

# Integrating Cultural, Spiritual and Ethical Dimensions into Conservation Practice in a Rapidly Changing World

**Mark Infield, Ph.D.**

Asia Pacific Regional Director  
Flora and Fauna International

and

**Arthur Mugisha, Ph.D.**

Culture, Values, Conservation Project Director  
Flora and Fauna International

MacArthur  
Foundation



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**into**

**Conservation Practice in a Rapidly Changing World**

**Prepared for the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation**

**By**

**Fauna & Flora International**

**Authors:**

**Mark Infield, PhD.**

**Asia Pacific Regional Director**

**and**

**Arthur Mugisha, PhD.**

**Culture, Values, Conservation Project Director**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Modern conservation can be traced back to developments in Europe and the United States of America at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that reflected a conservation ethic which valued both the aesthetic and moral values of nature and natural landscapes and the wise use of natural resources for the benefit of “mankind.” These values gave rise to the first national parks, on which much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century’s conservation endeavors have been based, as well as the ethics and practices of sustainable resource management.

As conservation initiatives were applied in developing nations, whose peoples had very different cultural values and ethics, the relative values of aesthetic and spiritual attachments to landscape and nature began to give way to the absolutes of scientific and economic rationalism. Conscious of the need to gain the support of local communities and to respond to the fact that conservation initiatives often levied significant costs on local communities with few balancing benefits, conservationists embraced materialist perspectives and represented the natural world increasingly as comprised of commodities to be sustainably managed. This trend was strengthened by the growing dominance of market-based neoliberal solutions to social issues.

A proliferation of initiatives resulted, attempting to demonstrate and deliver tangible, material benefits to local communities. These included integrated conservation and development projects, community based natural resource management and community conservation. Their poor delivery of conservation results, however, led the basic assumptions on which they were founded—that communities degraded conservation areas or over-used natural resources because they were poor, and that enlightened self interest would turn poachers into guardians—to be challenged.

At the heart of concerns was that the conservation endeavor was not delivering. Global targets for biodiversity were not being met and protected areas, the crown jewels of the conservation establishment, were increasingly exposed due to lack of local and political support. Research began to re-examine the role of cultural, spiritual and ethical values in delivering conservation. These were recognized as powerful drivers of behavior and remembered as fundamental to the initiation of modern conservation efforts.

Efforts to re-integrate values-based approaches to conservation speak to the policy questions, “What are we trying to conserve and why?” They also investigate the practical questions of “Why have current models not been more effective and how can we improve them?” The ‘Yellowstone’ model of protected areas was premised on the separation of human activities from nature, by setting aside large areas of land and resources for conservation. However, the separation of biological and cultural diversity obscures the reality that they are mutually reinforcing and mutually dependent. Indeed, it is difficult to understand and conserve the natural world unless we understand the human cultures that shape it, for each culture possesses its own sets of representations, knowledge and practices through which people interact with their environment. Nature is both a cultural construction and a biophysical reality.

The United National Millennium Declaration 2000 recognizes the current unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, and calls for a new ethic of conservation and environmental stewardship. Cultural values approaches need to become mainstream elements of the conservation endeavor, in both its conceptualization and its practical delivery. Integrating cultural and ethical values into the planning and

management of protected areas, in particular, will provide practical lessons to address current and future challenges to conservation. The cultural values approach is informed by the partial successes and failures of community conservation approaches based on economic and scientific values. It offers diversity and adaptability—something that is increasingly important to our rapidly changing world—and responds to questions of morality, what is right and wrong, that go beyond the materialism of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is not relevant everywhere and will not address all challenges faced by conservation. But it offers promise for demonstrating mutually beneficial incentives for managing protected areas, surrounding landscapes and natural resources, and for creating a broader constituency for conservation that will protect biodiversity sustainably, more effectively and more equitably.

Donor leadership is essential to harness the full potential of this approach, and to develop a shared understanding and critical mass of implementation within this “next frontier” for sustainable conservation. This sort of transformative leadership is already a signature of the MacArthur Foundation. MacArthur’s early support to several grantees in this area is beginning to show results and affect real change – moving policy and practice forward from narrow forms of community engagement to embrace and work with the diversity of values in nature and the natural world that exist amongst the peoples of the world.

The report examines the integration of cultural, spiritual and ethical dimensions into the conceptualization, design and delivery of conservation practices and initiatives, identifies gaps in the field, describes lessons learned to date, and proposes opportunities for the MacArthur Foundation to integrate these cultural dimensions into its conservation and sustainable development grant-making program over the next ten years.

## 1. THE RATIONALE FOR INTEGRATING CULTURAL<sup>1</sup> APPROACHES IN CONSERVATION<sup>2</sup> PRACTICE

The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation commissioned Fauna & Flora International (FFI) to prepare this report to support the development of their next ten-year strategy. It examines the integration of cultural, spiritual and ethical dimensions into the conceptualization, design and delivery of conservation practices and initiatives, and identifies opportunities for the MacArthur Foundation to integrate these dimensions into its conservation and sustainable development grant-making program.

Conservationists have long understood that community support and action are key requirements for sustainable conservation and, over the past century have attempted to integrate development issues into conservation programming in a variety of ways. In these times of rapid change, escalating threats from loss of habitat to agriculture and resource extraction, the new threat of climate change, and continuing biodiversity loss, FFI believes a focus on what we refer to as a “cultural values” approach to conservation, and especially to protected area management—an approach that allows representation of the different values, spiritual beliefs and moral philosophies of different cultures—affords a rallying point for targeted, sustained and more effective conservation action. Adoption of a cultural values approach provides an exceptional opportunity to forge new types of partnerships for conservation, and to make conservation relevant to a much broader cross-section of people, increasing the prospects for more meaningful and effective conservation and sustainable development in the coming decade and beyond.

### *1.1. An emerging cultural gap in biodiversity conservation*

In 1988 the International Society of Ethnobiology declared, "There is an inextricable link between cultural and biological diversity."<sup>3</sup> To address issues raised by this perspective requires re-examination of the meaning of conservation and new sets of tools to achieve it. Developing a framework that responds to these inextricable links is advanced by using a cultural approach to conservation.

The community-oriented approaches implemented over recent decades were designed to build strong and supportive constituencies for conservation. These approaches were and continue to be dominated by a world view that privileges the application of science and economics. Over this period the values, both western and non-western, that underpin relationships between peoples, place and nature were steadily lost from conservation policy and practice. Adopting a cultural approach to conservation is not about adding a set of prescriptions. Rather, it is about viewing the world through a cultural lens (Rao and Walton 2004), through the eyes of those whose values informed the management of land and resources for centuries, and whom we wish to become part of a broadened conservation constituency.

“An intervention that ignores social norms and imposes a view of the world that is external to the target group can be particularly ineffective” (Rao and Walton 2004, 9). This understanding is highly relevant to

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Culture’ resists definition. Culture relates to why human beings differ in their forms of life (Ingold 1994), confers identity, meaning, worth, aspirations and a sense of place in the universe (Goulet 1993), and comprises relationships between individuals, groups, ideas and perspectives (Rao and Walton 2004). Its use here and that of associated terms - cultural values, cultural approaches - is understood as complex, relative, and changing and to include the spiritual dimension and ethical considerations.

<sup>2</sup> ‘Conservation’ is used here and throughout the paper to mean the protection of biodiversity, species, ecosystems and landscapes, and the sustainable management of natural resources.

<sup>3</sup> International Society of Ethnobiology, Declaration of Belém, 1988 (<http://ethnobiology.org/>).

both development and conservation initiatives and helps explain some of their shortcomings. Integrating the social norms of local communities is of especial relevance in a rapidly changing world. Where communities, including indigenous peoples, face profound, rapid and apparently continuous changes to their social, economic, political and biophysical circumstances, the erosion of the values and institutions that provide social cohesion, adaptability and resilience is a matter of considerable concern. The cultural lens must be re-polished and adjusted as communities respond to change; but grafting an entirely new lens is likely to result in reduced capacity to recognize and respond to change.

Arguments for a cultural approach to conservation address two questions. First, “What are the values we wish to conserve?” This reflects concerns over the narrowness of perspectives expressed in current conservation theory and practice, helps clarify the non-material objectives of conservation, and contributes to the evolution of new conservation approaches. Second, “How can we achieve conservation?” This question speaks to the fact that the biological diversity that defines current conservation objectives continues to decline (Yamin 1995), demonstrating the need for new approaches that will improve conservation delivery. The integration of cultural perspectives into mainstream conservation practice will require examination on a sector-by-sector and case-by-case basis to determine which values can—and importantly cannot—be integrated into specific conservation initiatives.

### ***1.2. The origins of protection and protected areas***

The idea of protecting and managing resources is not new. Over 2,000 years ago, royal decrees in India protected areas and species. Sacred groves, forests, springs, rivers and mountains were revered as places where the ancestors resided, spirits lived or rituals were performed (Byers *et al.* 2001). The conservation movement of nineteenth century North America and Europe emphasized different values. In North America, protected areas were to safeguard dramatic and sublime scenery, in Africa, big game and ‘the hunt’ were valued, while in Europe, protection of landscapes—often domestic landscapes—was more common (Philips 2007).

Protected areas continue to be primary tools for the conservation of nature, whichever values are emphasized. In 1972<sup>4</sup>, the U.N. agreed that the protection of all major ecosystems was a requirement of national conservation programs; it is now a core principle of conservation policy (Olson 1999).<sup>5</sup> By the end of the 20th century, 120,000 areas had been ‘set aside’ for conservation purposes, covering 12 percent of the world’s surface and 6 percent of the seas (UNEP-WCMC 2008). Nonetheless, notable gaps in the representation of ecosystems and biomes remain, while many protected areas are little more than ‘paper parks’ (Brandon *et al.* 1998). Recognition of protected areas as primary tools for conservation is reflected in this exploration of a cultural values approach. It examines how conservation action in and around protected areas can significantly improve in both effectiveness and sustainability by mitigating conflict with surrounding communities, and strengthening actions in support of the expression of cultural values.

### ***1.3. The origins, loss and resurgence of values-based approaches to conservation***

Moral, aesthetic and spiritual understandings and sentiments were central to the development of modern conservation at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the United States, the spiritual and aesthetic values

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<sup>4</sup> The Stockholm Declaration of the United National Conference on the Human Environment.

<sup>5</sup> E.g., *The World Charter for Nature*, 1982; the *Rio Declaration at the Earth Summit*, 1992; *Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Agreed Program of Work on Protected Areas*, 2004.

emphasized by John Muir and Henry Thoreau led to the development of America's national parks<sup>6</sup>. In parallel, a strong utilitarian perspective emphasized practical and economic values. Gifford Pinchot, founder of the US Forest Service, coined the term, 'conservation ethic' promoting an anthropocentric understanding of conservation.

These two strands of thinking began to intertwine as protected areas spread around the globe. Justifications for conservation were increasingly necessary in poor and developing nations. As the cultural values of western conservation were not easily transferable, utilitarian perspectives began to dominate. Consequently, the institutions responsible for conservation adopted a schizophrenic approach of exclusion and material valuation in which strictly managed protected areas prevented most uses, but were explained and justified in economic and utilitarian terms (sustainable development). Science, originally a powerful tool for understanding ecological processes and designing management practices, came to define the reasons for conservation itself (Infield 2003); science evolved from a tool to a value.

Conservation practitioners universally recognize the need to build broad, robust and active constituencies for sustainable resource use, conservation and protected areas. From the 1980s, policy and practice changed profoundly as programs to achieve this became mainstream (Brown 2003, Adams and Hulme 2001)<sup>7</sup>. Hulme and Murphree (2001) describe three elements of 'new conservation': a community level focus; the use of ideas and language from the development sector; and market force incentives for conservation behaviors. The policies of governments, donors and NGOs became couched in economic and development terms, encouraged and supported by the ascendancy of neo-liberalism throughout the 1980s and 1990s, particularly in the US and Europe.

