

3670132

BEST AVAILABLE

PN-1772-267
ISN = 54547

THE FRAGILE MOUNTAIN REVISITED:

NEPAL'S AGENDA FOR HALTING THE SLIDE

Hemanta R. Mishra
King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation
National Parks Building, Babar Mahal
P.O.Box 3712, Kathmandu
NEPAL

ABSTRACT

This paper documents the conservation problems besetting Nepal, many of which stem from social and economic woes. As a result of deforestation and poor land use practices, Nepal has been losing precious ground and losing valuable time in a race against ecological ruin. It also introduces several concrete programmes for reversing these negative trends. One of the brightest hopes is the newly created King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation, an environmental agency dedicated to the preservation of Nepal's natural heritage. Another important mission of this non-profit organization, unique in the third world, is to promote economic opportunity through projects that require conservation of natural resources. Under the shadows of their fragile mountains, Nepalis are now realizing that ignoring ecological imbalances makes economic development impossible.

Paper presented to the 16th General Assembly and Technical Meeting of the IUCN

Madrid, Spain Nov. 5 - 15, 1984

1-1772-267
ISN = 54547

PN-1772-267

23

1. INTRODUCTION:

Ten years ago, it was difficult to convince bureaucrats and planners that environmental conservation and human welfare are intimately linked. Conservation programmes, they often replied, were fine for rich western nations but inappropriate in destitute countries struggling to promote agricultural and industrial production. During the last decade, with increased soil erosion, floods, and famines in the Himalayan zone, the number of skeptics decreased.

Today, most Nepalis need little convincing. During the past monsoon the capital city of Kathmandu was completely cut off from the only two commerce routes linking it with the south. Several days of torrential rains triggered floods that swept away several key bridges, and caused land slides that blocked highways. In many parts of the country, houses were washed away which led to the drowning deaths of a number of villagers and livestock. Rivers ruined farmland and rice crops near harvest. Such ravages of the monsoon can only be expected to increase in severity if watersheds remain unprotected. These isolated ecological disasters spell economic decline for the whole region if timely conservation measures are not taken.

The Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal serves as an appropriate site to demonstrate the principles of conservation for sustainable development. The task of bringing about a delicate balance between meeting the needs of an expanding population and preserving a fragile environment is crucial (Shah, 1984 a). This land-locked country of unexcelled natural beauty is also one

**BEST
AVAILABLE**

of the world's poorest. Here, the plethora of environmental problems is also staggering. Population growth is one of the highest in the world. Two thirds of the people dwell in climatically hostile and rugged mountainous terrain that produce only one third of the food required. Each year, the 4 major rivers with over 6000 tributaries export 240 million cubic metres of Nepal's precious soil into the Bay of Bengal (Joshi, 1981). Yet, it is one of the few developing countries where the leadership and the people understand the urgency for nature conservation. For example, the Kingdom of Nepal has achieved remarkable success in creating an extensive network of national parks and wildlife reserves in less than 15 years. Much of this work, however, threatens to be undone if conservationists fail to grasp that without meeting the basic needs of food, fuel, fodder, and shelter for impoverished farmers outside the park boundaries, there may be no wildlife left inside (Sherpa, 1979; Milton and Binney, 1980; Mishra, 1982; Hinrichsen et al, 1983; Mishra, 1984).

The aim of this paper is to illustrate the harsh socio-economic realities in contrast to the abundance of natural resources in Nepal. It documents Nepal's efforts in attaining the objectives prescribed in the World Conservation Strategy (WCS, 1980). Finally, this paper highlights the creation of a unique institution dedicated to promoting local development through conservation, the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation, and discusses its agenda designed to meet this goal. As will become clear below, Nepal's environment is in a precarious state, like a Himalayan forest perched on a

precipitous mountainside. It is the task of the King Mahendra Trust and other agencies to halt the slide that jeopardizes Nepal's future.

2. THE SETTING:

The Kingdom of Nepal is a land of unique ecological contrasts. Within a short span of about 200 km., the altitude varies from less than 100 m above mean sea level to the highest point on the Earth's surface (8,848 m) and contains some of the most outstanding natural areas in the world. The country's 147,000 sq.km. include four distinct ecological zones. Approximately 23% of the area is comprised of the hot and humid lowland Terai, an extension of the fertile Indo-gangetic plains. The midlands, a central region of rugged mountains and terraced farmlands, cover nearly 44% of the land. The rest of the country is dominated by the Himalayas - a largely uninhabitable area of boundless energy with permanent snow - and the Trans-Himalayan region, characterized by the treeless steppes of the Tibetan plateau.

