

# **Integrating Conservation and Development – Can it contribute to Gross National Happiness**

**By**

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## **1. Introduction**

According to IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) all national parks, as far as possible people should be separated from humans. In Bhutan, this is almost impossible since people were residing in the national parks before they were declared as national parks, wildlife sanctuaries or any forms of protected area. Therefore, Nature Conservation Division, in an effort to harmonize the economic and conservation needs, has been implementing Integrated Conservation and Development Programme (ICDP) in all the national parks of the country. People residing inside the national parks have to bear certain cost in the form of higher level of restriction on the use and access to national parks resources. No large-scale change in land use including commercial logging is allowed in the national parks.

The paper will make an effort to analyze the relationship between conservation and economic development of people residing inside national parks, based on the experience gained for the last ten years of implementation of ICDPs. It will also try to assess the perception of the protected residents of the conservation policy of the Government, thereby relating the findings to Happiness.

## **2. Background Information**

Bhutan has consistently adopted a pro conservation and sustainable development policy since the country embarked on planned development in 1960. This was backed up by a National Forest Policy promulgated in 1974 after His Majesty's ascension to the throne in 1974 wherein it was adopted as a national policy to maintain at least 60 percent of the country under forest cover for all times to come. Such a noble and far sighted visionary policy has delivered the country with most of its forests still in a pristine state, covering more than 72 percent of the country. To further supplement the conservation focus, more than 26 percent of the country has been dedicated as protected areas, and 9 percent as biological corridors. The country has been so convinced by the need to conserve our forests for the present and future generations as a source of resource base for socioeconomic development, the need to maintain 60 percent of the country as forest and setting aside adequate space as protected areas has been included in the draft constitution. The link between forest resources and general well being of the people, particularly the lower strata of the society has been established in many countries. Bhutan is no different. The rural people will depend more on forest resources than the urban and the economically better offs. Since more than 79 percent of the population live in the rural areas, it becomes even more important to conserve the forests at least for them.

Therefore, there could be a link between happiness and conservation of forests, at least for the 79 percent of the Bhutanese people.

National parks management policies differ from country to country. In some countries such as the United States of America, no permanent residency is allowed inside the national parks. In most of the European countries also nature and people have been separated. Indian laws also prohibits residency of people inside national parks. However in Bhutan, people who were residing inside the national parks before the declaration of the national parks are allowed to continue to reside. This situation renders conservation and economic development within the national parks more challenging.

### **3. Literature review**

Integrated conservation and development programmes (ICDP) have become one of the most widely implemented and yet controversial approaches to biodiversity conservation (MaShane and Wells 2004). The term itself emerged as a collective label for a new generation of projects that started to go beyond national parks and pay particular attention to the welfare of the local people (Wells and Brandon 1992). Wood, Stedman-Edwards and Mang (2000) in their book on “Root Causes of Biodiversity Loss”, draw a direct link between the root causes of biodiversity loss and poverty among the national parks residents.

During the last two decades, ICDPs and their equivalents have exploded in popularity, rapidly metamorphosing from an untested idea attracting seed money for pilot projects to become widespread “best practice” for biodiversity conservation (Larson, Fruedenberger, and Wyckoff-Baird 1998). A key factor behind the growth in popularity of ICDPs seems to have been the prospect of delivering working models of “sustainable development” which had become an overarching priority since the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro (McShane and Wells 2004).

However, over the years a pattern of shift in the perception of several conservation theorists and practitioners on the effectiveness of ICDPs in addressing the ecological and social aspects of biodiversity conservation has emerged. Thomas O McShane in “Getting Biodiversity Projects to Work” states that even as ICDP momentum was building, the initial experiences of some of the early field projects were disappointing. This was largely attributed to the considerable uncertainty and debate over how much emphasis to put on biological versus economic goals, and it was proving difficult to combine conservation and development objectives than had been anticipated. Conservation biologists and social scientists such as Redcliff 1987, Sachs 1991, Stocking and Perkin 1992, and West and Brechin 1991, Murphee 1993 began to question the contribution of ICDPs to biodiversity conservation, both from ecological and social perspectives. Over the years the debate and uncertainty on the effectiveness of ICDPs in reconciling local people’s development needs with national parks management grew. This culminated in a backlash against ICDP approach by the donors and agencies involved in implementing ICDPs in the field. Some conservation agencies have started to ask questions whether

projects that emphasize sustainable development – a term that remain frustratingly elusive to define – can in practice be compatible with biodiversity conservation.

