

FORESTS AS RESOURCES FOR THE POOR – THE RAINFOREST CHALLENGE PARTNERSHIP



The Process Principles – An Approach to Implementation

While there is much talk of integrated approaches (or sustainability science, ecosystem approaches etc.), the examples of appropriate action and success on the ground are few and far between. A core component of the Rainforest Challenge Partnership will be to articulate and validate a minimum set of basic *implementation process principles* that are crucial to achieving better synergy between conservation and development activities in the humid tropics. The pro-forma principles listed below are drawn from a careful review of recent literature, conclusions of the main inter-governmental processes and the previous experiences of the RCP partners.

The RCP will operate through a nested set of partnerships that bring together local groups with leading organisations in nature conservation, tropical agriculture and natural resource management at the local, national and global levels. A network of sites will be developed, where approaches to integrating conservation and development will be tested at the scale of landscape mosaics. These insights will be shared with a larger (and expanding) set of *associated* sites to accelerate learning and impact.

Principle 1. Local relevance

Indigenous land use systems and practices, customary institutions, and (for better or worse) existing policies will be the point of departure for this collaborative effort. Local and national participation – and benefits – are key ingredients for success. Previous approaches have not given sufficient attention to local priorities, interests, and time frameworks. Effective efforts must take into account the needs of both local and non-local stakeholders. Income generating activities on *non-forested* parts of the landscape mosaic often will be among local peoples' most pressing needs. Sustainable growth in agriculture and the broader rural economy must be central to this process.

Principle 2. New forms of organization and partnership¹

New types of relationships among resource managers (farmers, foresters, fishers etc), policy makers, environmentalists, researchers, extension workers, and other relevant groups are required. Incentive systems for scientists will have to recognize the new roles required of them as facilitators and members of interdisciplinary teams with flexible, client-driven agendas. New kinds of organisations will need to evolve: *organizations that are better able to learn and adapt*. In the RCP a *steering group of key stakeholders* will work with scientists to explore different development scenarios for the area. *Professional facilitation* will be used to guide this process. *Shared visions* will be built using participatory systems modelling. User-friendly *information management* systems will be developed with, for example, biophysical and socio-economic data overlaid on digital elevation models, and with attention paid to informal knowledge. Researchers and local stakeholders will negotiate *indicators of system performance*, covering both environmental and livelihood changes. Both scientists and resource managers will *learn by action*.

¹ Ashby, J. A. 2001. Integrating research on food and the environment: an exit strategy from the rational fool syndrome in agricultural science. *Conservation Ecology* 5(2): 20. [online] URL: <http://www.consecol.org/vol5/iss2/art20>

Principle 3. Multi-disciplinary teams

We propose to address the problems by linking the competencies of different scientific disciplines with those of local resource managers and decision-makers in a large-scale adaptive management framework. This framework process will provide the context for the deployment of component research expertise from within the core competence of the CGIAR centers, NARS and ARIs.² Thus at each benchmark site there would be the flexibility and resources to bring in the scientific expertise needed for participatory diagnosis of emerging problems (e.g. particular pests and diseases) and participatory development of technologies (e.g. new plant varieties better adapted to changing local conditions).

Principle 4. Active learning and science-based management

A growing literature suggests that under conditions of uncertainty and multiple interests, where information flow is limited, and where extension is inappropriate, collaborative processes of learning help people to adapt and find solutions to their problems.³ All management interventions will be treated as experiments and research will focus on measuring/predicting the outcomes of real management interventions. Performance indicators and feedback will drive the process of adaptation. Scenario development will identify options and highlight the need to negotiate trade-offs. Scientists will add value through bringing awareness of how similar problems are being addressed elsewhere, and will contribute to developing the basket of possible interventions. Active learning will be at a number of levels – at the level of a site, at various scales; and at the level of the global network.⁴

Principle 5. Multi-scale approach with landscape focus

Mosaics of forest and agricultural land will be subject to protection, management and restoration, in order to achieve an acceptable balance between local and global benefits. Analysis and intervention will be conducted at multiple levels. (For an example of how this can work, see Annex 2.)

Principle 6. Comparative insights

This challenge will be met by focusing on a learning network of sites of global biodiversity importance with significant populations of poor people and cultivating a new type of collaborative relationship between the scientists and the resource managers. All sites will have different problems and characteristics but these basic principles will underpin the approach at all sites. This should quickly generate not only products that are useful for the specific sites but also options that can be rapidly replicated in new locations, and hence constitute global public goods.

Principle 7. Scaling up

Many impediments to scaling up have to be overcome in the design and initial stages of project development. Crucial is the selection of key partners on the various impact pathways, at a range of scales.⁵ The enthusiastic response to the Rainforest Challenge concept has produced a list of sites and potential partners that well exceeds capacity of the RCP, at least initially. However, this also presents the possibility of developing innovative ‘boundaryless’ relationships with associate

² NARS – National agricultural and forestry research systems; ARIs – Advanced research institutes

³ Third World Academy of Sciences. 2002. *Lessons Learned from the International Workshop on Science, Technology and Sustainability: Harnessing Institutional Synergies*. Trieste: Third World Academy of Sciences and Initiative on Science and Technology for Sustainability. URL: <http://sustainabilityscience.org>

⁴ CIFOR is currently studying the role and success of global and regional forest-related networks. This knowledge will be used to structure the proposed network.

⁵ Lovell, C., A. Mandondo, and P. Moriarty. 2002. The question of scale in integrated natural resource management. *Conservation Ecology* 5(2): 25. [online] URL: <http://www.consecol.org/vol5/iss2/art25>.

sites and through communities of practice that can accelerate mutual learning and scaling up of impacts.

Principle 8. Global significance

To ensure that the RCP focuses on issues of global significance, and hence achieves its potential for wide impact, the ongoing inter-governmental processes (the environmental conventions signed at the Rio Earth Summit, the United Nations Forum on Forests, global poverty reduction agreements) will be monitored as a source of demand for research themes.