

Poverty Reduction and Biodiversity Conservation:

The Complex Role for Intensifying Agriculture

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## Review

The major role of economics is to uplift the quality of life of our people – that is, to eradicate poverty. In this paper, poverty reduction will be discussed, side by side with biodiversity conservation as it is known that some of the aspects of societal improvement detracts biodiversity. The source of this discussion is a study entitled, Poverty Reduction and Biodiversity Conservation: the Complex Role for Intensifying Agriculture, written by John W. Mellor who is the Vice-President of policy consulting firm, Abt Associates, Inc. This paper will discuss major points argued by Mellor to be agreeable or otherwise.

Mellor discussed the balance between the efficacy of using agriculture to reduce poverty and yet its detrimental effects to biodiversity conservation.

Here, the subject of poverty and biodiversity is analyzed and thus will provide the in-depth analysis of the reason of choosing this topic in retrospect of personal career goals and what are to be done now to instill a positive outcome for our society.

## Discussion

### Concern for the World

I am very much concerned of the situation of our world where I believe, prosperity is the cause of goodness to prosper. However, it is evident that the world has nations of different incomes. There are first world countries and on the other hand, the third world who are experiencing extreme poverty. What can be done to help them? This simple question drives me to formulate my goals and plan on how I can channel my education, talents and resources to answer this.

Agriculture is one of the most widely-spread productive activities, using nearly 40% of the earth's land surface, providing sustenance for us all and generating direct employment or livelihoods for the vast majority of rural dwellers worldwide (Mellor, 2003). However, according to WWF's Global Agriculture Network Initiative, expanding the agricultural frontier in countries around the globe is largely responsible for the destruction of nearly 17 million of hectares each year (Mellor, 2003).

It is evident that rich nations have low-biodiversity while those of poor nations have high-biodiversity. Thus we can conclude the economy (or being a poor or a rich country) is inversely proportional to biodiversity – as evidenced in highly industrialized nations. In contrary, the first initiator of economics is labor and the most proximate way of labor in poor countries is agriculture. While using agriculture though, it affects biodiversity.

With this cause and effect scenario between poverty reduction and biodiversity conservation, rich and poor countries must learn the balance.

Mellor believes that governments of poor nations must enact policy changes with philosophical considerations such as high population density and low population density areas. The population density must be a factor of agricultural advancement.

The paper also discussed the role of agriculture in intensified in the population density areas through trade specialization and physical infrastructure and technology. Further, the powerful multiplier and linkages to rural non-farm employment is the key to poverty reduction.

#### Agreements with the Author

I agree though, that the key to reduce poverty is employment. This is particularly true during the Depression Era of the Americas that the key to its rise in the economic cycle is the constructions of roads and infrastructure to rebuild the nation. With this employment, the people earned money which they can allocate to whatever they believe will help them further multiply their income, such as education, etc. This employment during Depression, though, is non-farm and not linked to agriculture.

#### Disagreements with the Author

Mellor discussed the importance of biodiversity conservation. With biodiversity conservation, it puts a constraint on the use of agriculture to reduce poverty. The poor nations, though would need immediate solutions to their economic problems via use of a more proximate means such as the land nearby – agriculture. In reality, the first problem to be solved by a poor nation is its immediate needs such as survival and/or poverty reduction. This is also supported by Abraham Maslow's theory on the hierarchy of needs.

I believe that the way to a higher quality of life is to begin on the basic economic employment generation which is agriculture. This is the only way prior a country can reach industrialization. A poor country must be able to produce first its food and with the use of technology, increase its productivity. Upon increased production, a poor nation can now trade and sell its excess food to other nations. With the trade deficits with other nations, the extra income can be used to support other income-generating investments such as manufacturing, services and further, tourism.

With such, in the beginning of developing agriculture of a poor country, it is the high-income nations' social responsibility to provide their aid to these poor nations in order to reach the balance of economics in the world. These rich nations must not alleviate its own scarce biodiversity nor must it exploit the remaining rich biodiversity of poorer nations. In a poor nation, where millions die of hunger, poverty reduction comes first prior biodiversity conservation. In biodiversity conservation, all other living things such as the plants, flora and fauna are conserved but what about the human specie? They are the highest form of creation, the

stewards of the Earth, the highest creature in the food chain. Poverty must be reduced by the use of agriculture in the small expense of biodiversity conservation. This must be done immediately. When poverty is reduced, the action plan for biodiversity conservation must be taken place immediately to take effect the partnership between man and the earth.

The rich nations must provide aid to poor nations for enlarging biodiversity reserves and protecting high priority conservation areas. Further, the poor nations, once their poverty has been reduced and the quality of life, uplifted, must form community organizations to ensure that biodiversity is preserved.

There must be action programs, especially for rich nations, to preserve biodiversity.

### Positive Changes in Life

It is important to be aware of the economic situations of both rich and poor countries to be able to realize the social responsibilities of both. Upon awareness comes the questions that form in the inquisitive minds. These questions will seek its answers through education and learning how the Earth, or biodiversity, can be the source of income generation- through employment in agriculture. After poverty is reduced, we must work together in conserving our biodiversity.

## Summary

This awareness made me think of the power a rich nation has to make this world better by reducing poverty. Further, it is a point of reckoning that our world is a scarce world, that we have limited resources which we must use efficiently and wisely to lose no more time in helping others reach a higher quality of life. Agriculture is the key, but most importantly, it is the belief that all of us, experiencing either poverty or affluence, has a role to help one another and thus be truly stewards of the Earth.

## References

Macroeconomics for Sustainable Development Program Office. (2003). *Poverty Reduction and Biodiversity Conservation: The Complex Role for Intensifying Agriculture*.

Mellor, John: Author.