, Forest Peoples' Programme; Maria Berlekom, SwedBio.

## 3.2 Activities

### 3.2.1 Information provision

Our consultations have highlighted that many individuals and organizations would value the establishment of a “one-stop shop” for information on conservation-poverty linkages. The Learning Group website will act as a repository for information and a key means for dissemination. The website will include four main databases:

- A **bibliographic database** containing annotated details of key publications from the conservation, development and human rights communities. Wherever possible hyperlinks will be provided to the original document. If this is not possible full details will be provided for obtaining copies of the document. Users will be able to search the database for documents from specific organizations or specific types of organization (eg donors, indigenous peoples organizations); for information on particular themes (eg protected areas, organizational approaches); for particular types of document (policy papers, case studies), and so on.
- A **case studies database** detailing practical examples of efforts to link conservation and poverty and the particular strategies that have been used to make the linkage (e.g. revenue sharing schemes, conservation enterprise, community conserved areas, ecoagriculture) and the impacts of these efforts. Users will be able to identify examples by location or by type of approach used.
- An **institutional database** that highlights who is working on conservation-poverty linkages, where they are working, specific projects they are engaged in, relevant publications they have produced. It is anticipated that the members of the inner circle will be the main base for this.
- An **initiatives database** that provides details of ongoing research, networking activities and implementation activities. There are a number of international initiatives that are relevant to the conservation-poverty debate (e.g. the UNDP/UNEP Poverty Environment Initiative; the CIFOR Poverty Environment Network; the MacArthur “Advancing Conservation in a Social Context” Initiative). This database will be used to provide updates on all of these activities and to highlight the linkages and synergies between them.

The four databases will be interlinked and will be regularly updated. Members of the Learning Group will be critical in providing new and updated information.

As well as the databases, the website will function as a **web portal**, providing links to other sites of interest, members institutional sites, related databases, networks and so on. The site will also contain:

- an **e-library** for documents that are not available on other live websites,
- a section for useful **methodologies and tools**,
- a practitioners exchange forum to facilitate rapid exchange of information, post requests for assistance and so on from project managers, protected area officials and so on.
- a section for posting **Learning Group documents** (including thinkpieces, position papers, workshop proceedings, archived newsletters).

The site will be live and under testing from 1st November 2005 and will be designed to be used. Features that are not used will be removed or modified and users comments will be integrated into its design, and a survey questionnaire mid-year will solicit feedback from regular users and known non-users. The website will be launched in English but shortly after will also be available in French and Spanish versions.

### 3.2.2. Learning Activities

We propose a mix of virtual and face-to-face activities. We are very aware that many current models for information dissemination and learning have severe limitations – electronic newsletters and listservs clog email inboxes and are often unread; few organizations have video-conferencing capacity; e-conferences can be time consuming and not available to those with no – or limited – internet access; face-to-face conferences and workshops are even more time consuming and expensive to participate in. At the same time many of these models do work for certain stakeholder groups and can be made to work better:

- CIFOR’s Poley listserv is an electronic newsletters perceived almost unanimously to be effective.
- Those organizations that do have video-conferencing facilities generally find them extremely valuable. Particularly in terms of engaging indigenous and local community organizations, video-conferencing where participants can see and talk to each other in real-time (albeit via the services of an NGO host or translator) can be extremely valuable.<sup>5</sup>

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5 Alejandro Argumedo, Indigenous Peoples’ Biodiversity Network, personal communication.

- IIED has recently facilitated an innovative, multi-lingual “e-forum” on local food systems that combines local field-based workshops and meetings with internet-based exchanges.
- Face-to-face meetings are expensive – but they work, if well facilitated, well targeted and well timed.

We therefore suggest that the first year of the Learning Group (from January 2006) should be used as a pilot phase to test different learning approaches and, through a regular feedback process, to eliminate those that are burdensome and fine-tune those that are valuable. The provisional list of activities (to be prioritized and refined at the inception meeting of the Group) includes:

