

Strengthening WWF Partnerships with Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities

Report on implementation of WWF review commitments

March 2011

In 2007, WWF concluded a review of its policies and programs as they relate to indigenous peoples and local communities. The *Strengthening WWF Partnerships with Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities* review responded to commitments from WWF management, published in WorldWatch magazine in 2005, to:

- Openly re-evaluate WWF policy on indigenous peoples and strengthen its enforcement and monitoring mechanisms
- Examine WWF's large-scale conservation programs as they relate to indigenous and local communities to expand support for effective partnership approaches as well as implement changes where necessary
- Listen more closely to the voices of indigenous peoples and ensure that their concerns are addressed in the design and implementation of WWF field projects.

The review resulted in ***five main recommendations*** on ways to strengthen partnerships with indigenous peoples and local communities and ensure high standards for that work throughout the WWF conservation program. While recognizing that much of WWF's engagement with indigenous peoples and local communities takes place at field site and national levels, the recommendations were focused on WWF Network-level actions that would better promote and support this engagement within projects and country offices. The five recommendations were to:

1. Commit resources necessary to increase WWF's capacity to raise awareness and to consistently implement and monitor its indigenous peoples' policy across the WWF Network.
2. Develop WWF policy to address key elements of socially-responsible conservation as they relate to local communities.
3. Integrate community-based and socially-responsible approaches more fully into the WWF conservation program.
4. Expand institutional support for partnership approaches including through increased technical capacity, knowledge-sharing, communications and fundraising.
5. Increase communication and strengthen partnerships with indigenous peoples' organizations and related civil society groups at country, regional and international levels.

The recommendations were fully endorsed by WWF management in a Management Response published in the review. The following summarizes WWF Network-level actions taken to implement each of the five recommendations as of December 2010, and notes priorities for ongoing work.

- 1. Commit resources necessary to increase WWF's capacity to raise awareness and to consistently implement and monitor its indigenous peoples' policy across the WWF Network.***

This recommendation addressed a finding in the review that, while WWF's indigenous peoples' policy provided good guiding principles, there was a need for dedicated capacity, systems and resources to actively promote and support its implementation and monitoring, including through an internal system for responding to and resolving complaints.

Actions taken to date:

- To ensure indigenous issues receive ongoing priority attention, WWF in 2007 created a position of Network indigenous policy focal point. The Network focal point provides leadership and support on indigenous issues, coordinating development of relevant positions, building institutional capacity and systems to support WWF indigenous peoples' policy implementation and monitoring, and engaging with indigenous organizations and others on global issues and development of program partnerships.
- To ensure field capacity for indigenous peoples' policy implementation and monitoring, WWF also established starting in 2007 a network of country indigenous policy focal points. This network expands and links together staff members working on indigenous issues in WWF National Organizations and Program Offices. Members of this country-level network held a workshop in July 2008 to define roles and responsibilities, share experience and lessons, and communicate with WWF senior management on actions needed to promote increased mainstreaming of WWF's indigenous policy principles.

As a result of this work, staff members in key WWF offices are building awareness, supporting integration of WWF's indigenous policy principles in field programs and projects, and building partnerships with indigenous organizations and support groups. Small grants were provided by the WWF Network to focal points to support these activities in 2008 and 2009. Examples of country-level activities are summarized in the box below.

Country activities

- **Australia:** Audit conducted of WWF-Australia's indigenous engagement, leading to development of an Australia-specific indigenous policy statement and creation of a high-level Indigenous Policy Officer position in 2008. Workshops conducted with Aboriginal organizations in northern Australia to establish culturally-appropriate relationships, agreements and partnership activities.
- **Central Africa Regional Program Office (CARPO):** WWF-CARPO Code of Ethics and Principles Concerning Indigenous Peoples and Conservation in Central Africa developed with civil society NGOs. Key projects reviewed for alignment with indigenous policy principles, in conjunction with indigenous rights organizations, and new collaborative initiatives developed to translate principles into action.
- **Colombia:** Principles of Work with Indigenous Peoples developed, resulting in the signing of more than ten collaborative agreements with indigenous organizations in Colombia, Panama and Ecuador.
- **Democratic Republic of Congo:** National strategy for engagement with indigenous peoples and organizations developed, indigenous social and legal officer hired, and relationships expanded with indigenous organizations.
- **India:** Community mapping pilot work conducted to support implementation of India's Forest Rights Act, in collaboration with social justice organizations.

