

# Local Participation and Ecological Sustainability in the World Bank Policies on Indigenous Peoples

Rodolfo Tello Abanto  
University of Maryland, College Park  
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## Abstract

*Through a review of the current trends in the World Bank policies regarding the participation of indigenous peoples in its funded projects, this paper intends to show that the degree of participation of indigenous peoples has been one of the most important elements influencing not only the probabilities towards the success or failure of the projects during their lifetime, but also the prospects for their ecological sustainability. Moreover, even though some mechanisms regarding the participation of indigenous peoples have been included in the World Bank's policies, ranging from protection to consultation, according to this paper they could be better suited to face the new challenges raised in the practice by reorientating the focus of their current participatory approach, switching from consultation to empowerment.*

## I. Introduction

In the Amazon basin the indigenous peoples are closely attached to the environment, and consequently, the ways local participation are considered in conservation projects in areas occupied by indigenous peoples affect their performance and sustainability. To this respect, the indigenous peoples have been striving to participate in the international dialogue concerning development and conservation projects at different levels, creating a challenge to open a space for them (Davis 1993: 6). The manner the World Bank, one of the most important funding providers for environmental projects, addresses the indigenous peoples' participation is a key factor to understand the contributions of local participation. This paper intends to explore the current trends in the World Bank policies regarding the local participation of indigenous peoples, and by doing so, understand better their implications on the ecological sustainability of the environmental projects in the Amazon basin.

In 1989, the Coordinating Body of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin (COICA) made a call for collaborative action between international environmental and development organizations and the indigenous peoples to protect the Amazon rainforest, combining human rights considerations with practical suggestions for action. This suggestion came as a revelation of an alternative approach that caused a great impact around the world (Chapin 2004: 19). Today, the notion that stakeholder participation is key for ensuring the long-term sustainability and the effectiveness of development projects is a statement widely recognized by leading multilateral institutions like the World Bank (World Bank 2005a).

Some related extracts of the COICA document (1989), state: "We, the Indigenous Peoples, have been an integral part of the Amazon Biosphere for millennia. We have used and cared for the resources of that biosphere with a great deal of respect, because it is our home, and because we know that our survival and that of our future generations depends on it. Our accumulated knowledge about the ecology of our home, our models for living with the peculiarities of the Amazon Biosphere, our reverence and respect for the tropical forest and its other inhabitants, both plant and animal, are the keys to guaranteeing the future of the Amazon Basin, not only for our peoples, but also for all of humanity".

This document also asserts that “the international funders of Amazonian development should educate themselves about the Indigenous People's relationship with their environment, and formulate new concepts of Amazonian development together with new criteria for supporting Amazonian development projects which would be compatible with the Indigenous People's principles of respect and care for the world around them, as well as with their concern for the survival and well-being of their future generations”. It also states that there should be programs for strengthening and communicating the indigenous voice, including systems to allow easy communication with the indigenous communities and organizations, and to promote their participation in local, regional, national, and international forums where decisions are made.

All parties then perceive participation as something necessary. However, there are many possible ways of participation, and *who* participates and *how* participation takes place may be more crucial to project success than any purely quantitative expression of participation, which sometimes can be even addressed as ‘pseudo-participation’ (Uphoff 1991: 478). Therefore, the analysis of the ways the policies of the World Bank have been incorporating local participation mechanisms in its funded projects, specially in areas occupied by indigenous peoples, will provide some insights to understand the limitations of their participatory approaches to the sustainability of environmental projects, specially in the context of the Amazon basin where the indigenous peoples and the environment are closely interrelated.

The most important research questions considered to address this topic are: (1) how do the current policies of the World Bank regarding indigenous peoples address the issue of local participation in its funded projects? (2) What lessons can be extracted from the analysis of the World Bank-funded projects regarding the participation of indigenous peoples in the context of the Amazon basin during the past decade? And (3) what are the current challenges and areas for improvement regarding the local participation of indigenous peoples in development and environmental projects in the Amazon basin?

This paper analyzes three projects involving indigenous peoples from the Amazon regions of Brazil, Ecuador and Peru. A preliminary argument states that in the Amazon the degree of participation of indigenous peoples, understood as the local communities and their organizations, is one of the most important elements that has been influencing not only the probabilities towards the success or failure of the development projects during their lifetime, but also the prospects for their ecological sustainability. However, even though important mechanisms regarding indigenous participation have been included in the past years, ranging from protection to consultation, the paper states that the policies of the World Bank on indigenous peoples could be better suited to face the new challenges imposed by the requirements of the projects in the practice by reorientating the focus of their current participatory approach and incorporating the need to go beyond consultation.

To this respect, the term ecological sustainability basically refers to a working criterion of success, a rough index of management succeeding practices, both human and resource-centred, that applies when the resources in question are used “without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”, according to the statement of the World Commission on Environment and Development (Feeney et al 1990: 5).

