



Taking a Livelihoods, People-Centered Approach to Conservation

ECOSYSTEM DEGRADATION AND LIVELIHOODS: WORKING WITH THE COMMUNITIES MOST AT RISK

Some of the world's poorest people are those whose livelihoods depend directly on nature and on the benefits that nature provides. Activities such as harvesting wild food, fodder for livestock, medicinal plants, fuel wood, and timber are often central to the livelihoods of impoverished families, leaving them highly vulnerable to the effects of ecosystem degradation and biodiversity loss.



For 50 years, WWF has worked to help protect wildlife, preserve habitats and empower people to conserve natural resources while also improving their livelihoods. WWF understands that conservation success requires an integrated approach that addresses the wide range of social, economic and cultural issues affecting how people interact with the environment. WWF's vision is to help build a sustainable balance between people and nature by empowering local communities to make decisions that will improve their livelihoods through responsible management of their natural resources.

WWF SUCCESSES FROM THE FIELD

Cameroon

Community forestry emphasizes the roles of indigenous and local communities in conservation, and the importance of generating local livelihoods for through sustainable forest use. This depends, in turn, on policy changes that enable communities to manage and benefit from forests, so that forests can be recognized as a livelihoods asset that contributes to their continuing welfare. In Cameroon from 2007 to 2010, WWF implemented the Community-based Forest Enterprises Project (CBFE) to support community forest operations in becoming independent and prosperous enterprises. The CBFE project represented a new direction not only for the villagers involved, but also for the country of Cameroon. The national legislation for community forestry, the first such legislation in the central African region, had seen little field implementation when the project was started. Thus, the project, which focused on teaching participating communities sustainable forestry techniques and business management skills, was a test case for implementing community forestry in this region. The project included a strong partnership with Cameroon's Forestry Administration as part of its implementation, including organizing field visits and training officers in community forestry. This partnership enabled WWF to work with the Administration to improve the procedural manual for the establishment and management of community forests and develop a simplified version for use by community groups.

South Pacific

The South Pacific is characterized by diverse marine ecosystems that house many species, including humpback whales, large schools of tuna, saltwater crocodiles, sharks and globally threatened turtles species. This region is also home to a vast diversity of local peoples, many of whom have a long history of using traditional management systems like seasonal bans and temporary no-take areas. WWF's staff in the region, based in Fiji, has been working since 1995 with the governments and people of the Pacific on conservation and natural resource management programs and projects to protect the marine resources of this island region from a host of threats, including destructive fishing, sea level rise, growing populations, coastal development and a general loss of cultural and

traditional connections to the sea. Organizations focused on marine conservation in the region, including WWF, have joined to support a community-based approach known as Locally Managed Marine Areas (LMMA). The approach addresses threats to coastal regions in line with communities' traditional rights and knowledge. It supports coastal communities to revive traditional methods and combine them with modern techniques to implement the most effective and innovative forms of sustainable management.

Namibia

Namibia's Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) program, long-supported by WWF, has been highly successful in demonstrating how conservation can contribute to improved rural livelihoods. The CBNRM program is based on the premise that "conservation successes outside state protected areas depend on the benefits that local people gain from the natural resources being conserved." Through the development of natural resource-based activities and partnerships with the private sector, the program has generated ever-increasing benefits to conservancies, often located in remote areas far removed from traditional economic hubs. Joint-venture tourism involves agreements between national and/or regional private sector companies and each conservancy and provides the largest overall source of benefits to conservancies. During the period 1994-2009, total annual benefits (cash from tourism, hunting, natural plant sales, small enterprise; employment; and in-kind) grew from negligible to US \$5.05 million of which US \$4.16 million went directly to conservancies and their members. The remaining US \$0.89 million was earned by people living outside conservancies but with CBNRM-related enterprises (tourism, campsites, handicrafts, natural plant product sales). CBNRM program activities have also provided significant employment opportunities for conservancy residents. For example, in 2009 alone, 1,669 formal jobs were funded, while approximately 7,115 people benefited from seasonal employment opportunities. The tourism industry accounts for the largest portion of these salaried positions.



Panama

The Emberá-Wounaan people of the Darien rainforest, Panama's largest remaining forest, rely on this rainforest for their economic and cultural survival. Despite the importance of the Darien forest to the livelihoods of more than 400 families living in ten communities (approximately 2,000 individuals), the customary rights of this population were not always recognized, and in the past, timber merchants would often purchase standing trees well below their real value, earning large profit margins by going after the most valuable wood species once abundant in the Darien. This practice continued until formal management plans were established, officially approved and implemented with the assistance of WWF and multiple donors starting in 2004. The formalization of forest management as required by laws and regulations and the commercialization of the harvested wood by means of formal contracts led to major improvements in enforcing the rights the Emberá-Wounaan people have over their customary forests. For example, with support and extensive training in forest management and business practices from WWF, the Emberá-Wounaan secured a 10 year contract in 2010 with Green Life Investment Corporation, a Franco-Panamanian group that will market the wood from these communities' responsibly managed forests to international buyers. Over the 10-year period, from 2010 through 2020, expected revenue for the communities is estimated at US \$2 million, with an additional US \$400,000 in wages for approximately 50 forestry workers. This agreement provides the community with a fair price for timber from a dedicated buyer as well access to the international market for both established commercial species and lesser known varieties. In addition, Green Life Investment is working with these communities to achieve Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) FSC certification.



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