The report, "Our Common Future" (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987) strengthened the economic analysis behind sustainable development and recognized that conservation levied costs on local communities. The 1980s and 90s saw a proliferation of interventions that cast natural resources and protected areas as engines of development to engage local communities in their conservation. These activities included sharing revenues from protected areas, community-based natural resource management, and collaborative management schemes. They were based on the key assumption that hostility to or lack of interest in conservation was the result of poverty. Thus, enlightened self-interest would lead communities to embrace conservation, and economic development would reduce pressure on protected areas and natural resources. Though investigation of these assumptions, especially in respect to integrated conservation and development projects (ICDPs), found them flawed (Wells *et al.* 1992; Wells 1995), ICDPs and efforts to calculate the monetary worth of wildlife and nature<sup>8</sup> contributed to representations of conservation as economic in nature. Recently, payment for environmental services (PES) approaches—notably for carbon sequestration and storage—have taken this trend even further.

Economic approaches to conservation are not easy to design or deliver (Blaikie and Jeanrenaud 1996; Infield and Adams 1999), and success has been patchy (Noss 1997; Murombedzi 1999, Wells 1995). Despite significant investment, local interest and active support remains elusive and many conservation

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<sup>6</sup> The first national parks promoted the values of the western settlers; those of Native Americans were excluded.

<sup>7</sup> Key conservation conventions (e.g. the CBD, the Ramsar Convention, and the WCPA Durban Statement) require the inclusion, active participation and receipt of benefits by local communities and indigenous peoples.

<sup>8</sup> Surrogate market pricing, survey-based approaches, and contingent valuations (Dixon and Sherman 1990; Eltringham 1994) were used to commoditize nature without creating actual revenue flows.

initiatives operate within an environment of conflict and suspicion. These shortcomings have led to both resurgent demand for traditional ‘fines and fences’ approaches (Brechin *et al.* 2002), and to an articulation that a sole focus on scientific and economic rationales leads to alienation of those that value nature differently and have other motivations for its protection (Jepson and Canney 2003).

During this period, attention to non-material values all but vanished, even though cultural values had been drivers of the modern conservation ethic (Nash 1982; Lord 1994; Adams 1996) and individual interest is strongly associated with aesthetic, ethical and spiritual values. While the role of cultural values in building support for conservation was noted in the 1980s (McNeely and Miller 1984; Brownrigg 1985) and the concept of protecting diversity rather than “... some ideal, pristine nature” was recognized (Soule and Kohm 1989, 2), both were largely ignored in practice (Infield 2001). The past decade, however, has seen recognition of the interrelationships between culture and conservation (Maffi 1999, Posey 1999) and initiatives to re-integrate cultural values into conservation. Researchers and conservation practitioners alike are recognizing that conflicts with local groups increase when local cultural values are ignored (Verschuuren 2007), contributing to failures to conserve biodiversity, and undermining local peoples’ abilities to help protect their environment (Alcorn 1993).

Despite this evolution, initiatives to integrate cultural and ethical dimensions into mainstream conservation programs remain rare. Practical initiatives do exist, however, especially in the developed world, where stronger institutions and open governance structures enable innovation, creating new models that present real opportunities for developing cultural approaches in developing countries, too.

#### ***1.4. Protectionist conservation policy and practice***

Protected areas (PAs) are set aside to maintain functions and values that cannot survive in intensely managed landscapes. Conservation policies are strongly influenced by PAs, which remain the cornerstone of national and international conservation strategies. PAs embrace a wide range of management approaches, from total exclusion, through parks that welcome visitors, to areas that allow traditional lifestyle activities (including resource extraction) (Dudley 2008). However, most PAs continue to protect nature by separating it to some degree from human intervention.

This invariably creates conflicts between local people and conservationists (Alcorn 1993). Though each circumstance is unique, the severing of people from their land is destined to cause disagreements as the ‘wilderness’ set aside by conservationists is inevitably part of someone else’s cultural and economic landscape. PAs thus become surrounded by people who have been disenfranchised and ignored, do not understand the purpose, relevance or meaning of PAs, and derive little or no sanctioned benefits from them. The conservation authorities, meanwhile, have little appreciation of local perspectives, and pay insufficient attention to links between the PA and the lives of neighboring communities. A profound and lasting mutual distrust often results (Adams and McShane 1992). Effectively, rather than embracing the links between vigorous indigenous cultures and nature, conservation policies build barriers against them.

#### ***1.5. Cultural perspectives in protected areas and natural resources management***

Responses to the natural world stem as much from culturally based constructions of nature as they do from economics (Croll and Parkin 1992). Though the cultural values of biological diversity have received

considerable attention in the literature, until recently there was little practical exploration of the influence of culture on interactions between communities and conservation initiatives (Infield 2001).

Cultural values and social constructions of nature and landscape are at the center of relationships between nature and communities (Schama 1996, Posey 1999). Infield (2002a) argues that protected areas are best understood as cultural rather than economic entities, and that their management should emphasize values rather than resources. However, different people (and peoples), have different values and even value the same object differently. For example, the scientific and economic values emphasized by modern conservation that have largely replaced aesthetic and ethical values (Japson and Canney 2003) do not generally appeal to local or indigenous communities (or even the general public).

Many local communities and indigenous peoples, however, have values systems that link them to the natural world. If incorporated into conservation initiatives, these have the power to imbue protected areas or resource management regimes with relevance for local cultures. Furthermore, the enforcement of protection rules, such as taboos, based on local values and cultural institutions are generally more acceptable to indigenous communities, and less expensive to implement than externally imposed, poorly understood laws and regulations and may thus offer local but effective protection, including to threatened species (Colding and Folkes 2001).

For example, in the coastal forests of Kenya, the *Mijikenda* conserved their sacred forests over many generations using informal institutions and taboos. People breaking the rules faced the discipline of elders who handed out culturally and socially accepted sanctions. Social and economic changes have weakened the authority of the elders and cultural institutions but, with the support of external agencies such as the Kenya Wildlife Services and WWF, they continue to play important roles in efforts to conserve these threatened forests. FFI, in partnership with Uganda Wildlife Authority and local communities of the *Bakonjo* and *Bamba* peoples, are using taboos against the killing of chimpanzees, considered 'kin to people' to protect a remnant population. In Southeast China, relationships between natural resources and the *Dai* and *Hami* peoples have been forged within religious, moral, cultural, political, economic and ecological boundaries that are enforced by long-standing rules and norms. The philosophy and religious life of the *Dai* and *Hami* instill respect for forests, plants and animals and the landscape has been maintained through traditional land use and cultural practices (Xu *et al* 2005).

### **1.6. Relevance in a changing world**

The relationships between people and nature are socially and culturally conditioned, creating a diversity of reasons for conserving biodiversity across different cultures and societies (Yamin 1995). This diversity of interests and perspectives is core to adaptability and the capacity to respond to change. By supporting this diversity, cultural approaches help retain and enhance adaptability and are especially relevant in a changing world.

It is clear that no single approach to conservation will meet all the needs of our changing world or the rapidly evolving threats to biodiversity. Adding to the range of tools available, however, increases adaptability of the conservation endeavor to the range of challenges it faces now and will face in the future. Cultural approaches, by their nature, must respond to local situations, and thus offer adaptability. Values-based approaches are also suitable for areas where traditional 'fines and fences' and community

conservation approaches have failed or delivered only partially. Responsiveness is essential, not just to the design of conservation initiatives responding to changing circumstances, but to the resilience of communities and cultures themselves.

Culture, values and ethics are not static but respond to and evolve with changing circumstances. Indeed, they are key mechanisms for responding to change in ways that are socially relevant, appropriate and creative. Communities, especially indigenous communities, are most exposed to the negative effects of external influence and globalization when their cultural values and institutions have been lost or weakened<sup>9</sup>.

## **2. A GLOBAL REVIEW OF CURRENT APPROACHES AND PRACTICES**

Despite the current focus on material values of conservation, and the gathering impetus of payment for environmental services (PES) approaches, interest in the non-material values of conservation has grown in the past decade. A review of values-based approaches being employed around the world reveals both their underlying rationales and justifications and practical ways to build support for these initiatives. This exploration indicates early implementation interest and success, huge scope for improving conservation performance, and an opportunity (indeed, a necessity) for donor leadership in order to harness the full potential of a cultural values approach to conservation.

### ***2.1. Opportunities for values-based approaches to conservation***

#### **2.1.1. Broadening values in nature conservation**

Efforts to build support for conservation based on cultural values are underway. Several significant initiatives are integrating spiritual and religious values into conservation endeavors. Other values may be more difficult to describe, relevant to smaller groups, and difficult for outsiders to appreciate; as such, there are currently fewer practical initiatives to integrate them into conservation activities, even though they represent a vast and diverse set of values that link people to nature.

The cosmologies and behaviors of most indigenous peoples implicitly see humans as an integral part of the natural world (Croll and Parkin 1992). Though differing world views may make separation and definition of these values challenging, by grouping values we can support practical approaches to integrating them with conservation. Figure 1 provides a simple attempt to separate values applied to the natural world.

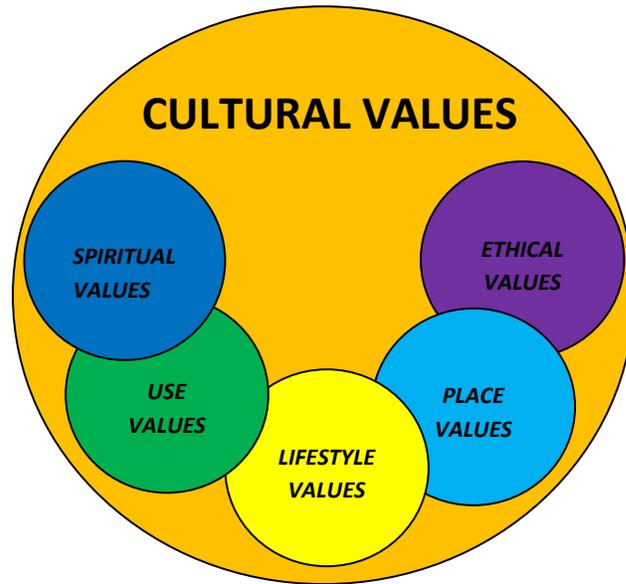
Values related to nature present practical opportunities for integrating culture and conservation. Use values and lifestyle values may be synonymous with spiritual values in a given culture, but they also engage people in activities and behaviors that locate them in landscapes and physically connect them to a natural resource. Use values have long been employed in community conservation initiatives, but are generally described in economic terms (Infield 2001). Investigating underlying drivers of the use of resources and places presents a wide range of tools for attracting the interest of local people in the

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<sup>9</sup> Undermining cultural institutions was a favoured means of creating compliant subjects by imperial powers in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

conservation of these resources and places. Place values may also be linked to spiritual values, as well as the history of occupation and use that establishes a connection between people and place.

Not all values in and of nature are sympathetic to its conservation and some directly conflict with conservation objectives. The process to identify those values that are appropriate for integration and those which are not can be extremely challenging. Conflicts between values may be nearly insurmountable. Conflict over whaling, for instance, is an example of conflict between competing values that has proved hard to resolve.



**Figure 1: Sub-sets of cultural values in nature**

In addition, culture is not static and the contemporary values and ethics of people may have little to do with traditional ones or support conservation goals. The practice of wildlife consumption amongst Vietnamese elites, for example, where relationships are cemented by offering rare and expensive wildlife dishes, present a complex and difficult set of problems for conservation (Drury, in press).

#### 2.1.2. Working with cultural values

The five value groups presented in Figure 1 connect people to nature in different ways and provide a range of opportunities to build support for conservation objectives.

- *Spiritual values:* Sacred natural sites include sacred groves and springs, sites of worship, rituals and offerings, burial sites, and locations associated with spirits or deities. Numerous sites exist around the world<sup>10</sup> and many are managed to support both conservation objectives and spiritual functions (Wild and McLeod 2008). The Rwenzori Mountains in East Africa provide an example of a spiritual landscape; their glaciers, high peaks and moorlands are recognized as the home of the gods of the *Bakonjo* people. The entire island of Bali is sacred to the Balinese, a landscape in which the forces of good and evil must be balanced by worship and offerings at specific sites.

<sup>10</sup> Some estimates suggest that Sacred Natural Sites cover 15% of the surface of the earth (Palmer, M. (2008)).