The methods of data collection considered for this paper are the review of the literature specialized on the topic, interviews with current and former Bank’s employees related to social issues and indigenous peoples, online publications and Websites with relevant information, and personal communication with different people related to the topic. The data analysis process was based on an interpretive approach, focusing mainly on acquiring a sense of context and meaning regarding the participatory mechanisms in the different information sources analyzed, due to the preliminary stage of the research.

The projects considered were selected using a random sampling criteria, without considering the quality of their outcomes in the practice, but instead focusing in extracting the lessons related to the local participation of indigenous peoples. Later on, however, the quality of the indigenous participation resulted to be closely attached to the outcomes of the projects, as explained in the conclusions.

## **II. Understanding Participation**

Before discussing the main topic, it is important to clarify the meaning of some terms associated with the idea of participation brought up in different recent publications. According to Van Willigen, participation ranges in a continuum that includes information sharing, consultation, collaboration, and empowerment (2002: 71). Participation should involve the intended beneficiaries in the decisionmaking, implementation, and evaluation stages of development projects, as well as share the benefits of these projects (Uphoff 1991: 467). A participatory approach should be considered also as an entry point for changing the ways in which development is done, because it directly addresses the relationships of power that subordinate local people and local knowledge (Cornwall and Pratt 2003: 3).

Participation tends to place a high value on local knowledge and the involvement of local organizations (Van Willigen 2002: 71), setting up a two-sided channel for information sharing. Similarly, the idea of consultation can be understood as a process that enables one party to obtain input regarding interests, concerns, and expectations of another party and to integrate that input into the decision-making process (Stapp and Burney 2002:120). The term collaboration basically refers to situations in which outside experts and members of indigenous communities collaborate by sharing responsibility and authority (Harrison 2001: 36).

A participatory viewpoint requires one to understand the situation within which one operates and the role one plays in it. Thus, participation derives from one's own consciousness, determination and awareness of the system (Van Willigen 2002: 70). This process should culminate in making action plans in which people define what they would like to change and how they would go about it (Cornwall and Pratt 2003: 3). These ideas are closely related to the notion of empowerment, which can be defined as a process whereby individuals or collectives of individuals move from a state of being simply acted upon to one in which they are initiating and directing control over their lives (Van Willigen 2002: 72).

According to Michael Cernea (1991: 465-466), the experience gathered from different projects was used to define five ways of ensuring beneficiaries participation in the projects. First, the degree of participation desired must be made clear at the outset and in a way acceptable to all concerned parties. Second, there should be realistic objectives for participation and allowance must be made for the fact that some stages will be protracted, while others will be shorter. Third, specific provisions for introducing and supporting participation are needed. Fourth, there must be an explicit, adequate financial commitment to popular participation. Goodwill is not enough. Fifth, there must be plans to share responsibilities in all stages of the project cycle.

Considering this, it can be said that "working participatively is arguably more difficult and challenging than working 'normally', largely because to interact well with others, and yet not to lose the plot, requires strong intuitive, lateral thinking and adaptive skills" (Drinkwater 2003: 65). However, the effort is certainly worthwhile. As Chambers (2003: 38) states, those who are 'lowers' in a context can usually do much more and much better than 'uppers' believe, even proving to be better than 'uppers' in certain activities, like facilitating other peer villagers. In addition, when 'lowers' are allowed to utilize their skills in substantive positions, the whole project benefits. Participation then brings its own fulfillment.

Besides this general background, there is also some institutional information about local participation. According to the World Bank Website, the Participation and Civic Engagement Group of the Social

Development Department at the World Bank promotes the participation of people and their organizations to influence institutions, policies and processes for equitable and sustainable development. The Group supports World Bank units, client governments and civil society organizations to incorporate participatory approaches in the design, the implementation, the monitoring and evaluation of World Bank supported operations (World Bank 1995f).

The statement of the Group refers participation as the process through which stakeholders influence and share control over priority setting, policy-making, resource allocations and access to public goods and services. Thus, promoting participation helps build ownership and enhances transparency and accountability, and in doing so enhances effectiveness of development projects and policies (World Bank 2005a). It is also stated that the nature of investment lending has evolved over time, so that the World Bank investment lending projects have increasingly begun focusing on stakeholder involvement and community participation (World Bank 2005g).

This trend towards community participation is addressed as Community Driven Development (CDD), which is an approach that looks for sustainable solutions to development challenges giving control over planning decisions and investment resources to community groups and local governments, operating on the principles of local empowerment, participatory governance, demand-responsiveness, administrative autonomy, greater downward accountability, and enhanced local capacity (World Bank 2005h).

However, there is considerable difference between agency rhetoric and the extent to which development is participatory at the level of the local community (Van Willigen 2002: 71). Therefore, if ‘people’s participation’ is to be more than a trendy slogan, projects must organize participation, identifying and mobilizing the social actors whose participation is sought, and opening practical ways in which they could participate (Cernea 1991: 465). The next sections will provide elements to assess better these statements.

