

EMBEDDING HUMAN RIGHTS IN NATURE CONSERVATION: FROM INTENT TO ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE ENVIRONMENT REPORT - 2022

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Chela Elena Umire designs and makes traditional dress and accessories made from feathers and other local materials for traditional Indigenous community events, in La Chorrera, Predio Putumayo Indigenous Reserve, Department of Amazonas, Colombia. WWF-Colombia and Puerto Rastrojo Foundation are working together with the Amazon Indigenous organization to enhance their governance scheme and enhance Indigenous people's ability to diversify their livelihoods based on the zoning, cultural, and environmental management plan to protect the territory and land use rights.

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FOREWORD



WWF is pleased to share with you the Human Rights and the Environment 2022 report which documents achievements and challenges on the implementation of WWF's Management Response to the Independent Panel Report "Embedding Human Rights in Nature Conservation: From Intent to Action". This Year 2 report mirrors the structure of the Year 1 report issued in 2021 and also includes 14 case studies that bring to life the important and challenging work our colleagues and partners are undertaking around the world. As a conservation organization that operates globally, including in fragile, conflict- and violence-affected regions, we are committed to ensuring that local stakeholders have a strong voice and are recognized as leaders in conservation efforts. We are making important strides in embedding human rights into our conservation actions and remain fully committed to address the challenges ahead with vigour and dedication.

After the release of the WWF Management Response, we focused our efforts in the first year (2020-2021) on strengthening our infrastructure and capacity as an organization to carry forward the recommendations of the Independent Panel report and further our commitments to inclusive conservation. This included establishing our programme, hiring key positions and agreeing on a delivery roadmap. In the second year (2021-2022), we have focused on accelerating delivery and further embedding these commitments into our governance structures, environmental and social safeguards, engagement with law enforcement and relationships with government and NGO partners. We have faced a number of challenges in this work, some of which were raised in the first year and others that we have since uncovered as we continue our journey towards consistently delivering impactful and inclusive conservation.

Here are five key areas that have been the focus of our work in 2022:

1. OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSPERSON.

A key focus in 2022 was on the development of the Office of the Ombudsperson Operating Framework. Appointment of an Ombudsperson was recommended by the Independent Panel and committed to by WWF in our Management Response (November 2020). This reinforced the initial undertaking by WWF to appoint an Ombudsperson in our 2019 Environmental and Social Safeguards Framework. WWF appointed Gina Barbieri to the position with effect from September 2021. The independent Office of the Ombudsperson, which reports directly to the WWF International Board, is the first of its kind in conservation organizations. We looked into the possibility of sharing this function with other partners, however, interest was limited, and we pursued our efforts independently. Whilst development of the operating framework has taken almost 12 months given the complexity of the landscape, the outcome is a fit- for- purpose model of accountability. We remain keen to share lessons learned with our community as we go through this process. Internal and public consultations on the operating framework for the Office of the Ombudsperson were initiated in 2022. The final operating framework will be reviewed for approval by the International Board in March 2023.

2. ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SAFEGUARDS FRAMEWORK (ESSF).

We adopted the ESSF in 2019 to ensure the consistent and comprehensive application of safeguards across the entire WWF Network. Since then, a consultation was undertaken in 2021, which gathered helpful reflection and commentary. As implementation of the ESSF continues across the landscapes and seascapes where WWF works, we are also learning from that experience, including challenges (e.g. capacity constraints) and opportunities (e.g. integrating safeguards into conservation design and delivery). Both the consultation and lessons from implementation will inform proposed revisions to the ESSF that will be submitted for approval and subsequent adoption across the network in 2023.

3. SOCIAL POLICIES.

The 2021 consultation provided valuable feedback that will inform the next iteration of WWF's social policies and principles, including their relationship to the environmental and social safeguards. The proposed revisions will be submitted for approval and subsequent adoption across the network in 2023.



4. LANDSCAPE-LEVEL GRIEVANCE MECHANISMS.

There are currently eight landscapes with a dedicated landscape-level grievance mechanism. In all cases, we have experienced challenges in their establishment, scope, relationship to other complaint mechanisms and overall governance structures, including timely notification of complaints received. These challenges aside, we are seeing usage of these mechanisms and with it, the valuable role they play as a fundamental pillar of stakeholder engagement and a transparent and trusted way for potentially affected people and communities to voice and seek resolution to their concerns.

5. BUILDING CAPACITY AND SKILLS ACROSS THE WWF NETWORK.

This year, we have continued to build our competencies to more consistently implement inclusive conservation, including accreditation of 7 safeguards experts in our network and the hiring of additional senior expertise on ethical law enforcement. While we have made progress, we are also conscious of existing gaps, particularly at the country level where safeguards are screened and implemented. We will continue to ramp-up our capacity and expertise in human rights and safeguards as we work to build the required capability.

As mentioned in our Year 1 Implementation Update, our efforts to advance our vision – a world in which both people and nature thrive – are based on the fundamental principle that positive outcomes for both people and nature depend on firmly integrating human rights into conservation practices.

Our mission takes us to some of the toughest places in the world, where conflict takes place on a daily basis between communities, with governments and with wildlife. Many of these geographies are some of the highest priority regions for biodiversity and global ecosystem services, including carbon sequestration and climate regulation.

WWF cannot guarantee human rights violations will never happen in these places. The protection of human rights is a government responsibility. As an NGO operating within these contexts, we have a role to play in helping to create stronger enabling conditions for human rights; ensuring that communities co-lead the design, execution and monitoring of conservation programmes; and influencing governments so that they fulfil their duty to protect the rights of their citizens. In some of these places, we have been inconsistent in achieving that goal. As we further implement the WWF Management Response, we continue to reflect, to listen and learn, and seek partnerships with conservation, human rights, and development organizations to deliver better outcomes for all.

The Independent Panel Report urged WWF to commit to action to improve how we embed human rights in conservation. I am pleased that this Human Rights and the Environment Report 2022 report documents our efforts in this vein. Much progress has been achieved and I am proud of the steps our colleagues and partners have taken. We remain fully committed to further advance our work on this over the years to come.

