



Living in harmony with nature

Biodiversity for Development and Eradication of Poverty

Biodiversity underpins the global economy and society. The complex financial systems obscure the fact that all such human systems remain subsystems in the Earth's broader ecosystem.

The continuous failure to recognize the enormous value of biodiversity is rapidly pushing us toward critical tipping points, to where many of the planet's ecosystems will shift into unprecedented states in which the capacity to provide for the needs of present and future generations is highly uncertain. Because biodiversity also matters as insurance against global changes or risk management strategy, this is a serious problem.

Currently, the reversal of biodiversity loss and ecosystem services degradation is not recognized by development strategies, sectoral and intersectoral policies and budgetary processes. Actions taken (or not taken) over the next two decades will determine whether the relatively stable environmental conditions on which human civilization depend will continue beyond this century.

The 193 Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity unequivocally state that biodiversity must be recognized as the foundation of economic productivity, prosperity and sustainable development, and must be backed with new and original economic regulations and governance.

Main macro-economic indicators need to reflect the costs and consequences of biodiversity degradation. Ecosystem services need to be incorporated into national accounting systems to reflect their contribution to the economy.

The poor, who disproportionately depend on biodiversity for their subsistence needs, suffer first and most severely from its degradation. Recognition of the link between ecosystem services and the fate of poor people implies that biodiversity should be a priority in national and international efforts to address poverty reduction.



Convention on
Biological Diversity

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Poverty is not simply the result of low income, but also reflects a deprivation of basic human requirements for well-being. The poorest populations are the most dependent on ecosystem services for food, clothes, medicine, fuel, shelter, income and other basic needs. It is essential to protect poor people's rights to access ecosystem services, renewable natural resources, land and sea. The free and accessible nature of ecosystem services makes them essential and irreplaceable. Their empowerment in the management of biodiversity constitutes a positive incentive, addresses underlying causes of biodiversity loss and contributes to prevent poverty.

Fast Facts

- ▶ Under a 'business as usual' scenario, where overexploitation continues and ecosystem services keep declining, the cost to compensate for lost ecosystem services (the cost of inaction) over a 50 year period will amount to US\$ 2.0 to 4.5 trillion per year
- ▶ Current global fisheries underperform by US\$ 50 billion annually
- ▶ Ecosystem services and other non-marketed goods account for 47% (India) to 89% (Brazil) of the so-called GDP (Gross Domestic Product) of the poor
- ▶ 3 billion people depend on marine and coastal biodiversity, while 1.6 billion rely on forests and non-timber forest products for their existence
- ▶ Habitat degradation, and consequently biodiversity loss, is a threat to the livelihoods of more than a billion inhabitants of dry and sub-humid lands
- ▶ In 2010, about 45% of business leaders in Africa, 53% in Latin America, 34% in Asia-Pacific and 18% in Western Europe considered biodiversity loss to be a threat to economic growth

Learn More

Millennium Development Goals ▶ www.un.org/millenniumgoals

United Nations Poverty-Environment Initiative ▶ www.unpei.org

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) ▶ www.undp.org/biodiversity

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) & Millennium Development Goal 7
▶ www.unep.org/MDGs

International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED)
▶ www.iiied.org/tags/biodiversity

Poverty Environment Partnership ▶ www.povertyenvironment.net

Platform for practitioners working on ecosystem management and poverty alleviation ▶ www.natureandpoverty.net

The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) ▶ www.teebweb.org

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