### **III. The World Bank Policies about Indigenous Peoples**

The policies of the World Bank regarding indigenous peoples evolved during the late 1970s and the early 1980s “in response to many projects in developing countries that were planned and implemented with little or no concern for their impacts on indigenous peoples or the delicate forest and mountainous ecologies where many of these people live” (Davis et al 2004: 1). It is also significant that many suggestions formulated by COICA in 1989 for bilateral and multilateral funders (COICA 1989) regarding their attitude towards indigenous peoples have been included in the new policies of the World Bank (World Bank 2005b).

In 1982, the World Bank’s formal policy on indigenous peoples was first adopted as Operational Manual Statement (OMS 2.34), which was mainly oriented to the recognition and protection of indigenous peoples land rights, the provision of basic services to indigenous peoples, the strengthening of government agencies responsible for protecting indigenous lands and providing services to indigenous peoples, and the preparation of special components within the World Bank to address the needs of indigenous peoples (Davis et al 2004: 1). This orientation apparently shows, at least at a preliminary level needing further confirmation, that the basic assumptions prevailing at that time corresponded to a **protectionist** approach.

In 1987, the Bank had begun linking its indigenous peoples policies to its new environmental policies, and soon after its Environmental Assessment Policy was approved (OD 4.01), the first indigenous peoples specialists were hired to work in the World Bank. In 1991, the World Bank approved a new Indigenous Peoples Policy (OD 4.20), using the International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention 169 as a framework, and highlighting the need of ‘informed participation’ of indigenous peoples in

development decisionmaking rather than only on strengthening government indigenous agencies (Davis et al 2004: 1).

In July 2005, the World Bank approved the Operational Policies and Bank Procedures for Indigenous Peoples (OP/BP 4.10). The first draft of the document was developed in a span of several years, evolving from an Approach Paper in 1998 through a first draft in 2001. The process of consultation on the Approach Paper and the first draft involved Indigenous Peoples leaders, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and representatives of governments around the globe. The draft policy documents (Version March, 2001) were circulated in eleven languages. The Bank participated in 32 consultation meetings with external stakeholders from 35 countries, including representatives of the governments, Indigenous Peoples Organizations (IPOs), other CSOs, academia and development institutions. About 1,200 stakeholders participated in these meetings and written input was also received (World Bank 2005l).

Consultations continued in 2003 and input into policy revision was garnered at annual meetings of the United Nations (UN) Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations. In May 2004, representatives of Indigenous Peoples and Bank Legal Department staff held a meeting to discuss the draft policy. The final round of public comments, ended on February 28, 2005. During the public comment period, the Bank received comments from twenty-one entities and individuals (World Bank 2005l). Considering these facts, it can be grossly said that the Bank showed an open attitude towards stakeholders involvement in the design of this new set of policies, even though many of the issues considered were controversial, initiating a debate that apparently has not concluded yet, and towards which the present paper might provide some insights and contribute to a better understanding of the problems which have arisen.

In reference to local participation issues, this new set of policies (OP/BP 4.10) states that “The Bank provides project financing only where free, prior, and informed consultation results in broad community support to the project by the affected Indigenous Peoples” (World Bank 2005b). Considering the multiple implications of the World Bank’s policies regarding their effects on the lives of the indigenous peoples, it is important to take a more careful look at the procedures involved in this process by examining their basic orientations.

These policies state that a project proposed for Bank financing requires: (a) screening by the Bank to identify whether Indigenous Peoples are present in, or have collective attachment to, the project area; (b) a social assessment by the borrower (to evaluate the project's potential positive and adverse effects on the Indigenous Peoples); (c) a process of free, prior, and informed consultation with the affected Indigenous Peoples' communities at each stage of the project, and particularly during project preparation, to fully identify their views and ascertain their broad community support for the project; (d) the preparation of an Indigenous Peoples Plan or an Indigenous Peoples Planning Framework; and (e) disclosure of the Indigenous Peoples Plan or Indigenous Peoples Planning Framework (World Bank 2005b).

According to this new policy, where the projects affect Indigenous Peoples, the borrowers have to engage in free, prior, and informed consultation with them. To ensure such consultation, the borrower must:

- (a) Establish an appropriate gender and intergenerationally inclusive framework that provides opportunities for consultation at each stage of project preparation and implementation among the borrower, the affected Indigenous Peoples' communities, the Indigenous Peoples Organizations (IPOs) if any, and other local civil society organizations (CSOs) identified by the affected Indigenous Peoples' communities.

- (b) Use consultation methods appropriate to the social and cultural values of the affected Indigenous Peoples' communities and their local conditions and, in designing these methods, give special attention to the concerns of Indigenous women, youth, and children and their access to development opportunities and benefits. Such consultation methods (including using indigenous languages, allowing time for consensus building, and selecting appropriate venues) facilitate the articulation by Indigenous Peoples of their views and preferences.
- (c) Provide the affected Indigenous Peoples' communities with all relevant information about the project (including an assessment of potential adverse effects of the project on the affected Indigenous Peoples' communities) in a culturally appropriate manner at each stage of project preparation and implementation.

