

VI.A.3. The Local Community and Biodiversity Conservation in the Western Ghat Region of Kerela: A Contingent Valuation Approach

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This paper is an attempt to look into biodiversity conservation aspects and highlights the lacuna of the present conservation measures. The paper also brings forth the supportive or supplementary measures required for a successful implementation of biodiversity conservation measures.

This paper consists of three sections. The first section overviews the conservation measures in a highly rich biodiversity area in the western Ghat region in Kerela. Second section evaluates the appropriateness of the protection measures of Periyar Wild life Sanctuary as evidenced by the data generated in a contingent valuation survey in an adjacent village of Periyar wild life sanctuary. The last section deals with the supportive measures for a successful implementation of biodiversity conservation measures in general and in the Periyar Wild life Sanctuary in particular. In this paper, we have hypothesized that land use patterns and socio economic factors in areas next to parks and reserves have major implications for the integrity of biological diversity in protected areas. Besides, protection of selection natural habitats is neither sufficient nor desirable for conserving biodiversity unless we consider the local needs. Based on this hypothesis we have examined the welfare implication of the on going biodiversity conservation measures, on the local people, who are the direct users of the forest, living on the periphery of protected wild life sanctuaries. Apart from validating some of the earlier hypothesis that establishment of protected area adversely affects food security and the livelihood of the people living in and around the protected area the study also brings forth the perception of the local people regarding the conservation measures.

The study largely draws from the preference elicitation of the people living in the periphery of the sanctuary using a contingent valuation format and came to the conclusion that unless we take into account the local demand no conservation measure is going to be a success. As the local people are more concerned about their day to day living rather than inter generational equity, crop destruction due to the attack of the animals from the protected sanctuary matters a lot to them. Therefore, they resort to the ways by which they can prevent this, whether legal or illegal. This is specially true in the village which comprises migrant population who had migrated in search of economic betterment.

The study in the periphery of the sanctuary provides some policy insights. Since the households are having certain externalities mainly by way of crop destruction due to attack of the animals from sanctuary their willingness to accept is very high. But as we know, our budgetary

constraints is very high for such a measure to be practical, alternative measures has to be formulated. An easy solution would be to say conserve biodiversity through local participation. Again, how we could achieve this is a tricky question? The present paper has also tried to find answers to these questions.