Dr. Kirsten Schuijt,
Director General, WWF International and Chairperson of the Action Plan Steering Group



SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

As detailed in the Year 1 progress report, WWF commissioned an Independent Panel in March 2019 to review how we addressed alleged human rights abuses by some government rangers in Cameroon, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Republic of the Congo, India and Nepal. It was chaired by former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Judge Navi Pillay and included Dr Kathy MacKinnon and John Knox. The review was independent, and the Panel had unfettered access to WWF's staff and documents. We published the Panel's report on 24 November 2020. Although it found no evidence that WWF staff were involved in human rights abuses, its conclusions were that we fell short of what is expected of us and that we need to do better. WWF fully condemns violations of human rights and is determined to do more to make communities' voices heard and to advocate for their rights.

The Panel made 29 recommendations regarding the country-level programmes it reviewed, as well as 50 general recommendations (grouped under 10 overarching recommendations). WWF published a Management Response detailing how we will address the recommendations, building upon our own self-assessment, lessons learned and work that was already underway. In 2024, following three years of implementation, we will undertake a formal review of WWF's progress in realizing the commitments made in the Management Response. This Year 2 report is the second implementation update of the Management Response to recommendations from the Panel report and covers actions taken in 2022. It builds on the progress reported in the Year 1 report.

WWF has long recognized that conservation and human rights are at the heart of sustainable development and the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Over the last two years, we have designed and implemented systems to more consistently integrate human rights into our conservation work. In this Year 2 implementation update, we will highlight our progress and where we have strengthened measures to foster better and more inclusive conservation. We will also highlight our challenges. Conservation is inherently complex and requires finding a balance over the long term between social, environmental and economic imperatives as well as navigating different interests between diverse stakeholders and rights holders. Our commitment to sustaining the natural world for the benefit of people and nature means regularly improving and adapting our practices by embedding lessons learned and maintaining transparency and honesty about our progress against our commitments and where we have had dilemmas.

The Year 2 report provides progress updates on the commitments we made through our Management Response to the Independent Panel's general and country-level recommendations. This report weaves in descriptions of our actions, lessons learned and stories from conservation project areas, giving voice to colleagues closest to the implementation of conservation programmes – including the 57 authors from across the WWF Network who helped write this report and its case studies.

Many of the Panel's general recommendations contained overlapping or related suggestions, and many of our actions concurrently address multiple recommendations. As such, we cluster our update on progress towards addressing general recommendations into four categories, as we did in the Year 1 report:

- Enhancing WWF's **governance structures** to ensure we move from intent to action;
- Implementing the **Environmental and Social Safeguards Framework** to ensure we uniformly move toward an inclusive approach and effective community engagement in all our conservation project areas operations;
- Taking steps to reduce conflicts between communities and government **law enforcement** relating to conservation; and
- **Leveraging our agency** to influence government partners regarding human rights issues.

PROGRESS IN 2022

As we close our second year of implementation of the Management Response, we highlight the following progress.

1. **Defining the Office of the Ombudsperson Operating Framework.** Appointment of an Ombudsperson was recommended by the Independent Panel and committed to by WWF in our Management Response. This reinforced the initial undertaking by WWF to appoint an Ombudsperson in our 2019 Environmental and Social Safeguards Framework (ESSF). A focus for the Office of the Ombudsperson, in collaboration with WWF, has been on defining the mandate, scope and functions of the Office of the Ombudsperson through the development of the Operating Framework, the development of which benefited from internal and external input. The proposed Operating Framework was approved for consultation at the September 2022 meeting of the WWF International Board. Following internal WWF consultations, the Operating Framework was subject to public consultation in November 2022 to January 2023 – the second public consultation undertaken by WWF (the first concerned our ESSF). The final operating framework will be reviewed for approval by the WWF International Board in March 2023.

2. **Advancing our ESSF.** We adopted the ESSF in 2019 to ensure the consistent and comprehensive application of safeguards across the entire WWF Network. Since then, a consultation was undertaken, which gathered helpful reflection and commentary (with over 1,000 specific comments received). As implementation of the ESSF continues across the landscapes and seascapes where WWF works, we are also learning from that experience, including challenges (e.g. capacity constraints) and opportunities (e.g. integrating safeguards into conservation design and delivery). Both the consultation and lessons from implementation will inform proposed revisions to the ESSF that will be submitted for approval and subsequent adoption across the network in 2023.

3. **Screening landscapes in line with our ESSF.** We continued to screen all landscapes where WWF works in line with our ESSF. As of December 2022, 289 of 374 (77%) landscapes and seascapes where WWF currently works were in the process of being or had been screened for environmental and social risks. There are 85 landscapes that have not started ESSF implementation for a variety of reasons, including eligibility and work being put on hold (e.g. due to conflict or natural disaster).

4. **Building capacity in environmental and social safeguards and social policies.** The training and capacity building on ESSF has been an ongoing effort since the adoption of ESSF in 2019. To continue the implementation of ESSF we have invested in building our capacity to allow for appropriate due diligence. As of late 2021, 14 colleagues were accredited as 'safeguard experts' and seven more have been accredited as of late 2022, thereby giving a total of 21 accredited safeguard experts across the network. Capacity building through the accreditation of safeguards experts remains a priority. In addition, a foundational training course, Making Sense of Safeguards, was introduced in April 2020 and offered in several languages. This was completed by all 7,500 staff and board members across the network in 2020 and is now mandatory training as a part of onboarding. As of December 2022, there are 8,643 staff that have completed the training.



5. **Supporting and improving complaints channels and grievance mechanisms.** As of December 2022, 89% of all WWF office sites have published a country-level complaints channel in line with our Speak Up! core standard – an increase compared to November 2021 when we reported that 48 offices (approximately 63%) had established country-level complaints channel. In some locations, specific risks will necessitate an additional landscape-level grievance mechanism to allow for better communication and engagement with communities. There are currently eight landscapes with a dedicated landscape-level grievance mechanism in place. In all cases, we have experienced challenges in their establishment, scope, relationship to other complaint mechanisms and overall governance structures, including timely notification of complaints received.

6. **Increased influence of Indigenous Peoples perspectives throughout WWF and on the International Board.** With two new appointments in two different offices in 2022, the number of Indigenous Peoples representatives on WWF governance boards and advisory groups now totals 10 (seven and three, respectively). These trustees sit across seven different offices in the WWF network. [1] Further, the International Board has also approved the appointment of an Indigenous Peoples trustee on the board and the recruitment process has been initiated.