- *Use values:* Use values have been employed in community conservation projects as economic incentives rather than cultural benefits for communities. Though use cannot be divorced from economics, the underlying cultural drivers of the behavior are generally ignored. Specific resources are often essential for the maintenance of cultural practices or necessary for rituals including prayer, initiation and purification rites. Others are needed to make material cultural artifacts or are linked to valued lifestyle activities, such as hunting or fishing.
- *Lifestyle values:* Collection of foods may be necessary to prepare traditional dishes. Many West African peoples, for example, collect forest plants to prepare characteristic dishes. Regional specialties are central to the food culture in France and influence the use and perceptions of the landscape. Grazing ‘beautiful cows’ links the *Bahima* pastoralists of Uganda to their ancestors, locates them within the pastoral landscape, and defines their values, tastes and ethnic identity. Walking or ‘rambling’ links the English to ‘countryside’ and strongly informs their sense of place and values in nature. Summer camps give millions of young Americans an experience of ‘wilderness’ and the back-country skills associated with the settler experience.
- *Place values:* Place values are established at and by locations of cultural or historical importance such as battle sites, graves, memorials and ruins that establish the identity of a people. Natural features may have been created by acts of gods or ancestors; actions may be required or proscribed to maintain the harmony or healthiness of landscapes, and maintain a people’s place and links to it. These may include establishing markers, holding gatherings, harvesting plants or animals, burning, and grazing livestock. Activities may entail economic transactions, such as the harvesting and smoking bamboo shoots by the *Bagisu* people in Mount Elgon National Park, Uganda, but these do not define them (Infield 2001).
- *Ethical values:* Ethics or moral philosophy allows communities, groups and individuals to address questions of morality in relation to behaviors towards the natural world, and separate actions that are right from those that are wrong, those that are good from those that are bad. These judgments are intrinsically linked to the higher values of a people, perhaps especially their religious and spiritual values, which, together, provide a set of overarching moral principles that can help resolve complex moral problems. Though less direct than the other values discussed above, ethics are important in governing normative behavior and though they will not always result in decisions in favor of nature conservation over community needs they provide a moral compass to balance material demands on the natural world and others species.

## 2.2. *Approaches integrating cultural and spiritual values into conservation*

Recent research suggests that the direct involvement of local institutions is the strongest predictor of successful conservation projects (Waylen *et al.* in press). Community participation, conservation education and benefit sharing, when conducted by outside groups, had less relationship to success. In addition, partnerships with local and indigenous groups offer opportunities for strengthening conservation both within and outside protected areas (Alcorn 1993). The importance of including local groups and their values and belief systems has resulted in a number of global partnerships including: the Forest Peoples’ Charter established in 1992 to give indigenous people rights to the forests in which they live (Alcorn, 1993); and the Global Biodiversity Strategy, which supports recognition of ancestral domains and

spiritual values (World Resources Institute *et al.* 1992). Approaches investigating and integrating cultural, spiritual and ethical dimensions into conservation practices are described below.

### 2.2.1. Community conserved areas

Community conserved areas (CCAs) feature conservation of biodiversity and cultural values by indigenous and local communities, generally through traditional institutions. Communities have developed rules and institutions to manage CCAs for a range of purposes, including use of natural resources, recreation, the enjoyment of aesthetic values, and for spiritual and religious activities. In 2003 the World Parks Congress recognized their importance to biodiversity conservation by recommending CCAs be afforded national and international recognition. However, as traditions weaken and globalization and access to education expand, the involvement of external agencies and changing world views may result in more materialist interpretations to define the functions of CCAs.

### 2.2.2. Sacred Natural Sites

Sacred Natural Sites (SNS) are perhaps the world's oldest protected areas. Many are important for biodiversity as well as the culture of their guardians. The geophysical and biological characteristics of SNSs can be described—they may be a small stone, a standing tree, or an entire mountain range—but their sacredness can only be described by the peoples who hold them sacred. Activities attached to SNSs or carried out (or proscribed) within them are similarly diverse and dependent on local values. Not all SNSs support significant biological diversity or actively conserve what they do support. Large numbers of visitors may limit support for conservation objectives or even result in negative impacts (Wild and McLeod 2008).

The Friends on Gamo Gofa Sacred Sites Association in Ethiopia demonstrates how SNSs can support cultural and biodiversity conservation. After forest lands were converted to agriculture, local people vowed to protect their sacred places. Ritual festivals fostered respect for the area's cultural history, decreasing pressure on the Gamo sacred forests. The custodians of the sacred sites (the elders) were accorded legal authority, helping them better protect both their culture and biodiversity (Maffi and Woodley 2010).

In Columbia, the Fundacion Pro-Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta (FPSN) is working to increase connectivity among forest fragments in four river basins of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta massif. The project is building on the values of native ethnic groups whose traditions center on a belief that the mountain's well being controls their day-to-day welfare and long-term destiny. This feeling of sacredness translates into a sense of stewardship for natural resources.<sup>11</sup>

### 2.2.3. Protected areas management that integrates cultural values

Protected areas policies in some countries allow them to be designed and managed with specific reference to cultural values. The National Parks of the United Kingdom for example, conserve anthropogenic landscapes valued as cultural landscapes, often linked to art and literature (for example 'Hardy Country' references the 19th century rural novelist, while the Lake District is associated with Wordsworth and the romantic poets). The active and implicit inclusion of "invisible heritage"—people's feelings of belonging

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<sup>11</sup> MacArthur Foundation grant description: PROGRAM ON GLOBAL SECURITY AND SUSTAINABILITY, Conservation and Sustainable Development, Fundacion Pro-Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, Santa Marta, Columbia.

through language, sayings, place names, history, legends, and folk customs which all derive from heritage—clearly demonstrates the centrality of cultural values to conservation practice (Snowdonia National Park Authority, 2005, quoted in Hourahane et al 2008, 184).

In Australia, the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service commissioned studies to understand how the varying cultures of different users influenced their experiences of protected areas in order to develop management responses (Thomas, 2002). The cultural values of 18 aboriginal groups in Queensland are being mapped to ensure their survival and to help coordinate efforts to protect and manage cultural heritage and values in the Wet Tropics World Heritage Site (Maffi and Woodley 2010).

Such approaches remain the exception rather than the rule, however, especially in developing countries. FFI's Culture, Values and Conservation Project, funded by the MacArthur Foundation, supports practical steps to integrate cultural values into Uganda's protected areas by working with managers, communities and other stakeholders. In Lake Mburo National Park the project focuses on values and behaviors associated with the institution of *enyemibwa* (the breeding of beautiful cows) to resolve long standing conflicts with *Bahima* pastoralists<sup>12</sup>. The Nature Conservancy is supporting Nicaragua's Bosawas Biosphere Reserve, which stretches over a number of traditional peoples' territories, to develop a management plan that incorporates local values and traditions (Maffi and Woodley 2010).

Since 1999 Fundación para la Sobrevivencia del Pueblo Cofán has worked with The Field Museum to expand protected status to and effective management of Cofán territory, and foster a new generation of Cofán leadership committed to and capable of providing sustained stewardship of their land and culture. The project trains and employs Cofán as park rangers, protecting the reserve from illegal extractive activities, addressing threats to both biodiversity and the lands of the Cofán.<sup>13</sup>

#### 2.2.4. Flagships and keystones

The concept of flagship species is a key one for conservation practice and has strong relevance to cultural approaches to conservation. Jones and Entwistle (2002) note the importance of broadening the concept to allow flagship species to reflect local as well as global values. This gives greater local relevance to the concept, helps engage the values of local people in efforts to conserve particular species and their habitats and, perhaps most importantly, shares the process by which priorities for conservation are set. FFI has investigated and applied the use of cultural flagships to support conservation of endangered habitats and species in Indonesia, by emphasizing the cultural significance of Asian elephants, in Nigeria, by building on traditional values invested in Cross River gorillas, in Tanzania, by focusing on a flying fox, and in Cambodia, by integrating the reverence indigenous peoples have for the Siamese Crocodile into wetland conservation efforts.

Keystone species have significant effects on their environment and other species within it. Their loss may result in rapid and dramatic shifts with loss of complexity and resilience. Similarly, certain values or institutions may be fundamental to the identity and values of a people and their loss result in rapid loss of

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<sup>12</sup> Further details of this project and its achievements are included in Annex 1.

<sup>13</sup> MacArthur Foundation grant description: PROGRAM ON GLOBAL SECURITY AND SUSTAINABILITY Conservation and Sustainable Development, Fundación para la Sobrevivencia del Pueblo Cofán, Quito, Ecuador.

social norms, language, and traditional knowledge and practices. Such institutions may be thought of as cultural keystones. For example, the loss of the Paramount Chief of the *Bakonjo* following the declaration of Uganda as a republic in 1966 led to loss of the authority structure based on mountain ridges which led to loss of traditional resource management practices and the network of ritual sites and institutions.

#### 2.2.5. Traditional knowledge and practices

Cultural practices and values develop knowledge that can support the management of ecosystems with special emphasis on ecological resilience (Berkes *et al.* 2000). Traditional knowledge and practice is increasingly incorporated into the design and management of protected areas and community based resource use regimes. The specific knowledge and experience acquired by local and indigenous communities over centuries can provide significant insights to improve management. Traditional forms of ecosystem management include multiple species management, resource rotation, succession management and patchy resource management that are rarely attempted under conventional modern resource management (Berkes *et al.* 2000). These approaches can also re-vitalize cultural values and institutions, and help strengthen relationships between people and nature where the forces of modernization and globalization have weakened them. Colding and Folke (2001) advocate for the use of informal institutions, rather than government institutions, as a less expensive option for managing PAs.

Rice varieties in Nepal are being conserved in the face of pressures on local people to adopt more productive varieties. Rice landraces have symbolic value and are important in rituals, celebrations and food traditions. Communities chose to continue growing traditional varieties, conserving biodiversity and agricultural stability in the event that crops face declines due to disease or changes in climate (Maffi and Woodley 2010). The *Parque de la Papa* (Potato Park) in Peru demonstrates a practical application of traditional knowledge. Local communities established this protected area with the intention of conserving their cultural landscape, their livelihoods and ways of life, and their customary laws and institutions as well as the 1200 varieties of domesticated potatoes they cultivate (Colchester 2005).

#### 2.2.6. Academic investigations of culture and conservation

Research into links between culture and conservation examine both why we undertake conservation and how we achieve it. The number of disciplines examining relationships between culture and conservation include anthropology, development studies, economics, philosophy, psychology and sociology.

Ethno-ecology, which studies people's understandings of the environments in which they live, and how they relate and respond to them, is particularly relevant to questions of resilience to sudden or unexpected environmental changes. Closely related fields include ethno-biology, ethno-zoology and ethno-ornithology; all study the interactions of people and nature through time and across cultures. Tidemann and Gosler (2010), for example, examine how indigenous knowledge and practice related to birds can be used to support research and conservation.

In 1997, UNESCO New Delhi began an extensive research initiative in Northeast India on the linkages between two knowledge systems: the traditional ecological knowledge system of indigenous groups living in close proximity to nature with knowledge gained through an experiential process of development over generations, and the formal knowledge system derived through a deductive process of analysis and scientific experimentation. The goal is to determine the links between the tangible and intangible forces

that operate within traditional societies and contribute to conservation, ecological balance, and sustainable development.<sup>14</sup>

### 2.2.7. Biocultural diversity conservation

Linguistic diversity is an indicator of cultural diversity, and areas of linguistic and biological diversity are correlated (Loh and Harmon 2005). Thus, threats to languages and biodiversity are closely linked (Posey 1999). According to UNEP and UNESCO (2003, 7), “Respect for biological diversity implies respect for human diversity,” yet the dominant conservation approaches do not demonstrate this, and negative impacts of conservation endeavors on local and indigenous communities are well documented.

“Biocultural diversity comprises the diversity of life in all of its manifestations—biological, cultural and linguistic—which are interrelated (and likely co-evolved) within a complex socio-ecological adaptive system” (Maffi and Woodley 2010, 5). This mutuality defines ‘biocultural diversity’ and informs steps to conserve it. Western cosmology that separates the human and the natural worlds underpins contemporary approaches to conservation, often at the cost of indigenous and local peoples and their cultures, weakening the links between peoples and nature. Biocultural conservation seeks to strengthen these links to strengthen the prospects of conserving both. Maffi and Woodley (2010) describe 45 biocultural diversity conservation initiatives that, in response to conservation needs, have separately evolved mechanisms that integrate efforts to conserve biodiversity, culture and language.