- **Indonesia:** WWF Indonesia-specific indigenous peoples' policy statement developed in 2009, and field projects surveyed in 2010 on how they are addressing indigenous issues. Position paper on Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas developed and used in national and international (CBD) settings as a governance approach to protect forests and rights of communities.
- **Nepal:** Support provided to the Nepal Environmental Coalition of Indigenous Nationalities (NECIN) to publish and disseminate a study on the situation of indigenous peoples in Nepal.
- **Peru:** Peru-specific indigenous peoples' policy developed and an Indigenous Advisor position established in 2007. Projects jointly reviewed with national indigenous federation to promote dialogue and shared learning.
- **Philippines:** WWF project experience reviewed in collaboration with community groups and national indigenous organizations. Philippines-specific indigenous policy statement developed and WWF's indigenous policy principles integrated into WWF-Philippines field manual.

At the international level, WWF has continued to track developments on indigenous rights, and published an updated version of its policy on Indigenous Peoples and Conservation in 2008 to reflect them. In particular, the 2008 policy endorses the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples adopted by the UN General Assembly in September 2007.

To increase both internal and external awareness, WWF's indigenous peoples' policy has been broadly disseminated to all WWF offices, to indigenous networks and to public audiences. It is posted on WWF's external website and staff intranet, and has been highlighted in presentations to the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, at Convention on Biodiversity conferences and at the 2008 IUCN World Conservation Congress. Information on WWF's positions and work with indigenous and local communities has also been documented for dissemination at international meetings and on WWF websites.

Resources necessary for this work have come from a core allocation of WWF Network funds, as well as contributions from a wide range of WWF offices. For example, field offices have provided in-kind support for focal point staff time, and many of the activities carried out by country focal points in 2008 and 2009 were supported by grants from WWF-Netherlands, WWF-US and WWF-UK.

Ongoing and next steps: With the adoption of a broader set of social policies (see next section), WWF is also moving to integrate its social policy capacity and support systems. A Social Development for Conservation (SD4C) team was established in 2009 to lead and coordinate social policy work across the WWF Network, bringing together staff working on WWF's Indigenous Peoples, Poverty, Gender, Human Rights and other policies. Development of regional SD4C teams, building on and incorporating country focal point networks, is underway – Asia-Pacific and Africa launch workshops were held in 2010, and a Latin America workshop is planned for 2011. These teams are taking on leadership and support roles for social policy implementation at the regional level. Across all levels, an ongoing priority is to ensure that oversight, mandates, time and resources are in place in ways that enable designated staff to play these roles effectively.

One action that has not yet been completed is adoption of an internal process for receiving and responding to complaints. A process for resolving complaints was proposed in 2008 in relation to

WWF's Indigenous Peoples' policy; then revised in 2009 – with the adoption of Human Rights and Poverty policies – to be applied across all WWF social policies. However, adoption and “roll out” of a complaints resolution process has been delayed, and remains a priority for 2011.

2. *Develop WWF policy to address key elements of socially-responsible conservation as they relate to local communities.*

This recommendation responded to feedback from the review that many of the community rights and livelihood issues addressed in WWF's indigenous peoples' policy are also relevant to other local communities, and that it would be useful to articulate positions on them.

Actions taken to meet this recommendation include:

- In 2008, WWF's Network-wide Conservation Committee mandated development of a range of new social policies, including on Poverty, Human Rights and Gender.
- In February 2009, WWF developed and adopted a policy on Poverty and Conservation. This policy reaffirms WWF's commitment to embrace a pro-poor approach to conservation, to find equitable solutions that benefit people as well as the environments in which they live, and to help empower local people to play a key part in crafting solutions for sustainable development.
- In October 2009, WWF adopted a Conservation and Human Rights Framework that was developed through WWF's engagement in the Conservation and Human Rights Initiative (CIHR), a consortium of eight international conservation NGOs. The adopted framework includes four overarching principles for integrating human rights in conservation, along with a set of measures to ensure their effective implementation and monitoring. A WWF policy on Community Rights and Resources, articulating WWF positions on key conservation and human rights issues, is being developed through WWF's engagement in the Initiative.
- In March 2010, WWF adopted an umbrella statement on *Social Dimensions of Conservation and Natural Resource Management* summarizing social policies already developed or underway, and laying out an integrated framework for their implementation throughout the Network.