Some proponents of government bureaucracy in India have argued that a sudden devolution of power could lead to the strengthening of the hegemony of dominant groups in a village, or a class, or those already financially well-offs. Therefore ICDPs that include empowerment of the local communities should be carefully thought out. It is further argued that the bureaucracy itself is hierarchical in nature and would need some time to change and appreciate a participatory approach to conservation of biodiversity and forest resources. ICDPs also should not be an appeasement strategy of the local communities for conservation of flora and fauna.

On the other hand, there are several success stories of ICDPs in furthering biodiversity conservation and economic development. Bhutan has been implementing ICDPs for the last ten years and these ICDPs have proved that both conservation and economic goals be achieved. Katrina Brandon and M.O'Herron have also documented some successful ICDPs in Costa Rica.

The Ministry of Forest and Environment in India has implemented ICDPs in the form of Joint Forest Management and Eco-development. Under these schemes, the management responsibilities and benefits from forests are shared between the government and the participating communities. The success of Joint Forest Management in some selected communities encouraged the protected area planners of India to develop a similar approach in National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries, essentially to involve the local communities in protected management. However, it was more complex than forest management, complicated by the provisions of the laws where humans and wildlife have to be separated in National Parks, one critical factor being that nothing is allowed to be taken out of the national parks whereas, harvesting of some forest produce is permitted from general forests.

#### **4. Assessment of ICDPs**

The primary focus of the ICDPs in Bhutan has been in reducing the dependency of the national parks residents on national parks resources. These include firewood, construction timber, roofing material, and several other forest products. We have also focused on improving the livelihood of the national parks residents through implementation of programmes such as improvement of mule tracks, foot bridges, construction of community centers, supply of solar panels. To ensure that deserving students do not have to stop going to school because of financial reasons, some national parks have initiated scholarship programme. Deserving students are provided scholarships till high school.

ICDPs in Bhutan are implemented with long term conservation goals in mind. It is not a substitute for rural development programme. Specifically ICDPs are expected to lead the improvement of livelihood of park and wildlife residents through the promotion of income-generating and ecologically sustainable activities and thereby contributing to biodiversity conservation

Our national parks network has been carved out of the existing forest area of the country. Prior to 1964 there was no entity such as national parks except some mention in the Thrumshung Chenmo 1958 about the prohibition of killing of elephant, tiger and musk deer (Wangchuk S. 1997). Although extra effort was made to exclude settlements while rationalizing the location of the national parks, invariably some settlements had to be included in the national parks, primarily to accommodate the ecosystem representativeness and adjustment of physio-geographical boundaries. Recognizing the fact that it would be a traumatic process to remove the residents out of the national parks by force or legislative means, a more benign policy of working with the local people has been adopted. One way of the achieving this and the long term conservation goal is to improve the livelihoods of the national parks residents.

We adopted two approaches for improving the livelihood of the national parks residents: household level; landscape level

#### **4.1. Household level**

At the household level we introduced income-generating activities such as sustainable incense collection and marketing in Laya, mushroom cultivation in Damji. These are just few examples of several activities being implemented in various national parks. The other household level activity is improving farming practices by the national parks residents. We have been distributing improved varieties of horticultural plants such as mangoes, mandarin, sugarcane slips in Jigme Singye Wangchuck National Park and Thrumshingla National Park. We have also been supplying improved breeding bulls in Jarey and Tsamang Geogs.