In deciding whether to proceed with the project, the borrower ascertains, on the basis of the social assessment and the free, prior, and informed consultation, whether the affected Indigenous Peoples' communities provide their broad support to the project. The Bank reviews the process and the outcome of the consultation carried out by the borrower to satisfy itself that the affected Indigenous Peoples' communities have provided their broad support to the project. The Bank pays particular attention to the social assessment and to the record and outcome of the consultation with the affected Indigenous Peoples' communities as a basis for ascertaining whether there is such support. The Bank does not proceed further with project processing if it is unable to ascertain that such support exists (World Bank 2005b).

From the analysis of these contents, it is possible to state that this new set of policies regarding indigenous peoples (OP/BP 4.10) give great importance to the participation of the indigenous peoples involved in the projects. However, it is evident that the focus of participation is centered in **consultation**, usually addressed as a process of "Free, Prior, and Informed Consultation". This requirement is present in the different operational documents related to this policy, like the World Bank Procedures regarding Indigenous Peoples (World Bank 2005b), the guidelines for the Indigenous Peoples Plans - IPP (World Bank 2005d) and Indigenous Peoples Planning Framework (World Bank 2005e), and the operational policies related to social assessment requirements (World Bank 2005c).

A brief comment about the participatory dimension of consultation refers to the need of being aware of the complaints of many practitioners that people's involvement often stops at the analysis stage, as the right to make final decisions is reserved by professionals in developing organizations. This can happen subtly through professional "facipulating" (a combination of facilitating and manipulating) the direction or conclusions of the analysis (Cornwall and Pratt 2003: 4). In addition, those in position of power can often coerce the powerless to be involved in certain activities (Van Willigen 2002: 70).

These considerations address the effectiveness of the consultation process, bringing up the subject that consultation activities are plunged in a process that carries out some intricacies that might jeopardize its participatory spirit, making it necessary to take them into account and watch them carefully in the practice. The analysis of some experiences among indigenous peoples in the Amazon basin presented next will provide a broader sense of the context regarding the challenges faced by the projects in the field, and about the need to go beyond consultation in order to improve their participatory approaches.

#### **IV. Indigenous Participation in the Amazon Basin**

According to Uquillas and Eltz, one of the major lessons over the past decade is the recognition by international development agencies that indigenous peoples need to be provided with enabling conditions, technical skills, and financial resources to participate actively in the planning and implementation of their own development (2004: 14). This statement has important implications in the

orientation of the Bank's policies. In order to understand better this issue, some cases of World Bank-funded projects settled in different countries of the Amazon basin are presented next.

### **The PRODEPINE I Project - Ecuador**

The Indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian Peoples Development Project (PRODEPINE I, 1998-2004), financed by the World Bank and the International Fund for Agricultural Development, was part of an experimental initiative designed to build pro-poor forms of social capital and promote 'ethnodevelopment'. It was the first time Ecuador borrowed resources specifically for investments to benefit poor indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian populations by channeling resources directly through indigenous organizations. PRODEPINE I invested in local capacity building, small-scale demand-driven rural subprojects, land tenure regularization, cultural heritage activities, and institutional strengthening of CODENPE, the official institution dealing with indigenous peoples (Uquillas 2004: 53). Additional information about this project can be found on the World Bank Website (World Bank 2005i).

According to the statements of the Bank's implementation completion report (World Bank 2003: 4), and the observations of an external evaluator (Paul Daughty), this project is considered successful. This is not only because the project had transparent procedures and flexible operations, but also because of the relative autonomy and shared decision-making, which gave indigenous communities and spokespersons involvement in project management (Uquillas 2004: 60). The inclusion of indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian organizations at the local, regional and national level in the identification and implementation of priority demands produced positive economic and social impacts on the target population, as well as an enhanced social capital, which should help sustain these processes in the future (World Bank 2003: 4).

The implementation completion report states that this Project is likely to maintain its achievements relative to its objectives for the following reasons: the Project design reflects the demands of the indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian peoples of Ecuador and responds to their long term development agenda, the Project has been largely appropriated by the beneficiaries who have contributed almost all the local counterpart; and most communities' capacity for self development has increased. Sustainability of subprojects financed under the Project is also likely, due to the high degree of participation by communities in identification, preparation, contracting and implementation, which enhances ownership (World Bank 2003: 12).

The main lessons learned from this project, can be summarized as follows: (1) An ethnic vision of development can be an effective vehicle for promoting local employment and growth; (2) Any successful model of "development with identity" must overcome a traditional basic-needs approach and must facilitate opportunities to generate wealth through productive initiatives based on the culture; (3) An integrated participatory approach, applied at grassroots level, can create in beneficiaries a sense of ownership and responsibility for self development; yet the sustainability of public infrastructure will ultimately depend on the availability of public budget resources to maintain it; (4) A project design which emphasizes decentralized implementation is crucial for successfully dealing with ethnic and cultural diversity of beneficiaries. In such instances, procedures should be tailored to different cultures, types of organizations and settings; (5) Piloting implementation procedures should speed up project implementation and improve results; (6) The concept of social capital and the notion of community, when applied to development issues, should be tempered by the reality of differing income levels and personal interest imperatives; (7) Participation and social capital do not guarantee the absence of discretionality, like when the social mechanisms of reciprocity do not extend easily into the management of micro-enterprises; (8) A project focused on empowerment should monitor in a systematic way how its own inputs may affect the relationships between communities and their higher level organizations, because when the latter handle implementation they should remain accountable to their members; (9)

