

How can biodiversity contribute to poverty alleviation and development?

Biodiversity is crucial to the alleviation of poverty, due to the **basic goods and ecosystem services** it provides. It is integral to key development sectors such as **agriculture, forestry, fisheries and tourism**, which more than 1.3 billion people depend on for their livelihoods. Although biodiversity does not contribute directly to all sectors of development, such as infrastructure or mining, sustainable development cannot be achieved if biodiversity is compromised by development efforts.



Consequently, **biodiversity mainstreaming into development strategies and programs is essential to poverty alleviation and development.** It is for this reason that the “Message from Paris” adopted by the Conference on Biodiversity of the European Development Cooperation, held in November 2006, calls for the support of biodiversity mainstreaming in partner countries, and the improvement of governance for both poverty reduction and the sustainable use of biodiversity.



Biodiversity for Development and Poverty Alleviation

“BIODIVERSITY FOR DEVELOPMENT AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION” is an initiative launched by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, with the support of the French and German governments, aimed at the integration of biodiversity into relevant development processes thus contributing to the achievement of the MDGs.

Its three inter-related specific objectives are:

- 1) **To promote the integration of biodiversity considerations into sectoral and cross-sectoral policies at the regional and national levels, as well as to incorporate the development dimension into National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans;**
- 2) **To facilitate the exchange of experiences and the dissemination of lessons learned regarding the integration of biodiversity into development sectors;**
- 3) **To establish and develop contacts between the Secretariat of the Convention and the main organizations and cooperation agencies in charge of development at the international and regional levels in order to better integrate biodiversity considerations into their strategies and programmes.**

For more information about the objectives and activities of this initiative, please contact:

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An initiative of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity with the support of the French and German governments



Convention on
Biological Diversity

Why is biodiversity important for development and poverty alleviation?

70% of the world's poor live in rural areas and depend directly on biological diversity for their livelihoods. Biodiversity serves as an important **source of food and income** to rural households.

More than 3 billion people depend on marine and coastal biodiversity for their livelihoods, while over 1.6 billion people, including 1 billion living in poverty, rely on **forests and non-timber forest products**.

Forests are home to 80% of the remaining terrestrial biodiversity and also provide **protection for water resources** and **reduce the risk of natural disasters and erosion**.

Habitat degradation and the loss of biodiversity are threatening the livelihoods of more than 1 billion people living in dry and sub-humid lands.



The **impact of environmental degradation** is most severe among people living in poverty, since they have few livelihood options. Therefore, the availability to and sustainable use of biodiversity by the poor are of direct relevance to efforts at poverty alleviation.

Addressing the biodiversity challenge needs to be at the heart of international cooperation for sustainable development and poverty alleviation. It is for this reason that the **Millennium Declaration** called for the full implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity, and that the UN Secretary General responded by including biodiversity as an integral part of Goal 7 of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Biodiversity and the Millennium Development Goals

Biodiversity is key to the success of the MDGs:

Goal 1: Eradicate extreme hunger and poverty

The world's poor, particularly in rural areas, depend on biological resources for as much as 90% of their needs, including food, fuel, medicine, shelter and transportation. The loss of biodiversity, resulting in a reduction of crop and livestock genetic diversity and the decreased availability of wild biological resources, threatens food security for the poor.

Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education

Many families in the developing world depend on biological resources, collected from their surrounding environment, for their day to day needs. A shortage of these resources increases the workload of families, including children, which makes it harder for them to attend school.

Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women

Biodiversity degradation reduces the availability of firewood, non-timber forest products and potable water, which makes the daily tasks of women more time-consuming and difficult. Given that in many contexts, women are responsible for the management of biodiversity resources, they should be involved in all efforts to conserve biodiversity.



Goals 4, 5 and 6 (health-related issues)

The World Health Organization (WHO) has documented that human health is highly dependent on a healthy, well-functioning environment, which cannot exist without biodiversity. 80% of the world's people rely on traditional medicines, as in Ghana, where 60% of childhood malarial fevers are first treated with plant-based medicines. Availability of safe drinking water, provided by ecosystem services, is directly related to health. More than 5.5 billion people may live with a serious shortage of drinking water by 2025. Declines in biodiversity are also associated with a rise in vector-based and other diseases.

Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability

Biodiversity loss will directly affect the quality and quantity of ecosystem services provided, such as carbon sequestration, watershed protection, recycling of nutrients, control of erosion and pollination of crops and trees.

Goal 8: Global partnership for development

A stronger partnership between all stakeholders is necessary to achieve poverty alleviation and development, and the protection of biodiversity upon which both depend.

