



**Environmental Concerns  
in Development**  
A Conference Report

## ABOUT THE MOHONK TRUST

The Mohonk Trust was established as a means of strengthening the concerns which the Smiley family has been developing at Mohonk for over a hundred years. The earlier Mohonk activity, and the work of the Trust, have both been based on the conviction that interdependence in its finest sense—man at peace with man, and all men in harmony with their natural environment—is a requisite for survival and a measure of human dignity.

In support of this conviction, and the established traditions of Mohonk, the Trust attempts to further two general purposes. One aim is to preserve a tract of undeveloped land in the Shawangunk Mountains, to be held in perpetual trust and unspoiled, making it available for recreation, education, scientific research and inspiration. The second purpose is to promote international understanding, world order and peace through conferences and seminars and the exchange of ideas in a setting of unique spirit and unusual beauty.

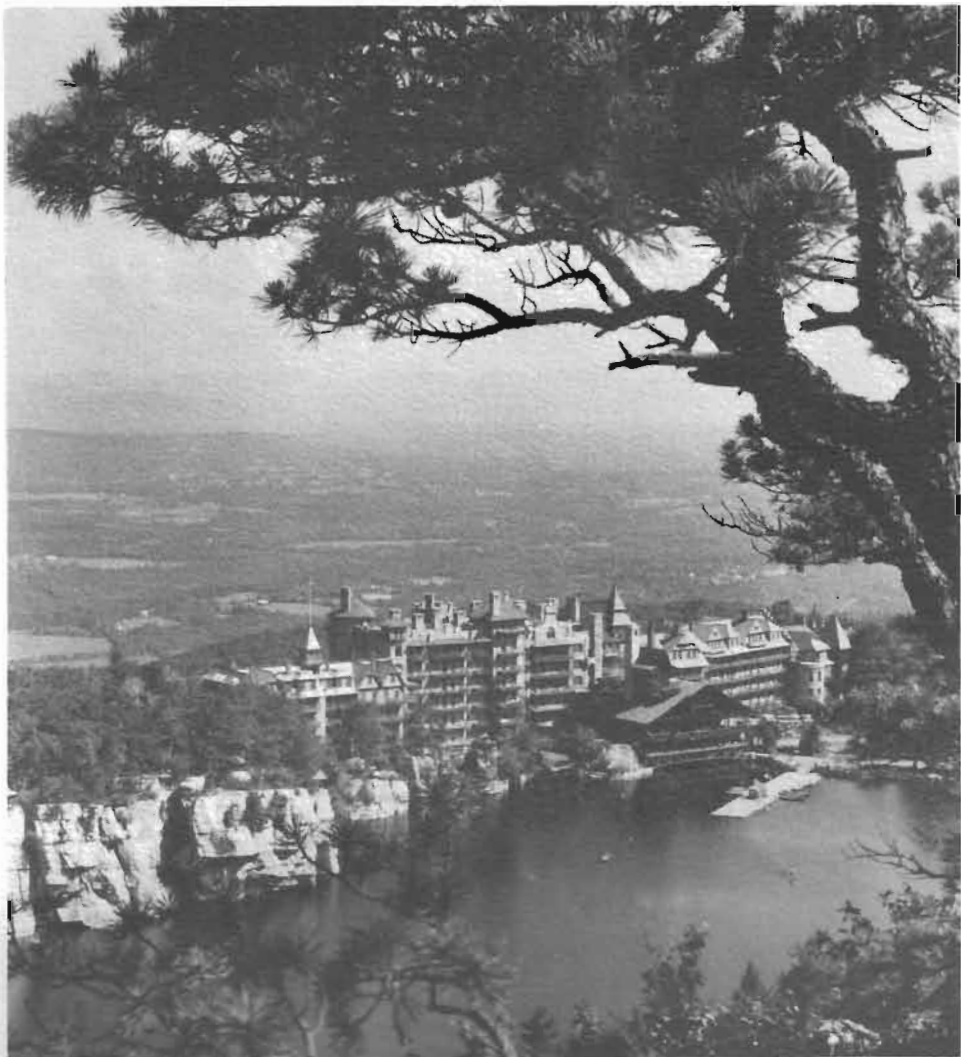
The Trust is a non-profit, charitable and educational organization, founded in 1963.