One of the crucial elements in successful implementation of small investment subprojects, is to ensure that training of beneficiary groups is provided in the right sequence and in a timely manner; (10) Participatory planning can increase the capacity of beneficiaries to define and implement their own vision of development and such plans can provide communities with a key instrument for negotiating priorities with government development agencies and donors; (11) There is a trade-off in community procurement between lump-sum, fixed price contracting and fully-documented subcontracting. The former delivers the investments more simply and effectively, while the latter increases paperwork and field supervision, but provides an incentive to strengthen organizational capacities; (12) The transfer of land in environmentally fragile protected areas may require an accommodating legal framework which confirms the unique access to those lands by indigenous peoples based upon ancestral rights; (13) In order to have a more comprehensive approach to inclusion, attention should be given to gender differential issues during appraisal (World Bank 2003:16-17).

These lessons show that multiple elements should be taken into account when assessing the participation of the local population. For example, when administering scholarship programs, one of the lessons pointed out that that care must always be taken to design checks and balances in the selection process to reduce favoritism and co-opting by elites (World Bank 2003: 16). This situation shows the presence of potential social and political limitations in the process, mainly due to the social practices in which the local people responsible for conducting the implementation of the projects are immersed, which in some ways affects the performance of the projects.

Another important element is that PRODEPINE I was not exempt of internal conflicts, and it is especially relevant the fact that “several of these conflicts arose from a lack of information and inadequate participation, communication, and debate”. There is also a situation where some communities and local stakeholders are still trapped in a welfare approach to development, and the patronizing attitudes of the State and certain local governments, private companies, and NGOs do not help to overcome paternalism. This situation now sets up a challenge to go from paternalism to empowerment (Uquillas 2004: 58).

### **The PPTAL Project - Brazil**

The Pilot Program to Conserve the Brazilian Rainforest is a joint undertaking of the Brazilian government, Brazil’s civil society and the international community that seeks to find ways to conserve the tropical rainforests of Brazil. The Program was setup in 1992 out of concern about the deforestation of Brazil’s humid rain forests in the Amazon and on the Atlantic coast. Its purpose is to demonstrate ways towards conservation and sustainable use of the natural resources of the rain forests. The Program is funded by the G-7 group of countries, the European Union, the Netherlands and Brazil. The World Bank assisted Brazil in coordinating the Program and administering the multi-donor Rain Forest Trust Fund (World Bank 2005j). The Program provides support for an integrated set of projects designed to reduce the rate of deforestation in the rain forests. Together, these projects are designed to strengthen the capacity of the public sector to set and enforce sound environmental policy, improve the management of special protected areas, and increase the knowledge base on conservation and sustainable development in the Amazon rain forests (World Bank 1995: 1).

The Indigenous Lands Project (PPTAL) is one of these projects. The general objective of the project is to improve the conservation of natural resources in indigenous areas and increase the well-being of indigenous people through regularization of indigenous lands in the Legal Amazon, and improved protection of indigenous populations and areas. To achieve these objectives, the project included technical assistance, training, surveying and demarcation services (normally contracted for in the private sector), equipment, vehicles, pilot community-based and applied research sub-projects, and operational costs, including travel, per diem, fuel and supplies, for the following four components: (i) Regularization



of Indigenous Lands; (ii) Surveillance and Protection of Indigenous Areas; (iii) Capacity-Building and Studies; and (iv) Support to Project Management (World Bank 1995: 4).

The Indigenous Lands Project included an Indigenous People's Development Plan as stipulated in World Bank Operational Directive 4.20. The Directive emphasized the importance of informed participation of indigenous people in all phases of the project cycle by identifying local preferences through direct consultation, incorporation of indigenous knowledge into project approaches, and appropriate early use of experienced specialists. According to the assessment, the Indigenous Lands Project fully met these guidelines. Indigenous participation in the design of this project included meetings and preinvestment studies involving indigenous and indigenist organizations (World Bank 1995: 47).

In order to strengthen the participation of indigenous communities, all indigenous organizations in the areas covered under the project was to be recognized and encouraged by FUNAI, the government agency for indigenous affairs, communicating directly with the FUNAI Special Projects Coordination Unit (SPCU), the Executive Secretariat of the Pilot Program, the Pilot Program International Advisory Group (IAG), and an independent evaluation team. Non-governmental organizations that supported indigenous people in the areas covered under this project were also to be recognized and encouraged by FUNAI to function as communication channels, especially for indigenous people without their own organizations or those who live in situations of extreme isolation (World Bank 1995: 47).