7. **Advancing efforts in ethical law enforcement and partnering in ranger training on human rights.** We made the following progress on ethical law enforcement:

   a. **Ranger Training.** In 2022, WWF partnered in human rights training across landscapes in Central Africa, Nepal and India. In some instances, these trainings have been formally adopted by ranger training colleges.

   b. **Developing and piloting the Law Enforcement Due Diligence Tool.** WWF has developed the Due Diligence Tool for Conservation Law Enforcement Support in Protected Areas to screen and evaluate new or existing partnerships with government agencies in charge of law enforcement in protected areas, focusing specifically on the law enforcement mandate. The due diligence tool was signed off for progressive roll-out across the network from June 2022 through to June 2024.

   c. **Onboarding a Director of Ethical Law Enforcement.** We have hired a seasoned expert in security and human rights. Formerly a security and human rights advisor in the corporate sector, she joined WWF in August 2022 as the Director of Ethical Law Enforcement.

   d. **Advocating for the adoption of the Ranger Code of Conduct.** As already reported in the Year 1 report, working with the WWF-backed Universal Ranger Support Alliance, we supported the International Ranger Federation to release the International Ranger Federation Code of Conduct. In July 2022, the code of conduct was included in the Africa Protected Area Congress Kigali Call to Action.

1 The following offices have Indigenous Peoples on their WWF boards and advisory groups: Australia, Brazil, Canada, Nepal, New Zealand, Sweden and USA

INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL CHALLENGES IN 2022

We have been confronted with challenges, both internal and external. For the former, they largely relate to the roll-out of our ESSF and the complexities of establishing and operationalizing the Office of the Ombudsperson - firsts for the environmental and civil society sectors. Some of these challenges we have identified this year and others were mentioned in the Year 1 report and remain pertinent. We have outlined below network-level internal challenges as well as external challenges common to the conservation sector more broadly. Challenges faced at the country level are covered in individual chapters.

INTERNAL CHALLENGES

1. REFINING AND CLARIFYING THE ESSF AND SOCIAL POLICIES.

The Year 1 progress report detailed the public consultation that was undertaken in 2021 for the ESSF and social policies. An interim report on the consultation and high-level outcomes from it was publicly shared in November 2021. As we gain experience with implementation, we have sought to refine and clarify the ESSF and social policies to take into account actual experience and the comments received in the public consultation. As noted above, the ESSF and social policies will be reviewed for approval in 2023 by the WWF International Board and for subsequent adoption by WWF national organisations.

2. CAPACITY BUILDING ON ESSF.

Implementing our ESSF requires significant capacity, not just in



The internal challenges outlined below are dilemmas that we have faced as an organization as we look to embed and define our processes across our global network:

time and effort but in internal competencies. We continue to build our capacity through measures such as the 'training of trainers' model to accredit more colleagues in safeguards implementation. This was raised in the Year 1 report and remains pertinent today.

3. BUILDING HUMAN RIGHTS CAPACITY.

While retaining the contracted human rights expertise that was referenced in the Year 1 report, we decided to delay the establishment of the Human Rights Advisory Group until three other processes have been concluded:
(i) any refinements to the social policies and ESSF;
(ii) an assessment of internal human rights capacity (undertaken in Spring 2022 and that is underway);
(iii) a strategic and visioning process for the WWF-backed Conservation Initiative on Human Rights. The outcomes of these three initiatives have implications for the expertise that we require - and whether that is best addressed through an advisory group or another form of support.

4. THE COMPLEXITY OF PUTTING IN PLACE AN OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSPERSON.

The Office of the Ombudsperson is unique for the conservation sector. The process to develop the Operating Framework underscored the need for actual experience with the Office of the Ombudsperson to help inform operational scope and processes. Finalizing a fit-for-purpose model of independent accountability through the Office of the Ombudsperson required more time to develop than anticipated.

5. ADVISORY GROUP OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES.

In the Management Response, WWF committed to establishing a group of Indigenous Peoples which would advise and give feedback to WWF on Indigenous Peoples-related issues. It is foreseen that the advisory group will be composed of WWF Indigenous trustees, as well as external Indigenous leaders. WWF has been working with an Indigenous leader to steer the development of this advisory group, which we aim to make operational in 2023.

6. LANDSCAPE-LEVEL GRIEVANCE MECHANISMS.

Through the newly established mechanisms, we are starting to receive grievances. However, we need to improve efficiencies in their operations (e.g. speed of escalation). Relatedly, the issue of costs needs to be addressed. We need to build capacity locally to resolve grievances that are raised at a local level.

7. DISCLOSING LANDSCAPE LEVEL INFORMATION.

The commitment to disclose safeguard related information at landscape level was made in the ESSF adopted across the network in 2019. As screening and mitigation planning for landscapes has progressed, we have realised that original commitments place a high burden on implementing offices by requiring two disclosures early in the implementation cycle. A revised approach to disclosure - based on a single disclosure when risks and impacts have been fully assessed and a mitigation framework developed - forms part of the revised ESSF that will be taken to the WWF International Board for approval in early 2023. Once approved, we will commence landscape level disclosure that was referred to in the WWF Management Response and Year 1 progress report.

8. LANDSCAPE SCREENINGS.

The implementation of our environmental and social safeguards remains our primary risk mitigation framework to help us identify possible adverse impacts to communities and the environment and help ensure we take action to avoid or, where not feasible, to mitigate them. We are committed to applying safeguards in ongoing programmes and not only to new initiatives. We agreed to primarily address safeguards at a landscape level, which provides the focus for most WWF interventions. There are 374 landscapes and seascapes that need to be screened using a comprehensive tool developed for the purpose. The scale of the task remains challenging and advancing these efforts is a priority for 2023.

EXTERNAL CHALLENGES

The external challenges outlined below were raised in the Year 1 report and remain pertinent today. These challenges are under constant consideration:

9. PERSEVERING THROUGH CONFLICTS.

There are unique challenges to operating in countries with weak governance, in conflict or post-conflict states and in remote areas of fragile, conflict- and violence-affected countries. In these places, there is a greater need for funding to implement rights-based approaches, safeguards and measures to strengthen the protection of human rights by governments, which requires collaboration with donor countries and institutions.

10. OPERATING IN PLACES WITH WEAK ACCESS TO JUSTICE.

Governments must provide access to justice. Access to justice includes the ability to obtain representation and bring matters to the courts, and it is essential both to support victims in asserting their rights as well as to hold offenders accountable. However, conservation work often takes place in remote areas within fragile states, where the rule of law and access to justice is weak.

