

PROSPECTUS

PROJECT: Wildlife/Biodiversity Conservation and Poverty Alleviation

CLIENT: Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS)

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ADVISOR: Professor Arun Agrawal (arunagra@umich.edu)

PURPOSE OF STUDY:

This study will address the following questions: “What is the relationship between wildlife/biodiversity conservation and poverty alleviation? What is the nature of evidence that is available? To what extent is it possible to make any broad generalizations on the subject?” The project team will evaluate the design and implementation of a number of international conservation programs and seek to situate the answers within these broader questions and current literature.

The project gains its significance both from the intrinsic interest that many scholars have in the relationship between poverty and environment, but also because in the past few years a number of important international agencies have been pressing for greater attention to poverty alleviation at the expense of biodiversity, wildlife, and the environment. This shift in interests is visible in reduced availability of funds for conservation, decline in the emphasis on environmental protection even among groups that supposedly focus on the environment, and the emergence of competing social agendas.

This project will be part of a larger long-term research and action project planned by WCS. Prof. Agrawal and Dr. Kent Redford, Director of the WCS Institute, will be meeting March 18-20 to refine and partition project components. They will proceed with this project regardless, but are very enthused about this topic and are excited about potential student participation. They plan to study 20-25 projects internationally. One way for students to make a concrete contribution to the larger project, and yet have a clearly defined research target for themselves would be to select one or two locations of interest and design a clearly defined and manageable research project to implement with the help of Professor Agrawal.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

Prof. Agrawal encourages team members to think about what particular aspects of the broader question interest them. This would help project members focus on their research

design, and help the group produce a final output that will be of greater use both to group members and to the client (WCS). Examples of potential ways in which group members could target their research is by focusing on:

- Urban v. rural setting
- Two different regions (developed vs underdeveloped) in a country
- Presence vs absence of international actors (local v. international NGOs)
- Presence vs absence of local participation
- Projects purely targeted towards conservation v. projects that combine conservation and development goals

RESEARCH PROCEDURE:

- Data collection from NGOs/government/and potentially some original fieldwork during summer field work.
 - Each team member is encouraged to conduct field work in the country/region of interest. The adviser will work closely on research design with the team as a whole and with each individual student to identify how comparable data can be collected in the different locations.
- For project evaluation, data/information needed on:
 - Broader governance of country; demographics; socio-political, historical information.
 - Conservation program design: project and goal, objectives, major actors, incentives, resources, etc.
 - Ecological/natural resources of region, resource characteristics
 - Institutional design of project
 - Effect of project

Students are not limited by projects run by WCS. The projects could be run by the government, local NGOs, international NGOs (CI, TNC, WWF for example), or partnerships. The final selection of a project should happen in consultation with Professor Agrawal and Dr. Kent Redford.

The projects will most likely not cover marine or water conservation projects.

TIMELINE:

- Winter 2004: literature review, define project, research design, apply for funding.
- Summer 2004: data collection, preferably in the field
- Fall 2004-winter 2005: data analysis in relation to the major issues, write up of project

BUDGET:

Students will need funding. Prof. Agrawal has suggested sources such as UM or WCS. (note that the deadline for travel awards sponsored by the International Institute at UM is March 8)

STANDARDS:

- Project clearly defined in scope by time, energy and interest.
 - Deadlines congruent with project objectives.
- Work closely with advisor to fit project into larger project conducted by WCS.

RESEARCH PRODUCTS: A final paper, and possible publication.

WHO WILL BE INTERESTED:

Conservation NGOs, development and aid NGOs, governments.

EXPERTISE NEEDED:

At present, general analytical/critical thinking skills.

LITERATURE/REFERENCES:

Prof. Agrawal already has a reading list in mind for when students are ready to take on the project. Additionally, students may opt to review the syllabus for the student-organized Fall 2003 course, *NRE 677: Integrated Conservation and Development Projects: Practice, Problems and Potential*.