These extremes are enriched with a diverse fauna and flora perhaps unparalleled at this latitude. Both the Oriental and the Palearctic fauna merge here. Nepal, as a transition zone between these two biotic provinces, provides a natural laboratory for testing ideas of zoogeography. Nearly 100 mammalian species have been reported from Nepal. The alpine and temperate regions of the north include endangered species such as the snow leopard (Panthera uncia), musk deer (Moschus moschiferus), the great Tibetan sheep (Ovis ammon hodgsoni) and the lesser panda (Ailurus fulgens). The steaming tropical jungles of the south,

harbours animals such as the pre-historic rhinoceros (Rhinoceros unicornis), tiger (Panthera tigris), and 5 species of deer (Mishra and Mierow 1974). Nepal is also regarded as an ornithologist's paradise as over 800 species occur here, more than half of all the species recorded for southern Asia (Fleming et al. 1979).

Unfortunately, less is known about the wealth of plant life in this land-locked country. In the angiosperms alone, over 5,000 species have been listed. This is almost two and half times greater than those reported from the United Kingdom even though the size of Nepal is less than two thirds the size of Britian (Shrestha 1983). Many of these endemic plants are increasingly in demand by pharmaceutical companies for their medicinal value. Nepal's endangered flora also serves as a reservoir for genetic materials that can be exploited to develop or improve food, fodder, or fuel wood crops. The loss of irreplaceable plant communities and wildlife they support is a tragic loss of Nepal's natural heritage. But, this by no means is the only justification that merits their conservation. Another practical reason for taking actions before it is too late is Nepal's growing dependence upon wilderness-oriented tourism to generate revenue and employment in rural and remote parts of the country.

3. THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC SCENE:

3.1 The human dilemma:

The United Nations has classified Nepal as one of the least developed of the developing countries (LDC). The population is currently 16.6 million and is increasing at an alarming rate of 2.6 %. Thus, the population which took 60 years to double in 1971

may now take less than 27 years to double again. Nearly 40 % of the population is less than 15 years of age. The density is 472 persons per sq. km. of cultivable land. More than 90 % of the people are subsistence farmers who depend upon depleted forests for fuel, fodder and water (ADB, 1982).

The fertility rate is one of the highest in the world as it is common for a woman to have 5 - 7 children. Family Planning programmes have been quite active, yet only 17 % of families practice birth control. Infant mortality is 133 per 1000 of live births and life expectancy is 44 years. Adequate health care for most Nepalis is lacking. There is one doctor for every 32,000 persons and one hospital bed for every 5,000 patients (ADB, 1982; Bhattarai, 1983).

Despite government efforts to provide free primary education to all children, the literacy rate is a mere 23 percent (Manandhar, 1982). Only half of the eligible primary school aged children enroll in schools, even though education is free.

Aside from tourism, industries are very much underdeveloped; they employ about 60,000 people and provide only 4% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Although the government has heavily emphasized cottage industries, their average turn over is merely 150 \$ per annum. The per capita income of 120 \$ per annum is one of the lowest in the world (Manandhar, 1982); ADB, 1982). Nearly 65 % of the 1.3 million rural labour force is unemployed or under-employed (ADB, 1982). In spite of these hardships, outsiders regard the people of Nepal as hard working, friendly and tolerant. The Kingdom's Tibeto - Burman and Indo - Aryan

ethnic groups form a mosaic of rich and diverse cultures that still flourish today (Bista, 1997).

3.2. Land use pattern:

It is an unfortunate paradox that over 90% of the people live off the land in a country where only 20 % of the area is ecologically sound for farming (Bhattraï, 1983). In comparison to other mountainous countries, the patterns and trends are more of abuse rather than use of land. Definitive data on the tenure system do not exist and land capability surveys have not been undertaken. Nevertheless, figures obtained from the National Planning Commission (NPC, 1981) indicate that at present 29 % of the land is forested and 22% under agriculture. Natural pasture occupies 13% while 18% is classified as barren. Water bodies including the large snow - fed rivers form 3% of the surface area. Urban areas encroach a mere 0.2 percent while the gigantic peaks with permanent snow command 15% of the total land mass of Nepal. But, the most alarming news is that forests are being destroyed at a rate of nearly 3 % per annum.

