

# BOOK REVIEWS

## BIOCULTURAL DIVERSITY: A GLOBAL SOURCEBOOK

Luisa Maffi and Ellen Woodley

Earthscan, 2010

285 pp. Available online at:

<http://www.earthscan.co.uk/?tabid=101785>

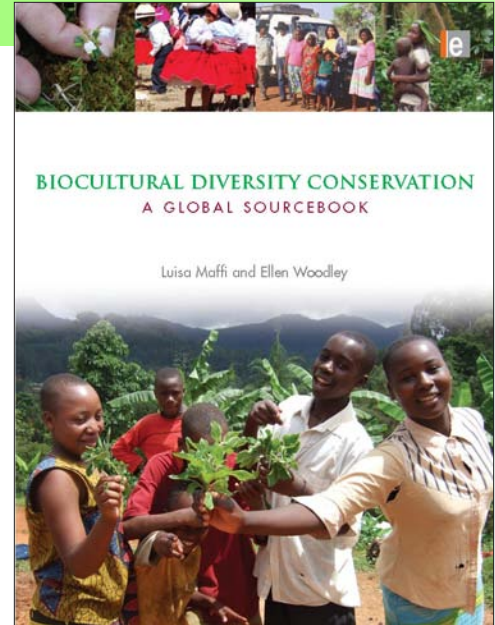
*Review by Sanjay Khanna*

*Biocultural Diversity Conservation: A Global Sourcebook*, by biocultural diversity expert Luisa Maffi and environment and development consultant Ellen Woodley, is a rigorous, groundbreaking, and practical exploration of the increasingly influential concept of biocultural diversity. Seven years in the making, Maffi and Woodley's book is intended for researchers, professionals, policy-makers, Indigenous and other local organizations, international agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), funders, and media. Amid the loss of biological species, cultures, languages, and habitats caused by global civilization's fast-growing ecological footprint, readers are encouraged to critically assess the premise that the protection, maintenance, and restoration of biological, cultural, and linguistic diversity ("biocultural diversity"<sup>1</sup>) are necessary to support the longevity, vitality, and resilience of nature and culture.

Within the first two chapters, the authors establish that nature and culture comprise a highly differentiated and complex reality, the innumerable facets of which are necessary for humanity to adapt to a planet that is undergoing increasingly rapid and destabilizing change. The book's argument frames the decline of ecological diversity within a context of worldwide linguistic and cultural loss, which, the authors show, closely mirrors the staggering pace of global biodiversity loss. In the conservation arena, the book further compels readers to perceive biological, linguistic, and cultural diversity as correlated with ecosystem health. The implication is that conservation programmes should seek ways to build human cultural resilience and vitality as a necessary aspect of any effective plan to sustain biodiversity, a point worth making in the 2010 International Year of Biodiversity.

The book's contents are divided into three sections: the first explains the concept of biocultural diversity; the second surveys 45 projects from about 25 countries to showcase local interventions that attempt to strengthen the many facets of biocultural diversity; and the third provides recommendations for "connecting the dots" and "filling in the gaps" around biocultural diversity in research, policy, and practice. The book's appendices contain useful analytical tables, survey details, survey contributor information, and a directory of selected biocultural diversity resources.

The projects central to the book illustrate the biocultural approach to conservation, which identifies scientific, traditional, and local knowledge as examples of "adaptive tools...in relation to the environment and the continued intergenerational development, transmission and vitality of beliefs, values, institutions, knowledge, languages, and practices related to human-environment relationships."<sup>2</sup> Gathered from Africa, Arctic, Asia, Europe, Latin America, North America, and the Pacific, the surveyed projects – selected for being "integrative and synergistic," cognizant of the "importance of intergenerational transmission of local cultural values, beliefs, institutions, knowledge, practices and languages," and "endogenous or strongly participatory"<sup>3</sup> – are local grassroots initiatives that support cultural resilience, linguistic vitality, and biodiversity, either independently of, or in collaboration with, international non-governmental organizations. These initiatives include, for



1 Biocultural diversity (definition): Biocultural diversity comprises the diversity of life in all its manifestations – biological, cultural, and linguistic – which are interrelated (and likely co-evolved) within a complex socio-ecological adaptive system. Maffi and Woodley, page 6.