### 2.2.8. Religions and conservation

Religions are emerging as strong sources of support for conservation (Bhagwat and Palmer 2009). In 1986 representatives of five world religions met in Assisi, Italy, and pledged to promote conservation awareness within their communities. In 1995, leaders of nine faiths committed to interfaith cooperation on conservation. Several institutions or programs have developed since then to support conservation initiatives. For example:

- *The Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC)* implements projects on behalf of eleven faiths. In 2009, ARC launched the multi-faith “Plans for Protecting the Living Planet.”
- *World Bank Faiths and Environment* works with people and institutions whose spiritual beliefs lead them to environmental actions as part of the expression of their faith.
- *The Forum on Religion and Ecology (FRE)*, a multi-religion project, explores religious world views, texts, ethics, and practices to broaden responses to current environmental concerns.
- *The Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility* is an association of faith-based institutional investors whose members press companies to be socially and environmentally responsible.
- *The National Religious Partnership for the Environment* is an association of independent U.S. faith groups that emphasizes scholarship, leadership training and public policy education.

Many practical initiatives work with major religions to support conservation on the ground. For example, Imams in Aceh Province, Indonesia, have worked with FFI to develop and deliver conservation messages.

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<sup>14</sup> MacArthur Foundation grant description: PROGRAM ON GLOBAL SECURITY AND SUSTAINABILITY Conservation and Sustainable Development, UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, New Delhi.

### 2.2.9. Rights-based approaches to conservation

Conservation maintains and enhances the long-term benefits of nature for all, including future generations, as human well-being is strongly dependent upon ecosystems and the biodiversity within them. Initiatives and actions to conserve nature and natural resources support the rights of people to secure sustenance, shelter, livelihoods and healthy, productive environments. Yet, conservation can also generate negative impacts if human rights and well-being are not sufficiently understood or addressed. Provisions in international conservation agreements, including the Convention on Biodiversity, include specific requirements for the protection of the rights of local and indigenous communities.

Conservation organizations of all types (national, international, government and non-government) recognize that their actions affect the relationship of peoples to their lands and vital resources and are increasingly accountable for the social effects of their programs. They generally consider rights related to material needs, such as land rights or resource access. However, Article 27 of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations 1948) states that everyone has the right to participate in the cultural life of the community. Therefore, rights-based approaches should also support adoption of cultural approaches to conservation. Amartya Sen, awarded the Nobel Prize for work on welfare economics, writes “The freedom and opportunities for cultural activities are among the basic freedoms the enhancement of which can be seen to be constitutive of development” (Sen 2004). The same can be said of conservation.

The Field Museum’s Environment, Culture, and Conservation Program (ECCo) is working to assist native community-based organizations in the Cordillera Azul buffer zone in Peru to develop natural and cultural asset maps, design and implement “life plans”, develop culturally appropriate communications strategies, and strengthen the relevance of monitoring tools to indigenous use. Quality-of-life plans reflect central community values, emphasize self-sufficiency and are grounded in local ecological knowledge.<sup>15</sup>

An aspect of rights-based approaches to conservation relates to the ethical treatment of animals and the according of rights to species other than the human species. Though perhaps most associated with efforts to halt the cruel treatment of captive or domestic animals, it extends to the treatment of wild animals and their exploitation by, for example, the global fur trade or the Asian food and traditional medicine industries. There is now a growing movement to accord the planet itself legal rights, promoted under the “Trees Have Rights Too” campaign<sup>16</sup>.

## 2.3. *Integrating ethical dimensions into conservation*

### 2.3.1. Historical relationships between ethics and western conservation

The philosophical underpinnings of modern conservation arose from two ethical perspectives: to preserve the aesthetic and ethical values of landscapes (Jepson and Whittaker 2002); and to prevent excessive and ‘unsporting’ hunting and resource use in general (Mackenzie 1987; Adams 2004). Theodore Roosevelt, an early supporter of conservation, wrote, “I recognize the right and duty of this generation to develop and use the natural resources of our land; but I do not recognize the right to waste them, or to rob, by wasteful use, the generations that come after us” (National Parks 2009). The conservation ethic

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<sup>15</sup> MacArthur Foundation grant description: PROGRAM ON GLOBAL SECURITY AND SUSTAINABILITY, Conservation and Sustainable Development; Field Museum of Chicago, Assisting native community-based organizations in the Cordillera Azul buffer zone.

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.treeshaverightstoo.com/>

encapsulated responsible use and recognition that the conquest of nature carries with it the responsibility to avoid needless, cruel and barbaric killing (Jepson and Whittaker 2002). These ethical considerations were shared by many hunters and led to the establishment of the Boone and Crockett Club in America and the Society for the Preservation of the Wild Fauna of the Empire in England<sup>17</sup>, important departure points for modern conservation (Adams 2004).

### 2.3.2. Ethical dimensions of current conservation approaches

Current conservation strategies are based on exclusionary conservation policies, particularly in the management of protected areas where success has been mixed (Brandon *et al.* 1998) and controversy is common (Alcorn 1993). The erosion of ethical dimensions to conservation policy with the rise of scientific and economic rationalism and the commoditization of nature enforces a simplified relationship between people and nature. The consumer culture of the 21st century threatens much that people value in nature, including individual and community identity and spirituality (Jepson and Canney 2003).

A re-examination of conservation ethics is in order. The ethical underpinnings of western conservation are based on two ideas. A bio-centric ethic respects the intrinsic value of all life forms and promotes a moral obligation to conserve it, which extends to the granting of ‘rights’ to species. This ethic is balanced by an anthropocentric ethic which recognizes the multiple values of biodiversity and nature for human well-being (Yamin 1995). Because the wholesale destruction of nature and the loss of biodiversity will have profound effects on not only human welfare, but on the whole planet, mankind has a responsibility to both the planet and itself to halt the damage (Yamin 1995). While loss of biodiversity is a natural process, the unprecedented scale of species extinctions due to human actions requires an ethical response as to knowingly accept extinctions can be considered an act of extreme violence – similar to genocide – towards nature and other species (van Klinken and van Hoff 2004).

The question of how the benefits and burdens of conservation policy and practice should be appointed must also be raised. Though practical aspects have been discussed in this paper, particularly with respect to improving conservation performance through the integration of cultural values, arguments must also be phrased in terms of ethical perspectives (Yamin 1995). The relationships between people and nature have shaped, and been shaped, by society (Jepson and Whittaker 2002). Kellert (1996, 218) states that “respect and reverence for the value of life” results from self interest. However, for a society to be ‘civilized’ all life must be respected and people must co-exist with all of nature, regardless of its utility (van Klinken and van Hoff 2004). Thus ethical arguments that recognize the non-material value of nature and require their consideration add to utilitarian arguments for conservation (Byers *et al.* 2001).

### 2.3.3. Extending ethical dimension within conservation practice

People-centered conservation requires a pluralistic approach to values (Brown 2003). Care is individual and discretionary, but implies a relationship and requires action (Clayton and Myers 2010). Care for nature will renew in society the wonder and inspiration man has traditionally derived from the natural world and, by establishing a deeper relationship with nature, develop a renewed sense of personal and

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<sup>17</sup> Fauna and Flora International descends directly from this organisation, formed in 1903, of which Theodore Roosevelt was a founding member.

social worth (Kellert 1996), and return nature to the divine part of our lives (van der Wal 2004). This will build support for and thus success of conservation endeavors (Jepson and Canney 2003).

Traditional indigenous belief systems and the major faiths of the world influence how people interact with and view nature (Palmer and Finlay 2003) and provide potentially powerful institutions for achieving ethical change. The Judeo-Christian concept of mankind's dominion over nature, for example, has been interpreted as establishing the duty and right to exploit the world and its resources. However, contemporary teachings give mankind, as a 'higher being', a moral duty towards the natural world and to protect the gifts given by God.

There is a growing convergence amongst nations that respect for all species and their habitats should be incorporated into national and global constitutions (van Klinken and van Hoff 2004). To achieve this and the goals of modern conservation, cultural, spiritual and ethical values in nature need to be integrated into conservation actions, especially those of local and indigenous peoples (Bibles 1999).

### **3. PROGRAMS INTEGRATING CULTURAL VALUES INTO CONSERVATION**

This section attempts to capture the range of initiatives working with cultural values to support the delivery of both nature and culture conservation objectives. The initiatives do not necessarily make explicit references to the different values described in Sections 2.1.1 and 2.1.2. It is often implicit rather than explicit that values-based approaches integrate ethical, spiritual, use, lifestyle and place values in different combinations depending on the circumstances and communities concerned.

#### **3.1. *Donors and donor programs***

Many funding organizations have programs that focus on social issues, including human rights and sound governance, and on a range of sustainable development and biodiversity conservation issues. Many that focus on biodiversity conservation recognize the need to work with local and indigenous groups to build successful projects. However, though donors have and continue to support projects that employ a cultural values approach to address local conservation needs, few donors have made it an explicit priority to support their integration into their programs.

The **MacArthur Foundation's Division of Conservation and Sustainable Development** is dedicated to protecting biodiversity while balancing the needs of communities that depend upon natural resources. MacArthur does not have a program dedicated to the support of cultural approaches to conservation, but does have a strong record of providing leadership funding to promising new approaches. MacArthur's innovative grant making has led it to support since 2005 the Culture, Values and Conservation project implemented by FFI and the Uganda Wildlife Authority. MacArthur also supports, among others, the UNESCO project in New Delhi, India; the Amazon Conservation Team project working with the Inga and Cofán peoples in the Columbian Amazon; the Amazon Watch-Fundacion Pachamama project along the Ecuador-Columbia borderlands; and the Field Museum's Environment, Culture, and Conservation Program, which supports community-based organizations in the Cordillera Azul buffer zone in Peru.

The **Christensen Fund** focuses on the conservation of biocultural diversity, holding that this adaptive interweaving of people, place, culture and ecology is a neglected force for conservation. The Fund

supports activities that secure ways of life and landscapes that are “beautiful, bountiful and resilient” selecting locations with the potential to withstand and recover from the global erosion of diversity. The Fund emphasizes supporting the role of the local custodians of local values and heritage as well as international efforts to build global understanding of these issues.<sup>18</sup>

The **Ford Foundation**, while it has no program dedicated to cultural approaches *per se*, has provided grants to support the development of these ideas, in particular assisting the development of the Taskforce on Non-Material Values of Protected Areas (now the IUCN Task Force on Cultural and Spiritual Values of Protected Areas or CSVPA) and early initiatives of Terralingua.

### 3.2. *Implementers of cultural approaches to conservation*

Despite the lack of dedicated support, initiatives and institutions focused on the integration of conservation and culture have grown over the past decade and present diverse approaches, perspectives and emphases. Several of these are briefly described below.

#### 3.2.1. The IUCN Specialist Group on Cultural and Spiritual Values (CSCPA)<sup>19</sup>

Established in 1998 as the Task Force on Non Material Values of Protected Areas, it became the Task Force on Cultural and Spiritual Values of Protected Areas in 2003 and in 2009 became a Specialist Group. CSVPA comprises a network of 100 volunteers from 24 countries under which a range of projects and initiatives has developed. Though broad in conception, CSVPA has focused on the integration of spiritual and religious values into conservation. Some examples of CSVPA’s activities are given below.

