



CONSERVATION
FOR POVERTY
REDUCTION
LINKING
LANDSCAPES,
PEOPLE AND
POWER
An IUCN Initiative
in Support of the
Millennium
Development
Goals

**CONSERVATION FOR POVERTY
REDUCTION**

IUCN – The World Conservation Union launches an ambitious Conservation for Poverty Reduction Initiative to secure and improve rural livelihoods through the improved management of ecosystems across the developing world.

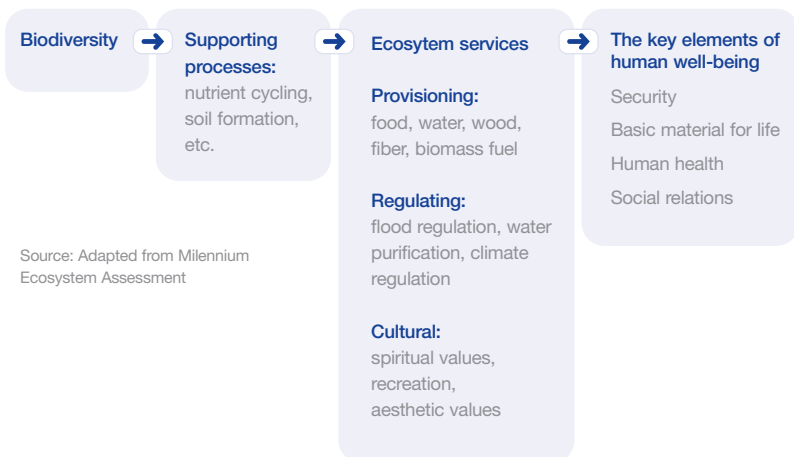
The Initiative puts into practice the growing experience with and understanding of the ways in which better management of ecosystems can increase livelihood security, improve human health, and reduce poverty. It develops knowledge, empowers communities, and promotes policy changes to provide rural communities with the natural resource base on which to build a healthy future.

A wide range of partners in developing countries is being mobilized to identify and promote positive linkages between conservation and poverty reduction.

Beneficiaries will be rural communities in Asia, Latin America, and especially Africa, who will directly benefit from improved management of ecosystems and natural resources, thus becoming less vulnerable to poverty and natural disasters.

MANAGING ECOSYSTEMS FOR SECURE LIVELIHOODS

The report of the UN Secretary General *In Larger Freedom* says, “[A] serious concern is loss of biodiversity, which is occurring at an unprecedented rate within and across countries. Worrying in its own right, this trend also severely undermines health, livelihoods, food production and clean water, and increases the vulnerability of populations to natural disasters and climate change.”



Healthy ecosystems provide a diverse range of plant and animal species that are used as sources of food, particularly by the poor. Wetland ecosystems perform key hydrological and biological functions that are critical to water supply and human health, like water filtration, flood control and groundwater recharge. Forests stabilize soils, provide a range of timber and non-timber products and play a vital role in climate regulation. Coastal and marine ecosystems provide food and income from fisheries, and serve as buffers against extreme weather events.

It is clear that the array of goods and services that ecosystems provide are a valuable resource for the poor. Once they are lost, communities lose their livelihood security and are at increased risk of falling into poverty. On the other hand, effective and improved management of ecosystems secures livelihoods and increases options for growth and development for the poor.

The Millennium Development Goals recognize that environmental health is a key component of development. They also make clear that conservation efforts need to focus on the needs of the poor. The conservation of biological resources must be aligned with the needs of the poor people who live directly with them.

The Initiative makes poverty reduction a central objective to conservation efforts around the world.

SECURING ACCESS AND RIGHTS

Around 70% of the world’s poorest people live in rural areas, and depend heavily on natural resources for food, fodder, fuel and medicines. Yet they often do not have security of tenure and access to the lands and resources that they depend on.

Any effort to address poverty therefore requires addressing the rights of the poor, promoting adoption and implementation of policies that improve gender and social equity, and encouraging better governance of natural resources.

The Initiative empowers local communities and mobilizes institutions to improve the equitable sharing of natural resources.



ADDRESSING PLANNING AND CHANGE

Improved management and more equitable sharing of conservation benefits are but part of the solution. There is a wide array of issues that relate to the role of natural resources in sustainable livelihoods.

The evidence on the role of ecosystem goods and services in securing livelihoods is substantial, but better understanding of the links between conservation and poverty is still needed. The Initiative will generate and share knowledge and experiences worldwide at project, regional and national level, and apply it to poverty reduction strategies and other national economic planning processes.

Conservation for poverty reduction will also require a change in the economic frameworks that impact livelihoods and natural resource use. Markets must work for the poor and the environment at the same time. The Initiative will work with governments and business to implement appropriate policies and actions on market and trade issues, and will engage with the private sector to create new opportunities and improve incentives for conservation actions that tangibly benefit the poor.