2 Maffi and Woodley, page 19.

3 Maffi and Woodley, pages 23-24.

example, forest protection and management in the Cameroon highlands, aboriginal traditional knowledge and assessment of species at risk in Canada's northern territories, recovery of landscape health and cultural resilience in Mexico, revitalization of traditional seed exchange and cultural knowledge in Costa Rica, and maintenance of culturally rich agricultural systems in the context of food security in Nepal.

The authors analyze whether and how the chosen projects address the following four dimensions: (1) cultural practices that conserve biodiversity; (2) Indigenous, traditional, or local ecological knowledge; (3) maintenance or revitalization of Indigenous or local languages; and (4) biocultural diversity policy. In aggregate, the 45 projects contained in the book illustrate the complexity of the relationships between humans and the environment and the importance of striving to align local people's socioeconomic and cultural practices with the life support capacity of local ecosystems. Depending on their national or local context, by seeking to strengthen cultural resilience, the projects could inspire participants to use rights-based approaches – crossing scales from national to local levels or from local to national – to address inequities that have for centuries alienated diverse peoples and cultures around the world from natural systems and from sociopolitical redress of injustice. For example, the authors note a rights-based approach would beneficially involve, among other key tactics, “supporting land claims, resource tenure and governance systems to enable locally controlled decision making on sustainable use and management of local biodiversity.”<sup>4</sup>

*Biocultural Diversity Conservation: A Global Sourcebook* may prove to be a seminal contribution to the evolving dialogue on human survival, sustainability, and biodiversity. Academics, professionals, policy-makers, and others should note that the book's subtle, variegated, and well-grounded analyses gain strength by drawing on much-needed insights from threatened cultures. International and national agencies should heed the authors' plea to use the book as a resource for developing “policies and action plans...that support the integrated protection, maintenance and restoration of diversity in both nature and culture.” In essence, the book should be used as a tool to recognize and support the many intangible and tangible values of biocultural diversity.

After all, human civilization is arguably on an increasingly perilous course under business as usual. As protection against this unfortunate circumstance, time is of the essence in undertaking practical and relevant projects such as those described in Part II of the book and in developing policies and programs such as those suggested in Part III to conserve and enrich biocultural diversity. In authoring *Biocultural Diversity Conservation: A Global Sourcebook*, Luisa Maffi and Ellen Woodley have created a critical framework for supporting cultural renewal, ecosystem health restoration, and climate adaptation. During a period of increasing political conservatism, macroeconomic uncertainty, and climate change, however, the only question is how urgently and practically policy-makers and biocultural diversity practitioners can move to derive lasting benefit from the book's framing insights and recommendations.

**Sanjay Khanna** (sanjaykhanna1@gmail.com) is a writer, climate commentator, and co-founder of Resilient People, the world's first organization to address the psychological and sociocultural impacts of climate change. Sanjay is a Huffington Post blogger and has also written for Nature, Grist, Worldchanging, and other publications.

## ECUADOR CONTEMPORÁNEO

Ángel Montes del Castillo (Ed.)  
Universidad de Murcia, Spain, 2009  
350 pp.

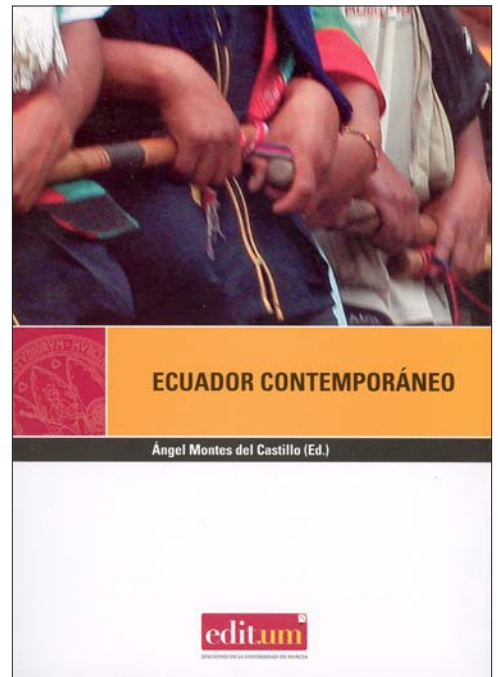
Review by Grazia Borrini-Feyerabend

If there is one country today that strives to achieve real change in all the dimensions dear to the majority of CEESP's members and partners, it is certainly Ecuador. The 2008 Constitution of Ecuador is a visionary document developed in a highly participatory way. It takes flight from a celebration of nature and peoples' history, spirituality, cultures, religions, and social struggles, and aims towards “good living” (*sumac kawsay*) for all the peoples and communities of Ecuador. A number of juridical innovations find their firm place in this new Constitution, ranging from “nature” as a subject of rights to the direct participation of Ecuadorian women and men in public decision-making, from the appreciation of a pluri-national society to the recognition of collective rights of peoples