- *The Delos Initiative* focuses on sacred natural sites in developed countries throughout the world to help maintain both the sanctity and the biodiversity of these sites through understanding of the complex relationship between spiritual / cultural and natural values.<sup>20</sup>
- *Sacred Groves Project* supports conservation of India’s 13,000 documented sacred groves by reviving community interest and encouraging actions toward their protection and restoration.<sup>21</sup>
- *Recovering Sacred Sites in Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta* is focused on territorial, environmental and cultural preservation of four sacred sites in Columbia.<sup>22</sup>
- *Integration of Sacred Natural Sites and Communities into Protected Area Planning* is developing methods for including SNS in protected area planning in Guatemala.<sup>23</sup>
- *The Cultural Values and Nature Initiative* promotes integration and communication of cultural and spiritual values and SNS in biocultural conservation strategies.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> [http://www.christensenfund.org/frame\\_grants](http://www.christensenfund.org/frame_grants)

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.csvpa.org/>

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.med-ina.org/delos/>

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.aerfindia.org/sacred.html>

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.sacredland.org/sierra-nevada-de-santa-marta/>

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.fsd.nl/csvpa/76085>

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.culturalvalues.org/>

### 3.2.2. UNESCO's World Heritage Site Program<sup>25</sup>

World Heritage Sites are examples of cultural and natural heritage of outstanding universal value. The convention recognizes 689 cultural sites and 176 natural sites, while 25 are listed as joint or mixed sites. Article 2 of the convention addresses sites of universal aesthetic or scientific value, the habitats of threatened animal and plant species, and areas of outstanding scientific, conservation or aesthetic value. The valuation of natural sites for aesthetic reasons and the existence of mixed cultural and natural sites demonstrate recognition of cultural landscapes—a fundamental concept for cultural approaches to conservation. The convention recognizes that landscapes can be the product of human - nature interactions, but the paucity of mixed sites suggests that the relevance of history, culture and sense of place is only rarely recognized. In fact, most landscapes are cultural constructions, imbued with the history, use, institutions, worship, spirits and ancestors of the people who call that place 'Home'.

### 3.2.3. Conservation International

Conservation International (CI) has established a Cultural Services Initiative<sup>26</sup> based on its recognition that cultural and spiritual needs are integral to a complete life and that these needs are an important element of what nature provides to humanity. CI is working to identify and highlight important cultural benefits provided by nature, helping ensure that the value of these benefits is included in decision making and development strategies, and supporting the delivery of ecosystem services more broadly through a cultural services approach.

### 3.2.4. The Earth Island Institute

The Sacred Land Film Project of the Earth Island Institute<sup>27</sup> produces a variety of media and materials to deepen public understanding of sacred places, indigenous cultures and environmental justice, seeking to use journalism and activism to rekindle reverence for land and increase respect for cultural diversity, the connections between nature and culture, and sacred lands and spiritual practices.

### 3.2.5. Silene Association

The Silene Association<sup>28</sup> studies, disseminates and promotes the spiritual and intangible cultural heritage, especially in relation to nature conservation. It supports spiritual and intangible cultural heritage values of nature through education and the planning and management of protected areas. The Silene Documentation Centre contains resources on the world's intangible spiritual and cultural heritage.

### 3.2.6. The Nature Conservancy

The Nature Conservancy established the Parks in Peril (PiP) program<sup>29</sup> with USAID to support the transformation of "paper parks" in Latin America and the Caribbean into fully functioning protected areas. PiP projects worked to reconnect local people with the parks, using approaches to incorporate their traditions, values and ethics into their design and management.

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<sup>25</sup> <http://whc.unesco.org/>

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.conservation.org/learn/culture/Pages/overview.aspx>

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.earthisland.org/index.php/projects/sacred-land-film-project>

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.silene.es/>

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.parksinperil.org/index.html>

### 3.2.7. The Field Museum

In 2004, The Field Museum created the Environment, Culture, and Conservation (ECCo)<sup>30</sup> division to unite and strengthen the Museum's departments of Environmental and Conservation Programs and the Center for Cultural Understanding and Change. ECCo now operates over 20 projects in the Americas.

### 3.2.8. Fauna & Flora International

Fauna & Flora International (FFI) and the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA), supported by the MacArthur Foundation, are working to support two conservation landscapes in Uganda, the Rwenzori Mountains and Lake Mburo National Parks, by actively integrating local cultural values into their management. The project aims to demonstrate that improved relations between parks and people will result from integrating local cultural values into the conceptual frameworks that inform the design and development of protected areas, their day-to-day management and their responsible authorities, fostering policy-setting that accommodates local interests, in the broadest sense, and creates a sense of local ownership in the goals and activities of the parks. This project is being scaled up in Uganda, to cover additional sites and to support capacity building and institutional development within UWA.<sup>31</sup>

In addition to this focused project, FFI has explored cultural values approaches to conservation across its global portfolio of endangered habitats and species projects. In addition to the examples discussed above (see Section 2.2.4), in Belize, local partners have focused on cultural links between indigenous communities and the jaguar to support forest and species conservation initiatives; while in Kyrgyzstan FFI support for cataloging Sacred Sites and local traditions following their erosion after decades under the Soviet system has spawned four conservation projects. All these examples expand the concept of 'flagship species' to incorporate local values and perspectives.

FFI recognizes the potential of cultural models for conservation to be applied widely around the globe. In 2011, FFI will launch its global Culture and Conservation Program to mainstream cultural approaches within FFI, develop a portfolio of pilot projects, help develop policies and practice for values-based approaches to conservation, and advocate for the integration of cultural approaches into mainstream conservation.

## 3.3. *Implementers of biocultural diversity conservation*

The biocultural diversity conservation agenda presents a unique, but important, element within the field of culture and conservation. Maffi and Woodley (2010) describe initiatives that employ the synergies between cultural and biological diversity to conserve both. Whatever the original or primary objective of a project—whether to conserve biodiversity, maintain or revitalize cultural knowledge, practices and beliefs, or conserve and revitalize languages—these initiatives identify vital interdependencies and develop activities that employ support for one value as a mechanism to deliver another. These initiatives are not part of a program and may only loosely or tangentially conform to the precepts of biocultural diversity. The Maffi and Woodley's "Global Sourcebook" (2010) supports the development of a network and coherence of action and perspective. However, initiatives included under the umbrella of biocultural diversity do not seem to demonstrate sufficient similarity to form a coherent entity. The inextricable links between culture and nature that inform biocultural diversity suggest the best way to achieve conservation

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<sup>30</sup> [http://www.fieldmuseum.org/research\\_collections/ecco.htm](http://www.fieldmuseum.org/research_collections/ecco.htm)

<sup>31</sup> For a case study of this project, see Annex 1.

is to integrate efforts. While progress to this end is being made, it remains unclear whether *biocultural diversity* conservation initiatives will always deliver *biodiversity* conservation outcomes. Brief details are provided of some prominent organizations working in biocultural diversity conservation.

### 3.3.1. The Society of Ethnobotany

The Society of Ethnobotany<sup>32</sup> was established to gather and disseminate knowledge of ethno-biology. Its 1988 Declaration of Belem gave rise to the concept of biocultural diversity. The society promotes the interdisciplinary study of the relationships of plants and animals with human cultures worldwide and works to integrate its scientific research into policy development at all levels.

### 3.3.2. Terralingua

Terralingua<sup>33</sup> helped define and now supports the conservation of biocultural diversity, pioneering biocultural diversity policies and practices. Their long-term program of work includes the mapping, measuring and monitoring of biocultural diversity and implementing field based activities. Most recently, with financial support from the Christensen Fund, Terralingua has published a global sourcebook on biocultural biodiversity conservation (Maffi and Woodley 2010).

### 3.3.3. The Global Diversity Foundation

The Global Diversity Foundation<sup>34</sup> promotes agricultural, biological and cultural diversity around the world through research, social action and training on biocultural diversity. The Foundation builds on local traditions and knowledge to secure education, health, nutrition and other human rights for marginalized peoples. Areas of specific focus include the continuity of ethnobiological knowledge, community access to biological resources and the conservation of biodiversity.

## 4. GAPS AND LESSONS LEARNED

### 4.1. *Gaps in the cultural approaches field*

Despite advances in research and practice over the past decade, few dedicated programs or projects focus on the integration of cultural, spiritual or ethical perspectives into conservation. This is the case within the major funders of conservation, government and non-government, and the major implementers, also government and non-government. Despite the overall paucity of action, a number of specific gaps in the developing field of cultural approaches to conservation can be identified and are particularly noteworthy.

#### 4.1.1. Few practical demonstrations of the integration of cultural values into conservation

Recognition of the utility of values-based approaches as an effective tool to strengthen conservation delivery is largely confined to developed countries and even there, is in its infancy. There are few models or pilot projects, a lack of guidelines and other resources to assist potential practitioners, and a shortage of information generally about the approach. While cultural approaches will not work everywhere, in every

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<sup>32</sup> <http://ethnobiology.org/>

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.terralingua.org/>

<sup>34</sup> <http://www.globaldiversity.org.uk/>

region that FFI has explored, appropriate sites exist. More pilot projects are needed around the world, preferably set up in a way that encourages information exchange, to support learning and catalyze impact.

#### 4.1.2. Failure to capitalize on a cultural approach as tool for mitigating conflict

Cultural approaches can be relevant to a multitude of governance, development and conservation situations, and are particularly relevant to improving the effectiveness of protected areas. Ongoing conflicts, the lack of local interest and political support, and the failure of many protected areas to protect biodiversity, all need to be addressed in order to strengthen conservation outcomes. Opportunities exist to establish a dedicated program of conflict resolution featuring cultural approaches for protected areas.

#### 4.1.3. Inadequate exchange on cultural values approach

Opportunities exist for actual and potential practitioners of a cultural values approach to learn directly from projects with practical experience. For example, developed countries have valuable lessons from their initiatives to integrate culture into conservation, but these have only minimally influenced conservation policy and practice in developing countries. In this case, North–South support networks and programs for site visits, practical exposure, and sharing expertise and experience would be invaluable. An exchange program between projects (south-south, north-north, east-west) would facilitate the learning that can (and should) happen.

#### 4.1.4. Low level of awareness of the utility of cultural values in conservation

The cultural values approach will not work everywhere or deal with all problems but its relevance to the conceptualization and delivery of conservation is great. Its impact will not be felt, however, until it is mainstreamed across the sector and the awareness amongst conservation institutions and professionals of how cultural approaches can increase conservation effectiveness is raised. Requirements to conform to international conventions on the rights of indigenous peoples and the participation of local communities in conservation initiatives are also poorly understood. A champion is needed to lend stature, credibility, connections and resources to the development and adoption of cultural approaches to conservation. The IUCN CSVPA Specialist Group has gained considerable traction but needs support to mainstream the approach, even within IUCN.

#### 4.1.5. Inadequate capacity for implementation of cultural approaches to conservation

The research showing that leadership by local institutions increases the effectiveness of conservation initiatives (Waylen *et al.* in press) suggests their involvement should be the norm. However, many relevant intuitions lack the capacity to lead or play major roles in complex and demanding projects. Long-term support, training and exposure to the core ideas, principles and practices of a cultural values approach are needed. Similar levels of capacity building amongst local and national NGOs and government authorities will also be necessary. FFI underestimated the need to build capacity in its Culture, Values and Conservation project, and considerable investments have been necessary to strengthen the capacity of its local community partners and also its co-implementer, the Uganda Wildlife Authority. Given the institutional cultures of most conservation organizations and the novelty of the approach, this is not surprising, and gaining understanding and support for cultural approaches to conservation will take time and investment.

#### 4.1.6. Poor integration of cultural approaches into PES and climate change initiatives

The growing interest in PES approaches to conservation, especially REDD projects, is significant to the development of cultural values approaches. The primary objective of REDD is to mitigate climate change. There are concerns about negative impacts on indigenous and local community interests, however, as well as excitement about co-benefits, namely biodiversity conservation and support for livelihoods. Both positive and negative outcomes of REDD projects are amenable to cultural analysis and prescriptions designed using values-based approaches.

The application of cultural approaches will strengthen the resilience of communities to the impacts of climate change. The empowerment of communities through recognition and application of their cultural institutions, values, knowledge and practices will help the retention of these capacities, which have evolved over millennia in response to changing needs and circumstances and which continue to support flexible and adaptive responses to change. The heightened support for protected areas resulting from the employment of a cultural approach will also help them respond to the demands and pressure likely to be imposed by climate change.

Ecosystems provide water catchments, climate control, pollination and biodiversity. Cultural values can also be considered an ecosystem service. Mechanisms to reward or compensate the custodians of ecosystems providing cultural values could be proposed at different scales from local to global.

