



Engaging the Stewards of Nature

Partnering with Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities

From the San of Namibia to artisanal fishing communities in the Gulf of California's Kino Bay, indigenous peoples and local communities are among the Earth's most important stewards and are critical to WWF's mission to build a future where human needs are met in harmony with nature. Around the world, large areas of global significance for biodiversity conservation are owned and managed by local and indigenous peoples who have a close relationship with their natural environment. In addition to ancestral ties, they also depend on forests, fisheries and wildlife resources for their livelihoods and cultures.

During almost five decades of conservation work, WWF has collaborated with indigenous peoples and local communities on activities such as conservation area management, sustainable use of natural resources, and policy advocacy on issues of shared concern.

These partnerships depend on an understanding of the links between biological and cultural diversity, appreciation of people's contributions to biodiversity conservation over time, and recognition of their rights and interests.

Lasting conservation must be established in close collaboration with these communities and be based on their local institutions and knowledge. WWF is committed to working with them to improve human lives and conserve biodiversity.



Threats

Indigenous peoples and local communities have made enormous contributions to the maintenance of some of the Earth's most fragile ecosystems. Today they are challenged by many of the same forces that threaten nature, such as pressures from extractive industries and infrastructure development. Climate change and other global trends are likely to accelerate the loss of the natural habitats and resources upon which people depend.



A Principled Approach

WWF was the first international conservation organization to formally adopt a policy recognizing the rights of indigenous peoples. Developed in 1996 and updated in 2008, *WWF's Statement of Principles on Indigenous Peoples and Conservation* reflects our dedication to respecting indigenous peoples' human and development rights and recognizes the importance of conserving their cultures.

WWF also worked with the IUCN in 2000 to develop *Principles and Guidelines on Indigenous and Traditional Peoples and Protected Areas*.

In 2007, WWF completed a review and recommendations for *Strengthening Partnerships with Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities*. It includes a reaffirmation of our *Statement of Principles* and identification of actions to strengthen its implementation and monitoring. WWF published updated guidelines for implementing the *Statement of Principles* in 2008.

Photo Credits. Top to bottom, left to right: Cashinahua girl - Alto Purus Reserved Zone, Peru - © André Bärtschi / WWF-Canon; Mahafaly prince, Madagascar - © Richard Hamilton / WWF-Canon; Tribal grandmother, from the Ta Oi ethnic minority group, Central Vietnam - © Elizabeth Kernf / WWF-Canon; Bahla Kino sunset, Gulf of California, Mexico - © Edward Parker / WWF-Canon.

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Partnerships in Action

Eastern Himalayas

On September 22, 2006, Nepal's government turned over conservation of the wildlife and habitats surrounding Kangchenjunga – the world's third highest mountain – to a coalition of local communities. WWF was instrumental in the decision and is supporting the Kangchenjunga Conservation Area Management Council as part of its Sacred Himalayan Landscape program.

The historic step came at a critical time in the history of Nepal, and showed the government's commitment to working more closely with local communities, especially regarding natural resources management and the equitable sharing of benefits.

The Kangchenjunga Conservation Area is known for its rich biodiversity, spectacular scenery and vibrant cultural heritage. WWF has been active in the region since 1998 and continues working with communities to conserve globally threatened wildlife – such as the snow leopard – while supporting locally defined needs for health services, education and income-generating activities.

Because women play a significant role in managing natural resources, WWF also helped establish Mothers Groups to offer their members skills development and training for income generation. Each Mothers Group also has scholarship funds they place in interest-bearing accounts. The interest earned is then used to fund stipends for female students who might otherwise not be able to attend school.

Since the project's inception, pressure on local forests has decreased while local support of conservation has improved. In addition, wildlife poaching and the illegal harvesting of valuable medicinal plants have decreased. Communities have also formed committees to monitor wildlife movement and illegal activities.

Bering Sea and Kamchatka

WWF is helping Alaska Native tribes protect the wild salmon stocks that are so integral to their culture and livelihoods. Currently, the wild Chinook and chum salmon destined for Western Alaska are intercepted as bycatch in the Bering Sea pollock fishery. Because salmon bycatch has increased substantially over the last decade, Alaska Native tribes in Western Alaska have forgone harvests in recent years, causing significant health and economic hardships. WWF assisted in crafting and promoting a proposal that is currently before the North Pacific Fishery Management Council – the federal body charged with managing fisheries in the Bering Sea and Arctic – that would cap the amount of salmon the pollock fishery may take as bycatch and ensure adequate salmon returns to Western Alaska Native communities.

WWF is also helping to develop an Arctic Fishery Management Plan that would proactively close Arctic waters to industrial commercial fishing before the loss of sea ice allows entry of commercial fishing boats into the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas for the first time. The preemptive closure of Arctic waters to commercial fishing would be a conservation milestone that is unprecedented in U.S. fisheries. This action supports the interests of the Alaska Native tribes who identify industrial commercial fisheries as a threat to their traditional way of life that affects the resiliency of an Arctic ecosystem already stressed by climate change. If the plan is approved, it would also allow baseline scientific studies that have been impossible in areas where commercial fishing has already occurred.