4 Maffi and Woodley, page 156.

and communities, and from the practice of free, prior and informed consent to the highlighting of peoples' natural and cultural patrimonies and the promise that authorities will never again displace peoples from their ancestral lands. Similarly innovative is the kind of "development" that Ecuador is now seeking. Mutual respect, peace, equity, solidarity among people and between people and nature, food sovereignty, cultural diversity, and co-management of natural resources are tenets of such development inscribed in the Constitution, as much as an economic system whose main values are social equity, solidarity and harmony with nature.

In practical terms, this means that Ecuadorian people now have a right to health care and free education at all levels and that genetically modified organisms, extractive activities in protected areas, and the privatization of water are all banned. In addition to the executive, judiciary, and legislative powers, there is now also a specific power known as "transparency and social control" in Ecuador, which is exercised through a Council named by social organizations and citizens. This Council, which exists today in a provisory form, has a say in the nomination of public authorities and is in charge of promoting citizens' participation in all acts of public life, in particular through a national decentralized system of strategic visioning and participatory planning.



It is against this backdrop of the dramatic flourishing of a new society that the papers collected in *Ecuador contemporáneo* must be appreciated, as they trace the historical and cultural roots of the changes embodied in the new Constitution. How has a social change of this amplitude been possible in Latin America, a land used to both right- and left-wing dictatorships, and to elected leaders who arguably cultivate corruption and the oppression of citizens? A tenet of several of the papers collected in this intense volume is that an important role in promoting this change has been played by emerging Indigenous and peasant movements, as well as by the Catholic Church as a mobilizing force for solidarity and a more ethical vision of politics in the country. However, J. Sanchez Parga notes in one of the papers that the new Constitution of Ecuador is also a product of a crisis of party politics, parliaments, and even political representation and democracy in general, a crisis that finds expression in the "*caudillismo democrático*" – the extraordinary (and thus non-democratic) power of charismatic elected leaders. This process, whose final outcome has yet to be determined, may be nothing less than an act of "democracy destroying itself", an accumulation of "power over the means of information" that inevitably subjects and suppresses others (see pages 95 and 73-121).

And yet, as well expressed by Hernan Rodas in another of the papers, new forms of spirituality are also emerging in Ecuador, as in many other areas of the global South. Alongside profound socio-cultural change (such as extreme inequality and migration), obtuse official religious practices that continue to legitimate dominant interests, and a plethora of religious consumerism, a "popular religiosity" has emerged, acting as an antidote to individualism, dogmatic credos, and the loss of life's meaning. At the meeting point between religious celebration of life and festivity, gratuity, emotion, and solidarity, one can find a measure of ancestral spirituality – the symbols, images, myths, traditions, and rhythms that still manage to convey strength and peace to people. In this sense, "popular religiosity" offers a measure of moral leadership in the practice of solidarity and justice, a voice of social change from within (see pages 310-311).

One can find all this and more in Ecuador, a country whose liveliness and richness reveal a profound historical experience and offer a beckon of learning, evolving politics, and hopeful humanity.

## COMMUNICATION FOR ANOTHER DEVELOPMENT

Wendy Quarry and Ricardo Ramirez  
Zed Books, 2009  
157 pp.

