Donor Support for Protected Areas

Melinda Kimble  
United Nations Foundation

I. What can donors do to contribute to the long term flow of funds for Protected Areas?

Donors may be in the best position of any stakeholder to do advocacy and raise awareness in partnership with others in support of a sustainable flow of funds for protected areas. Advocacy and awareness-raising often require major resource investments that are essential to developing "communities of interest" in developed countries in support of these efforts. Among other things donors can do are:

- Create new action networks in support of specific protected areas. These must include the local community, the state or provincial and national government, individuals, nongovernmental organizations and the private sector.

- Explore new ways of investing in sustainable economic activities at the local level. Programs in community forestry and sustainable energy initiatives are often the key to vesting communities in support of the maintenance of protected areas while improving the community's economic situation. Programs of this type often broaden the donor base while improving the prospects for conservation.

- Ensure that the community and the local and national government share the goal of maintaining the protected area. Sustainable conservation cannot be done "long distance". Thus, the act of conservation must create more opportunities -- and long term revenue potential -- for the local and national community rather than other, more destructive choices. Donor support for community education and awareness is often the foundation for a framework that can lead to a sustainable action plan.

- Cooperate rather than compete. If we were to create a sustainable flow of funds to the 143 natural World Heritage sites alone, it would require billions of dollars. Donor funding alone is inadequate to complete the task. Donors need to work together and with national governments and local communities to prioritize their programmatic investments and maximize the use of scarce monetary resources.

- Engage the private sector. Donors urgently need to find new ways of engaging the private sector. Key sectors, including tourism, extractive industries and agriculture must become part of the solution. We need better ideas on how to do this, but advocacy and awareness-raising is an essential element in this campaign.

- Create new financial instruments that provide some level of permanent cash flow to sites. From this idea we have seen debt swaps and endowments come into being. These may not be the only
Franchises that assign 1% of profits to a specific PA, or other variations on this concept, might be an innovative approach.

II. How can donor funds be effectively applied to Protected Areas?

The answers track the ideas outlined above. As donors we must engage both local and national communities to have success. Donor money must support a management plan; we cannot assume the control or the management of these efforts alone. Among our greatest challenge, however, is to stabilize protected areas in zones of political instability and conflict. At this stage, we have ad-hoc arrangements that have had some success, but they cannot offer a permanent solution. We also face a continent-wide challenge in Africa given the threat to primates. Addressing this situation is urgent and demands a coordinated effort by donor governments and other stakeholders.

Among the ideas that might improve the efficacy of funding are:

- Advocacy, awareness, and education from the local community to the global public;
- Alliances around public service announcements to build awareness among potential donors;
- Strengthened community planning in the context of habit and species preservation;
- Community programs that link improved livelihoods with successful conservation;
- International community pressure on -- and help for -- national governments that have recognized sovereignty over the protected areas. In this effort, the UN, UNESCO, UNEP, and key convention secretariats (CITES, CBD, CCD) can be important allies and they offer readymade fora for raising government awareness of the problems;
- Emergency Funds -- a pooling of resources that could be drawn on by protected area managers to deal with emergencies; and
- New partnerships with the private sector.

III. What makes a collaboration arrangement attractive to donor funding for Protected Areas?

There are a number of factors that make collaboration or partnership attractive for donors -- among the most important is leverage of available financial resources. That said, partnerships have their own drawbacks that must be addressed for success. Donors must bear in mind the following:

- Partnerships require more time than direct programming;
- Local communities have to be actively engaged in the partnership;
- UN organizations can provide access to national governments, but they add a level of bureaucracy to the effort that can create problems;
- Partnerships remain, however, one of the best ways to broaden the donor base and raise more awareness of the problem; and
- The magnitude of the challenge requires much broader engagement by bilateral and private donors, by the public, and by the private sector.