3.3 The Food Situation

Between 1975 and 1980 a total of 15,000 sq. km. of natural habitat including 7,000 sq.km. of highly prized virgin forests were converted to agriculture (ADB, 1982). But, during the same period the per capita food production decreased as the population exploded. In 1980, grain production increased by 3 % while population increased by 14 per cent. It has been estimated that by the year 2020, the population will have expanded by over 50 %, while the grain output will increase by only 5 percent (NNCS, 1983).

The livestock production sector is also not encouraging. It is estimated that there are 14 million head of hoofed stock in Nepal. While they contribute 15% of the GDP, they consume 50 million tons of green plants and consume most new growth of fodder plants (Bhattraï, 1983). Yet, over 50 percent of the cattle may be suffering from disease or malnutrition and many have become feral.

4.3 THE STATE OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT:

It is worth reiterating again that it took only 5 years to lose 15% of Nepal's forests (ADB, 1982). This, combined with cultivation of slopes over 30 degrees or land with thin soil depth, and fueled by heavy monsoon rains, has triggered the processes of erosion. Soil loss per annum is estimated to be between 20 and 50 tons per hectare. This is 20 times more in weight than the amount of rice produced from the same sized land (NNCS, 1983). Though some of the erosion could be attributed to the geologically young mountains, over half is caused by human activities (Joshi, 1981). Soil loss in overgrazed pasture is estimated to be nearly 40 metric tons per annum and the top soil in crop lands is being reduced at a rate of 25 tons per year (Bhattraï, 1983).

In the energy sector, the fuel wood crisis in Nepal is well publicized as 97% of the people use fuel wood for cooking (Eckholm, 1976; Joshi, 1981). Statistics on supply and demand indicate that the deficit averages out to 5.1 million cubic meters of wood. As more trees are cut from the reserve forests, the country will suffer from a wood shortage by the turn of the

century (Upadhyaya, 1981).

The demand for commercial timber is expected to increase from 292,000 cu. m. in 1980 to 736,000 cu. m. in the year 2000. The loss of these renewable resources which during 1980/81 alone contributed 16.3 million dollars in export earnings (ADB, 1982) shall have grave economic consequences. Consequently, it may not be long before Nepal becomes heavily deforested and a net importer of timber.

The government's efforts to improve human welfare is compounded by the miseries caused by the recurrent disasters such as floods and landslides. Sediments carried by the numerous rivers and streams are causing river beds to rise 15 - 30 cm annually (ADB, 1982). Twenty years of data on natural calamities indicate that there is an average of one major disaster each year that kills over a thousand people (Earthscan, 1984). Other accounts reveal that at least two large hydro-electric turbines, several kilometers of highways, and a few bridges were washed away during the last 5 years. These consequences resulting from the degradation of the environment are not the only ones that impede human prosperity.

4. POSITIVE TRENDS IN CONSERVATION

4.1: An overview

Despite the pessimistic outlook for conservation and economic development few other developing countries can match the optimistic trends prevailing in Nepal at present. Largely due to the well publicized concern of His Majesty The King of Nepal, planners and decision makers are realizing that conservation and

economic development are inseparable. International aid and concern for Nepal's environmental issues have augmented further awareness.

Since 1973, a total of 11 sites covering approximately 6% of the country's surface area have been declared as National Parks or equivalent reserves. Even at an early stage, His Majesty's Government of Nepal (HMG/N) believed that sound management plans cannot be formulated without adequate scientific knowledge and base line data. Consequently, HMG/N has collaborated with the Smithsonian Institution; Frankfurt Zoological Society and others in the field of applied ecological research (Mishra and Maskey, 1982; Wemmer et al, 1983).

More recently, the Sovereign of Nepal has enacted a soil and watershed conservation act to provide legal provisions for preventing man - made erosion. Integrated watershed management projects have been implemented in several major catchment areas by HMG/N. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has supported more than a dozen programmes that includes soil conservation, watershed management and projects that monitor changes in the environment (Joshi, 1981). With technical assistance from the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO), community plantation projects have been launched in 29 out of the 75 districts of Nepal.

