



## Improving Democracy and Governance through Conservation Practice

Working in over 100 countries, WWF seeks to transform institutions, policies, and markets to reduce threats to the diversity of life on Earth and to the people who depend upon it. WWF incorporates civil society strengthening and governance as key elements in its conservation programming, shaping policies and forging partnerships to create conditions that improve the well-being of people and ecosystems. Promoting good governance practices and empowered civil society organizations helps create the necessary conditions for successful conservation.

“Governance” concerns who holds power, both formal and informal. It also encompasses the processes in which public, private and civil society actors organize themselves and coordinate with each other to make decisions and distribute rights, obligations and authority. Good governance in conservation involves a policy environment and empowered civil society organizations that support democratic participation in decision-making about environmental matters and equitable access to the benefits of conservation.

### Democracy and Governance Examples

WWF’s conservation work includes efforts to promote governance using multiple approaches ranging from the local to global scale.

#### *Namibia*

Namibia’s Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) Program, long-supported by WWF, has been highly successful in demonstrating how good governance is vital for the success of conservation. Namibia’s CBNRM program is based on the premise that “conservation successes outside state protected areas depend on the benefits that local people gain from the natural resources being conserved.” Through the development of natural resource-based activities and partnerships with the private sector, the program has generated ever-increasing benefits to conservancies, often located in remote areas far removed from traditional economic hubs. For example, from 1994 to 2009, total annual benefits (cash from tourism, hunting, natural plant sales, small enterprise; employment; and in-kind) grew from almost zero to US \$5.05 million of which US \$4.16 million went directly to conservancies and their members. Improvements in conservancy governance are being documented through the monitoring of indicators focused on the relationship between conservancy members and their elected management committee – how decisions are made, who makes them and who is accountable to whom.



One major lesson from the program is that governance is linked to benefits and that the more a conservancy earns, and is capable of meeting the different needs of members, the more interest members take in its affairs. It is therefore important to look at how benefits can be increased as part of improved governance within conservancies. Over the next few years, WWF will support the efforts of conservancies to restructure themselves as businesses, leading to improved governance and ownership of benefits by all conservancy members.

## Colombia

Since 1964, WWF Colombia has been working to strengthen local people's participation in decisions about the management of their natural resources and to promote governance strategies that enable effective resolution of environmental conflicts. One strategy that has been used successfully is the *Conversatorio*, a process that builds the capacity of citizens to understand and articulate their rights and responsibilities and negotiate with state actors to address problems. In April 2011, a *Conversatorio* brought together local and national institutions interested in the problem of illegal logging and rising deforestation in the Urabá Antioqueño region (located within the Chocó-Darién Ecoregional Complex.) Within the Urabá Antioqueño region are the indigenous territory communities of the Embera Katío and Chami. These territories host a population of around 4,000 indigenous inhabitants and contain protected forests as well as the main source of water for the region. However, illegal logging and unsustainable expansion of agricultural production and grazing practices are threatening the health of the area's tropical forests, biodiversity and the region's water supply. The discussions in the April *Conversatorio* led to a number of impressive achievements, such as development of a joint work plan for forest management; the creation of a system for providing environmental education to members of the Colombian army's 17th Brigade (which patrols the area); and the organization of a new inter-institutional working group to oversee the implementation of the Plan for Forest Development for Urabá. The *Conversatorio* served as an effective platform for forest sector actors to work collectively to mitigate current harmful activities and to improve the participation of indigenous people in decisions about their natural resources.

## Heart of Borneo

WWF-Indonesia and WWF-Malaysia are working with the Alliance of the Indigenous Peoples of Highlands of Borneo (FORMADAT) –a grassroots organization raising awareness and understanding about the highland communities that straddle Malaysia and Indonesia in the Heart of Borneo. FORMADAT was established by the main ethnic groups in the area –the Lun Bawang, Lun Dayeh, Sa'ban and Kelabit – who number around 25,000 people. FORMADAT's vision is to develop their homeland while ensuring the sustainable management of the natural resources of the Highlands of Borneo. Their priorities revolve around sustainable farming (especially rice), conservation of water catchment areas and cultural heritage sites and sustainable management of forests, which are important assets for community-based eco-tourism, food sources, and materials for crafts and more. WWF-Indonesia and WWF-Malaysia partner with FORMADAT by providing targeted institutional strengthening support that allows the organizations to improve the effectiveness of its conservation practice.



## Nepal

WWF is working in partnership with CARE in Nepal's Kanchenjunga Conservation Area (KCA) in order to ensure equitable benefit sharing and access to natural resources among local communities. KCA, which measures some 786 square miles, is located in northeastern Nepal, bordering China (Tibet) to the north and India to the east. For community organizations that are charged with managing Nepal's rich forest resources, good governance is an essential element needed for achieving lasting conservation results. WWF is working to create a cadre of local experts on good governance who share this concept with local institutions and periodically monitor its practice by those institutions. To date, WWF has trained approximately 25 local resource people, including women and indigenous people on principles of good governance and its four major pillars: participation, accountability, transparency and predictability. WWF is also supporting capacity building of Poor, Vulnerable and Socially Excluded groups through raising awareness on the causes of their exclusion and by building their leadership skills to help them assert their rights to natural resources and the decision making process.

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Local farmer practicing sustainable rice farming in the Highlands of Borneo. © Domini WIRZ