The participatory dimensions of the PPTAL project when helping to regularize many indigenous lands in the Amazon region and improve the way regularization is done were mainly undertaken with respect to demarcations, in which communities, indigenous and indigenist organizations participated as partners. Also, participatory approaches were introduced in the component for surveillance and protection of indigenous lands, besides the process of identification and determination of the boundaries of the indigenous lands (Lisansky 2004: 40).

The legal recognition process by the government is an exercise of formal surveying and precise delineation. The indigenous peoples were involved when the lines are drawn on the map, even if this task is somewhat foreign to the way indigenous people define their lands (World Bank 2005j). This situation opens up some doubts about the potential limitations in the practice regarding the indigenous participation, mainly due to the technical nature of the process and the possibilities of achieving an acceptable level of interaction, because even if there is a strong political will to carry out a participatory process, achieving it goes beyond pointing the fact of working on that direction. However, additional information is needed to clarify this point.

Nevertheless, one of the most important contributions of the project in terms of local participation was the empowerment of the indigenous communities about the demarcation of their lands, at least in the short term, expressed in a better understanding of the process of State recognition of their lands, and the facts that they became more vigilant in trying to maintain and protect their territories. However, the long-term implications of the indigenous involvement are not yet known (Lisansky 2004: 40).

In this respect, it is also important to recognize the limitations of the project. As Lisansky explains, “the participatory and empowerment aspects of the PPTAL were not unduly emphasized during project negotiations, in part because of government concerns about the implications of ideas of indigenous sovereignty implicit in the term ‘territorial control’ and also because of the predominant organizational culture of FUNAI [the National Indian Foundation] which traditionally did not see the indigenous peoples as partners but rather as *coitados* (‘poor things’) requiring protection and assistance” (2004: 39).

## **The PIMA Project - Peru**

The Indigenous Management of Protected Areas in the Peruvian Amazon Project (PIMA, 2001–2006) aims to increase the sustainability of biodiversity conservation by involving indigenous communities in the management of new and existing protected areas. The development objective of the project is to increase indigenous peoples participation in benefits from biodiversity conservation in the Peruvian Amazon through communal management of protected areas by indigenous groups. This will be achieved by: (a) establishing areas for communal reserves using participatory methods; (b) developing management plans and management agreements with the indigenous communities and federations managing the communal reserves; (c) building and strengthening institutional organizational and technical capacity to sustainably manage reserves; and (d) investing in pilot community development projects for sustainable use of biodiversity (World Bank 2005k).

During the preparation phase of the project, there was a social assessment and public participation analysis to determine the social conditions of indigenous communities, and to establish institutional, economic and area management perceptions. The consultation process was carried out using field surveys, workshops and field reconnaissance, involving a total of 170 communities in the four natural protected areas involved (World Bank 2001: 69). The Project Appraisal Document of the World Bank regarding this project states that the long-term sustainability of project outcomes is highly probable due to an enabling policy environment that encourages the use of participatory planning in project implementation. Important responsibilities for protected area management and co-management will rest with indigenous communities, who will use traditional community structures of participation by members of the community for surveillance, enforcement and management. (World Bank 2001: 20).

The document also states that this assumption is sustainable as long as the project responds to the desires of indigenous peoples in the Peruvian Amazon Region, the legal framework for protected areas restricts non-sustainable use, and recurrent costs are manageable within Government's fiscal capabilities (World Bank 2001: 20). Also, it prevents that controversy may result from disagreements among indigenous peoples regarding the appropriate balance between conservation and sustainable biodiversity use. The project then will have to work closely with indigenous groups and their representatives to ensure a high level of participation and consensus as management plans are developed and approved (World Bank 2001: 23).

However, the last statement was apparently not taken into account. In the practice, one of the main limitations of this project regarding participatory approaches has been its meager relationship with the main indigenous organizations. In 2003, during the proceedings of a meeting called upon by the Ombudsman Bureau where I was also present, a representative of the Peruvian Confederation of Amazonian Nationalities (CONAP) expressed his disagreement with the ways the Project was conducting its policies towards the management of the natural protected areas without taking into account the local knowledge and the cultural management practices already practiced by the indigenous communities. In 2004, the project was also challenged by the Interethnic Association of the Peruvian Rainforest (AIDSESEP) because of a conflicting criteria related to the category definition of the natural protected areas without properly taking into account the indigenous participation.

Nevertheless, the complaints did not stop there, but rather, they increased. In 2005, AIDSESEP strengthened its claims, asking for a halt in the project and the need of carrying out meetings with representatives of the World Bank and the Peruvian Government (Indymedia 2005). In addition, an indigenous former administrator of one of the natural protected areas accused the Project of excluding the informed participation of the indigenous peoples and manipulating the indigenous participation (Silva 2005). This situation provides some hints about the lack of indigenous participation in the implementation of the project.

A preliminary analysis shows that the underlying issue seems to be that the project was significantly more attached to the perspectives and goals of INRENA, the Peruvian government agency in charge of the natural resources and the environment, than to those of the indigenous communities and their organizations. As a senior social scientist of the World Bank staff recently stated referring to the PIMA case, “a project whose mission is to incorporate the indigenous peoples in the co-management of the natural protected areas that is not able to deal in good terms with the indigenous peoples, doesn’t have a *raison d’être* anymore”.