Cover Design by Susann Foster Brown

Diked water catchments for almond trees in Negev Desert.  
Cuban mechanical cane loaders and ox-cart transport to factory.  
Water testing.



A View of Mohonk Trust Lands



Mohonk Mountain House  
Conference Site

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The Mohonk Trust

## Acknowledgements

The Mohonk Trust is grateful for the cooperation and support of the U.S. Agency for International Development, which partially funded the Conference, and for the participation of AID staff members Albert Printz, Environmental Coordinator; Molly Kux, Office of Science and Technology; John Ulinski, Director, and Stephen Bergen, Senior Development Officer, Office of Private and Voluntary Cooperation.

We are indebted to everyone who participated actively in the program, but special mention must be made of our keynote speaker, Harlan Cleveland; Dor Bahador Bista, visiting anthropologist from Nepal, who in his luncheon address gave us a Third World view of environmental problems in development; and John E. Kinney, who was given the difficult assignment of summarizing and commenting on the Conference process each day.

The case studies prepared by Professors Len Berry and Richard Ford, Co-Directors of the International Development Program at Clark University, provided the substantive material for the workshops. The Trust is particularly grateful to Professors Ford and Berry for their vital contribution in the planning stages and throughout the Conference.

Two background papers, prepared by Leon O. Marion and Jacob Scherr described the broad range of activities of U.S. environmental agencies and U.S. private development organizations. By familiarizing participants with this material in advance, the Conference was able to move directly to the examination of substantive issues. The Trust thanks Messrs. Marion and Scherr for their contributions.

The positive commitment of members of the Steering Committee to the purposes of the Conference was extraordinary. The Trust deeply appreciates the key role played by the Committee in planning and participating in the Conference.

Special thanks are due Philip Quigg for helping to prepare Conference materials for publication.

June 1978

## Foreword

This report is an attempt to synthesize the principal ideas emerging from a three-day Conference on Environmental Concerns in Development held at Mohonk Lake, New Paltz, N.Y. in October 1977. The stated purpose of the Conference was to "initiate a dialogue between private voluntary agencies actively pursuing development projects in the field and private voluntary agencies concerned with environment on an international level..." Although the assumption that environment and development are in necessary conflict has never survived close examination, it is a notion that dies hard.

As had happened with the Steering Committee members in the planning sessions, participants discovered in the course of the Conference that they had much in common and much to learn from each other. However, these discoveries were not easily made. They emerged from the creative tension which developed in plenary sessions, small group workshops, and social interaction at the Conference. A need was acknowledged for close communication and understanding between development planners and environmentalists involved in the Third World. The Conference only began to fulfill this need; the seeds of understanding and trust were established which deserve, or rather demand, continued attention if knowledge of environment and development in Third World countries is to be shared. The door has been opened for future interaction and mutual learning.

Representatives of the United States Agency for International Development also participated in the discussions and on the program. AID has a particular interest because of its obligations to consider the environmental consequences of the development projects it supports. Private organizations holding AID contracts will obviously be affected by this policy—the more so because AID plans to increase the funds made available through United States voluntary agencies working overseas. Thus it was, and remains, in the interest of all participants to explore at length their common interests and to maintain a continuing forum for improved communication.

Documentation for the Conference consisted of two case studies, two background papers and a guide to resource materials. The two case studies—one involving a village with an acute seasonal water shortage, the other a resettlement scheme in Indonesia—were designed to introduce some of the issues and to provoke discussion. The first of the two background papers described the characteristics of the voluntary agencies working overseas, emphasizing their diversity; the second paper set forth the objectives and methods of U.S. environmental organizations with global interests.

In the Appendices of this report will be found further information: an abbreviated version of the Conference Schedule, a summary of the Keynote Address by Harlan Cleveland, a list of the participants and observers, and a bibliography of documents prepared for the Conference.



## ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

### A Report on the Conference

The Conference opened with a keynote speech by Harlan Cleveland which outlined the relation of environmental concerns and development, emphasizing the common objective of basic human needs. (A summary of Mr. Cleveland's speech appears in the Appendix.) The essence of the Conference consisted of a carefully planned blend of plenary sessions and small group discussions based on case studies distributed before the Conference.