3. *Integrate community-based and socially-responsible approaches more fully into the WWF conservation program.*

This recommendation addressed a finding of the review that, while WWF supports a wide range of community-based conservation and natural resource management programs, clearer guidelines and procedures need to be in place to mainstream WWF social principles consistently across all relevant projects and programs.

Actions: Initial work under this commitment focused on WWF's indigenous peoples' policy, as WWF's main social policy prior to the adoption of Poverty and Human Rights principles in 2009. Detailed guidelines on *Mainstreaming WWF's Principles on Indigenous Peoples and Conservation in Program and Project Management* were developed and published in 2008. These guidelines have also been translated (by WWF Chile) into Spanish – with additional material and examples from LAC – and (by WWF Brazil) into Portuguese.

Several of WWF's highest priority programs – also known as Network Initiatives – have drawn on these guidelines as part of their strategic planning. Network Initiatives that have taken specific steps to integrate indigenous policy principles include WWF's Amazon Initiative , Forest Carbon Initiative , Arctic program strategy, and Green Heart of Africa. This work has resulted in enhanced social safeguards, new partnerships and increased priority to community-based approaches to conservation and natural resource management in those programs.

To promote broader mainstreaming, WWF's Indigenous Policy principles and guidelines have been integrated into core program management manuals and tools. The *WWF Standards for Program and Project Management* manual and online toolkit includes information on and links to the policy and guidelines, while reporting templates for Network Initiatives have added questions regarding implementation of indigenous peoples' policy safeguards.

Ongoing and next steps include to:

- Establish more consistent procedures for social policy reviews and social impact assessment as part of program development, and for social policy monitoring.
- Develop integrated program guidance, reflecting the full range of WWF social policies.
- Complete a review of livelihoods-related work across WWF's Africa country programs initiated in 2010 - in order to strengthen awareness of WWF's social policies, foster open discussion on their implementation, and identify opportunities for improving and/or expanding this work.
- Continue and build on other actions underway at regional levels to mainstream social policies in programs, such as a social policy mainstreaming questionnaire in Asia.

4. *Expand institutional support for partnership approaches including through increased technical capacity, knowledge-sharing, communications and fundraising.*

This recommendation responded to interests voiced especially by WWF staff to increase and better coordinate WWF's in-house expertise on social issues, improve Network-level knowledge management (so programs have access to relevant technical resources), and expand opportunities for staff learning and experience-sharing.

Actions taken include:

- The Social Development for Conservation team and regional hubs are acting as mechanisms to better coordinate existing expertise in WWF National Organizations and Program Offices.
- Knowledge management has been improved through establishment of a *Social Issues in Conservation* section of WWF's intranet.
- Increases in awareness and dedicated staff have resulted in expanded opportunities for learning/knowledge-sharing activities with staff and partners (though funding for such activities remains limited). Examples of activities include:
 - Thematic workshops such as on Land Tenure, Resource Rights and Conservation (2007), Community Conserved Areas (2008), Poverty and Conservation (2009, 2010), Indigenous Peoples, Human Rights and Conservation (2009).

- Regional workshops such as the Africa regional Poverty and Conservation Workshop, and Asia Social Development for Conservation regional team meeting.
- Communication and experience-sharing has also increased through WWF's external websites, case study publications, and knowledge-sharing workshops in international fora (such as a workshop on *Land Tenure, Resource Rights and Conservation* at the 2008 World Conservation Congress, and panel on indigenous rights and protected areas at the 2010 CoP 10 Nagoya meeting.)

Ongoing & next steps: Needs for increased capacity and partnerships (see #5) on social dimensions of conservation continue to be highlighted in WWF assessments, such as the ongoing reviews of livelihoods-related work in Africa. Better monitoring and evaluation - integrating social dimensions - is another ongoing priority.

5. Increase communication and strengthen partnerships with indigenous peoples' organizations and related civil society groups at country, regional and international levels.

WWF management gave high priority to this recommendation. Ongoing country and regional-level dialogues with indigenous organizations and related civil society groups are essential to increasing mutual understanding, identifying shared agendas for field program and policy partnerships and ensuring that any conflicts that may arise are resolved in a timely manner.

