

Poor People in Rich Lands: A First Look at the Socioeconomic State of Biodiversity Hotspots

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Conservation and development must work hand in hand, even when the actions taken differ in their time frame, scale of activities, and delivery of benefits. But what actions are most needed, where, and when? Addressing these questions requires an understanding of the development context of people living within areas of high conservation value.

This study builds on the methodology used to identify the “hottest of the hotspots” (Myers et al. 2000). Nine development indicators characterizing the socio-economic situation of 25 global biodiversity hotspots are analyzed to reveal the relative human context in hotspots.

Results provide a coarse-scale analysis to prioritize where actions urgently need to be pursued by the conservation and development communities. Likewise, the places where strong coordination and agreement on actions needed are identified if biodiversity in the hotspots is to be maintained. It was found that conservation and development needs clearly overlap at a coarse scale.

The situation is particularly urgent for: Eastern Arc Mountains & Coastal Forests of Tanzania & Kenya, Indo-Burma, Western Ghats & Sri Lanka, Philippines, Madagascar & Indian Ocean Islands, and the Caribbean. These are the hottest biodiversity hotspots existing in the worst development context. Furthermore, the highest corruption in public and private sectors co-occurs in these hotspots. Therefore, coordinated action between conservation and development efforts is required to meet the elusive but linked goals of improving human welfare while conserving biodiversity.