Partnerships in Action

The Amazon

Extremely rich in biological and cultural diversity, the Abanico del Pastaza Wetlands Complex in northeastern Peru is a priority area for conservation in the Amazon. Since 2003, WWF has supported efforts of Candoshi communities in Lake Rimachi, and of Achuar communities in the Corrientes River area, to manage threats to the area and protect themselves from the negative effects of overfishing and commercial oil development.

Overfishing in Lake Rimachi, the largest lake in the Peruvian Amazon, has led to a reduction in many fish species, negatively impacting the Candoshi people who depend mainly on fisheries for their livelihoods. WWF has provided technical support to the Candoshi to develop an indigenous fisheries management plan, a first in Peru. We are also providing support for improved market access and agreements.

In the Corrientes River, decades of petroleum production polluted drinking water and negatively affected the environment and health of Achuar communities. In partnership with local organizations, WWF has supported indigenous groups in water monitoring and capacity building, so that they can better defend their environmental rights as they are affected by oil companies. WWF also helped the local indigenous association – FECONACO – successfully advocate for improved environmental standards, preventing further damage from petroleum extraction.

Namibia

Namibia's rich wildlife, beautiful scenery and abundant natural resources are the foundation of a sustainable future for its people. But the legacy of colonialism left behind vast economic disparities and overexploited resources. Prior to Namibia's independence in 1990, Namibians were suffering from high unemployment. Wildlife populations in communal areas had plummeted because of a prolonged military occupation, extensive poaching and a severe drought.

In the mid 1980s this situation began to reverse as a Namibian organization – Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation (IRDNC) – introduced an innovative program to inspire community stewardship of wildlife. In 1996 more progress was made when the government passed a law that promotes publicly managed conservancies run by local communities. This legislation created a more favorable environment by recognizing the rights to natural resources of communities in conservancies, including rights of ownership over huntable game and rights to revenue from the sale of game, game products and tourism. This policy change, combined with long-term support from WWF through the LIFE Project, has assisted IRDNC and other Namibian partners' efforts to grow into Namibia's national communal conservancy program.

The WWF-supported Living in a Finite Environment (LIFE) Project, in partnership with Namibian civil organizations and the country's Ministry of Environment and Tourism, has helped to make conservation a national priority – benefitting both Namibian communities and their wildlife. Since 1998, the conservancy movement has engaged more than 220,000 community members with the creation of 50 communal conservancies covering more than 29 million acres of prime wildlife habitat. These conservancies generate more than \$5 million in annual income for the communities through joint ecotourism and cultural tourism ventures, handicraft industries, hunting concessions and the sale of live animals for restocking other conservancies.

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Conserving Together

WWF has a long tradition of working with local groups to achieve conservation goals. By leveraging the strengths of our collaborations, we are able to accomplish our greatest successes.

Borneo and Sumatra: In Borneo, Indonesia, efforts by WWF and FoMMA – the alliance of indigenous peoples of Kayan Mentarang National Park – resulted in government recognition of Kayan Mentarang as the first national park in Indonesia to be collaboratively managed. WWF is now partnering with FoMMA and park officials to implement a comanagement plan that incorporates indigenous knowledge and resource use and community livelihood needs.

Southern Chile: After a 17-year struggle, in 2007 the indigenous Pehuenche community of Quinquén was formally granted the land rights to 22,000 acres of araucaria forest. WWF and partner organizations worked closely with the Pehuenche to successfully navigate the lengthy land titling and land planning process.

Coastal East Africa: In 2002 WWF helped establish Quirimbas National Park in northern Mozambique. Now WWF is working with Community Fishing Councils (CCPs) to implement a comanagement plan for the park. CCPs protect marine sanctuaries and control access to fishing zones, allowing locals to fish sustainably while keeping out industrial trawlers.



Empowering People

In addition to our work in specific places, WWF seeks to facilitate learning about innovative solutions and to build broader capacity for applying these approaches through partnerships at the local, national and international levels. Areas of work include the following:

Land Tenure and Resource Rights

Recognizing people's rights to their traditional lands, territories and resources is critical to their long-term environmental stewardship – and essential for indigenous cultural identities. Within WWF, a growing number of programs are engaged in partnerships with indigenous and local communities to increase security of community land tenure and resource rights.

Governance

Environmental governance examines how decisions about environmental management are made, and who makes them. Exclusion from these decisions threatens the livelihoods and cultures of local people. WWF is working to ensure that we are accountable to local partners and that collaboration with them is based on shared decision making.

Livelihoods

Many indigenous peoples and local communities depend heavily on nature for their livelihoods. WWF supports community development of sustainable nature-based enterprises such as community forestry, fisheries and ecotourism, and newer approaches such as payments for environmental services.



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