The role of the Family Planning Association of Nepal is not only to distribute free condoms and birth control pills. They have been actively involved in planting fast-growing fodder trees under the aegis of World Neighbours of United States. In addition, their projects aim at providing economic incentives to

raise the standards of the rural women.

The air is clean and water plentiful except, perhaps in the expanding city of Kathmandu. The panoramic spectrum of natural scenes combined with an exotic cultural heritage are Nepal's biggest assets in these days of international tourism. Consequently, the number of visitors contributing more than one third of the revenue has currently peaked to over 160,000 from a few hundred in the sixties. Nature - oriented tourism supports more than 50 companies that employ over 1000 permanent staff and are supported by 5000 - 7000 seasonal field staff. Per capita income of these workers is 290 US \$ which is almost two and half times more than the national average (Shah, 1983). Wilderness-oriented tourism is the fastest growing industry and is regarded as a potential source for generating employment and income in remote parts of the Kingdom. Yet, its successes could also be its demise in places like Sagarmatha (Everest) National Park (Hinrichsen et al., 1983; Hillary, 1983; Mishra, 1983). Fortunately tourism authorities are learning that nature conservation is the only insurance against killing the goose that lays the golden egg (PATA, 1983).

In addition to the unmeasurable quantity for hydro-electric power, potential sources for energy other than wood is high. Government plans are increasingly encouraging the development and use of bio-gas and solar energy (RECAST, 1981).

The government is stable and Nepal's image as a zone of peace and tranquility is recognized in the international scene. This alone warrants international support as neither conservation nor

development programmes can survive without peace.

Viewed in the short-term, Nepal's initial conservation efforts have been successful. They have at least demonstrated that determined actions by the Government combined with local and international concern have restored endangered animal populations and depleted habitat in many parts of the country. Furthermore, the social, economic and environmental realities in Nepal offer an ideal venue to promote the ethics of conservation for development. It was precisely for this reason that His Majesty's Government of Nepal subscribed to the World Conservation Strategy (WCS, 1980) at the behest of His Royal Highness Prince Gyanendra. In collaboration with the IUCN, His Majesty's Government has already prepared a prospectus (NNCS, 1983) and is planning an in-depth Nepal National Conservation Strategy (NNCS).

4.2 The King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation

To execute fully the WCS, efforts of the government alone are not enough in an impoverished country like Nepal. Moreover, in a country where financial resources are limited, every sector claims for preferential treatment. These realizations sparked the idea for creating a Conservation Trust. A number of dedicated conservationists from organizations such as the Smithsonian Institution, World Wildlife Fund, IUCN and the International Institute for Environment & Development (IIED) were consulted. By the end of 1982, the seeds finally germinated when the elected legislators enacted the King Mahendra Trust for Nature

Conservation Act. It is named after the late revered monarch of Nepal, without whose far-sightedness, areas like the Royal Chitwan National Park would have been converted into agriculture in the early sixties.

The King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation is an autonomous, non-governmental and non-profit institution established for the purpose of conserving natural resources and to improve human welfare. It is an action-oriented organization that aims at striking a balance between basic human needs and the needs for conservation (Shah, 1984 a). Initially, it will concentrate on raising funds from within and outside Nepal. An unique feature of the Trust is that the Governing Board of Trustees will not only be Nepalis, but also authorities from abroad. It is the only non-government organization that was created by a special and separate act of the Rastriya Panchayat (Parliament). The gracious consent of His Majesty King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Deva to be its Patron and the nomination of His Royal Highness Prince Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah, as the first Chairman, has been a great source of encouragement in attaining its goal.

The goals of the Trust have been broadly defined in the Act (Nepal Gazette, 1983). This includes bringing about attitudinal changes in the masses through conservation education and by implementing programmes that involve participation of the local people (Shah, 1984 a). It will work in close collaboration with His Majesty's Government and foreign aid agencies. The Trust supports field projects that the government or others are unable to fund or execute. They include research and development of

alternative energies besides fuel wood; launching of an effective conservation education and publicity campaign; applied ecological research and captive propagation of endangered species (Rana et al., 1984). Above all, it's target is to implement programmes that support the ethics of conservation for sustainable development as outlined in the World Conservation Strategy.

