

Wetlands and Poverty Reduction Project

Reducing poverty in wetland areas through integrated environmental and poverty alleviation initiatives

Linking wetland conservation and poverty reduction

The livelihoods of many poor people in the developing world depend to a large extent on intact and functioning wetlands. Many of the poor rely on wetlands for food, water, construction materials and similar necessities. Wetlands also act as transport corridors and provide protection against flood, drought and saltwater intrusion – all functions crucial to environmental and food security. Hence the maintenance of healthy wetlands is important for poverty alleviation, and because wetlands are critical to water supply they are literally the source of life.

Experience has shown that solutions to wetland degradation and over-exploitation must be based on a thorough understanding of how wetlands contribute to people's livelihood strategies. This concept challenges conventional approaches to conservation and development. Whereas in the past wetland conservation did not necessarily recognise the need to address local poverty issues, history and practice have shown that where wetlands have been degraded, poverty generally also increases, leading to even greater wetland degradation.

With so many people directly dependent on wetlands and wetland resources for their livelihoods, protecting and restoring wetlands is clearly in the interests of reducing poverty and vulnerability to poverty. The conservation and development-aid sectors have a responsibility to form collaborative partnerships that develop pro-poor approaches to wetland management. This concept forms the foundation of the Wetlands and Poverty Reduction Project (WPRP).

Wetlands International, in association with a range of international partner organisations represented by the Wetlands and Livelihoods Working Group, aims to contribute to poverty reduction and wetland conservation by encouraging the development-aid sector to recognise wetland values in its planning and implementation processes. Similarly, the WPRP endeavours to work with the conservation and environment sectors to integrate socio-economic development and poverty-reduction issues into their planning and actions. The WPRP aims to achieve this by facilitating dialogue between these sectors, and identifying a common agenda that provides complementary solutions for wetland conservation and poverty reduction.

Objective of the project

Wetlands International will contribute to achieving the Millennium Development Goals by catalysing the integration of sustainable wetland management into poverty reduction strategies and sustainable development plans. In addition, Wetlands International aims to influence regional, national and international policies and conservation and development planning processes by enhancing recognition of the dependence of the poor on sustainable wetland resource management.



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Results

The Project's activities will focus on achieving results in four main areas designed to catalyse the mainstreaming of wetlands in structural poverty reduction through policy improvements, partnership development and demonstration projects, training and capacity development, and awareness raising and outreach.

Result 1: International policies, strategies and mechanisms aimed at structural poverty reduction that recognises the importance of sustainable wetland management.

Result 2: Initiatives, delivered through local partnerships in Africa and Asia that demonstrate poverty reduction through the wise use of wetlands.

Result 3: Local technical capacity to reduce poverty in wetland areas through initiatives that integrate wise-use wetland management practices in East and West Africa.

Result 4: National poverty reduction policies, strategies and planning processes in Africa, Asia and Latin America that are informed by, and adopt, wise-use wetland management practices.

Geographic Focus

The WPRP will focus its activities on wetland conservation and poverty reduction in sub-Saharan Africa, South-east Asia and Latin America. However, the Project will also endeavour to influence inter-sectoral development for poverty reduction and sustainable wetland management in all parts of the world.

For more information on the WPRP or to find out how your organisation might be involved, please contact:

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