11. RISKS OF SPEAKING OUT.

Sometimes it is a significant risk to speak out in a particular country. Indeed, we experienced instances in the past year where WWF staff were threatened as a result of speaking out. Environmental defenders around the world are at risk.

12. FREE, PRIOR AND INFORMED CONSENT (FPIC).

Among the issues arising from our ongoing consultations with human rights and development groups, and others in the conservation sector, the challenges associated with obtaining FPIC for conservation measures that may result in access restrictions was significant. We recognize that obtaining FPIC is critical to ensuring a people-centred approach but while many governments claim to recognize the right of FPIC, many have not put in place measures for realizing it. As stated in our Management Response, and consistent with our social policies and the ESSF, WWF will not support and will oppose involuntary relocation. In this vein, WWF will not work with governments where FPIC is not observed effectively. In some instances, these countries lack procedures or processes to implement FPIC processes, while others do not recognize groups as Indigenous Peoples (consistent with ILO 169 and UNDRIP). It is even harder to orchestrate these processes where there is weak governance in the community or where leadership is not truly representative. We are committed to using our agency and advocating for the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local community stewards of sustainable development.

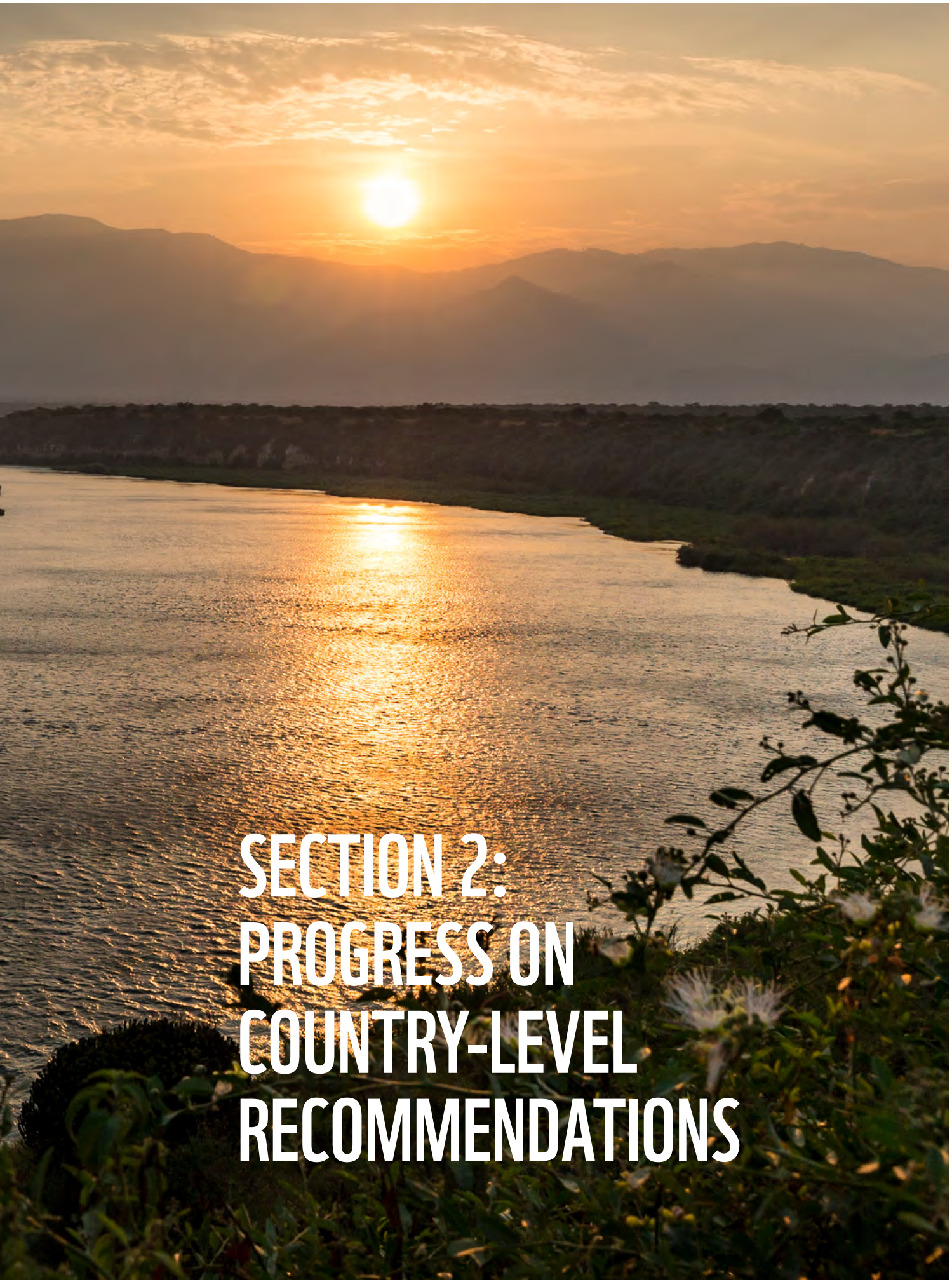
13. COVID-19 AND CONSULTATIONS.

We have instituted changes to allow for the voices of communities to be better heard in the places we work and to improve our ability to meet our commitments. However, these rely on effective and full consultations, which have continued to be difficult to undertake due to COVID-19-related restrictions on operations and in-person exchanges with communities. The pandemic and related restrictions have created issues in the conservation project areas that hampered much of our work with communities due to difficulties of outreach and associated health risks.