A dozen points of substance have been distilled from the Conference papers and those discussions which sum up both the content and spirit of the Conference. These may be variously described as useful considerations, guiding principles, admonitions, revealed wisdom or hard lessons of experience.

#### **1. Costs and Benefits**

Taking into account the environmental implications of development projects will almost always improve the chances for long-term success. The world is replete with great and small disasters arising from development projects where ecological relationships were not understood or were ignored.

#### **2. Meeting Human Needs**

Development projects should enhance the environment in such a way as to facilitate the meeting of basic human needs. Projects resulting in sustainable improvements in human conditions depend upon compatibility between a sound natural environment and continuity in the traditions and mores of the local community. Sometimes trade-offs have to be made between effecting changes in the physical environment and effecting changes in the social environment.

#### **3. Eco-development**

Eco-development is a principle which rests on harmony with natural systems. It depends on the use of renewable energy resources and of local materials, where possible;

respect for traditional cultures; and employment of technologies that are ecologically viable. It serves both environment and development well.

**4. Local Participation**

It is essential that local leaders be involved in decisions affecting their communities. Indeed the success of environmentally sound development will depend critically on the extent of public participation in discussion, planning and implementation of projects. Where cultural tradition permits, a special effort should be made to involve women, who may be more affected by certain decisions than are the men. Environmental guidelines should be flexible; compromise and accommodation are inescapable. Perhaps the most useful service that a voluntary agency can perform is to present options in clearly understandable form, allowing the people to make their own decisions by traditional methods.

**5. The Host Government**

Relations with the host government and knowledge of its policies may be of great importance. The voluntary agency should learn what laws exist in the field of conservation and environmental protection and to what extent they are implemented. Similarly, the development priorities of the host government should be understood. With such knowledge projects can be better planned in harmony with government policies. If the host government—national, provincial or local—shows no awareness or sensitivity to environmental considerations, then the voluntary agency may need to serve an educative function before the project can proceed. In any case, it is well to recognize that decisions are more likely to be influenced by political considerations than by technical feasibility.

**6. Assessing One's Own Capacity**

Before undertaking a development project, the voluntary agency should try to assess its own competence to carry out the project recognizing that the answers are not

simple. Some suggested questions were: Is the project manageable in terms of the human and material resources available? Does the private sector have an appropriate role to play and, if so, how does it relate to larger national and international undertakings? Are the dimensions of the environment/development problem understood and what additional expertise may be needed?

#### **7. Knowledge and Information**

Assessment, planning and decision-making obviously should be based on the most comprehensive information available both within and outside the country. This information should include social, cultural and anthropological aspects as well as science and technology. Every effort should be made to utilize the human resources of the host country and if possible to expand them. Even in the poorest developing countries, there may be scientists and other professionals who can be of help, particularly in bringing to bear knowledge of the local scene. Employing local talent is both an opportunity and an obligation.

#### **8. Training**

The importance of training as an aspect of development is now widely recognized. A project will accomplish little if there is no one to carry it on after the expatriates have departed. The need for environmental awareness adds a further dimension to training, which must extend not only to community leaders and individual technicians but ultimately to the community. The tendency to focus narrowly on a particular problem, such as the construction of a well, may lead to neglect both of those who must maintain it and of the public who must learn to protect it.

#### **9. Disaster Relief**

Natural disasters may bring opportunity as well as tragedy. If used wisely, emergency assistance can foster change and lasting benefit. Disaster may serve to focus attention on the natural environment and on whether human interference contributed to the disaster. If costly

stop-gap efforts can be complemented promptly by an assessment of long-term needs, much time, effort and money can be saved.

**10. Integrated Development**

It is axiomatic that development is a complex process in which an effort in one sector affects other sectors. Water, health, agriculture, nutrition, energy, and land use are all intimately connected. This interrelatedness applies not only within a defined community but raises the question whether a local solution is appropriate to a wider area and what the impact of a local project may be on neighboring villages.