As part of our efforts to reduce the dependency of the national parks residents on local natural resources, we have been supplying CGI sheets to replace the shingles. So far over 50 households and 30 community Lhakhangs within in Thrumshingla National Park, 35 households in Bomdeling, 368 Sakteng, have benefited from this programme. We have also carried out an analysis of the number of trees saved which otherwise would have been cut and would be cut for the next forty years.

Consistent to the National Park policy to reduce dependency on park resources, Jigme Dorji National Park worked with the Institute of Traditional Medicine Services and the local people of Lingshi to grow medicinal plants in Lingshi. More than three hundred species of plants are used for processing traditional medicines of which majority are collected from the Parks. By facilitating plantation of some of the species, pressure on the wild species is reduced or adequate recovery period is ensured. This has been a successful programme both from the park point of view large quantity of medicinal plant material has been supplied to the ITMS thereby taking pressure off the wild species and at the same time local people earning substantial income from the sale of the plants.

Besides the cultivation of medicinal plants by the Park residents, the Park management also facilitates sustainable harvesting and sale of high value medicinal plants. For instance, in 2004, the collection of Cordycep, a high value medicinal plant found in

Jigme Dorji National Park and Bomdeling Wildlife Sanctuary was legalized by a Royal Decree. Although an effort was made to organize the harvesting and marketing along the concept of Community-Based Natural Resource Management, it was not amenable among the local communities. One of the reasons for this response of the Laya communities could be due to the involvement of high value commodity and could not trust each other to handle the cash flow. In one season the communities of Laya alone earned more than Nu.400,000. Other communities from Sephu, Lunana and Bomdeling also benefited from this programme. To safeguard the sustainability of the harvesting and the population of the Cordyceps, stringent harvesting and sale have been framed.

Wherever electricity has not reached, we have provided solar panels that generate power through photo-voltic cells. So far 103 households within Jigme Dorji National Park, 90 households in Thrumshingla National Park, 30 households in Bomdeling Wildlife Sanctuary and 18 households in Jigme Singye Wangchuck National Park have been provided solar panels. Many of the community centres including Lhakhangs, Health Centres and RNR Centres have also been covered by this programme. For instance, 30 community Lhakhangs have been provided solar panels within Thrumshingla National Park. In Chungphel under Chumey Geog of Bumthang where weaving and sale of Yathra is the main source of income, solar lighting has improved the income of the people as solar lighting has increased the weaving hours in the evenings.

#### **4.2. Landscape level Approach**

At the landscape level, we have been directing our inputs at longer term results such as maintenance and improvement of watersheds, introduction of land management through soil conservation programmes, reducing grazing impact through rotational grazing. For instance, we supported plantation by communities in Jigme Dorji National Park and Bomdeling Wildlife Sanctuary in the critical areas such as drinking water source, ecologically unstable sites, etc. We facilitated the establishment of community and private pastures within and in the buffer zones of the parks. In some parks, we have supported the renovation of irrigation channels which potentially otherwise could have caused environmental damages to the surrounding areas.

In the pursuit of Park policy to provide alternative occupation to the park residents, we have constructed several community schools. For instance, Jigme Dorji National Park constructed community schools in Damji, Laya and Lunana. Before these community schools were constructed, very few children would go to school. Since then, the enrollment in these schools is increasing over the years. The focus on education of the park residents is further enhanced by providing scholarships to deserving students in some of the parks such as Thrumshingla National Park.

#### **5. Constraints**

One of the main constraints for ICDPs is high expectations generated even as the biodiversity and socioeconomic surveys are not completed. For instance, the moment a Park staff is in the village gathering some data or asking some questions, people already start expecting some input from the government. If the time between the project/ICDP

activity implementation and the survey is long, local people start getting impatient. In some cases people start losing faith in the Park management.