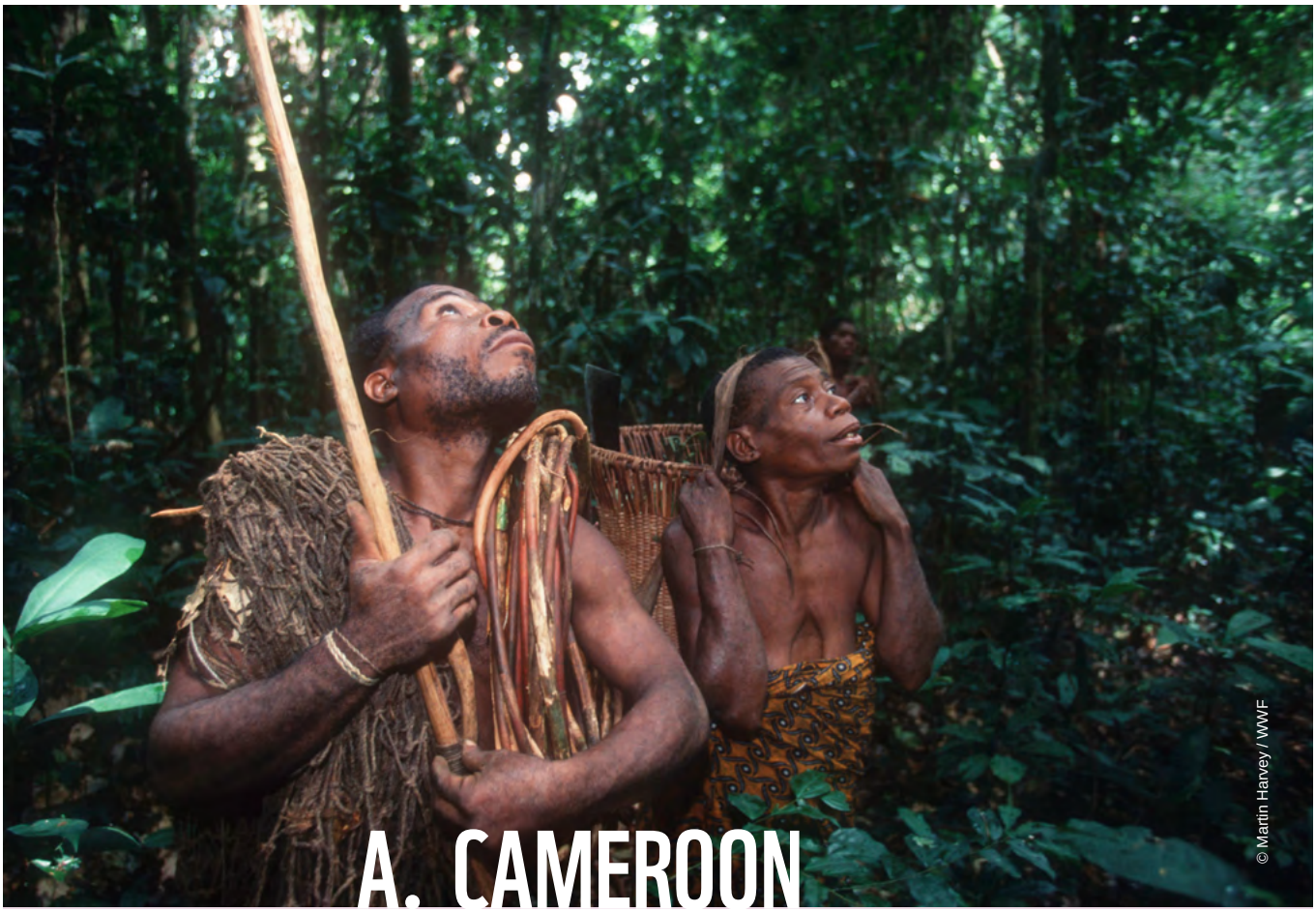
“AS AN NGO OPERATING WITHIN THESE CONTEXTS, WE HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY IN HELPING TO CREATE STRONGER ENABLING CONDITIONS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS; ENSURING THAT COMMUNITIES CO-LEAD THE DESIGN, EXECUTION AND MONITORING OF CONSERVATION PROGRAMMES; AND INFLUENCING GOVERNMENTS SO THAT THEY FULFIL THEIR DUTY TO PROTECT THE RIGHTS OF THEIR CITIZENS.

Dr. Kirsten Schuijt,
Director General, WWF International and
Chairperson of the Action Plan Steering Group


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SECTION 2: PROGRESS ON COUNTRY-LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS



A. CAMEROON

(1.) INTRODUCTION, CONTEXT, SUMMARY[1]

History. WWF has been active in Cameroon since the 1980s. The country is home to more than 1,000 ethnic groups, including some who self-identify as Indigenous Peoples and seek recognition of their way of life and their rights to the land and natural resources that they have stewarded for centuries. It is also a globally outstanding storehouse of biodiversity, including significant populations of elephants and great apes.

In 1994, the government of Cameroon mobilized international partners to help zone an area of 2.3 million hectares in south-eastern Cameroon as priority sites for conservation and development. In 1995, Cameroon created three provisional development and conservation zones, which later became the three national parks of Lobéké, Boumba Bek and Nki.

WWF supports local communities in and around these parks with social development needs as part of an integrated conservation and development scheme. Most of these communities do not have access to safe drinking water, adequate medical care or schools.

Socio-economic development support. Since the start of WWF's work in these landscapes, WWF has invested in supporting community welfare and livelihoods. This work has included:

» **Access rights.** Negotiating with the government to secure access rights of Baka[2] Indigenous Peoples to parks in south-eastern Cameroon for traditional and cultural purposes.

1 As documented in the Management Response and the Year 1 report.

2 The BaMbenga, a forest peoples of Central Africa, is found west of the Oubangui River, straddling Congo, the Central African Republic (CAR), Cameroon, and Gabon. This group includes the Ba'Aka (in northern Congo and in SW CAR), the Baka (in SW Cameroon and northern Gabon) and several small groups in central Gabon.

- **Community forests.** Supplying specific support targeted at Baka communities, including advocating for the designation of over 10,000 hectares of community forests and providing direct support to help community members secure national identity cards and birth certificates.

- **Public health.** Supporting public health activities including improving access to drinking water; building latrines; raising awareness on health issues such as waste management, child malnutrition, HIV/AIDS and zoonoses; and training primary school teachers to educate students on health and environmental issues.

2020-2021. More recently, WWF has worked to progress the commitments made in the Management Response and actions documented in the Year 1 Implementation Update. To deliver on our mission through more inclusive conservation, our work from 2020-2021 included the following:

- **Developing a coordinated strategy.** The overarching conservation strategy for WWF-Cameroon was finalized. This included incorporating feedback from local rights holders and stakeholders and laying out our approach to working with Indigenous Peoples and local community stewards of sustainable development.