**11. Continuing Assessment**

With the introduction of environmental considerations in development projects, follow-up evaluation becomes even more important. Has the primary goal been accomplished? Is the environmental impact as projected? Were the social and cultural influences anticipated? If the solution adopted is not a success, can the missing element be identified and provided for?

**12. The Common Goal**

One of the principal lessons of the Conference was that the imperatives guiding the development planner are not different from those motivating the environmentalist. If each can embrace a greater part of the other's viewpoint, all will benefit. In adopting programs, there can be no either/or decisions, though there may be occasions when developmental concerns will predominate over the environmental and others when the environmental factors will be dominant.

## Recommendations of the Conference and Follow-up Activity of the Steering Committee

### I. Training and Education

#### AID Training

The commendable Workshops in Techniques of Environmental Investigation, conducted at Clark University for AID personnel, should be open to the staffs of voluntary agencies working in overseas development. In this way both groups, who must work closely together in the field, will be familiar with common environmental policies and procedures.

#### Other Training

Training in environmental concepts should be devised and pursued for the home staff of development agencies and for field personnel as well as for counterpart agencies and government officials in host countries. Organizations that might be encouraged to implement this proposal include the American Council of Voluntary Agencies for Foreign Service and United Nations agencies, especially UNEP. Counterpart training of environmentalists in development concepts is also recommended.

*Follow-up: The Conference Steering Committee is considering the following meetings:*

1. *A three-day conference similar to the one held in October 1977 but with a different set of participants, possibly project-level directors and field personnel where available and representatives of the Third World.*
2. *A three-day conference combining technical training on environmental problems for field personnel. Possibly this conference could be held at some central point in South America or Africa.*
3. *A series of one-day conferences in New York and Washington, possibly:*
  - a. *A reunion of participants from the October 1977*

- Conference to report on subsequent developments.
- b. *Technical sessions by environmentalists on:*
    - 1) *Forests, forest crops and related problems.*
    - 2) *Non-forest crops in arid lands and/or tropical and rain forests.*
    - 3) *Water resources.*
  - c. *Discussions with Third World persons on the problems of implementing environmental planning in their home countries.*
  - d. *Workshops on the preparation of impact statements.*

## **II. Information**

### **Guidelines for Field Personnel**

A pocket field guide should be designed to serve as an environmental checklist. The booklet should cover a broad range of questions on topics such as soils, climate, vegetation, wildlife, forestry practices, local health, local diseases and parasites, cultural stigmas and practices, as well as general sources of local information. It should be written by a small group of ecologists with input from representatives of the development agencies. The booklet will be distributed through development agencies to field personnel.

*Follow-up: With funding from AID, a preliminary draft has already been prepared and, after some revisions, will be sent to all Conference participants for comment.*

### **Resource Guide**

The Resource Guide prepared for the Conference should be expanded and annotated as completely as possible and made available to voluntary development agencies through AID.

*Follow-up: The Resource Guide was slightly revised for use in Workshops in Techniques of Environmental Investigation held at Clark University in February, May and June 1978. The Co-Directors of the International Develop-*

*ment Program at Clark University plan to revise the Guide every year.*

#### **Directory of Human Resources**

A directory of resource people should be compiled on a country-by-country basis listing scientists and other professionals to whom field personnel could turn for advice or information.

#### **Information Referral System**

Existing systems and organizations should be examined to find ways to expand information about environmental matters and technical personnel. The aim would be to provide a referral system for specific answers to specific questions either through informational resources or qualified personnel. Possibly VITA could provide this service.

### **III. Development of New Projects**

Joint projects involving both development and environmental personnel are endorsed.

### **IV. Long-Range Suggestions**

An effort should be organized and supported to bring under one cover all information essential to understanding and resolving environmental issues for use by development agencies as well as colleagues in the host country.

All institutions that fund overseas projects should be encouraged to take environmental problems into account in all their activities. This includes private as well as public funding institutions.

## Appendices

A summary of the Conference Keynote Address by Harlan Cleveland, Director of the Program in International Affairs of the Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies.