While some of the enterprises facilitated by the Park have contributed substantially to the economy of the community, others have had only marginal impact. For instance, Jigme Dorji National Park financed the establishment of a milk processing unit in Tsangkha, Trongsa. The unit has highly enhanced milk processing capacity and increased the number of members of the cooperative. Easy access to market of the products of the unit, both in Trongsa and Thimphu has improved the economic sustainability of the cooperative. On the other hand, we have also realized that generally not all ICDPs activities generate sufficient revenue for the households or the groups. For instance, sustainable collection of medicinal plants or mushroom cultivation generate only part of the income of the households in Laya.

Lack of organizational capability of the local communities to implement ICDPs is another constraint. In all the Parks we have experienced a lack of organizational capability among the communities. We have not been able to find a negotiating partner in identifying and developing any community-based conservation programmes. Therefore, most of the times, the lead has to be taken by the Park Management. For instance, in Jigme Singye Wangchuck National Park and Jigme Dorji National Park, the residents live in far-flung areas and makes it difficult to organize themselves as an organization to implement any ICDP activity. For instance, it is difficult to even organize a mule track maintenance crew among the village communities using the trails. The situation is similar in all other Parks. One of the reasons for the low level of social organizational capability among the communities in the Parks could be attributed to an “individualistic mindset” of most of the Bhutanese, and low level of literacy. A formal study has not been carried out, but a good guess is that the literacy level of Park residents is much lower than the national average.

However, with the operationalization of the Geog Yargay Tshogchung and Dzongkhag Yargay Tshogdu, it is expected that the social organizational capacity of the communities will improve and become more effective in organizing themselves to manage investments from outside, and natural resources within their localities. In fact in some Geogs, the level of articulation what needs to be done in the Park is impressive, although it may not be in the best interest of the park management. As the social organizational capability of the local communities grow across the country, a clear policy that balances between the national interests (national parks) and the local needs (resource use) has to be put in place.

In the process of implementing ICDPs, we have learnt that communities, even small ones, are not homogenous. Sometimes it is difficult to see clear pattern of priorities in a community. In our experience, generally the priorities are based on household level. And therefore the needs and aspirations are different for different households. For instance, in Jigme Dorji National Park, some people would like to see a reduction in the wild dog population while others want the population of wild dogs to remain constant as they keep a check on the population of wild boar. In other areas, some households demand for solar

light while others would like to wait for electricity to reach their locality. In Jigme Singye Wangchuck National Park, some of the park residents have expressed fear that if solar power is accepted, they may never get electricity since the area is far from the national grid or a transmission centre.

The needs and aspirations of the national park communities are not static but rather dynamic. For instance, the park residents of Jigme Dorji National Park asked for improvement of mule track from Tashithang to Gasa Dzong. This was carried out through an ICDP in the early 1990s. However, by 2000, the upgradation of the mule track to a motor road was the top priority of the Park residents. Part of the aspiration has been fulfilled with the completion of a motor road to Damji. Over the years, our experience shows that Park strategy also has to be dynamic in nature, in response the changing needs and aspirations of the Park residents.

Another important constraint of implementing ICDPs is that the root causes of biodiversity loss are not well identified. While directing inputs for biodiversity conservation, it is difficult to focus action as the root causes of biodiversity have not been adequately identified. For instance, the decrease in the population of wild dogs or the imbalance in the wild boar population has been difficult to understand. We have not been able to understand the decrease in some of the prey species of tigers and leopards and why livestock depredation in some places is on the rise.

In most of the instances, we assume that by strengthening the capacity of the government organizations to implement community-based approaches to natural resource management, benefits will accrue to communities. We have invested substantial amount of funds in training the park staff in the implementation of ICDPs. However, in the process of implementing ICDPs, we have learnt that even trained park staff have only limited communication skills. One reason is that the training takes outside the country where the ground realities are different including social structures and aspirations of the local people.

We have also realized that in the absence of a clear government policy on devolution of natural resource management responsibilities to local communities, it difficult to effectively implement some of the programmes developed jointly between the parks and the local communities. For instance, policy on the collection of medicinal plants or high value mushrooms by the local communities is not clear as to who is authorized to issue permits or whether a permit is required or not.

