

Conservation and Human Rights Framework

Conservation Initiative on Human Rights

Actions to conserve nature and natural resources are closely related to the rights of people to secure their livelihoods, enjoy healthy and productive environments and live with dignity. The pursuit of conservation goals can contribute positively to the realization of many human rights, and realization of rights can enable more effective conservation outcomes. However, conservation activities may also generate negative impacts if their links with human rights and well-being are not sufficiently understood or addressed.

As conservation organisations, our objective is to maintain and enhance the long-term benefits of nature for all, including future generations. Our work is motivated by belief in the intrinsic value of the diversity of life, recognition of the responsibilities of people to the Earth and to other species that share the Earth with us, and understanding that the well-being of people everywhere is intimately dependent upon ecosystems and the biodiversity that underpins them.

At the same time, we recognize that conservation activities affect the relationships of people to lands and vital resources, and that many people in high-biodiversity areas are among the world's poorest and most vulnerable. As organizations involved in supporting the design and implementation of conservation programmes, we also recognize that we have a responsibility to address and be accountable for the social effects of our work. Furthermore, we believe that there are benefits to articulating clear principles for action and accountability on human rights as they relate to conservation, as a framework and guide for implementation actions, partnerships and shared learning.

Therefore:

WE, the undersigned international conservation organizations reaffirm our commitment to:

1. Respect human rights

Respect internationally proclaimed human rights¹; and make sure that we do not contribute to infringements of human rights while pursuing our mission.

2. Promote human rights within conservation programmes

Support and **promote** the protection and realization of human rights within the scope of our conservation programmes.

3. Protect the vulnerable

Make special efforts to avoid harm to those who are vulnerable to infringements of their rights and to support the protection and fulfilment of their rights within the scope of our conservation programmes.

4. Encourage good governance

Support the improvement of governance systems that can secure the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities in the context of our work on conservation and sustainable natural resource use, including elements such as legal, policy and institutional frameworks, and procedures for equitable participation and accountability.

¹ As contained in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and other applicable international instruments.

To implement these principles, according to individual governance structures and operating partnership models, the undersigned organizations commit to work to achieve the following:

5. Further develop these principles and implementation measures in consultation with our constituencies

Discuss and develop the principles and implementation measures with our constituencies and with support as needed from individuals and networks that have relevant experience and expertise.

6. Establish relevant institutional policies

Establish our own institutional policies to ensure that these principles are fulfilled; communicate our policies internally and externally and periodically review and revise them as needed.

7. Ensure implementation capacity is in place

Determine the competencies needed within our organizations to implement these policies and principles and ensure that the necessary capacity is in place.

8. Address conservation-human rights links in the design, implementation and monitoring of our programmes, including by:

- **Undertaking impact assessment and consultation in advance of conservation interventions:** Conduct prior evaluation of the scope of proposed conservation policies, programmes, projects and activities, so that the links between human rights and conservation are identified, and ensure that potentially affected persons are informed, properly consulted, and able to participate in decision making about relevant interventions. This includes respect for the right of indigenous peoples and local communities with customary rights to lands and resources to free, prior, informed consent to interventions directly affecting their lands, territories or resources.
- **Reflecting local concerns in design and implementation:** Ensure that the design and implementation of conservation interventions reflect such prior evaluation and the participatory decisions that were made.
- **Monitoring and adapting:** Monitor and evaluate interventions and their implications for human rights, as a basis for ongoing improvement.

9. Establish accountability measures

Establish processes to monitor and evaluate compliance with our policies and principles on a regular basis, and effective, accessible and, transparent procedures to receive and resolve complaints.

10. Apply the policies and principles in agreements with subcontracting organizations and implementing partners

Include appropriate provisions on compliance with these policies and principles in subcontracts, partnership agreements and capacity-building activities with other implementing organizations.