### **Relationship of Environmental Concerns to Development**

The specialized enthusiasms represented at the Mohonk Trust Conference are defined in the two pre-conference papers:

-Environmentalists are concerned with "the task of protecting the natural environment and maintaining its productivity for this and future generations."<sup>1</sup>

-Developmentalists are concerned with the "well-being of individuals and especially the poor"<sup>2</sup> and see this as a reflection of the economic well-being of a nation.

Creatively to fuse the environmental emphasis and the development drive, a synoptic view of the world is necessary. Looking at the situation as a whole will facilitate an understanding of these two contrasting but reconcilable movements. Environment and development do not have to be on collision course.

Environment and development were on collision course as long as development meant growth as measured by Gross National Product and environment meant "no" to change. This confrontation became apparent when we started exporting "environment" to the developing nations whose leaders expressed their preferences for development even if it brought pollution in its train.

### **Evolution of an Environmental Ethic**

A strong conservation ethic has been part of the developing American value system. Early versions of the conserver society idea were in the writings of Thoreau for example. Politically, the ethic has been in evidence, for instance, when Congress established the national park system. Much of the farm legislation of the thirties was based on conservationist principles. By 1970 with the passage of the National Environmental Policy Act, the environmental ethic received equal-opportunity status with the growth ethic as a central source of guidelines for national decision making.

With the coming of age of a national environmental policy and a growing determination to bend modern technology to human purposes, a new ecological ethic is emerging. This ethic is based on new perceptions about science and technology and has popularized socially determined limits to 1) the damage people do to their physical environment, 2) the dangers of people-managed processes, 3) damage from the rate at which people use up non-renewable resources, and 4) damage to the renewability of renewable resources. Our acceptance of these limits results from the discoveries of the biologists, the beginnings of understanding of what goes on inside a cell and how the universe is put together—that is, the growing perception that everything is related to



everything else, summed up in the newly-popular word "interdependence."

Admittedly, this ethic of ecology is on a collision course with undifferentiated, technocratic, indiscriminate growth.

#### **Development Movement**

For two decades or more, such a growth ethic was the central organizing principle of our lives as Americans, and the lives of nearly everybody in the world. GNP was hailed as the almighty indicator of success by teachers, businessmen and government officials. "More" was "better." But there are multiple problems in relying on quantitative growth as the measure of success. It is grotesquely indiscriminating, counting that which is unproductive and unusable as quantitatively equal to that which is productive and beneficent. The benefits of growth turned out to be much too unfairly distributed. "Growth" was damaging to the environment and wasteful of resources. The notion of collective growth increasingly gets in the way of individual self-fulfillment. All these problems have tended to compound the difficulties of individual democracies so that being "developed" has come to mean a chronic crisis of government. These warts on the face of the growth ethic resulted in a brief flurry of interest in a new ethic—"no growth." The sobering best seller *The Limits To Growth* symbolized and quantified one part of the case for calling a halt and sensitized a whole generation to the possibility that man and his environment were on a collision course unless we embraced a new ethic.

The interest in no growth was brief because the assumptions on which the catastrophists based their views were disappearing and in some ways the most basic assumption, namely that industrialization would continue to make people hungrier for non-renewable resources, was being undermined by the way post industrial economics was working out. The growing opportunities for reuse of waste and recycling of materials and the more efficient regenerative practices inherent in the emerging bio-conversion and bio-technical industries all argued against the assumptions underlying the no-growth philosophy. In addition, "no growth" overlooked the importance of information as a new kind of resource, available for distribution and reuse many times over.

This description characterizes what's going on in the developed nations of the world because that's where developing nations, with a few exceptions, get their ideas. Our successful efforts to transfer the growth model of our individual societies to developing countries have often had negative results. The poor, for the most part, have remained poor. This poverty has been compounded by environmental degradation accompanying our development efforts: mutilated countrysides, overcropped fields, overgrazed pastures, forests stripped for firewood, polluted air and water, rural and urban slums. Our older models also seemed tarnished by their impact on local economies and cultures.