- *Learning events:* Interactive events will include roundtable discussions, workshops, training and so on. The themes and scope of these events will be designed to address the learning agenda to be agreed at the inception meeting of the Group (see above for a preliminary identification of key issues). Some events will involve the entire Group (eg, in advance of an agreed agenda we suggest the first event should be a workshop with the coordinators of the various global initiatives addressing biodiversity-poverty linkages); others will be targeted to specific sections of the Group (eg a donor roundtable) and others will be opened out to participation by a broader range of affected stakeholders – depending on the thematic and geographic coverage (eg a session exploring the impacts of conservation activities on indigenous peoples and other affected communities). Where possible events will be linked to existing regional and international meetings such as CBD events, UN meetings, IUCN events, Poverty-Environment Partnership meetings and so on. We will also experiment with video-conferencing and e-conferencing as a means for facilitating participation in these events.
- *Quarterly newsletter:* This will be distributed by email but also available on the website. It will include an update of learning group activities, new publications and key events, plus perspectives on key issues. Over time we may need to explore whether this should in fact be two distinct outputs: the newsletter, which provides updates on the Learning Group and other related initiatives; and a Pollex-type briefing paper which synthesizes new research, provides a critical perspective on new publications, events and so on.
- *Databases:* The four web-based databases will be

continuously updated and expanded – in particular by drawing on the knowledge and experience of Learning Group members.

- *Methodologies and tools:* Methodologies currently used at project/site level to undertake socio-economic baselines (including PPAs), design interventions and monitor socio-economic impact of conservation work will be documented and posted on the website. Examples of “good practice” will be identified.
- *Practitioners exchange forum:* The Learning Group is particularly keen to engage practitioners. An interactive site will be established on the website which will allow field workers to post their experience and to learn from others. The Secretariat will partially moderate this forum by actively soliciting experience on specific key issues – eg revenue sharing mechanisms, negotiating private sector partnerships, land claims.
- *Blogs:* In order to stimulate discussion on key issues and give space to a wide range of perspectives, the website will also include a blog page<sup>6</sup> moderated by the Secretariat. We anticipate that Learning Group members will play a key role in writing short pieces – or blogs – intended to stimulate and provoke!
- *Written outputs:* The Learning Group will periodically produce *briefing papers* and other short documents that will be posted on the website but will also be made available in hard copy for those with limited web access. We also plan to produce a hard copy *annotated bibliography* from the bibliographic database, and a *reader* that highlights key texts from the conservation, development and human rights disciplines.

Two to three interactive events will be planned for Year 1, and the other activities will be gradually introduced over the first year. We will continuously monitor the uptake of, and participation in, different activities over Year 1 and will seek critical feedback as to which activities are the most valuable. On this basis we will seek to streamline the suite of activities and services offered in Year 2 (bearing in mind that it is likely that different types of activity will be more or less useful to different members). However, as a general principle we will seek to maintain a mix of virtual and face-to-face activities, electronic and hard copy outputs, so as to meet the needs of as wide a range of participants as possible.

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<sup>6</sup> A “blog” is an online, chronological forum for posting views and comment on key issues.



We recognize that key issues will vary from region to region and country to country – as will the potential to influence change. As the Group develops we will encourage participation in the Learning Group by national and regional organizations that have the potential to develop spin-off activities and events that

address their specific needs and are responsive to local demand. The Learning Group will thus evolve over time into a Learning Network of regional and national nodes that can both inform and be informed by the international Group.

#### **4. Next Steps**

Based on the consultation process to date, IIED will start to invite membership of the Learning Group amongst organizations that have demonstrated or voiced a desire to learn or to share experience. The Learning Group will be formally constituted at an inception meeting in late November 2005 – to be held in Cambridge or London, UK. This meeting will serve to confirm commitment to the Group and to the learning process and to agree an agenda around which learning activities will be devised. The first learning “event” will be held on the second day of the meeting. In advance of a learning agenda being agreed by the Group, it is proposed by IIED that this event should comprise a

roundtable discussion whereby coordinators of the many different international initiatives examining conservation-poverty linkages can share information about their initiatives and identify linkages, overlaps and key gaps.

The website will be promoted via the Learning Group mailing list that has been developed during the course of this scoping study. The website functions will be demonstrated to Learning Group members at the inception meeting. Written outputs of the Learning Group scoping study will also be finalized during November and presented at the inception meeting.

## Annex: Reviewing Potential Models for the Learning Group Structure

We have reviewed the structure and functions of a number of “learning group” initiatives, particularly in terms of their:

- *Governance arrangements:* how is the group structured e.g. is there a full-time Secretariat? Is there an oversight committee e.g. an Advisory Panel or Steering Committee? If so, how big is this group, how is it comprised and how does it work?
- *Activities undertaken:* what are the main activities of the group and how pro-active is it? Regular editorial? Sharing of information? Sharing of opinions (e.g. through blogs)? Moderated electronic and face-to-face discussions? And/or advocacy e.g. identifying & communicating “good practice”?
- *Membership arrangements:* How open is membership – and how big is the Group? Are there different categories of membership? How are members selected? How diverse are their backgrounds?
- *Geographical focus:* are learning activities targeted at – or carried out in – specific countries or regions? Do they operate at the international level? Or are they a combination of both?