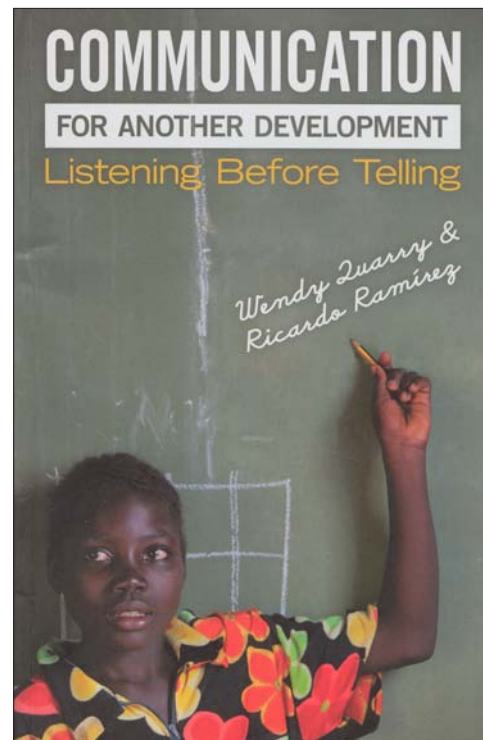
*Review by Grazia Borrini-Feyerabend*

Wendy Quarry and Ricardo Ramirez's booklet turns the conventional approach of communication for development on its head. While the conventional approach sees communication as an important add-on to development initiatives, the authors' position is quite the opposite. In this entertaining booklet, packed with anecdotes and stories, Quarry and Ramirez argue that genuine development *is* communication, in the sense that genuine, inspired, and intelligent development work implicitly contains effective communication.

The heroes of this booklet are the communication pioneers of "What now? Another development", a movement spearheaded by the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation in the early 1980s. As people who brought microscopes to Africa to discuss parasites with villagers and engaged illiterate communities in popular theatre, rural radio, mapping, and drawing, they contrasted sharply with so-called professional "communicators" – the main expected audience for the booklet – who arguably know a lot about technology and media, but can rarely articulate what they actually do or why do they do it.

As a constructive way forwards, the authors suggest the following three "coordinates for navigation": working with local champions; adapting to the context and understanding communication as listening, dialoguing, exchanging, learning, and advocating; and ultimately, acting for change. Participatory video and radio are leading approaches, blending the boundaries between education and entertainment to enable even the most remote villages to share stories, challenges, and successes. Overall, the authors contend that professional communicators need to be sincerely engaged in and understand the field context they wish to foster communication about; they need to work with community members and encourage them to use their own creativity and ideas towards social change.

**Dr. Grazia Borrini-Feyerabend** ([gbf@cenesta.org](mailto:gbf@cenesta.org)) has been associated with CEESP since 1994, and has been co-founder and co-chair of many of its Themes that promote equity, community governance, and a fair account of history and culture in conservation. From 2003 to 2008, she was senior editor of Policy Matters. She currently coordinates the ICCA Consortium and is President of the Paul K. Feyerabend Foundation and Vice-Chair of CEESP for Europe.




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## CONSERVATION WITH JUSTICE: A RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH

Thomas Greiber, Melinda Janki, Marcos Orellana,  
Annalisa Savaresi, and Dinah Shelton  
IUCN Environmental Law and Policy Paper No. 71, 2009  
118 pp. Available online at:  
<http://data.iucn.org/dbtw-wpd/edocs/EPLP-071.pdf>

*Review by Kathryn Kintzle*

Greiber *et al.*'s *Conservation with Justice: A Rights-based Approach* offers a step-by-step approach to finding an appropriate balance between the rights of nature and the rights of man.

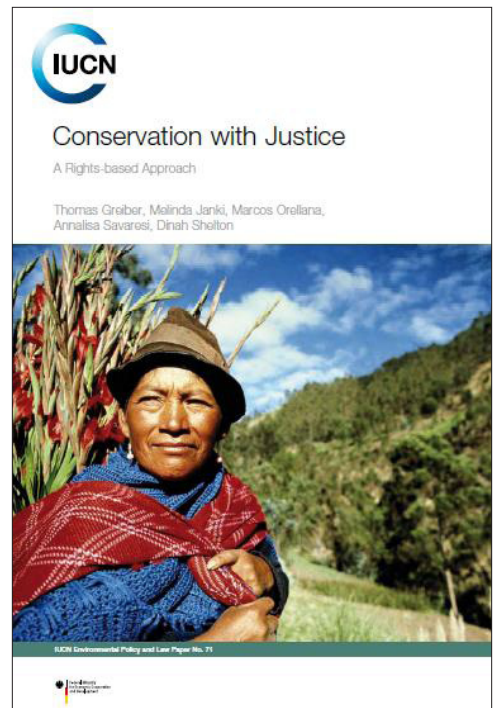
It discusses why this approach is needed and uses the following practical case studies as examples for implementation: climate change mitigation; forest conservation; and protected areas.<sup>1</sup> Even outside of these three areas of focus, however, the book provides a clear methodology of a rights-based approach that can be applied to many different procedural and substantive aspects of conservation policy and practice.