Natural disasters and extreme weather events prompted or amplified by climate change create insecurity, especially for poor people, and there is an urgent need to find management and planning tools that reduce their vulnerability. The Initiative will work with local communities and partners in the humanitarian, development and environmental communities to test and implement such measures, and recommend relevant policy changes to national and international fora.

DEVELOPING THE INITIATIVE

To date the Initiative includes well over 30 projects and activities with poverty reduction focus, implemented in cooperation with a vast range of members and partners in around thirty countries of Asia, Latin America and Africa, with an investment amounting to over US\$ 25 million. It is a growing body of projects and activities under one global strategic umbrella. IUCN is developing new partnerships to start new projects based on ongoing discussions and needs assessments. As IUCN expands its work and scope, it is ready to welcome new partners to work together. In the end, IUCN aims for a total investment of USD 300 million worldwide over ten years to make a difference to the livelihoods of the rural poor.

RESULTS

The results of the Initiative will include:

- Improved livelihood security and reduced poverty of local communities in project areas in at least thirty countries.
- Practical tools and approaches to build assets for the poor in an environmentally sustainable manner, and which will be useful to governments, UN agencies, indigenous peoples, rural communities, non-governmental organizations and business.
- Improved partnerships with organizations working in the health, humanitarian and development fields to more effectively address poverty-conservation linkages.
- Strengthened alliances with indigenous and local community organizations active in poverty-affected areas.
- Environmental concerns better integrated in PRSPs and other national and global level instruments.

WHY THE WORLD CONSERVATION UNION?

IUCN – The World Conservation Union brings unique capacities to coordinate this ambitious Initiative and ensure its successful implementation:

- It has demonstrated success in improving local practice and policy for sustainable development through hundreds of projects around the world.
- It has the proven ability to mobilize its members – 82 governments and over 800 non-governmental organizations, as well as hundreds of practitioners and scientists – for a common cause.
- It has the unique capacity to engage diverse sectors, including the development and private sector, for multi-stakeholder platforms for collaborative action.
- It has close and constructive relationships with many indigenous and community organizations and networks working with the poor, at local, national, regional and global levels.
- It has the infrastructure through regional, national and project offices in 62 countries to coordinate national and cross-regional activities.
- It has excellent interactions with UN agencies such as UNDP and UNEP, with the World Bank and Regional Development Banks, with all bilateral development cooperation organizations, with the executive offices of international environmental agreements, and with many other international players. This Initiative will strengthen cooperation and will be supportive of their efforts on poverty reduction and environmental improvement.

THE INITIATIVE IN NUMBERS

- a USD 300 million Initiative
- improving water management in twelve river basins
- improving forest management in twenty countries
- linking local action to national to international policy
- with 100 partner organizations
- targeting livelihood security for 50 million people



1 Reducing poverty among indigenous peoples

Indigenous peoples have a much higher risk of being poor than non-indigenous populations. Their dependence on natural resources makes them extremely vulnerable to changes in the availability of and access to these resources. The Initiative will work with indigenous communities and organizations in ten key countries to improve their living conditions, based on their cultural values and the conservation of their natural resources.

2 Saving Medicinal Plants

Medicinal plants make up eighty per cent of medicines in rural communities. They provide health benefits and substantial income. The Initiative contains activities to conserve the growing number of endangered plants that are used as medicines in ten countries, and improve the sustainable harvesting and marketing of these products.

3 Sharing water

Water is fundamental to life. Managing water to ensure the continued provision of ecosystem services to the poor is essential to livelihood security and poverty reduction. The Initiative works in 12 river basins, together with basin organizations, governmental agencies, communities and non-governmental organizations to improve water management decisions so they incorporate social and environmental objectives.

4 Greening the landscape

Within a landscape, we can find the right planning mix of areas for development and areas for conservation to ensure sustainability. The Initiative is undertaking major work to improve the management of forests in twenty countries so they provide livelihood options to the poor – in terms of food, fuels and security – as well as secure industry and large-scale agriculture.

5 Restoring lost profits

In many parts of the world, the degradation and overuse of natural resources has already driven communities into poverty. Restoration is a high priority to restore their livelihoods. The Initiative is working with local communities on ten restoration projects in drylands, wetlands, forests and protected areas.

6 Benefits beyond boundaries

Protected areas hold unique biodiversity, but their establishment should not create or aggravate poverty, and their benefits need to be shared with inhabiting and neighbouring communities. The Initiative will ensure that at least twenty per cent of protected areas of the world will make positive contributions to local poverty reduction.



MORE INFORMATION

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