#### 4.1.7. Low capacity of private sector to respond to indigenous and community rights

Industries engaging in activities that will result in land use changes within ancestral or traditional domains, with impacts on livelihoods and cultures, require the Free Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) of communities. Particularly significant examples include mining, oil exploration and drilling, and bringing new areas under agro-industrial cultivation, such as for soybean or palm oil production. FPIC requires a cultural approach to be meaningful and where impacts on culturally significant activities or sites are threatened, such an analysis will be critical. The surveying of land for palm oil estates, for example, requires identification of high conservation value forests which cannot be converted under industry standards.<sup>35</sup> The classification of such forests includes analysis of their value to indigenous communities under traditional management.

## 4.2. *Lessons learned*

The integration of cultural, spiritual and ethical dimensions into conservation practice is still too undeveloped for many lessons learned to have been documented. Some generic observations may be made, however, to ensure that the MacArthur Foundation recognizes the significant implications of this new field of conservation endeavor.

- *A cultural values approach is flexible and responsive to local circumstances:* Cultural values initiatives must be designed to respond to very specific circumstances and the particular values of communities and the particular biophysical characteristics of the natural system that is the subject of the conservation effort. For example, in the FFI Culture, Values and Conservation project in Uganda, activities at one site of the project are built on the sacredness of the Rwenzori

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<sup>35</sup> Set by the Roundtable for Sustainable Palm Oil – the RSPO.

Mountains, while at Lake Mburo, the cultural significance of ‘beautiful’ Ankole cows is the focus.

- *A valuable new tool in the conservation toolbox:* Adopting a cultural approach is a promising and dynamic new approach to conservation that can be applied to sites around the world. It is important to recognize, however, that it will not solve all problems or be relevant to all situations. For example, important biological diversity may not be recognized or be relevant to the cultures of some local communities. Specific practices, though historically adaptive, appropriate and sustainable, may no longer be so.
- *Cultural values approach is holistic by nature:* Values-based approaches by their very nature must be part of a holistic approach and should not be regarded as a ‘bolt-on’ application to mainstream conservation activities. Unlike adding an educational awareness program, for example, which can be done almost independently of other activities, a cultural values approach must be implemented within the context of a conservation initiative as a whole.
- *Not all values are compatible:* Though there are great opportunities for different value sets to overlap and find expression in one location or with respect to one resource or species, this will not always be the case. Certain values are so deeply entrenched that changes to them will be difficult.
- *Requires cultural changes within organizational structures.* The concept may be simple, but the implementation is not. It is not easy to mainstream cultural approaches within the existing conservation infrastructure due to strong organizational cultures and traditions and institutional inertia. Organizations will need to change their ways of thinking and working. In particular, the privileging of the values of educated elites over those of uneducated and often marginalized sectors of society will need to stop.
- *An intuitive and accessible approach:* The concept of engaging local communities and indigenous peoples and gaining their interest in and support for conservation through the medium of the intangible values, emotions and activities that link them to their own cultural landscape seems immediately obvious and self-evident. This is because it responds to the fact, quickly recognized by professional conservationists and members of the public, that it is these or similar values that motivate their own interest in conservation.
- *Implementation is complex and difficult:* Working with intangible values is not easy. Building trust, particularly where there has long been a history of conflict, requires creativity, respect, skill, and patience. These approaches demand not only close collaboration with local groups, but adoption of new procedures, protocols and practices by conservation organizations. Furthermore, opening dialogue on values can open up a range of issues that are outside the capacity or responsibility of conservation organizations to address. Issues relating to historical injustices, ongoing conflicts between different groups, and local, regional and even national politics can all arise.
- *Rapid results are possible:* Engaging in these issues provides a powerful demonstration to communities that conservation authorities wish to open up to them and encourage their

meaningful participation in conservation projects. Immediate benefits can be experienced in terms of relationships and reductions in conflict—even conflicts that have endured for decades.

- *Strong potential to mitigate conflicts:* As discussed above, protected areas are critical for biodiversity conservation, and have the potential to be equally important for conserving culture and cultural values. However, protected areas are failing to deliver conservation results in many cases and are often under threat as institutions. Many of these problems result from conflicts between local and indigenous communities and protected areas managers and authorities. These conflicts are amenable and likely to respond well to a cultural approach.
- *The unifying and divisive nature of ethical dimensions:* Though the ethics of behavior towards animals are evidently different between cultures, within western cultures they are powerful determinants of normative behavior. The western ethic that censures cruelty to animals is a powerful force that with care can be extended to the delivery of conservation objectives. Care is needed, however, as these ethics can conflict with other conservation tools based on the exploitation of animals, and because ethical perspectives vary widely between cultures. Careful examination of the ethics of other cultures is likely to find equally powerful, though quite possibly, entirely different, ethics that can be integrated into conservation objectives.

## **5. RECOMMENDATION: A GLOBAL PROGRAM WITHIN THE MACARTHUR FOUNDATION**

FFI recommends that The MacArthur Foundation build cultural approaches into its new 10-year program for conservation and sustainable development. There is no shortage of evidence that current approaches to conservation alone are unable to deliver the required results. The central place of cultural processes in the “...reproduction of inequality and human ill-being” (Rao and Walton 2004, vii) demonstrates their centrality to initiatives to produce the opposite, as well as contribute towards achieving conservation goals. This relates directly to the mission of the MacArthur Foundation, which seeks to protect the security and well-being of people and the environment around the world.

Both traditional protectionist and community approaches are failing to deliver required conservation results; the U.N. Millennium Development 2010 target for biodiversity will not be met.<sup>36</sup> Despite this there has been little re-programming of funding to new approaches, including the cultural approach. Existing initiatives are few, small scale and lack the critical mass to make a significant contribution to conservation in the 21st century. The MacArthur Foundation is uniquely positioned to provide leadership within the donor community and develop support for cultural approaches to conservation as a signature initiative for its next 10-year program.

The MacArthur Foundation can take a position of leadership in the field of cultural approaches to conservation by identifying key areas for intervention within its program and establishing a series of pilot or demonstration activities with supporting institutional and programmatic linkages. This will provide strong guidance to other donors. Table 1 on page 25 identifies areas of conservation importance and

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<sup>36</sup> MDG Target 2: Reduce biodiversity loss, achieving, by 2010, a significant reduction in the rate of loss. The number of species threatened with extinction is rising rapidly. <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/environ.shtml>

potential areas of engagement that can be addressed using a cultural values approach and describes proposed interventions and their predicted impacts. While this paper focuses on conservation, MacArthur could also consider the application of cultural approaches to its other areas of work, including projects on education, migration, human rights and international justice, peace and security and reproductive health, all of which could be enriched by consideration of the relevance of cultural approaches.

### ***5.1. Culture as a cross-cutting theme supported by a global portfolio of pilot sites and initiatives***

There is general, though not universal, agreement on the desirability of sustainable development, though less agreement on how to achieve it. With a common understanding of desired outcomes, a cultural approach can help design effective interventions. Employing a cultural approach to MacArthur's conservation program will require review of its objectives to agree on the values it is trying to conserve, before turning attention to how they are to be conserved. Integration of local values will not only provide effective prescriptions for actions, but ensure agreement on the objectives of the action. This may be thought of as sharing the right to define the meaning of conservation (Infield 2002b) and will be relevant to policy development as well as at any specific location or for any species or resource in question.

Adoption of a cultural approach to conservation can be achieved by developing a cross cutting theme, allowing the approach to be introduced across the organization. The danger in this approach, however, is that cross-cutting themes can be marginalized or reduced to a cipher or 'box-ticking' exercise. Developing a suite of projects that employ a cultural approach will demonstrate the potential of the approach to delivery conservation outcomes across a broad spectrum of locations and situations.

#### **5.1.1. Pilot projects on the application of culture to conservation initiatives**

Progress in values -based approaches has been made primarily in academic research. Practical initiatives remain few and mainstream conservation, including donors, implementers and government agencies, has had little exposure to the approach. To address this, dedicated support for pilot initiatives to build a body of knowledge and experience in the practical application of cultural approaches will be valuable.

The biocultural analysis is compelling and the universal truth of the inseparability of humanity and nature provides guidance to the philosophies and ethics needed to inform human conduct on the planet. It does not, however, necessarily support the conservation of the habitats or species under most threat. Figure 3 on page 29 identifies three core zones for biocultural diversity. These zones exclude key areas of global biodiversity. Adoption of broad policies and practical tools for supporting and improving the conservation of nature and its many values will provide great conservation outcomes than focusing narrowly on biocultural diversity.

**Table 1**  
**Gaps, areas of engagement and interventions for a cultural values approach to conservation**

<b>Gaps</b>	<b>Priority areas of engagement</b>	<b>Proposed interventions</b>	<b>Indicators of impact over 10-year program</b>
Few practical demonstrations of the integration of cultural values into conservation	Developing a global portfolio of pilot projects on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ PA management</li> <li>○ natural resource management</li> <li>○ PES in climate change adaptation</li> <li>○ private sector engagement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pilot interventions in and around protected areas working in partnership with communities, PA managers and the PA authority</li> <li>• Pilot interventions on community lands for integration of values into CBNRM regimes</li> <li>• Pilot interventions to integrate values approaches into PES projects</li> <li>• Analysis of conservation effectiveness with and without use of a cultural approach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhanced biodiversity conservation</li> <li>• Improved natural resource management</li> <li>• Strengthened community engagement and support</li> <li>• Improved retention of local cultural values and institutions</li> <li>• Technical papers and publications on impacts on PA effectiveness and on impacts on resource management regimes and PES projects</li> </ul>
Failure to capitalize on cultural approach as tool for mitigating conflict	Conflict mitigation in PA design and management  Conflict mitigation in resource use regime design and management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish protocols for cultural analysis of conflicts over conservation</li> <li>• Develop training events and materials for reconciling conflicting values</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced conflict around PAs</li> <li>• Reduced conflict over resources</li> <li>• Conflicting values reconciled</li> <li>• Increased availability of training materials for values based approaches to conflict resolution</li> </ul>
Inadequate exchange on cultural values approaches	Establish practitioners network  Support development of regional learning groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitate cross-site networking</li> <li>• Support web-based practitioners networks</li> <li>• Support existing associations and networks (such as the IUCN CSVPA)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accelerated development and adoption or supportive policy environment</li> <li>• Accelerated implementation of cultural approaches on the ground</li> <li>• Improved performance from exposure to lessons learned</li> </ul>
Low awareness of the utility of cultural values in conservation	Raising awareness of values based approaches  Mainstreaming cultural values approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support participation at global conservation events (e.g. WCPA Conference, IUCN Congress, SCB Conference etc.)</li> <li>• Host seminars and side events at key conservation events</li> <li>• Support engagement with key policy making initiatives</li> <li>• Integrate with existing associations and networks (such as the IUCN CSVPA, CEESP, WCPAs, etc.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthened policy environment for cultural approaches to conservation, at national and global levels</li> <li>• Increased inclusion of cultural values approaches in global and national conservation programs</li> <li>• Increased reference to cultural approaches in the literature</li> <li>• Increased availability of general information on cultural approaches.</li> <li>• Increased donor funding for cultural approaches</li> </ul>

Inadequate capacity for implementation of cultural approaches	<p>Building capacity within government and non-government agencies</p> <p>Developing protocols, procedures, guidelines and training materials</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support cross site visits</li> <li>• Develop a practitioners network</li> <li>• Provide targeted capacity building for cultural institutional partners, NGOs and government agencies</li> <li>• Development of materials for cultural values approaches</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exposure of practitioners to cultural approaches</li> <li>• Guidelines and toolboxes for practitioners available</li> <li>• Dedicated cultural values capacity within implementing organizations (NGOs, PAAs, community groups)</li> <li>• Training plans in place and implemented to mature capacity for cultural values approaches</li> </ul>
Poor integration of cultural approaches into climate change and PES initiatives	<p>Articulating the role of cultural institutions in adaptation to climate change</p> <p>Demonstrating role of cultural approaches to REDD and PES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research into relationship between retention of culture and adaptive capacity</li> <li>• Support analysis of cultural values as co-benefit of REDD projects</li> <li>• Pilot projects to investigate payment for provision of cultural values</li> <li>• Developing tools for integration of cultural values and traditional institutions into REDD and PES projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthened participation of indigenous and local communities in REDD projects through incorporation of cultural values and institutions</li> <li>• Policies and practices for payment to providers of cultural services to local and global society</li> <li>• Technical papers and publications</li> <li>• Increased recognition of cultural contributions to resilience and adaptation in the literature and the policy environment</li> </ul>
Low capacity of private sector to respond to indigenous and community rights	<p>Demonstrating the business case for cultural values approaches</p> <p>Supporting private sector initiatives to work with cultural values</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support protocols for cultural values within High Conservation Value Forest (HCVF) analyses</li> <li>• Support development of cultural analysis tools for Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) processes</li> <li>• Pilot initiatives to demonstrate utility of cultural values to private sector initiatives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protocols and guidelines for HCVF assessments</li> <li>• Protocols and guidelines for FPIC processes and assessments</li> <li>• Technical papers and publications</li> <li>• Increased adoption of cultural values into HCVF and FPIC processes</li> </ul>
Ethical support for conservation poorly articulated	Dedicated research into the role of ethical dimensions in conservation practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desk-based literature review and analysis of the relevance to conservation of groups working on species or planetary rights approaches</li> <li>• Participatory research to identify or propose practical initiatives based on ethical approaches to conservation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthened awareness of the ethics and conservation in global and national policies</li> <li>• Enhanced understanding of the particular role of ethical dimensions in conservation</li> <li>• Proposals for practical measures to integrate ethical dimensions into practical conservation initiatives</li> </ul>

### 5.1.2. Focusing on conflict resolution

The role of protected areas in conservation is clear and their spread to cover 12 percent of the surface of the planet is a great achievement. However, they are not delivering results in many cases and are often under physical and institutional threat. Conflict lies at the heart of these problems. Reduced conflict and increased benefits can be achieved by adopting cultural approaches to the design and management of protected areas. As well as increasing protected area effectiveness, access to cultural benefits will help conserve local values, institutions and knowledge.