From this review we have identified the following as some of the important differences between learning group models, which has helped to highlight some of the options to be thought through with regard to constituting the Poverty and Conservation Learning Group:

- *Size and composition of staff and oversight group:* All learning groups have some core staff/administrative capacity, but this varies from 1-5 people depending on scale of activities and interactivity of website. All learning groups have a formal oversight group, whether called a Steering Committee, an Executive Committee, an Advisory Panel or a Board of Directors. Usually this has less than 10 members. Governance processes for the oversight group are not generally identified.
- *Size and composition of core learning group:* Some groups go out of their way to be as inclusive as possible. Membership is completely open and as a result the number of members may be very high (The Mountain Forum for example has over 5000 individual members and nearly 500 institutional members). Other groups are deliberately small so that learning events can be very focused and interaction between members is maximized (The Forests Dialogue,

for example, consists of a core group of only 24 members). Smallness of often balanced, however, by opening up specific learning events to broad participation depending on the thematic or geographic focus. Representativeness is also a key issue when thinking through membership structure. Some groups ensure that traditionally marginalized interest groups are disproportionately represented (in order to counteract power imbalances), and that no single geographic region predominates. Others pay less attention to representation, seizing opportunities for creative or strategic partnerships, but emphasizing transparency.

- *Layers of membership:* All groups which have websites make the information on them publicly available, though a few have ‘members only’ sections (eg Ecoagriculture Partners). Interested parties are sometimes invited to join ‘circles’ of membership (defined by interests or level of engagement) or discussion groups (defined by issues). Some groups have institutional members, but most appear to be individual membership only. Ecoagriculture Partners is slightly unusual, having a combination of both.
- *Fee paying or not:* The only fee paying group reviewed was the Bushmeat Crisis Task Force, which is an advocacy and campaigning group with a core group of institutional members whose fees support the Task Force. Most learning groups provide their services for free, including access to publications and editorials.
- *Range of non-website services:* Some learning groups appear to be principally website driven, whereas for others the website is just one learning tool or the means for communicating non-website activities (meetings, research etc) with a broader audience. Others currently have no web presence (e.g. Forest Governance Learning Group).
- *Size/modality of website:* The websites of groups vary greatly in terms of the range of services offered (e.g. access to resources/databases, information about events, merchandise), their interactivity (search functions, membership sections, regular updating of information), and their usability (number of languages offered, quality of photos, depth and logic of structure). Learning groups for whom the website is the primary tool appear to have the most functional websites.
- *Degree of editorial comment:* Some groups are clearly moderated by technical experts (as



opposed to administrators) who offer editorial comment (regularly updated) on the front page of the website, and opinions on key issues, as well as access to moderated e-discussions and/or blogs. Others appear to be primarily dissemination vehicles.

- *Geographic focus:* Some groups operate at an international level (e.g. TILCEPA, The Forests Dialogue), others have selected specific countries to work in (e.g. IIED Forest Governance Learning Group which focuses on West and Southern Africa); others are international but include sub-groups at the regional or country level, or run “learning events” targeted at specific countries or regions (e.g. The Mountain Forum has a series of regional networks and regional discussion lists that subscribers can choose to join). In other cases, learning groups are set up specifically for policy makers and practitioners in a particular country – although the focus of learning may then be international (for example the UK Tropical Forests Forum which is open to UK agencies with an interest in tropical forest management; the Tanzania Natural Resource Forum – which is a national network addressing national issues).