- **Improving ranger training.** For example, by convening a workshop for key stakeholders – police officers, local civil society organizations, the National Commission on Human Rights, among others – to review ranger training so it better addresses human rights. Supplementary multi-stakeholder training was organized on human rights that incorporated the recommendation that arose from the workshop.

2021-2022. In 2022, efforts have continued and work has progressed in the areas summarized below (further developed in the 'Report back on 2022').

1. **Addressing access rights.** In Cameroon, we have continued to support the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the government partners and Indigenous Peoples. We advocated for the recognition and protection of access rights, and sought to leverage our influence to position the voice and proposals of communities as primary drivers in the parameters of this refreshed MoU. We expect the MoU to be signed in 2023.

2. **Supporting grievance mechanisms.** We worked with the *Réseau Recherches Actions Concertées Pygmées* (RACOPY - Pygmee Action-Research Coordination Network; an Indigenous Peoples network) and the National Human Rights Commission of Cameroon to facilitate the effective implementation of the grievance mechanism, strengthen the capacities of RACOPY member organizations, and support the independence of the grievance mechanism, particularly regarding financing.

3. **Improving rangers' training on human rights.** In May 2022, with the support of the National Human Rights Commission of Cameroon and the Cameroonian Bar Association, we organized training on human rights at Lobéké National Park for rangers, hunting safari managers, military personnel, police and ASBABUK (a Baka Indigenous Peoples association) communities. There were 79 people that took part in the training. We also supported the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF) in developing a revised bonus system for government rangers to be applied by the government as part of the revised code of conduct implementation.

4. **Embedding environmental & social safeguards and social policies in our work.** WWF has started assessments and conducted stakeholder consultations to develop risk mitigation plans for its activities in TNS (*Tri-national de la Sangha*) and TRIDOM (*Tri-national Dja-Odzala-Minkébé*). This engagement will provide a clearer picture of the risks associated with WWF's activities and how to address and mitigate them.

5. **Finalized our socio-economic strategy.** The socio-economic strategy for WWF-Cameroon was also finalized in August 2022, based on extensive consultations with Indigenous Peoples and local community stewards of sustainable development in the landscapes where WWF-Cameroon operates.

Challenges and lessons learned. While the above progress has been registered, there remain some challenges:

- **Uneven implementation of the MoU.** In addressing access rights through a revised MoU for the Baka communities bordering Lobéké, Boumba Bek and Nki national parks and Ngoyla Wildlife Reserve, recent evaluations demonstrated that the implementation of the preceding MoU (now expired and being revised) was largely uneven. This was due to a variety of factors, including a lack of awareness, the capacity of community relay teams and the scope of the agreement. Refer to page 3 of the Year 1 Implementation Update for further information.

- **Maintaining momentum.** In developing the revised MoU a challenge is to maintain the momentum in the implementation of the MoU action plan, and to mobilize the necessary resources for the process.

- **Resourcing grievance mechanisms.** The administration and implementation of the grievance mechanisms by RACOPY requires substantial human, material and financial resources that are not possessed by the organization at the moment. The financial viability of supporting the grievance mechanism therefore varies between landscapes, which can result in uneven implementation.

(2.) REPORT BACK ON 2022

More detailed information on the points described above is provided below.

1. Addressing access rights.

Lessons from the implementation of the first MoU. In February 2019, the Baka communities bordering Lobéké, Boumba Bek and Nki national parks, under the Baka Indigenous Peoples association ASBABUK, signed a three-year MoU with the government of Cameroon, represented by MINFOF. The agreement stipulated free access by the Baka to the resources in Lobéké, Boumba Bek and Nki national parks. In our 2021 report, we mentioned that the signing of this MoU was a first step toward restoring community access rights, but that its implementation had been insufficient for a variety of reasons. WWF is committed to continuing to support the implementation of this agreement and explore solutions with government, communities and civil society.

After three years of implementation, the MoU expired on 26 February 2022. Several actors have conducted evaluations of the MoU to understand how it has contributed to improved access by the Baka people to resources in the parks and better respect for human rights. The most recent evaluation, held in January 2022, was a multi-stakeholder process commissioned by MINFOF and ASBABUK and co-facilitated by WWF and RACOPY – the Indigenous Peoples network. Participants acknowledged that due to the negative experiences of access restrictions in the past, and insufficient awareness of the MoU among communities, some Baka communities did not enjoy improved access to national parks despite the MoU. They agreed that the MoU had not been fully implemented and that some Baka are still reluctant to enter the parks (limited implementation is due to a variety of factors, including awareness, ethical law enforcement, capacity and scope – refer to page 3 of the Year 1 Implementation Update for further information). Nevertheless, the Baka, MINFOF and WWF agreed that despite the limited implementation, the agreement is an important tool for Indigenous Peoples access to protected areas and natural resources, to perpetuate the Baka's culture and traditions and safeguard the essence of their customs. The Baka welcomed the renewal of the MoU, expected to be signed in 2023.

Incorporating lessons-learned in the renewal and revision of the MoU with stakeholders. WWF provides financial assistance and technical advice, and does not co-manage the parks with the Cameroon government. However, we are keen to use our influence so that MINFOF understands the interest we have in the MoU and our expectations around Indigenous Peoples and human rights. In January 2022, a high-level WWF delegation met with the Cameroon Minister of Forestry and Wildlife and the Minister of Social Affairs and subsequently held consultations with the Baka on the prospects of a much-improved version and implementation of the MoU. Around the same period, and given that the validity of the MoU was about to expire, extensive consultations between RACOPY and various actors led to the creation of a consortium to support ASBABUK in the MoU renewal process.

Following an agreed methodology and roadmap, the consortium consulted the Baka communities and other stakeholders from April to June 2022. A draft MoU was discussed with the communities for further input. The version agreed by communities will be submitted to MINFOF and various stakeholders involved in managing the relevant protected areas and their surroundings, including stakeholders representing the new geographic areas proposed under the revised MoU. These included: the park authorities of Lobéké, Boumba Bek and Nki national parks, and Ngoyla Wildlife Reserve; the divisional and regional delegations of MINFOF; representatives of logging concessions and sport hunting; representatives of the Ministry of Social Affairs; and the traditional rulers. The version resulting from these discussions will be submitted to MINFOF for signature in early 2023.

Establishing the consortium to support ASBABUK was crucial to the MoU renewal process and the usefulness and appropriateness of the agreement. It offered a space for members to talk to each other, put aside their differences and merge resources for the benefit of the Baka communities.