The King Mahendra Trust is a novel concept for a developing country like Nepal. Its success shall have immense demonstrative value for other Third World nations. As a body adhering to the basic policy of a NGO, some of its characteristics are bound to be unorthodox (Rana et al, 1984). But, the motive behind creation of the Trust is to insure that conservation programmes are pragmatic and in harmony with Nepal's overall development goals.

5. DISCUSSION.

Environmental problems breed from seeds of a diverse nature: population growth, poverty, hunger, greed, apathy, and above all the emphasis on economic development at any cost (Joshi, 1981). The governments of the Third World are faced with a series of conflicting issues. Lack of qualified personnel create contradictory and short-sighted policies. Several officials entrusted with farm forestry want large scale introduction of fast growing exotics whereas others are adamant on the needs to maintain the purity of indigenous plant communities. Technocrats want paper mills and dams upstream from where the tourism trade wants crocodiles and rhinoceros. People want more farm land while ecologists project that nature has reached its threshold.

Farmers want highways while foresters oppose. The poor want jobs while environmentalists are wary of polluting industries.

Leopold (1933) was one of the earlier naturalists to understand the relationship and interdependence between the human environment and wilderness areas in the United States. In Nepal, too, problems conceived 10 years ago as being of a biological nature are now known to be economic and social ones. Delegates to the Third World Conference on National Parks in Bali questioned the future of many protected areas in the developing countries that were created over the last ten years. They are seen as mere islands in a sea of struggling humanity, with no real value to poor rural communities. When hungry peasants are forced to worry about the source of their next meal, principles of environmental conservation have little relevance.

Recently, many of the seasoned leaders of the conservation movement have voiced that conservation and preservation of nature involves processes much more complex than previously understood. It cannot be approached in isolation (Shah 1984 b.) Biologists and naturalists have to recognize that the processes of development is also evolutionary and not revolutionary. Similarly economists and developers must understand the quest for more, will eventually end up with having less.

6. CONCLUSION.

Today, the people of Europe, North America and Japan are preoccupied with the issues of nuclear war and acid rain. The question they ask most frequently is - will we and our children survive another decade? For the poor of Asia, Latin America and Africa, the question is more immediate - will we survive until

tomorrow ?

The conservation issues in the Third World are inextricably linked to social and economic problems. In Nepal, through agencies like the King Mahendra Trust, we seek to tackle these issues head-on, and create an agenda based upon reality rather than rhetoric. For years, field ecologists working in third world countries produced voluminous papers and articles on wildlife. Many of these publications ended with a glib remark that the future survival of the wildlife species in question would be determined by preservation of critical habitat and the betterment of economic conditions of poor villagers who live nearby. While many have paid considerable lip service to this notion, Nepal has given this idea highest priority. Our most pressing conservation problems are not inside protected areas, but in the mountain watersheds and in poor villages along the flood plains of rhino country.

We urge donor agencies and conservationists to recognize this fact and join us in our efforts. Conservation for sustainable development can no longer remain merely a slogan of the West passed off to the Third World nations. Ignorance of this vital relationship in South Asia and elsewhere ensures a future of environmental and economic decay that all nations must seek to avoid.

LITERATURE CITED

- ADB (1982).
Asian Development Bank. Nepal Agriculture Sector Strategy Report
Part II. ADB, Manila.
- Bhattarai, Sushil (1983).
State of Environment in Nepal. Report # 2. HMG/N. Environmental
Impact Project. Kathmandu.
- Bista, D. B (1967).
People of Nepal. HMG/N Dept. of Publicity Kathmandu.
- Earthscan (1984).
Natural Disasters: Acts of God or Acts of Man. Earthscan Press
Briefing # 29. IIED, London.
- Eckholm, E. P. (1976).
Losing Ground. W.W. Norton, New York.
- Fleming, R.L.; Fleming R.L and L.S. Banerjee (1979).
Birds of Nepal. 2nd Ed. Avalok Pub., Kathmandu.
- Hillary, Sir Edmund (1983).
PATA Conference in Kathmandu. Proc. of the Third International PATA
Heritage & Tourism Conservation Conference. PATA Nepal Chapter,
Kathmandu.
- Hinrichsen, D; Lucas, P.H.C; Coburn, B and B.N. Upreti (1983).
Saving Sagarmatha. *Ambio* 12 (34): 203 - 205.
- Joshi, M.D (1981).
Environment of Nepal. HMG/N Dept. of Soil and Watershed
Management, Kathmandu.
- Leopold, A. (1933).
The Conservation Ethic. In Readings in Conservation Ecology.
Ed. C.W. Cox (1969). Appleton Century Crofts, New York.
- Manandhar, P.K (1982).
Introduction to policy, legislation and programmes of community
forestry development project. HMG/UNDP/FAO CFDP, Kathmandu.
- Milton, John P and G.A. Binney (1980).
Ecological planning in the Nepalese Terai. A report resolving
resources conflicts between wildlife and agricultural land use in
Padampur Panchyat. Threshold International Centre for Environ.
Renewal, Washington D.C

