

- IUCN has a good reputation as a scientific and policy-based organization. Some NGO observers feel, however, rightly or wrongly, that IUCN has been timid when asked for support on environmental issues where NGOs have clashed with the establishment. To the extent that this is true, IUCN may have to deal with a credibility gap;
- Such a coalition would have to make a strong effort to avoid becoming the sole arbiter of 'good development' among NGOs. Diversity and plurality are important characteristics of a strong NGO community and of sustainable development.²²

9.6 Mix and Match

Option 4 could be selected with all the elements of Options 1, 2 and 3, or without the project fund suggested in Option 2. The 'learning element' could be added to Option 1 without the project fund of Option 2, or the coalition aspects of Option 4. In other words, all or parts of the various options are possible. The options are flexible as far as timing is concerned as well. For example the 'hands-on learning' option could begin immediately, or could be implemented a year after everything else has started.

The most complete option, and the one recommended - Option 4 - is also the most complex, but in the end it is likely to have the greatest payoff.

10. ADVOCACY, NGOS AND THE NCS

Like the NCS, environmental awareness in Pakistan is in its infancy. Environmental advocacy is also very young, although much good work has been done by an up-and-coming breed of advocacy-oriented NGOs and by IUCN's Journalist Resource Centre. There have so far, however, been few of the clashes between NGOs, government and industry that have characterized growing environmental awareness in Europe, North America and countries such as Brazil and Indonesia, where a stronger NGO community has challenged government and industry on their shortcomings.

Such clashes are inevitable in Pakistan. There is, for example, already a fundamental contradiction between the unfettered free-enterprise, small-government growth model currently being encouraged by the government and the donor community, and the need for regulations and effective government agencies that will protect the environment. One approach stresses deregulation; the other stresses the opposite. The difficult tradeoffs are discussed in the World Bank's 1992 World Development Report, without providing much satisfaction. The report's ambivalence, in fact, bears out the likelihood of clashes once the regulatory and legal aspects foreseen in the NCS begin to bite into vested interests. As the Bank puts it, 'the rich are often good at protecting their positions [while] the poor... tend to play little part in the environmental debate. Yet they usually bear the brunt of environmental degradation.'²³

²² The word 'coordination' has been carefully avoided in presenting this option. In the NGO world, everyone wants to coordinate, but nobody wants to be coordinated. 'Coordination', in fact, is often a euphemism used by government and donors for 'control', or for a desire to diminish diversity and confusion. The confusion, however, is more often in the eye of the beholder than a matter of fact. There will be confusion, but this is inevitable if diversity and plurality are valued. Forming a coalition rather than attempting to 'coordinate' may reduce confusion without damaging diversity.

²³ World Bank, pg. 83

There are ways in which the debate can be made less painful for all concerned, some reflected in Options 3 and 4, above. The first is **by improving knowledge and understanding about environmental issues**, and the tradeoffs involved in choosing one option over another. Some of this will fall to the forthcoming Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), but IUCN has an important role to play as well, especially where NGOs are concerned. A second way of reducing conflict is **to develop better systems of information and education where environmental issues are concerned**. The JRC, the Teachers' Resource Centre and others are already doing this; more can be done. A third is **the encouragement by government of institutions, networks and coalitions which can act as environmental lobbyists**. Facilitating debate will allow the voice of the poor to be heard, as well as the voice of the rich. It will allow policy makers to make choices based on information, knowledge and public opinion, rather than on any preponderance of influence held by a particular segment of society.

A coalition of NGO support groups can play this role more effectively than any single body. In fact individual organizations may be constrained from taking a stand on a problematic issue for a variety of reasons, but could attach their name to a collective position. For government, a strong, independent, pro-poor voice is essential in weighing the factors in a particular issue, and in balancing other pressures that prevail upon development policy.

All this suggests that Options 3 and 4 make most sense for IUCN, the NGO community and government.

11. GOVERNMENT, NGOs AND THE NCS

In addition to the encouragement of an enabling environment for NGOs, what role should the government play in supporting NGO activity related to the NCS? Government currently envisages an annual Rs 30 million NCS-related fund for supporting NGOs. Should this be managed by government or should it be channeled through intermediary bodies (such as IUCN, Shirkat Gah or TVO)?

The most obvious answer is that both should happen. There will inevitably be NCS activities within government's purview where local NGOs can complement government's own activities, but where intermediary bodies do not operate, are not interested, or disagree with government's approach. In such cases, it is clearly to government's advantage to have a discretionary NGO fund of its own, with clear but simple criteria and procedures.

If Options 3 or 4 are accepted by IUCN, and if other NGO support organizations join a coalition, a government contribution to a central project pool could be an important demonstration of support, and could actually help to bring such a coalition into being. Government should not, however, seek to play a direct role in administering project funds through such a coalition. Government's hands-on approach with the NGOCC and TVO have created problems of administration and credibility. Direct involvement would also compromise the NGO community's ability to act as an independent advocate on important environmental interests. As noted above, it is as much in government's interest as anyone else's to ensure the independence of the NGO voice on environmental issues.