The book handles a very difficult topic and has the courage to acknowledge it. Understandably, conservation advocates often focus on the harms created by humans to nature and their implications for the future of both humans and nature. Throughout human history, however, many human rights, particularly the rights of Indigenous peoples, have been negatively affected in the name of nature conservation, including the prevention of access to a protected plant used in traditional practices or even the complete displacement of a community from its home. The rights-based approach explored in *Conservation with Justice* is one way to help ensure the integrity of law and policy applications in these local communities.

One of the most helpful sections of the book in terms of practical application is the methodology for implementation (see “Implementing the Rights-based Approach”, pages 23-35). The proposed rights-based approach involves the follow steps: (1) undertaking a situation analysis, including identifying actions, stakeholders and their roles, legal rights, claims, and duties, and the potential impact on both humans and nature; (2) providing information; (3) ensuring participation<sup>2</sup>; (4) taking reasoned decisions; and (5) monitoring and evaluating the application of the rights-based approach.

When explaining Step (1), “Undertaking a situation analysis”, the majority of the argument seems to be aimed at decision-makers, consultants, and other professionals, as the language of “actors”, “stakeholders”, “indicators”, acronyms, and phrases like “conflict resolution mechanisms” and “feedback loops” occur frequently. However, later in the book, the case studies are more easily understood by a broader audience (see Chapters 3, 4, and 5). For this step and in general, it would have been better to have written in a more accessible tone, especially as an important aspect of the argument concerns procedural rights. How can people defend their rights or even know what they are if they do not have access to a concept or process that they understand? The second step, “Providing information”, is self-explanatory, but necessary. Step (3), “Ensuring participation”, is not substantive unless the participants are identified and informed. It is one thing to have representation; it is quite another to have informed representation. Step (4), “Taking reasoned decisions”, is of particular interest because it is a step that allows a truly substantive and creative discussion with a balancing of interest. Required characteristics include that any project or policy has a lawful and legitimate aim, but how does one define legitimate? Many additional characteristics could be included here that could allow for increased ownership of this approach – in other words, an opportunity for inclusion in the further development of this approach. The methodology concludes with Step (5), which requires monitoring and party evaluation. This is a crucial element to any process and is even beginning to be recognized as a principle of international law.<sup>3</sup>

Chapter 1: Introduction is arguably the weakest part of the book, but only because the figures used can be interpreted as inaccurate and promoting a further separation of humans and nature, whether in terms of rights or biology (see Figures 1 and 2, “Visual Representation of an RBA to Conservation Objective” and “Visual Representation of RBA to Conservation Outcomes”, respectively). This chapter would have been much clearer by leaving them out. In both of these figures, there is a separation of nature conservation and people’s rights. This does not accurately show how the two are indeed biologically,



1 Chapter 5: A Rights-based Approach to Protected Areas, is helpful as protected areas arguably provide the most visible example of the tension that can arise between human rights and nature, substantively and procedurally (see the Yellowstone model, page 89). Forced removals to create protected areas have been done in several countries, including the United States, India, Australia, and South Africa. However, now some of these states and others are trying to reconcile these past harms. Reconciliation around the world is taking place in the form of revised co-management plans and even transfer or modification of ownership rights. However, a balance must still be sought between protection of biodiversity and healthy habitat, with people’s rights to privacy, their land and their way of life. Protecting each protects both and this book shows one method on how to do just that.

2 For example, this section opens with, “undertaken in good faith,” as trust-building is an important concern for all parties involved (page 29).

