

# WWF Position Paper on Poverty and Conservation

## Foreword

[Signed by Chairman of WWF International board]

WWF cannot celebrate the richness of the natural world while ignoring the poverty that exists in many places of high biodiversity. There is both an ethical and a practical imperative for WWF to address poverty issues. WWF recognizes that conserving and managing natural resources is essential in the fight against poverty and that conservation will only be successful in the long term if it addresses the development needs and aspirations of local communities.

The basis of WWF's stance on poverty is a commitment to strive to find equitable solutions for people and the environment and to enable poor communities to achieve tangible benefits from the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources. In many instances, particularly where poverty levels are high and people are heavily dependent on natural resources for their wellbeing, WWF will take a pro-active position, embracing a pro-poor approach to conservation, and making special efforts to enable local people to play a key part in crafting solutions for sustainable development.

In addition WWF recognizes the important poverty-related aspects of our work to influence global policies and processes, as a means of helping to ensure that conservation and development strategies and agreements take account of poverty concerns. Our work to redress unsustainable consumption patterns and our concerted efforts in the fight against climate change also offer new opportunities for tackling poverty.

WWF stands ready to take up the poverty challenge, drawing on our long-standing experience at the field level and developing a strategic approach that integrates our poverty-related work from the local to the global level.

## Background

This statement defines WWF's commitment, roles and responsibilities in tackling poverty to achieve lasting and equitable conservation outcomes. The definition of poverty that has been used in this statement is a broad one, encompassing not only physiological deprivation (non-fulfillment of basic needs, lack of income, ill-health etc.), but also social deprivation and vulnerability (lack of access to natural resources, discrimination, lack of voice and power, gender inequities, etc.). WWF therefore sees its work on poverty as broad-ranging and requiring coordinated action at all levels, from the field to the global policy arena.

WWF's mission is *to stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and build a future in which people live in harmony with nature*. Many people who suffer from poverty are heavily dependent on natural resources and particularly vulnerable to environmental change. Poverty and environmental degradation are moreover increasingly driven by broader structural factors, including poor governance, global markets and inequitable consumption patterns. WWF therefore believes that our conservation work and skills, ranging from local natural resource management to global climate change and trade policy, can make crucial contributions to alleviating poverty and promoting the long-term wellbeing of people.

Many biologically rich and threatened places around the world are also home to some of the world's poorest and most vulnerable people. In these areas, the poor are often the stewards of globally important biodiversity and key actors in sustaining the capacity of these resources to provide critical environmental services. WWF believes that maintaining the richness of these natural environments and sustaining conservation successes can only be achieved through addressing the poverty in these places. From decades of work around the world, WWF has learned that lasting success in conservation and natural resource management is only possible when it is sustained by, and benefits, local people.

WWF recognizes that there are at times trade-offs between conservation objectives and the immediate interests of local, often poor, stakeholders. We believe that taking full account of poverty-environment linkages and the relevant socio-economic dimensions and cultural perspectives is needed to address the urgent challenges facing the earth's natural systems and the people who depend on them.

Where conservation goals are jeopardized by poverty or, conversely, the goals themselves threaten to further marginalize poor people, WWF will adopt pro-poor approaches. Such approaches put people at the centre of the analysis and the forefront of any intervention, seeing them as key to the solution rather than as part of the problem.

## **WWF Principles for Engagement on Poverty and Conservation**

### **WWF recognizes that:**

- There are strong linkages between conservation and poverty and important ways in which equitable conservation can be a means of addressing the causes of poverty.
- Tackling poverty in a meaningful way will require not only working with poor communities at the local level, but also redressing inequitable consumption patterns and influencing global policies and processes.

**WWF commits to:**

1. Seeking to understand the poverty-environment linkages and the socio-cultural and economic context in each area where we work; this would include learning about the relationships between poverty and natural resource use and environmental quality.
2. In our project, programme and policy work, assessing the poverty implications of our activities in order to identify opportunities for positively contributing to poverty reduction as well as to address potential conflicts and trade-offs between conservation and poverty reduction goals. Where trade-offs occur, WWF will support affected local people to ensure that equitable and sustainable solutions are in place.
3. Engaging with resource-dependent communities in our programme planning, implementation and monitoring with the aim of identifying common interests, implementing collaboratively agreed activities, and producing outcomes that benefit both people and the environment. WWF will seek out and respond to the concerns, priorities and values of local people as they relate to natural resources (e.g. issues of access, control, management) and wellbeing.
4. Advancing understanding of linkages between sustainable resource management, environmental quality and equitable development to promote solutions to poverty-environment issues from local to global levels.
5. Promoting solutions to poverty-environment issues from local to global levels, including integrating these issues into its policy advocacy and programmatic efforts – joining together with broader civil society initiatives.
6. Actively seeking out and engaging with partners who can complement WWF's expertise to effectively address poverty-environment issues at all levels.
7. Integrating poverty and equity issues into our work on footprint and consumption.

**Implementation**

The implementation of this policy will build on and make more efficient use of the capacity that currently exists in the WWF network, further strengthening this capacity and consolidating an operational structure. The aim is to mainstream poverty work into WWF projects and programmes from a local to global level.

1. Senior managers in each WWF office and of each major programme will be responsible for ensuring that this policy is implemented. A procedural framework will be developed to ensure consistent implementation across the network,

including coordination mechanisms and clear benchmarks, standards and targets.

2. WWF will be accountable to the policy through transparent monitoring and reporting processes. This will include periodic review of implementation of this policy.
3. WWF will support and strengthen the institutional capacity of its offices to enhance WWF's role as a civil society actor, making use of the considerable capacity that already exists in different parts of the network.
4. WWF will integrate the above principles into its guiding frameworks and policies.
5. WWF will audit its existing programme and portfolio for consistency with these principles and make changes as needed.
6. WWF will integrate the above principles in its programme planning and implementation, and include poverty-relevant indicators in its programme monitoring.