Sometimes we seem to have extended too far the belief that local communities are best positioned to manage natural resources. We have experienced in all the parks and wildlife sanctuaries that social organizational capacity is lacking among all the residents. Most of the donors require that some form of groups or committees are formed to access funds from the projects. Since there is generally no functional entity within the communities to assume the functions of managing the natural resources on their own, the park management has to facilitate the formation of working groups or committees. If there is

no coaching over a longer period, these groups or committees become ineffective as a social organization unless the resource use involves substantial cash flow.

In most of the parks skilled labour is a serious constraint that leads to flow of capital out of the communities. For instance, construction of park or community infrastructure has to be contracted to people outside the park because the park residents lack construction skills. Installation of solar panels are also contracted to outsiders due to lack of skills among the park residents. Therefore, most of the money which otherwise could have remained in the community goes out.

## **6. Has ICDPs been effective in reducing biodiversity loss and enhancing socioeconomic development**

The National Parks and the Nature Conservation Division are not rural development agencies. Our primary mandate is to conserve the biodiversity of the country. The protection and management of the biodiversity is legitimized by the Forest and Nature Conservation Act 1995. The Act and the Rules provide clear provisions, primarily aimed at protecting the biodiversity, on what are permitted and what are not permitted in the National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries. All these decisions have been taken by the National Assembly and the Council of Ministers. The Nature Conservation Division, Department of Forest under the Ministry of Agriculture has been mandated to enforce the implementation of these legal provisions.

As the national parks and wildlife sanctuaries are generally located in remote areas with low population, and abundant natural resources, the residents have not felt the burden and obligations due to the restrictions imposed by the Acts and Rules of the Department on the use of and access to natural resources. The remoteness of the area, and shortage of official staff to supervise the use of natural resources, render by default, a free-for-all situation for the local residents (Wangchuk, S. 1997). Most of the park residents are also not aware of rules and regulations of the national parks and wildlife sanctuaries. Such a situation, over the years has led to the growing perception of the local residents that natural resources should be used without any restrictions.

With increase in the number of park staff and expansion of management programmes, the government machinery is reaching out into the remote areas including national parks and wildlife sanctuaries. Along with the posting of government staff and increasing service delivery, some form of order, such as enforcement of rules and regulations, and code of practices are introduced to the local residents. This invariably creates some apprehension or fear, and in some communities, a sense of animosity towards the park management. Some park residents have expressed their strong opinion, and asked questions such as “why suddenly all these rules and regulations” on the use of or access to natural resources. Experience from other countries such as India, Nepal, United States of America and Australia show that balancing the conservation needs and at the same time trying to satisfy the socioeconomic needs of the park residents has been the most challenging job of any park management. In Nepal a project called “Anapurana Conservation Area Project” was implemented to improve the livelihoods of the residents

through ecotourism. The Project was in fact too successful and led to further pressure on the natural resources as with improvement in income, people started to build larger houses that consumed more timber. With increase in income, consumption level also increased and among others, environmental problems including solid waste management also increased. On the other extreme, in India, a project titled “Ecodevelopment” with funding from the World Bank and Global Environmental Facility was implemented in some of the national parks with the objective of improving the livelihoods of the people living in and around the national parks, and enhancing the protection of endangered species of flora and fauna. The project had limited impact as it got embroiled in conflict of interests of government, NGOs and the donors mainly relating to agencies’ own philosophy, as how to go about in the implementation of the project. For instance, the Centre for Science and Development, a highly respected NGO in India, argued that ecodevelopment without the empowerment of the local people on the use of and access to the resources will not have any impact on the welfare of the local people. However, some wildlife ecologists strongly felt that stakeholder consultation will not lead to any productive results and that in a national park, the protection of endangered species should be the central theme, and that all available legal means should be used including penalizing the offenders. The scenario is not different in other developing countries where population increase and receding natural resources are becoming common phenomenon. Recognizing the fact that we cannot be so different from most of the developing countries, embarked on a strategy termed as “Integrated Conservation and Development” (ICDP) to integrate conservation and development within the national parks and wildlife sanctuaries about ten years ago. We have carried out assessment of effectiveness of our programme in conserving the biodiversity of the national parks and wildlife sanctuaries, and enhancing the livelihoods of the local communities.