However, there is a new code word in the last few years in the development field—basic human needs. The needs refer to everyone's right everywhere for food, shelter, clothing, health, education, employment and security. Three related ideas are spreading very fast: 1) people are entitled to a minimum level of life and literacy by virtue of being people, 2) a poverty line should be set by international agreements and institutions (not unilaterally by Congress

or by the U.S. Director of the World Bank), and 3) the meeting of such basic needs should be regarded as a first charge on the world's resources. If the purpose of development is to meet basic human needs, the key question to ask is "Growth for whom?"

One of the initial statements of this philosophy was published in the fall of 1974 in the "Cocoyoc Declaration" on a New International Economic Order:

Our first concern is to redefine the whole purpose of development. This should not be to develop things but to develop man. Human beings have basic needs: food, shelter, clothing, health, education. Any process of growth that does not lead to their fulfillment or even worse disrupts them is a travesty of the idea of development.<sup>3</sup>

Basic human needs have been promoted in a few short years from an aspiration to an entitlement.

#### **Environmental Enhancement**

Because environment includes not only undefiled nature but also enhancement of the technosphere or manmade environment, and because development includes not only economic but also social, purposeful growth to meet human needs—environment and development need not be on collision course. The two concepts can be reconciled by what might be called a doctrine of environmental enhancement to meet human needs. Each development program has to be judged now by whether its effort is or is not well-designed to help meet basic human needs, and whether that is done in a way that not only protects what was there as a natural environment but enhances that environment for the purpose of meeting human needs. If the effect is to make the wasteful more wasteful or the rich richer, that's not development; that's a rip-off to which governments and foundations and voluntary agencies should give a very low priority. By the same token, each environmental assessment of a development program should ask whether development projects will enhance the environment in such a way as to facilitate the meeting of basic human needs.

Basic human needs can, in fact, be met worldwide by a generation of relevant and cooperative efforts to enhance the environment for development. Is there any reason why we shouldn't get on with it and together?

<sup>1</sup>Jacob Scherr, "Environment Protection and Developing Countries: The Role of U.S. Environmental Organizations," Mohonk Trust Conference Document #3 (New Paltz, New York: The Mohonk Trust, October 1977), pp. 7-8.

<sup>2</sup>Leon O. Marion, "Voluntary Agencies and Other Non-Profit Organizations," Mohonk Trust Conference Document #3 (New Paltz, New York: The Mohonk Trust, October 1977), p.6.

<sup>3</sup>United Nations, UNEP/UNCTAD Symposium on "Patterns of Resources Use, Environment and Development Strategies," Cocoyoc Declaration (U.N. mimeographed Document #A/C.2/292, 1 November 1974), p. 4.

## CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

### Sunday October 23

#### EVENING INTRODUCTORY SESSION

### Monday October 24

#### MORNING SESSION

Keynote Address: Relationship of Environmental Concerns to Development  
— Harlan Cleveland

Discussion  
— Leon O. Marion  
— Jacob Scherr

Discussion from the Floor

#### AFTERNOON SESSION

"Water for Gedamu" Case Study for Semi-Arid Environmental Setting  
— Dr. Len Berry and Dr. Richard Ford, Chairpersons

Small Group Discussions of Case Study

Group Summaries

Comments  
— John Kinney

#### EVENING PROGRAM

Films on Development and Environment with Discussion

### Tuesday October 25

#### MORNING SESSION

"Transmigration and Development" Case Study for Tropical Rain Forest  
Environmental Setting  
— Dr. Len Berry and Dr. Richard Ford, Chairpersons

Small Group Discussions of Case Study

Group Summaries

Comments

— John Kinney

**LUNCHEON TALK**

Third World Viewpoint on Environment and Development

— Dor Bahador Bista

**AFTERNOON SESSION**

Factors in Assessment, Project Planning and Evaluation

— Boyd Lowry and Peter Freeman, Chairpersons

Materials and Procedures

— Agnes Pall, Chairperson

1. Resource Guide

— Dr. Richard Ford

2. Perspective from AID

— Molly Kux

3. Critical Needs in Resource Material

— Agnes Pall

**EVENING PROGRAM**

International Folk Singers and Dancers

— Bill and Livia Vanaver

**Wednesday October 26**

**CONCLUDING SESSION**

Summary Comments

— John Kinney

Resolutions and Recommendations of the Conference

— Helen Vukasin, Chairperson

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