The new MoU will cover a larger geographic area than the previous one. It covers four protected areas and their buffer zones: the national parks of Lobéké, Boumba Bek and Nki and the Ngoyla Wildlife Reserve. The new MoU addresses various issues of Baka participation and representativeness raised in evaluations of the first MoU. These include: (i) issues relating to the relationship between the Baka and rangers; (ii) information and awareness about the MoU among communities and other stakeholders; (iii) adjoining private lands surrounding protected areas; (iv) monitoring and evaluation; and (v) implementation.

An implementation plan for the first year of the new MoU was developed, with clear roles and responsibilities. Effective implementation of this new MoU will strengthen progress toward the restoration of Indigenous Peoples access rights to resources in protected areas in Cameroon. One challenge ahead is to maintain this momentum fostered by the consortium in the implementation of the MoU action plan, and to mobilize the necessary resources for the process.

WWF has learned from the consortium's experience about how to improve our engagement for better collaboration with stakeholders, including with communities. In future, in our work to support communities we will look for synergies with other local actors for greater efficiency. We will regularly use this approach in landscapes where we operate.

Another lesson is the effectiveness of mixed teams of community members (Bantu, Baka) and rangers to monitor clearings in Boumba Bek and Nki national parks. This system has registered the following positive outcomes: (i) strengthened collaboration between rangers and communities in the monitoring of wildlife activities; (ii) stronger community management of the protected area and related decision-making; and (iii) income generation for communities to improve their living conditions.

In April 2022, WWF finalized studies for the potential extension of this system to other sites in Nki National Park in TRIDOM. WWF will continue

to share this experience with all our partners and seek to extend it to all the sites where we work.

2. Supporting grievance mechanisms.

As indicated in the Management Response, WWF committed to supporting landscape-level grievance mechanisms in Lobéké, Boumba Bek, and Nki national parks in south-eastern Cameroon. The grievance mechanism has already been operational in Boumba Bek and Nki, which are on the Cameroonian side of the TRIDOM (*Tri-national Dja-Odzala-Minkébé*), since December 2021 and in Lobéké, which is on the Cameroonian side of the *Tri-national de la Sangha* (TNS) transboundary conservation complex, since 2017. We are in the process of extending them to Campo Ma'an National Park within a Global Environmental Facility (GEF) 7 project. The extension of the grievance mechanism is planned for the coastal landscapes within the next phase of Leading the Change Project Phase II. This is in addition to the WWF-Cameroon country-level complaints channel.

The local grievance mechanism in TNS has undergone changes in its organization and implementation. It was previously administered by CEFAID, a Cameroonian civil society organization focused on the sustainable management of natural resources. The mechanism is now being coordinated by RACOPY and implemented on the ground through RACOPY member organizations, including CEFAID. A capacity-building session for RACOPY members in 2021 helped to harmonize members' understanding of the grievance mechanism and to define the specifics of its implementation for each landscape. RACOPY considers the grievance mechanism to be still in its experimental phase (research-action), and expects it to evolve as it is implemented.

RACOPY evaluates the grievance mechanism as part of its general assemblies held every three months. During these meetings, each implementing partner reports on the state of play in the mechanism's implementation, and RACOPY members make observations and formulate recommendations. RACOPY's coordination ensures recommendations are followed up between each general assembly. In parallel, WWF holds meetings with RACOPY and its member organizations that are implementing the grievance mechanism in two of WWF's intervention landscapes: TNS and TRIDOM. These meetings help to clarify the relationship between the grievance mechanism and WWF, particularly with regard to the independence of the grievance mechanism when it benefits from WWF funding.

After analysing the challenges and limitations observed in the implementation of the grievance mechanism in Lobéké, reported in the Year 1 Implementation Update, we developed a capacity-building plan for CEFAID. Funding from the German government was mobilized and will allow CEFAID to properly implement the grievance mechanisms for the next three years. This funding will help CEFAID to increase its presence, speed up the processing of reported cases of abuse and strengthen its proximity to the communities. This project also provides regular evaluations of CEFAID's implementation of the grievance mechanism in collaboration with RACOPY. An evaluation for the first year of the project is currently underway. The results of this evaluation will provide CEFAID and RACOPY with information on how to improve the effectiveness of the implementation of the grievance mechanism in conservation project areas.

It is important to note that the financial viability of supporting the grievance mechanism varies between landscapes. Its implementation requires substantial human, material and financial resources, which RACOPY does not possess at the moment. WWF continues to work with RACOPY and the National Human Rights Commission of Cameroon to facilitate the effective implementation of the grievance mechanism, strengthen the capacities of RACOPY member organizations and guarantee the independence of the grievance mechanism, particularly regarding financing.

From January 2022 to June 2022, the grievance mechanism administered by CEFAID in Lobéké National Park and parts of Boumba Bek National Park registered grievances from local communities, mostly related to land disputes. In TRIDOM, the grievance mechanism is currently active in 12 communities. Since December 2021, roughly 200 stakeholders have been informed of the grievance mechanism. For reference to the WWF-Cameroon country-level complaints channel, see: https://cameroon.panda.org/speak_up/

3. Improving rangers' training on human rights.

WWF supports the government of Cameroon in carrying out conservation activities. While the government of Cameroon manages the national parks and employs the rangers who patrol them, WWF provides support for logistics, technical advice, financing and small-scale infrastructure projects. WWF also supports training and regular refresher courses for rangers, including on human rights and proper law enforcement procedures. Each year, we organize at least one training session on human rights. This training on human rights is carried out in the following protected and conserved areas: Lobéké, Boumba Bek, Nki and Ngoyla.

In May 2022, with the support of the National Human Rights Commission of Cameroon and the Cameroonian Bar Association, WWF organized a training course on human rights at Lobéké National Park for rangers, hunting safari managers, military personnel, police and ASBABUK communities. There were 79 people who took part in the training. The training focused on the following themes: (i) respect for human rights and good practices in the fight against wildlife crime; (ii) introduction to the problem of wildlife crime and response strategy; (iii) the stages of implementation of the wildlife law; (iv) MINFOF-ASBABUK MoU and its implications for community rights and anti-poaching operations. A monitoring plan was developed and will help to measure the impact of training on improving human rights compliance in surveillance operations. The challenge is to maintain this momentum and continue to deliver at least one training session per year.

