

## **Abstract**

This paper presents an attempt to provide a first overview of the collective activities of conservation non-government organisations (NGOs) working in Sub-Saharan Africa, presenting findings on the work of over 280 organisations. The number of NGOs in existence grew in the 1980s and blossomed in the 1990s. Their distribution across the continent is patchy. NGOs work in about 14 percent of the continent's protected areas. Estimated average annual expenditure from 2004 to 2006 was just over US\$200 million. This is at most about 40 percent of the lowest predicted needs, and these predictions are themselves likely to be substantial underestimates of the sums required for effective conservation by conservation NGOs. Spending by country matches some declared conservation priorities well, without taking into account cost of doing conservation in different countries. In our concluding discussion we examine the diversity of the conservation NGO sector. We argue that the sector will probably need to scale up its activities by one order of magnitude to achieve its stated goals. We offer reasons why this might not be such an impossible task. But we also note that the possibility of more funding raises a number of awkward questions. These include: is money being spent effectively now? Does scaling-up mean more money to existing organisations or a whole set of new ones? More fundamentally, many studies have noted that there are numerous problems associated with existing levels and patterns of expenditure. Scaling up NGO activity will not deal with these problems, they could make many worse. We argue that the problems will be best addressed by recognising them explicitly.

**Keywords :** Conservation NGOs (non-governmental organisations), Sub-Saharan Africa, Expenditure

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## **Acknowledgements**

This report would not have been possible without the help and critical support of Neil Burgess, Andrew Balmford, Rosaleen Duffy, George Holmes, Annette Lees, Jim Igoe,

Sian Sullivan, Bill Adams, and the Environment and Development Reading Group at the University of Manchester. Thanks to Karl Hennerman for drawing the maps and to Graham Bowden for the website.

Dan Brockington held an ESRC Research Fellowship on the Social Impacts of Protected Areas (RES-000-27-0174) while working on this project and is grateful to the Ashoka Trust for Ecology and Environment (ATREE), Bangalore, for hosting him for some of it. He also thanks ATREE, the WWF-India, Delhi, the National Center for Biological Sciences, Bangalore, the Nature Conservation Foundation, Mysore and the Department of Zoology at the University of Cambridge, and the Faculty of Life Sciences at the University of Manchester for the opportunity to present some of the findings of this report.

A draft version of this report has been sent out to the vast majority of the NGOs it covers for comment. The comments, criticisms and engagement with it we received in response were wonderful to read. We are most grateful to Maartje van Westerop, Chris Hails, David Banks, Paul Reillo, Ernest Rukangira, Monique Borgerhoff Mulder, Guillermo de los Santos, Michael Keigwin, Mary Dykes, Leela Hazzah, Heather Eves, Bob Marshall-Andrews, Keith Brown, Eli Weiss, Ingrid Wiesel, Ann Turner, Mike Jones, Fred Nelson, Edmund Farmer, David Marsden, Kerry Morrison, John J. Jackson III, Emily Loose, Gaynor Asquith, Digs Pascoe, David Erickson, Thomas Lehmborg, Phil Woodcock, Juan Marx, Markus Borner, Carly Ikuma, Gleb Raygorodetsky, Wolde Tadesse, Ken Wilson, Christof Schenck, Therese Brinkcate, Patrick Chiekwe, Barney Dickson, Myriam Vacher-Vallas, Sonia Schoeman, Bernd de Bruijn, Kent Redford, Alex Hipkiss, Tim Davenport, Helge Denker, Andrew Mortimer, Nick Renshaw, David Thomas, Chris Spreadbury, Leon Bennun, Hazell Thompson. Jo Elliot and John Robinson.

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