Whether within protected areas or on common or private land, natural resource management regimes often engender conflict, both within communities and between communities and external authorities, landowners or other interested parties such as investors. Design and implementation of land and natural resource management regimes can also benefit from a cultural values approach. Broadening the range of resources which are valued can increase both the conversion of resources into financial benefits, add a range of new benefits to the management regime, and deepen or extend perspectives on sustainability.

### 5.1.3. Improving information exchanges on cultural values practices

The projects that are currently engaging cultural values approaches to biodiversity conservation have lessons and practical experience that could be of value to other practitioners, but there are very few opportunities to share this information through cross-site exchanges or other mechanisms. The establishment of a practitioners' network and a support structure to allow for the development of regional learning groups would help fill this gap. Specific initiatives could include cross-site networking (north-south, east-west, etc.), the development of a web-based practitioners' information-sharing network, and support for existing associations, such as the CSVPA. Such activities could accelerate the development and adoption of a supportive policy environment, accelerate implementation of cultural approaches on the ground, and improve performance at new and existing projects through sharing of lessons learned.

### 5.1.4. Raising awareness, and mainstreaming cultural values approaches

Awareness at all levels within the conservation community on the utility of cultural approaches to conservation is low. Targeting support for initiatives to raise awareness by sharing experiences through participation not only in the cross-site visits described above, but also in seminars and global conservation events, will create the level of awareness and interest necessary for cultural approaches to become mainstream within the conservation endeavor.

### 5.1.5. Building capacity for cultural approaches to conservation

Insufficient capacity and the resources to build capacity amongst relevant parties for the implementation of cultural approaches to conservation is a significant impediment to both its adoption on the ground and its inclusion within organizational structures and programs. Support for partner institutions to acquire skills in cultural analysis, values based approaches to conflict mitigation, and capacity to access and use a range of values based tools to support conservation initiatives will be essential for the mainstreaming of the approach.

#### 5.1.6. Integrating cultural approaches into payment for environmental services and climate change initiatives

Though payment for environmental services approaches to habitat conservation and in particular to climate change represent the next step in the commoditization of nature, their potential value in financing conservation initiatives is very great. They will be strengthened by integrating cultural approaches into their design and implementation. As these approaches are still in the experimental phase, they should become a focus of initiatives to mainstream cultural approaches into conservation. Specific attention to payment for cultural services at local and global levels should be considered.

#### 5.1.7. Engaging the private sector

Agri-business, mining and the oil industry continue to have massive impacts on the natural world, including protected areas, and on the lives of indigenous and local communities. International law and industry best practice increasingly requires companies to get the Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) of indigenous peoples before engaging in activities which will affect them. The process of FPIC requires engaging with the culture and values of communities. Supporting initiatives to work with the private sector to build awareness of the business case for cultural approaches to their business practices has the potential for significant conservation impact.

#### 5.1.8. Exploring the potential for ethical approaches to conservation policy and practice

Though ethics and the values of a culture cannot easily be distinguished or disentangled, and reference to culture in this paper is understood to include reference to ethics and moral philosophy, initiatives to explicitly integrate ethical dimensions into conservation practice is likely to require a specific focus, even within the new specific focus being proposed for a cultural approach to conservation. Some steps are already in train to emphasize ethical dimensions in global policy, but it is not easy to imagine what interventions to integrate ethics into conservation might look like at the ground level of conservation practice<sup>37</sup>. Dedicated research into ethical dimensions to support practical conservation initiatives would be valuable.

### 5.2. *Geographical areas*

Maffi and Woodley (2010) include two useful maps in their Global Sourcebook. The first correlates the distribution of languages and the distribution of plants (Figure 2). The highest diversity of languages and plants lies within the tropical and subtropical regions, areas of high human populations, currently and historically. The second identifies three core areas of biocultural diversity (Figure 3).

These analyses help identify priority areas for biocultural diversity conservation. However, many locations recognized as important for biodiversity are not featured, and the same is true of known areas of cultural diversity. This results from the composite nature of biocultural diversity. Adopting a strict biocultural analysis will significantly constrain programming in areas of high importance for biodiversity conservation. Adopting a cultural approach to conservation would avoid this and allow MacArthur to maintain its current process of geographical prioritization.

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<sup>37</sup> This does not apply to the adoption of ethical practices in relation to the rights and needs of indigenous and local communities, but to the adoption of ethical practices in relation to the rights and needs of species and ecosystems.

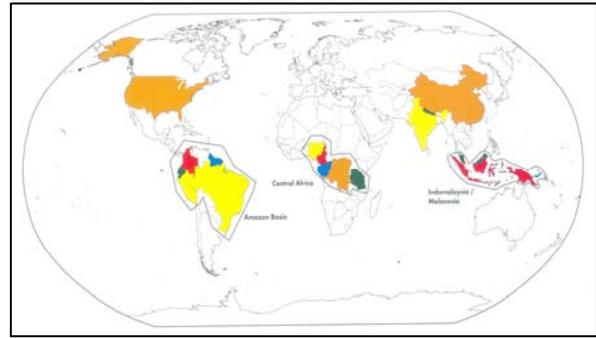
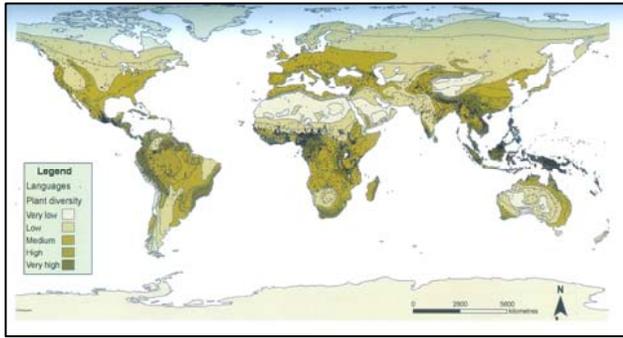


Figure 2. Distribution of languages and plant diversity. Figure 3. Core areas of biocultural diversity.

Initiatives to integrate cultural, spiritual and ethical dimensions into conservation initiatives are not easily related to geographical zones. This is because such values exist wherever people exist and interact with nature. As a mechanism for improving the effectiveness of conservation initiatives, therefore, the integration of cultural values can and should be attempted in relation to assessment of conservation priorities. Existing systems of measuring and comparing priority areas such as bioregions of biodiversity hotspots will remain relevant. At the global level, adoption of a cultural approach does not affect the objectives or targets of conservation, as it is primarily a tool for better achieving existing targets and objectives. At the local level, however, there will be implications for prioritization as local values and priorities will be considered in parallel with global values and priorities.

### 5.3. Recommendations

FFI recommends that the MacArthur Foundation take the following actions:

- Develop awareness of cultural approaches throughout the organization. This should focus on the Conservation and Sustainable Development Program, but application of cultural approaches may be relevant to many of the sectors in which MacArthur invests.
- Emphasize support for the integration of cultural values into the design and management of protected areas.
- Support efforts to use cultural values as a means to resolve historic and existing conflicts at and around established protected areas and within resource management regimes.
- Support innovative and experimental applications of a cultural approach to conservation through pilot projects and demonstration activities in all geographical regions.
- Support development of policy and advocacy for cultural approaches to conservation including development of national and regional guidelines to provide practical assistance to practitioners.
- Support regional and global networks of practitioners to share lessons and experience, including North-South, South-South and other dialogues to broaden understanding and application of cultural values-based approaches.
- Build the capacity of practitioners and institutions to understand, design and employ cultural approaches to conservation.
- Engage with the private sector to raise awareness of cultural approaches that may be relevant to the conduct of their own businesses, especially where these impact negatively on local cultures.
- Explore the potential for ethical approaches to conservation policy and practice.

#### 5.4. *Conclusion*

As we developed this paper, it was impossible not to come away with a strong sense that a cultural values approach is critical for the coming decade of conservation, and one where donor leadership is essential to harness its full potential. We see this as a “next frontier” for sustainable conservation, with great scope for increasing the constituency for conservation, strengthening effectiveness and delivering conservation sustainably. It is not relevant everywhere. But where it is, this approach offers promise for lining up many mutually beneficial incentives for managing protected areas and surrounding landscapes. MacArthur’s leadership support for FFI’s Culture, Values and Conservation work in Uganda is illustrative, and we think will have created real change years from now—moving policy and practice forward from more economic forms of community engagement with conservation to something that more fundamentally reflects a broader range of values. This, we believe, will create a broader constituency for conservation that will protect biodiversity sustainably, and more equitably.

Should MacArthur decide to integrate a cultural values approach, the Foundation’s focus on its conservation and sustainable development niche is retained, but a new strategic element is added that responds creatively to some of the failures of our sector and provides MacArthur the opportunity to engage and lead.

In the paper, we noted the need for attention to, and investment in, capacity building. FFI experienced this need as we implemented our pilot cultural values program in Uganda, and we envision that our experience will be true of many if not all cultural values pilot programs, at all levels (e.g. within grantee institutions, partner organizations, protected area authorities, community groups). For many years, MacArthur has led the way on understanding and investing in the meaningful development of the human (and, by extension, organizational) capacity that is critical to effective program delivery. It is easy to imagine that many people and organizations when exposed to the cultural approach will think, “We do that – look at our livelihoods program, or our...” It will take time and investment to communicate a very different way of approaching familiar issues. This sort of transformative leadership is a hallmark of the MacArthur Foundation. We believe that this area of engagement involves a shift, and, therefore, will benefit from investment in building capacity at all levels to help a shared vocabulary, together with new implementation and policy frameworks, take hold. It is enormously exciting. It will be a challenge. It needs to be done.

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## ANNEX 1

### **The Value of Culture In Conservation: A Case Study of An Innovative Approach To Integrate Local Values Into Protected Area Management In Uganda**

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#### **Introduction:**

Fauna & Flora International (FFI) was founded in 1903 and is the world's first international conservation organization. For over a century FFI has earned the respect of conservationists, donors, and project partners around the globe. The pioneering work of FFI's founders in Africa led to the creation of critically important protected areas, including Kruger and Serengeti National Parks. FFI's mission is "To conserve threatened species and ecosystems worldwide, choosing solutions that are sustainable, based on sound science and that take account of human needs."

In the context of selecting priority conservation projects, the word "flagship" has been used in different ways by different people and sectors, over time. Some use it in an ecological sense, referring to umbrella species, the protection of which also benefits other species. Others have applied it in an awareness raising context, to charismatic mega-fauna like mountain gorillas, tigers, and elephants, which serve as effective ambassadors for other species or a broader ecosystem (e.g., mountain gorilla investment will ensure afro-montane habitat conservation). To these two understandings, we add a third—what values do human communities place on ecosystems, and species, and which of these might be considered "flagships" from their perspective?