Actions include:

At country levels, focal points have increased ongoing communication and collaboration with indigenous organizations and support groups, for example as part of country activities described in section #1. At regional levels, WWF has established open dialogue and collaborative programs with regional indigenous organizations around key geographical and policy priorities. Examples include:

- **Amazon:** In 2008, WWF established an alliance with COICA, agreeing to work together on efforts to face and mitigate threats to the Amazon (one result of a meeting bringing together COICA member organizations and WWF offices from the Amazon region). Building on this agreement, WWF-Peru (on behalf of WWF) and COICA (with member federations AIDSESEP, OPIAC and CONFENIAE) have developed and are implementing a joint program of work to strengthen the role of indigenous peoples as key actors in conservation of the Amazon, and as leaders in promoting a paradigm shift in Amazon development towards sustainability and reduced climate change.
- **Central Africa:** In Central Africa, WWF and the Forest Peoples' Program have established joint projects on indigenous rights and protected areas in Cameroon and the Central African Republic, based on joint field visits and assessments of needs in particular sites. WWF has also established an active dialogue with IPACC (Indigenous Peoples of Africa Coordinating Committee), resulting in participation of local representatives from WWF project areas in IPACC activities, information-sharing and feedback on policy proposals, and development of plans for a joint workshop on indigenous rights and protected areas across the region. WWF co-sponsored a sub-regional conference on indigenous peoples and forest management in 2007, bringing indigenous organizations together from across Central Africa to share their experiences and concerns, and make

recommendations to government officials, including forest ministers, on increasing indigenous participation in forest decision-making, management and benefit-sharing.

- **Southeast Asia:** In Southeast Asia, WWF National Organizations participate in a number of regional collaborations with indigenous and community rights organizations, such as the Co-management Learning Network. WWF Indonesia and Malaysia provide ongoing support the Forum of Indigenous Peoples in the Highland Borneo (FORMADAT), a trans-boundary indigenous organization that provides a forum for engagement with highland communities in relation to the WWF-supported Heart of Borneo initiative.

At the international level, WWF has established more active, ongoing relationships with indigenous networks, social development and human rights organizations, to increase dialogue and feedback on program work as well as to coordinate efforts in relation to international policy processes. Actions include:

- In relation to **Indigenous Peoples' policy:** WWF actively supported adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), including by sending letters to government officials in Central African countries to advocate General Assembly adoption of UNDRIP, and to the US State Department to advocate US adoption. In general, WWF has increased its presence and role in policy fora such as the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, in order to increase dialogue and collaboration with indigenous organizations, and information-sharing on links between indigenous rights and conservation.
- In relation to **Climate policy:** WWF has prioritized clear and unambiguous protections for indigenous rights and participation in its policy positions, and included these protections as a top line priority in advocacy with UNFCCC negotiators and donor initiatives. Meetings with indigenous leaders in multiple settings have enabled coordination and identification of mutually-supportive positions, including WWF support for the priority negotiating points of the Indigenous Caucus. WWF has also provided support for participation of indigenous leaders in UNFCCC meetings, as well as for an LAC preparatory meeting to CoP 16.
- In relation to **Conservation Policy:** WWF engaged with indigenous organizations and human rights NGOs at the 2008 Barcelona World Conservation Congress to support resolutions on Indigenous Conservation Territories & ICCAs, Rights-based Approaches and related issues. At the subsequent CBD CoP10 in 2010, WWF presented position papers and advocated for decisions protecting indigenous rights in relation to traditional knowledge (Article 8j) and Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas.

Conclusion

Actions to fulfill the recommendations of WWF's *Strengthening Partnerships with Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities* review have established an "infrastructure" of capacity and systems within WWF enabling two-way links between WWF policy – particularly on indigenous peoples' and conservation – and practice. As a result, dialogue and relationships with indigenous peoples' organizations have expanded, key programs have enhanced social safeguards and increased priority to shared agendas with

indigenous and local communities, and there is greater overall awareness internally and externally of WWF's indigenous policy principles and how to fulfill them in practice. This work has also laid a foundation for development and implementation of a broader set of WWF social policies. For example, the positive experience of establishing a network of Indigenous Policy focal points has contributed to development of an integrated Social Development for Conservation team to address the wider set of social and human rights issues relevant to WWF's work.

Moving forward, key priorities are to build and deliver integrated approaches to these wider social and human rights issues, with particular attention to regional strategies and teams. Ongoing needs for this work include support for dedicated social policy staff in national organizations and program offices, opportunities for shared learning, clear procedures for social assessments and monitoring of project and programs, agile yet effective accountability measures and active partnerships with broader constituencies and centers of expertise on social dimensions of conservation.