We have adopted the indicators used by the World Wide Fund for Nature for assessment of ICDPs in fulfilling the objectives presented below:

Indicators of success of ICDP with different objectives

Objectives	Indicators
Species Conservation	Populations of species show no consistent decline
	Populations are not vulnerable to extinction
	Populations maintain ecological role
Ecosystem functioning	Species richness and diversity maintained
	Primary productivity maintained
	Nutrient cycling maintained
	Landscape patterns maintained
Human livelihoods	Resource availability maintained
	Poverty alleviated
	Per capita income increased
	Local management institutions strengthened
	Participation by local people in governance

	increased

Adopted from McShane Thomas and Newby Suad 2004

### **6.1. Species Conservation**

Preliminary surveys in the national parks and wildlife sanctuaries show there is no decline in number of any species. However, the population of some prey species such as sambar and other ungulates seem to have decreased and predation on domestic animals has increased in some parts. On other hand some species such as leopard, wild dogs and wild boar have increased.

### **6.2. Ecosystem Functioning**

Our biodiversity survey results indicate that there are no disturbances in the ecosystem such as large scale deforestation or degradation. The primary functions of ecosystem has not been altered due to abiotic factors such as overgrazing, forest fires or epidemics.

### **6.3. Human Livelihoods**

It is difficult to make a proper assessment of the impact of the ICDPs in improving the livelihoods of the park residents because of the complex socioeconomic structure and functioning of the system. However, if we consider the amount of financial resources delivered, some indication of the impact could be assessed. For instance, the supply of CGI sheets and solar panels have directly eased some of the financial burdens, and reduced some of the burdens and drudgeries. According to their own estimates, the shingles have to be replaced every three to four years. Every family needs at least five to ten large trees for shingles in three to four years. It is not just the trees having to be cut but the transportation from the forest to the site is very expensive. By roofing with CGI sheets, so much time and expenses are saved.

Solar panels have improved the health and hygiene of the beneficiaries. There is substantial savings on kerosene which has to be transported from long distances, sometimes having to walk for a week. Students can study longer hours and parents can extend their working hours.

## **7. Discussion**

The outcome of the first international seminar on GNH has characterized two perspectives of happiness – the inner perspective and the outer perspective. It seems that the main contention of the proponents of the inner perspective is that favourable external conditions alone are not sufficient condition for genuine happiness of an individual, and do nothing to ensure that an individual contributes positively to the happiness of society. It is argued that these objectives depend fundamentally on each person’s mental and moral attitudes. The inner perspective proponents derive substantially from the teachings of Buddhism and the impact in defining mental and moral attitudes. On the other hand proponents of outer perspective argued that GNH could be sustained through “good development” and that life circumstances do indeed make a difference to happiness.

In a simplistic manner, ICDPs contribute to both the inner and outer aspects of happiness. One of the primary goals of the ICDPs is to improve the livelihoods of the park residents. Under this programme one of the main activities is the supply of solar lights to the individual households and community centres including monasteries.

We also provide CGI sheets for roofing houses of some of the protected area residents. This spares much of the drudgery that the people have to under take to acquire roofing material. Mule tracks are improved in many of the protected areas. Foot bridges are also built. Several income generating activities are sponsored by the Park Management.

Do these activities contribute to the happiness of the protected area residents? Are the impacts on happiness permanent or momentary? Does exclusion of inputs from outside into one community generate unhappiness among other communities?