3 See, for example, International Court of Justice, 1997. Separate Opinion of Vice President Weeramantry. *Case Concerning the Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros Project (Hungary/Slovakia)*. Last accessed August 27, 2010, at <http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/files/92/7383.pdf>.

socially, environmentally, and legally intertwined. It was also difficult to understand why nature conservation and people's rights are drawn as three blocks upon a balance. The translation of the powerful substance of the rights-based approach into cogs and wheels was also unclear. Why should such crucial human rights concerns be translated into a machine process in order to be more translatable to a wider audience? These figures make a statement whether or not they mean to that promotes the further separation of humans from nature, as opposed to promoting humans as a part of nature. Any further development of this methodology should show a more scientifically accurate depiction of the relationship between humans and nature. This would also be more understandable to a larger audience.

Although the figures in the introduction do not establish the most informative or appropriate context, from Chapter 2 onwards, the authors provide clear and strong arguments of why a rights-based approach to conservation should be advanced and implemented. The authors acknowledge both the advantages and challenges of the rights-based approach (page 6), which gives the argument to support this methodology greater legitimacy. The advantages include highlighting the positive and negative impacts of conservation activities on people's rights, as well as the consequences of not affording people their rights when making conservation decisions. These rights include substantive rights such as cultural and minority rights, as well as procedural rights such as access to information and representation in decision-making. Chapter 2 provides excellent examples of the types of rights affected, including government commitments and follow-through of these commitments to nature conservation and human rights. This chapter also highlights the important point and challenge that this rights-based approach model is largely anthropocentric, with its focus on human rights in the application of nature conservation policy, as opposed to the rights of nature.<sup>4</sup> To this point, an additional challenge that could be addressed is the competition between the rights of humans and the rights of nature: which has priority and why and when? Another challenge is the competition between rights among different groups or within a single group, or between individual and collective rights and duties (page 7). The most practical challenge described in the publication is the need for substantial time, expertise, information, and funding resources that the implementation of a rights-based approach would require.

*Conservation with Justice: A Rights-based Approach* is important to the human rights discourse, as well as to the conservation policy and planning discourse, as it introduces a new and applicable concept to each. It provides a clear, step-by-step methodology for a socio-environmental approach to matters of justice, using existing institutions and frameworks while advocating for a new approach within these institutions and frameworks. Although a step-wise approach in itself is not radical, the methodological approach to advocating for human rights through conservation efforts is arguably quite revolutionary. Human rights are found in several current conservation dialogues such as climate change impacts and ecological refugees<sup>5</sup>, the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, and the rights to future generations,<sup>6</sup> but a clear methodology had not yet been presented to deal with these profound issues, for which a balance of interests is clearly and justiciably needed. *Conservation with Justice: A Rights-based Approach* offers this possible and practical approach. It aims to balance the rights and interests of both humans and nature, while understanding that the survival of one is inextricably linked to the survival of the other.

**Kathryn Kintzele** (kathrynkintzele@humansandnature.org) is the Director of the North American Global Responsibilities Program at the Center for Humans and Nature. She is also the Deputy Chair of the IUCN Commission on Environmental Law Ethics Specialist Group.

4 See Constitution of Ecuador (2008), Capítulo séptimo, Derechos de la naturaleza, Articles 71-74. Last accessed August 27, 2010, at: <http://pdba.georgetown.edu/constitutions/ecuador/ecuador.html>.

5 See, for example, Westra, L., 2009. *Environmental Justice and the Rights of Ecological Refugees*. Earthscan: London.

6 See, for example, Hiskes, R. P., 2009. *The Human Right to a Green Future: Environmental Rights and Intergenerational Responsibility*. Cambridge University Press: New York.