There is also the fact that the project objectives apparently were not so clear from the beginning. According to H. Helberg, director of the PIMA Project, the main focus of the project was the protection of the environment. However, according to the World Bank documents, the main objective of the Project was “to increase the sustainability of biodiversity conservation by involving indigenous communities in the management of new and existing protected areas” (World Bank 2005k). The lack of clarity about the priorities of the Project could have made it difficult to assess its performance, specially in the complex situation it got involved.

To this respect, it is necessary to point out that the original proposal of the Project included the participation of SETAI, the Technical Secretariat for Indigenous Affairs, which at the beginning of the project was the government agency responsible for indigenous peoples. The role of SETAI in the proposal was a crucial one, since this agency was supposed to strengthen the organizational and technical capacity of the indigenous communities and organizations to manage the reserves (World Bank 1999: 5). However, in 2003 SETAI was dismantled, and CONAPA substituted it as the official agency of the government. The performance of CONAPA during its lifetime was severally questioned by the media and the civil society, because it was not able to fulfill its duties regarding indigenous peoples, besides public claims about corruption inside the organization (Hildebrandt 2004). CONAPA was closed in 2004, and its managerial staff continues to be investigated.

The Peruvian government’s failure to create a permanent institution dedicated to conducting indigenous affairs and overseeing indigenous participation in government-related projects can be seen as a major weakness, which affected substantially the performance of the PIMA project. This acts as a remainder that political stability is highly necessary to open ways for indigenous participation in the development projects, even if the current political practices might show that this path is apparently difficult to be taken soon. As a local representative pointed out, changes are not expected in order for the indigenous representatives to be able to participate democratically in this process (Gonzales, 2005).

The limitations faced by the Project reflect the existence of structural problems in the treatment of the indigenous affairs by the Peruvian government, which show us the presence of considerable barriers for a more participatory approach regarding indigenous peoples. As Helberg states, the Project was required to operate in terms of the Peruvian legal framework related to the indigenous communities and the natural protected areas, plus the policies of INRENA, whose approaches were different from those of the indigenous organizations. Given the local conditions, the Project was basically able to set up the basis for establishing a bridge between the government and the indigenous peoples, so that it could allow the future possibility of a co-management for the natural protected areas (2005: personal communication).

## **V. Improving the Channels for Indigenous Participation**

A multitude of different situations exists underneath each project, which challenges the suitability of the World Bank policies. Local government pressures, unwillingness on granting the proper land rights, institutional paternalism regarding indigenous peoples, lack of skills to negotiate with indigenous organizations, power centralization, lack of a participatory tradition, geographical limitations to reach the

indigenous people, among other multiple factors, limit considerably the reach of the participatory approaches in the practice.

Also, the current demands of indigenous organizations roughly show that, sixteen years after the COICA statement quoted before, the indigenous requirements of participation and inclusion in the decisionmaking process have considerably increased, mainly due to a deeper understanding of the institutional system through which development is done, and due to the recognition of the ways in which some implementing agencies conduct the processes involving the projects without the necessary degree of indigenous participation.

Thus, participation remains a difficult challenge, and the institutional approaches of international development organizations should be continuously improving their methodological and political attitudes towards local participation, carrying out the need for additional research and evaluation of the experiences of the projects in the practice, in order to identify better criteria to understand the current limitations and act upon them, and also to reorientate the general trends of the institutional policies and programs.

To this respect, the World Bank has been incorporating some elements in order to improve its activities related to indigenous peoples. These refer to capacity building by strengthening self-managed sustainable development of indigenous leaders and their organizations, to increase their options for 'ethnodevelopment' through training, creating a learning partnership among indigenous organizations, national governments and international donor agencies in order to share experiences and best practices in the area of indigenous peoples development policies, and financing specific operations in the areas of development which address the needs and include the active participation of indigenous peoples (Davis et al 2004: 15).

In a similar manner, project design should systematically incorporate participatory mechanisms tailored to the specific political demands and the social and cultural contexts of indigenous organizations and communities. In addition, it is stated that multilateral institutions must invest heavily in strengthening the capacity of indigenous organizations and communities to plan their own development initiatives (Davis et al 2004:19).

In the policy arena, the analysis of the World Bank's policies showed that there have been some positive changes since the 1980s, starting from a protectionist approach to a more participatory one in the current policies about indigenous peoples, even if it is in some way limited to consultation procedures. However, the analysis of the performance of the projects in the practice shows us that improved approaches should be considered in order to fulfill the current requirements expected in the development process, addressing the need of a broader perspective. These requirements basically refer to the need of reorienting the current focus of the World Bank policies regarding local participation from consultation towards empowerment.