BEST
AVAILABLE

- (1983) *Integrating land, water and biodiversity in Nepal*. Royal Nepal Academy of Science and Technology, Kathmandu.
- (1983) *Tourism and conservation of natural heritage: The Nepalese experiences*. Proc. Third International PATA Tourism and Heritage Conservation Conference. PATA Nepal Chapter, Kathmandu.
- (1984) *Ecologie. Dans le parc des tueres d'hommes*. GEO Nouvelle monde la Terre, No. 55 (July 84): 32-39.

Mishra, H.C. and Bhandari, G.P. (1973).
Conservation of Wildlife in Nepal. Kathmandu: Nepal Academy of Science and Technology.

Sharma, H.C. and P. M. Baskry (1986).
Wildlife Conservation in Nepal. Kathmandu: Nepal Academy of Science and Technology.

(1987)
National Conservation Strategy of Nepal. Kathmandu: Nepal Academy of Science and Technology.

(1988)
The National Conservation Strategy of Nepal. Kathmandu: Nepal Academy of Science and Technology.

(1989) *Conservation of Wildlife in Nepal*. Kathmandu: Nepal Academy of Science and Technology.

(1989) *Conservation of Wildlife in Nepal*. Kathmandu: Nepal Academy of Science and Technology.

(1989)
Conservation of Wildlife in Nepal. Kathmandu: Nepal Academy of Science and Technology.

(1989) *Conservation of Wildlife in Nepal*. Kathmandu: Nepal Academy of Science and Technology.

(1989) *Conservation of Wildlife in Nepal*. Kathmandu: Nepal Academy of Science and Technology.

(1989) *Conservation of Wildlife in Nepal*. Kathmandu: Nepal Academy of Science and Technology.

(1989) *Conservation of Wildlife in Nepal*. Kathmandu: Nepal Academy of Science and Technology.

BEST
AVAILABLE

Shrestha, T.B (1983).

On indigenous plants of Nepal. In Heritage Preservation Tourism for Tomorrow. Nepal Heritage Society/PATA Nepal Chapter, Kathmandu.

Upadhyaya, Kumar P. (1981).

Biomass and domestic energy resources. In Proc. Renewable energy resources workshop seminar, Kathmandu, April 1981. RECAST/Sahayogi, Kathmandu.

WCS (1980).

World Conservation Strategy. Living resources conservation for sustainable development. IUCN/UNEP/WWG, Gland, Switzerland.

Wemmer, C.; Simons, R. and H. Mishra (1983).

Case study of a co-operative international conservation programme. The Smithsonian Nepal Tiger Ecology Project. Paper presented at Bombay Natural History Society Centenary Seminar, Bombay, 1983.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This report and Nepal's participation in the 16th General Assembly of the IUCN in Madrid would not have been possible without the gracious support of His Royal Highness Prince Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah. Mark Halle of IUCN provided the guidelines and Kumar Upadhyaya provided most of the documents needed to prepare this paper. Linda Kentro and Raja Ram Bhandari reviewed parts of the draft. Eric Dinerstein spent hours editing the manuscript into its final form. B.N.Upreti, M.D. Joshi and L.L.Rajbhandari, the 3 other Nepal delegates to the IUCN General Assembly, and Narendra R. Pandey and Prabhakar Rana of the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation provided other supports. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) generously provided travel funds for the Nepal delegation and I am grateful to Dennis Brennan and Charlie Hash of USAID/Kathmandu.