#### Models reviewed:

- **Ecoagriculture Partners (EP)** is an umbrella organization for NGOs, research institutes, farmers’ organizations, academia, public and private agencies with an interest in promoting ecoagriculture. Ecoagriculture Partners provides a platform for documenting ecoagriculture systems and practices, analysing and catalysing research, and raising awareness amongst the public and amongst policy-makers as to the potential of ecoagriculture and how best to support its development. As structured until recently (it is currently the process of registering as an NGO), EP had 5 staff and a 6 person International Board of Directors, as well as a list of 48 institutional partners. EP provides a well-organised volume of regularly updated information on events, media, materials, and has a ‘members only’ section to its website. <http://www.ecoagriculturepartners.org/>
- **The Forests Dialogue (TFD)** is a forum that brings together experts on forestry issues including NGOs and forest companies to address key issues of international concern. It has a staff of 3 people and a small core group, called the Steering Committee, of 24 people from a range of backgrounds – timber companies, timber workers, forest owners, NGOs, development agencies. The core group meets regularly to but more open events are also held on specific issues with wide participation. The TFD website offers a broad range of information on events, issues and publications. <http://research.yale.edu/gisf/tfd/>
- **Call of the Earth** is a forum to support and enable indigenous peoples to reframe the discussions and negotiations on intellectual property rights and traditional knowledge that are occurring in a wide range of fora. It has one staff member and a 9-person Steering Committee. It has two ‘circles’ for members: the Call of the Earth Circle is a forum for indigenous experts and representatives to address policy issues; other experts, as well as institutions, are invited to act as resource persons to the Circle and Steering Committee through the Circle of Friends. <http://www.earthcall.org/>
- The **Mountain Forum (TMF)** has a 6-person Board of Directors. TMF promotes global action toward equitable and ecologically sustainable mountain development through information sharing, mutual support and advocacy. It supports networking and capacity building and encourages members to be proactive in advocating sustainable development of mountain areas. It offers global, regional and thematic e-mail discussion lists, focused electronic conferencing, a calendar of events, and an on-line library. <http://www.mtnforum.org/>
- The **Bushmeat Crisis Task Force** is a campaign dedicated to removing the commercial bushmeat trade that is believed to threaten some wildlife species, notably in central and western Africa, by building a US lobby. An actively managed forum, with institutional members supporting it financially and provided its Executive Committee, plus an information-rich website. <http://www.bushmeat.org/>
- The **UK Tropical Forest Forum** is open to all British-based governmental agencies, NGOs, companies and individuals, with an interest in the sustainable utilization and conservation of tropical forests. The Forum meets regularly to discuss tropical forest issues. Information is also distributed by newsletter and other correspondence. It runs a number of specialist working groups – e.g. on bushmeat. <http://www.forestforum.org.uk/>
- **TILCEPA** is network of individuals with an interest in indigenous and local communities’ rights in relation to protected areas. TILCEPA promotes the participation of indigenous peoples and other local communities at regional and global conservation events and works with the Indigenous Peoples Forum and World Alliance of Mobile and Indigenous Peoples. It has 2 Co-Chairs, 21 Core Group members and 2 support staff. It is currently modifying its structure so that individual members can act as focal points for TILCEPA activities in a particular country. <http://www.tilcepa.org/>
- The **Tanzania Natural Resource Forum (TNRF)** managed by the Wildlife Conservation Society of Tanzania is a good example of a local network. It encompasses a number of researchers and operational

actors originated from different institutions, both public, private or NGOs, that deal on a day to day basis with the issue of management of natural resource. Some of the members of the forum are NGOs representing the interest of indigenous communities. It has recently hired a full time Programme Officer.  
<http://www.wcstarusha.org/tnrf/tnrfhome.html>

- **IIED's Forest Governance Learning Group** – this brings together key stakeholders in different countries of West and Southern Africa to conduct policy research, develop practical governance guidance materials and tools, and improve shared understanding of key issues in forest governance for poverty reduction. It operates very much on a country to country level – eg Ghana shares experience with, and learns from South Africa and Tanzania, and so on.

- The **Population-Environment Research Network (PERN)** is an online network that promotes exchange and learning between researchers and other experts. It runs e-seminars, hosts an online bibliographic database and produces a regular e-newsletter. <http://www.populationenvironmentresearch.org/index.jsp>
- **FRAME** is a USAID-funded program to build knowledge-sharing networks of natural resource professionals. It aims to foster discussion on emerging trends in environmental and natural resource management across disciplinary and geographical boundaries; and provide timely and relevant information on innovative and strategic options to address these issues. <http://www.frameweb.org/>

# Poverty and Conservation Learning Group

The Poverty and Conservation Learning Group is an initiative coordinated by IIED and funded by the Ford Foundation. The Learning Group is intended to address a number of problems:

- The apparently growing divide between conservation and development practitioners and policy makers on how – and whether – to link biodiversity conservation with poverty reduction;
- The potential duplication of effort by a number of different organisations that are grappling independently with the problem of linking conservation and poverty reduction;
- The lack of an established forum through which participants from a range of backgrounds can participate on an equal footing to share and analyse emerging experience in conservation-poverty linkages and identify knowledge gaps and research needs.

The goal of the Learning Group is thus to facilitate learning on conservation-poverty linkages between and within different communities of interest.

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