The notion of empowerment in the practice has been addressed through different approaches. Its constitutive elements have been included in approaches like self-management, 'ethnodevelopment', community-driven development, and other denominations. However, their basic ideas refer mainly to a process whereby communities and organizations move to a state in which they are initiating and directing control over their lives in equal partnership with government and international development agencies, and getting progressively more involved in the decisionmaking process during the different stages of the projects. Some elements of this approach have been already tried out in projects like PRODEPINE I and PPTAL, generating important promissory outcomes (Uquillas 2004: 60; Lisansky 2004: 40).

Nevertheless, pointing out a possible way for improvement is not enough. The path that leads to empowering local populations seems to be even more complicated and demanding than the institutional Bank approach towards indigenous peoples based on consultation procedures. This is because of the traditional government agencies and other non-indigenous perspectives of the stakeholders involved in the projects regarding the indigenous peoples, are basically characterized by paternalism, power centralization, and an extended tradition of top-down approaches, where those in control of a project have been usually unable to share their power when coming to take important decisions.

To better illustrate this point, an important argument to understand the importance of indigenous participation is that the most successful cases of development projects were those where the presence of indigenous organizations, both at the local and multicomunity level, served as a mechanism for representing indigenous peoples in the development process and the management of development initiatives. It is not surprising then that seventy-one percent (71%) of the successful cases of different projects evaluated attributed their success to the involvement of indigenous organizations (Uquillas and Eltz 2004: 14).

## **VI. Conclusions**

The following conclusions constitute only introductory ideas that need to be supported by further evidence in order to be considered as valid. However, even at this preliminary stage of the inquiry, they provide certain points for reflection and some insights to understand the topic, even if the overall contribution is to lay the groundwork for additional research in the areas related to local participation and the need for their improvement.

As Chambers stated, experience shows that when people are consulted, where they participate freely, where their needs and priorities are given primacy in project identification, design, implementation, and monitoring, then economic and social performance are better and development is more sustainable (1991: 515). As a result, a preliminary trend shows that the higher the degree of local participation a project achieves, the better the probabilities of achieving sustainability, like in the case of the PRODEPINE I project. Besides, from the analysis of the PIMA project, it can also be said that the lower the level of indigenous participation, the less the probabilities of achieving ecological sustainability. As long as the degree of local participation remains low, the indigenous peoples will not get fully engaged in the projects. This situation has considerable implications. Some of them are presented next.

The first potential implication is that the requirement of a 'broad support' from the local communities to the projects, as stated by the new policy of the World Bank, is not going to find a fertile ground. On the contrary, it will face important challenges to achieve its goals in the practice. These challenges could lead mainly towards two paths: a) the first would lead to the significant enhancement of the technical support provided from the Bank to the borrowing countries, so that the local practitioners and government agencies may incorporate a participatory approach during all the stages of the projects.

This situation implies a related increase in the resources destined to achieve this goal, including Bank staff members, budgets to field missions, training events, etc.; b) The second path, in case the situation described in the first path does not happen, would lead to a situation when the differences between the policy requirements and the situation in the practice are so huge that only partial fulfillment of the policy is possible. Even if this situation could not be strictly considered as an overseeing attitude, in the practice the main participatory goals of the policies will probably not be ensured, less achieved.

Another possible implication is that the lack of engagement of indigenous peoples will probably conduct to situations in which the indigenous peoples continue being excluded of the project outcomes. Under these circumstances, an additional statement of the new World Bank's policy related to the fact that

“Bank-financed projects are also designed to ensure that the Indigenous Peoples receive social and economic benefits that are culturally appropriate and gender and intergenerationally inclusive” will probably not be fulfilled. The reason is that this goal is very difficult to be achieved unless the indigenous peoples have full participation in the projects.

Therefore, a situation where the indigenous peoples continue to be excluded from the process will probably lead to a situation where the conflicts between indigenous peoples and the project administration agencies remain latent. This exclusion might reflect mainly into the lack of indigenous participation in the different stages of the project cycle other than project preparation, in the decisionmaking process, and also in the outcomes of the projects in terms of management systems. A social context where the conditions are favorable for the emergence of conflicts is definitely a high risk factor when assessing the sustainability of the projects.

The implications of these factors for the ecological sustainability of the projects are also very important, even if many important documents of the World Bank regarding environmental issues do not mention the importance of this inclusion *per se*. That is the case of the Regional Environmental Strategy for Latin America and the Caribbean of the World Bank. When addressing the sub-regional priorities for Amazon countries identified by the Bank’s staff and national workgroups, they do not include as a priority the issue of promoting local participation, except for strengthening of participatory mechanisms for negotiating and solving conflicts (World Bank 2002: 46). In addition, institutional reports regarding the evaluation of the World Bank’s performance when promoting the sustainability of the environment in development (Liebenthal 2002) do not consider local participation as an important factor in their assessment.

However, as described previously in the case of environmental projects in the Amazon basin, local participation is a highly relevant factor in the ability to achieve sustainability. Therefore, this issue should be taken into account with special regard in the process of achieving and assessing the sustainability of the projects, especially in contexts where the local population and the environment are closely interrelated. Some promising steps have been taken by pointing out the way the efforts should be directed, but the process of taking them to the mainstream and carrying them out into the practice remain as challenges still to be dealt with.

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