National happiness is not an aggregate of individual happiness but rather it must become a program of social and economic change and development (Mark Mancall, 2005). Most of the ICDPs fall under this category of characterization of GNH. For instance, in the process of mainstreaming conservation issues with socio-economic development, the park management has been implementing activities to improve the livelihoods of the local people. Is improving the livelihoods of people, at individual and household level, i.e. increasing income and health care, and reducing drudgery improve happiness? If this is true, then is happiness related to what is provided by the outsiders, in this case by the government.

The identification and prioritization of ICPD activities are carried out jointly by the local communities and the park management through a participatory process. This seems to fit the labeling of GNH by Hewavitharana and Pema Tenzin in their paper presented at the first international seminar on GNH in Thimphu in 2005 as “a development philosophy”. Further, some of the activities implemented as part of ICDPs could be considered as “a first step towards operationalizing the notion of good development” as discussed by Hirata (2005). The impact of some of the ICDPs on the park residents shows that the line between inner and outer perspectives of GNH is very thin – contributing to the physical environment and mental well being.

### **7.1. Trend**

ICDPs have generally failed in many countries to conserve biodiversity, and at the same time improve the livelihoods of the park residents. There are several reasons why this has failed. In some national parks, a vicious cycle seems to have been created. To improve the livelihoods of the park residents, income generating activities are facilitated by the park management. Over time, the success of such activities leads to increased demand for park resources such as timber for larger house construction, firewood, etc. Investment in education of the park residents has led to better organized groups that make higher demand on how the park resources should be managed, generally unsustainable use of park resources for shorter term gains. In Bhutan none of these trends have set in as yet. However, lessons must be learnt from other countries and adapt as we move on with socioeconomic development.

## **7.2. Prediction curves**

ICDPs will continue to be implemented in the national parks so long as there are people residing inside them to mainstream conservation issues with socioeconomic development plans. However, the type and the mode of inputs and working relationships will change as the centre of decision-making shifts (when DYT and GYT Chathrims are fully operational). There is a risk of ICDPs being forced to become rural development programmes as the local leaders set their own agenda. Conservation issues may take a back seat as the impact of conservation programmes are long term in nature, and generally involves restraining unsustainable use of natural resources. This has happened in several developing countries, and it would appear that Bhutan would be no different. Within this scenario, a common stabilizing variable needs to be identified i.e. that maintains the inner and outer perspectives of GNH. Amongst others, a sensible social development approach, which takes into consideration the long term benefits of conservation, and yet meets the immediate needs of the local people, could be a stabilizing factor of GNH.

## **8. Conclusion**

As the people have been residing in the protected areas long before the declaration of these areas as national parks and wildlife sanctuaries, the option of removing them through legal or economic means could be a tedious and an acrimonious one, if not impossible. Further, the needs and aspirations of the local people from the natural resources will grow. To further aggravate the flight of the park and wildlife sanctuary residents, the Forest and Nature Conservation Act 1995 imposes several restrictions on the use of or access to natural resources in the national parks and wildlife sanctuaries. This state of the environment will have some bearing on the inner and outer perspectives of happiness of the local people. On the other hand the government has assumed the responsibility of setting aside adequate areas of the country as national parks and wildlife sanctuaries for the benefit of the present and future generations. In fact, protection of nature could become the responsibility of the government and the people as per the constitution of the country. Therefore, a balanced approach between protection of nature through some level of restriction, and sacrifice of short term benefits by the local people seems to be one available at least for the time being.

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## **Conservation/Protected Area Management**

- **Restraint/Restrictions on use and access to resources**
- **Focus on sustainable use – for present and future generations (most of the development projects not sustainable)**
- **Use of legislations to protect the natural resources – generates some conflicts**
- **ICDPs implemented to improve the livelihoods of local people – some call it an appeasement policy**
- **Sensible development approach as discussed in the FIS on GNH – inner and outer perspectives.**
- **Gets over simplified when applied to the ground level – could be left at the conceptual level – as a guide to socioeconomic development planning for the government**