The global prioritization work of many international conservation organizations has permitted us to make progress in figuring out areas of focus—what is most endangered, where are the areas of highest endemism, where do we have small populations most at risk of near-term extinction. Yet these focuses do not necessarily align with the values of the local communities. For example, a study of British and Tanzanian school children explored how they value different animals (*Oryx*, 36(2)189-295). In the study, children were asked to name their favorite animals. The British children tended to select traditional flagship species such tigers and lions – animals that are ferocious and exciting but live far away. Tanzanian children chose animals like zebras and giraffes, noting their attractiveness and the quality of their meat. Elephants were also selected, despite the children's fear of them, because of the role they play in generating revenue through tourism.

Exploring the different ways in which people value nature, and what that means for the management of protected areas, informed the 2005 launch of our Culture, Values and Conservation (CVC) pilot in Uganda. Working with the Uganda Wildlife Authority and communities surrounding two national parks—Lake Mburo and Rwenzori Mountains—we have explored how to integrate cultural values into park management. Together we identified cultural values that would add meaning to parks and formed associations around them—the Ankole Cows Cultural Association at Lake Mburo and the Rwenzori Mountains Cultural Conservation Association. Flagships that express cultural values have been our focus. This has been a fascinating pilot program, now in its second phase, and one that we are eager to expand both in Uganda, more broadly in Africa, and indeed globally--improving park management, mitigating conflict with surrounding communities, and strengthening the expression of local culture and traditional knowledge. Ecological, economic and cultural perspectives on flagships and, by extension, conservation, combine to create a compelling platform from which we can expand the constituency for conservation.

## **Project Background and Rationale:**

National parks or protected areas set aside for the purpose of conserving nature were first pioneered in the late 1880s and designed to interest people in the beauty and wonder of nature. Ironically, however, protected areas have often separated people from nature. To effectively conserve biodiversity in the long term, policy makers must understand that cultures evolved within natural landscapes and continue to shape interactions with nature to this day. Cultural diversity and biodiversity can be interdependent and mutually reinforcing. What threatens a culture threatens the world in which it evolved, and what threatens the natural world threatens cultures linked to that world.

In this context, the relationships between culture, nature and conservation seem self-evident, yet they play a minor part in current conservation thinking as scientific and economic approaches have taken center stage. Programs to build support for protected areas amongst local people through education, sharing benefits and building bridges to local leadership have been disappointing. In fact, most protected areas have poor relations with local people. In response, Fauna & Flora International (FFI) has launched an innovative project with communities surrounding two national parks in Uganda. With support from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, FFI and the Uganda Wildlife Authority are working to integrate cultural values directly into park management. This effort is building demonstrable community support for these parks while deepening appreciation for traditional beliefs and values amongst the people and the park authorities – an authentic win-win.

In addition to being important centers of biodiversity, both parks are also cultural landscapes. The Rwenzori Mountains have been the homeland to two peoples for generations. *Bakonjo and Baamba* farmers, with a distinct mountain culture and economy, view the high mountains as sacred, and home to their gods. The Lake Mburo area is the traditional grazing rangelands for the *Bahima* people, pastoralists who depend on their cattle. The area is where *Bahima*'s kings grazed selectively bred 'beautiful cows' -- majestic cattle with a graceful build and impressive curved horns--representing the kingdom's grandeur, a defining principle of 'being Bahima.' But historic park management practices have excluded the *Bakonjo* and *Baamba* from their sacred mountains, and the *Bahima* from grazing their herds in now protected areas. In each case, this approach has created bitter struggles, sometimes resulting in armed conflict.

These parks were established with the best intentions to conserve wildlife and biodiversity. However, laws preventing use or entry often lead to serious local resentments. Communities feel excluded because not only the values and practices that connected them to the land were excluded, but what the landscapes *meant* to the local people was also excluded. In response, many people continued activities such as logging, grazing or hunting, often in ways contrary to traditional practice and values. The resulting conflict can dominate and undermine conservation efforts.

FFI believes that to garner lasting local interest and support, conservation policy must carefully consider cultural values in the design and management of protected areas.

## **Project Description:**

The CVC project is now in its second phase, which was designed to build on the lessons learned and experience from CVC Phase I to achieve the same goal: “to strengthen support for and interest in two of the parks, Lake Mburo and Rwenzori National Parks within the Albertine rift of western Uganda, amongst local communities and reduce conflicts between communities and park authorities (through application of cultural analysis to park management)”.

The project purpose for Phase II is: “to strengthen the capacity of local cultural institutions, i.e. the Ankole Cow Conservation Association (ACCA) and the Rwenzori Mountains Cultural values

Conservation Association (RWeMCCA) and UWA staff, to manage the integration of local cultural values into the management of Rwenzori Mountains and Lake Mbuho National Parks to improve their conservation status”.

The project set four main objectives. These are:

1. Support implementation of cultural values-related activities allowed for in the revised General Management Plans of Rwenzori Mountains and Lake Mbuho National Parks;
2. Build capacity of community-based cultural values institutions (RWEMCA and ACCA) to work with and participate in park management;
3. Integrate local cultural values in the management of protected areas as standard organizational practice for UWA policy and protected area design and planning processes.
4. Promote the integration of cultural values as a new and innovative approach to the management of protected areas at local, national and international levels.

The CVC project works closely with the local communities and park management to identify the cultural sources of tension and develop workable solutions. First, FFI and UWA surveyed and interviewed a broad cross-section of stakeholders around each park. This resulted in two new community-based institutions, the Ankole Cow Conservation Association (ACCA) and the Rwenzori Mountains Cultural Association (REWMCA), established with the mandate to champion community cultural interests in the parks, in close coordination with UWA.

The next step was to design actions that each park management can take to foster cultural values. At Lake Mbuho, the ACCA is working with park personnel to allow cultural Ankole cattle to graze in the park. This addresses conservation as well as cultural goals, as the Ankole breed is currently threatened by cross-breeding for economic reasons and by loss of traditional rangeland due to human population pressures.

In Rwenzori Mountains, the project worked with local and ridge leaders to map 15 sacred sites that the *Bakonzo* and *Baamba* believe bring health, rain, peace, good harvests and fertility. Next the project engaged in an ongoing effort to develop practical, sanctioned ways for local communities to strengthen their cultural ties to and use of these sites. For example, soon after the project commenced, park authorities worked with RWEMCA to facilitate a sacred ceremony within park boundaries. The occasion was the death anniversary of the Rwenzururu’s first king. People came into the park to celebrate at the burial site for one long special day, participating in ceremonial activities led by the ridge leader.

### **Accomplishments:**

The CVC Phase II project has already had significant success building on the accomplishments of the first phase of the project (2005-2008) (a comprehensive discussion of accomplishments and lessons learned during Phase I can be found in the Final Report to the MacArthur Foundation). As a sample, during 2009, the project accomplishments include:

- **Negotiating Access to Bulemba Cultural Site:** Negotiations between the management of Rwenzori National Park and the neighbouring communities represented by the Rwenzori Mountains Cultural Conservation Association (RweMCCA) and the Obusinga bwa Rwenzururu (OBR) to formalize access to the Bulemba sacred site within the Park. The site is important as a burial site for the late king of the Rwenzururu kingdom, and there is a need to access the site on an annual basis in commemoration of the death of the king. Also, there is a shrine, where cultural rituals and community ‘cleansing’- related activities are undertaken. Before the cultural values project started, the management of the park had denied the community to access this site, and people were resigned from ever attempting to request access. Those that did access the site did it

poorly. Under the aegis of the project, the community needs to access the Bulemba site were identified. During CVC Phase II, the project initiated a negotiation to formalise community access to the site. A memorandum of understanding was drawn up and is pending signature by the three parties involved.

- **Detailed Research into Role of Sacred Sites:** During Year 1, the project also undertook detailed research into the role of sacred sites in improving people's welfare and the achievement of conservation objectives. The research aimed at answering questions about the institutional arrangement in management and use of the sacred sites, and how the recognition and respect for sacred sites would contribute to the achievement of conservation objectives. The findings indicated that achievement of conservation goals, although secondary, are a likely outcome, and can be achieved through the existing ridge leadership system, which can facilitate controlled access to the protected areas. In addition, reverence for the gods will positively influence people's behavior to comply with agreed-upon access guidelines.
- **Community-based Cultural Tourism:** During 2009, the project also identified the potential for community-based cultural tourism among the communities where sacred sites are located. As a result, communities are organizing themselves to tap into this industry. One early example is the work to establish cultural community walks that depict the way of life of the mountain people in their natural environment.
- **Increased Governance Capacity of RweMCCA and ACCA:** CVC Phase II supported the community-based organizations, RweMCCA and ACCA to uphold good principles of governance. Under Phase I, the project assisted these institutions in developing their respective constitutions and strategic plans. The project also supported the establishment of interim executive committees until their membership was well enough organized to properly elect the committee (the process outlined under the respective constitutions). During Year 1 of Phase II, the project supported RweMCCA and ACCA in electing their governance structures according to their respective constitutions.

These built a strong foundation for further accomplishments this year, which illustrate the breadth and potential of using a cultural values approach to conservation.

- The EIA process for integration of Ankole cows came to its conclusion with the approval from the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) to establish a cultural village in the Park and the cattle kraal in the Government Ranch – Nshara.
- Decoration of the two cultural huts at the cultural center was completed.
- The Ankole Cow Cultural Values Association (ACCA) set up a management committee to take the lead in identifying a founding herd of the Ankole cows and putting them at the cultural center. This committee has agreed on criteria to select the cows and to date eight cows have been selected using this criteria. The cows are donated by members of ACCA. They have supervised development of a modest water source, interviewed and identified two workers who will be looking after the cows. They have identified and contracted someone to construct the kraal in the Nshara ranch and also construct a pit latrine at the cultural center.
- The project conducted a study tour to Zimbabwe to learn about how cattle and wildlife can be managed together.
- In Rwenzori National Park, members of the Rwenzori Mountains Cultural values Conservation Association (RWeMCCA) undertook a cross visit to the sacred forests of the Mijikenda coastal communities in Mombasa.

- Based on the understanding of managing sacred sites, the committee is now mobilizing exhibits to display in their completed museums in Bulemba
- A consultant was hired to design a cultural walk to incorporate Bulemba sacred site and it is in the process of being developed.
- In January 2010, the US Fish and Wildlife Service Great Apes Fund awarded the project a grant to extend conservation efforts to a specific species—the endangered chimpanzee. The project goal is to demonstrate how building local interest in and support for chimpanzee conservation in its natural habitat can be achieved by managing the Park to reflect the cultural values that underlie social constructions of nature and human-wildlife relations. The specific objective of the project is to conserve the chimpanzee populations in Rwenzori Mountains National Park through strengthening the capacity of local cultural institutions and UWA to manage the integration of local cultural values into RMNP management. Initial work for this project is underway. FFI is supporting UWA and RweMCCA in an assessment of the cultural values associated with chimpanzees in order to identify any that lead to specific threats to the chimpanzee population in the park.

### **Impacts and Implications:**

The initial project assessment found that the CVC project is creating interest and enthusiasm among local communities, has strengthened communication at all levels, and is improving relations between communities and protected areas. While challenges remain—as wildlife populations increase, so do damages to crops, farms and farming resources, for example—hopes are high that this “people oriented” project can find solutions that increase the sense of ownership local people have in the parks. This early feedback suggests that by creating a fundamentally different way of conceiving national parks as a cultural construct, *Culture, Values and Conservation* is well on its way to establishing a tested conservation model that can succeed not just in these two national parks, but throughout Uganda and across Africa.

The achievements of the Culture, Values and Conservation project have already led UWA to extend the concept to more protected areas. UWA has drafted guidelines to help protected area staff integrate cultural values into management plans and continues to work with communities, park staff and UWA’s policy planners to extend understanding and support for a values based approach to park planning and management. FFI is eager to build on this innovative area of work, deepening field testing of this conservation model in Uganda, in other countries in Africa, and indeed globally.