## CEESP NEWS & INFORMATION

- In **Whakatane, New Zealand**, from January 11-15, 2011, **CEESP** is hosting its first global conference on “Sharing Power: A New Vision for Development”. The conference will address three themes: the first examines how to fundamentally reshape our relationship with Mother Earth – the environment; the second explores sustainable development through macro-economics, science, and a new approach to business; the third explores reclaiming citizenship as an essential component of sustainable development, democracy and progress towards universal human rights and indigenous peoples rights. Keynote speakers will include Ashok Khosla, Winona LaDuke, Julia Marton-Lefevre, Professor Sir Sidney Moko Mead, and Elinor Ostrom. For more information and to register for the conference, please visit: [www.sharingpower.org](http://www.sharingpower.org).
- In **Canada**, **Iain Davidson-Hunt** ([davidso4@cc.umanitoba.ca](mailto:davidso4@cc.umanitoba.ca)) and **Peggy Smith** ([peggy.smith@lakeheadu.ca](mailto:peggy.smith@lakeheadu.ca)), CEESP Regional Vice-Chairs of North America, are supporting the Nishnawbe Aski Nation to bring attention to Bill 191, the Far North Act of Ontario. This bill commits the government to establishing 50% of protected areas in a region in which First Nations are almost the only permanent settlements. First Nation leaders feel that this policy is far-reaching and should require “effective consultation” prior to being passed. However, Ontario maintains that the long-standing Class Environmental Assessment for protected areas does not require further consultation with First Nations in order to create the so-called “super park”. Iain and Peggy are supporting the Nishnawbe Aski Nation in their position that First Nations should be permitted to complete land-use planning for their traditional territories in a manner consistent with Treaty Rights of Aboriginal Peoples in Canada, prior to a fixed percentage being set aside for protected areas.
- In **Costa Rica** (above left), **Vivienne Solis Rivera**, CEESP Regional Vice-Chair of Mesoamerica, is working with CoopeSoliDar R. L. (<http://www.coopesolidar.org>) and artisanal fishermen to reinforce their rights to access the marine resources they depend upon for food security livelihoods.
- In the **US Gulf of Mexico**, Professor **Rick Steiner** ([afrgs@uaa.alaska.edu](mailto:afrgs@uaa.alaska.edu)) has been working and reporting on the BP oil spill. Many lessons can be learnt from this spill. One of the most important is that less than 20% has been cleaned up and it is unlikely that ever be more than that. The remaining oil will remain in the ecosystem and continue to cause damage for many years to come.
- In the **Philippines**, local Government officials, including in both provinces on the Island of Mindoro, South Cotobato on Mindanao, and the local government of Subuyan Island, have passed moratoriums against mining in their provinces, particularly in their water catchment areas. Government officials based their decisions on “Philippines: Mining or Food?”, a book produced in part by **SEAPRISE** members, as well as maps that were made to illustrate the situation. However, the threats from open cast mines in other water catchments still persist. SEAPRISE is continuing to provide support to Indigenous peoples threatened by mining.
- SEAPRISE members **Sandra Kloff** ([srkloff@hotmail.com](mailto:srkloff@hotmail.com)), **Paul Siegel** ([psiegel@wwfsenegal.org](mailto:psiegel@wwfsenegal.org)), and **Clive Wicks** ([clivewicks@googlemail.com](mailto:clivewicks@googlemail.com)) have recently completed writing a book called, “Extractive Industries and Sustainable Development: A best practice guide for offshore oil and gas development in the West African Marine Ecoregion”. Covering oil development in 6 West African Countries (Mauritania, Senegal, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, and Sierra Leone), it is the most advanced book written by the authors and many of the recommendations on best practise would be suitable for many other countries. Although the book will be published shortly, a pre-formatted version can be obtained from the authors.

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**IUCN** has members from some 170 countries including nearly 90 States, over 200 government agencies, and some 1000 NGOs. Over 10 000 internationally-recognized scientists and experts from more than 180 countries volunteer their services to its six global Commissions, which are principal sources of guidance on conservation knowledge, policy, and technical advice. The vision of IUCN is “A just world that values and conserves nature”.

**CEESP**, the IUCN Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy, is an interdisciplinary network of professionals whose mission is to act as a source of advice on the environmental, economic, social, and cultural factors that affect natural resources and biocultural diversity and to provide guidance and support towards effective policies and practices in environmental conservation and sustainable development. Following the mandate approved by the 3rd World Conservation Congress in Bangkok in November, 2004, CEESP contributes to the IUCN Programme and Mission with particular reference to seven thematic areas:

- Theme on Governance, Equity and Rights (TGER)
- Theme on Sustainable Livelihoods (TSL)
- Theme on Conflict, Environment and Security (TCES)
- Theme on the Environment, Macroeconomics, Trade and Investment (TEMIT)
- Theme on Culture and Conservation (ICC)
- Theme on the Social and Environmental Accountability of the Private Sector (SEAPRISE)
- Theme/Strategic Direction on Indigenous Peoples, Local Communities, Equity and Livelihood Rights in Relation to Protected Areas (TILCEPA, joint between CEESP and the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas)

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