Cameroon's MINFOF is addressing issues of human rights and protected areas management. WWF is further supporting MINFOF in developing a revised bonus system for government rangers to be applied by the government as part of the revised code of conduct implementation. The revised bonus system and recently developed code of conduct for rangers have been submitted to the Minister of Forestry and Wildlife for signature. MINFOF also plans to integrate training modules on human rights into major schools that train state agents and executives in the forestry corps. The introduction of human rights courses and competencies into the training curricula of basic and higher educational institutions is a major step forward in improving the quality of training for forestry personnel (rangers). Training institutions include Garoua Wildlife School, the Mbalmayo National Water and Forestry School, and the Dschang Faculty of Agronomic Sciences. WWF is also working with MINFOF, university centres, the education ministry and other actors to develop these training modules into what are referred to as "action competencies" in the field of education for sustainable development.

However, improving capacity through training only goes so far. Without improvements in oversight and accountability, real improvements on the ground are unlikely to be sustainable. MINFOF committed to develop and test the framework of the GEF7 impact project – an innovative governance model for protected area management in Cameroon. WWF committed to accompany MINFOF in this reflection by facilitating discussions and consultations between the various actors working in protected areas in Cameroon and the private sector. It is important to note that due to funding constraints, ranger training was not completed for Boumba Bek or Nki national parks this year.

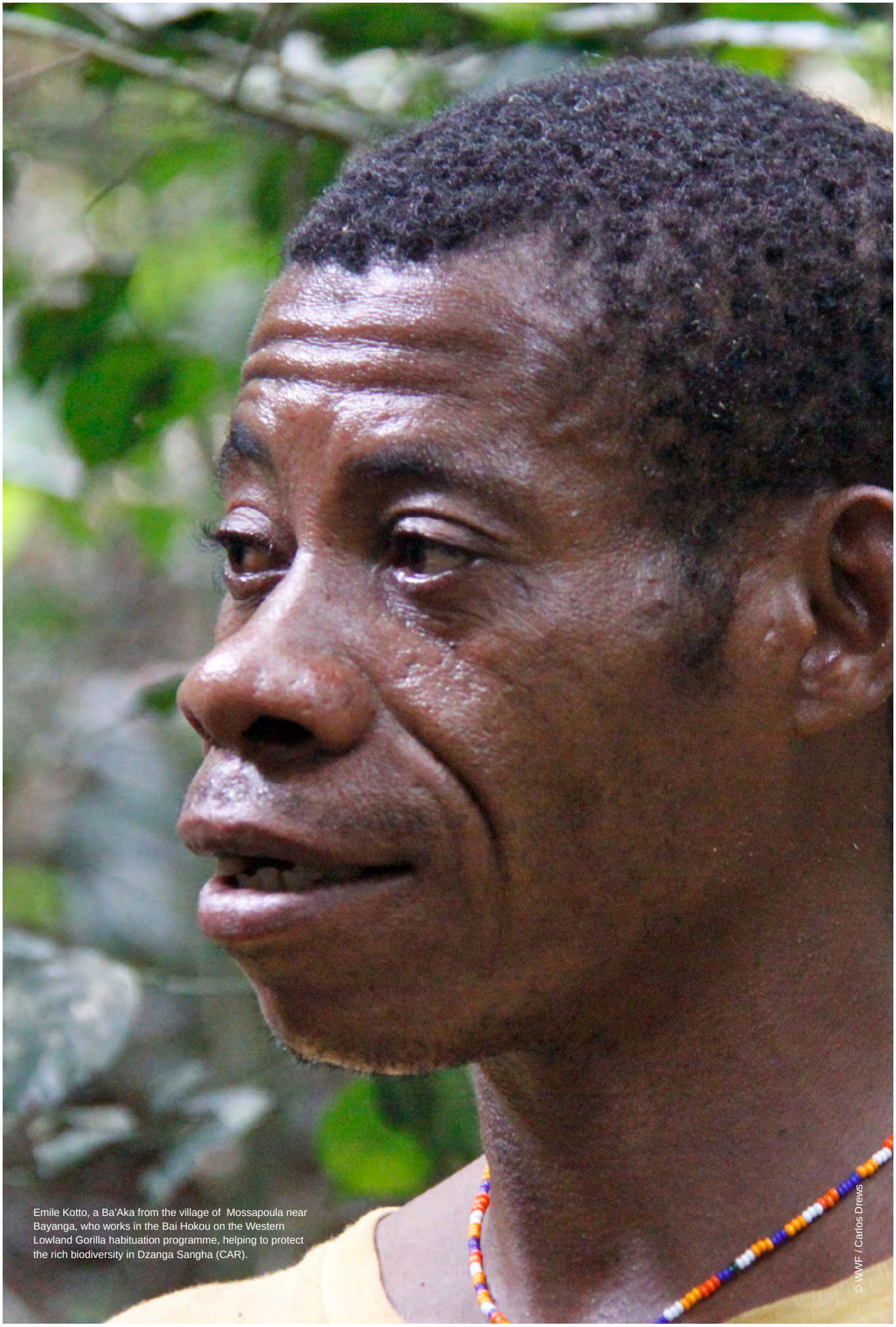
4. Embedding environmental & social safeguards and social policies in our work.

WWF has started assessments and conducted stakeholder consultations to develop risk mitigation plans for its activities in TNS and TRIDOM. The screening phases for Lobéké and TRIDOM were completed in 2021, with the documentation submitted to the WWF Regional Office for Africa and subsequently approved by the WWF International Quality Assurance Committee.

The categorization of the landscapes is also ongoing for Lobéké and TRIDOM. For the TNS and TRIDOM landscapes, consultants have begun preparing mitigation plans. These will be developed through consultations with local communities and other stakeholders carried out by the consultants and by local organizations. This engagement will provide a clearer picture of the risks associated with WWF's activities and how to address and mitigate them. This will also promote coordination and coherence across WWF's work in Cameroon, through the implementation of ESSF - a standardized process. These plans will significantly improve the way WWF functions in these landscapes and how we engage with stakeholders, especially with Indigenous Peoples and local community stewards of sustainable development.

5. Finalized our socio-economic strategy.

The socio-economic strategy for WWF-Cameroon was finalized in August 2022 based on extensive consultations with Indigenous Peoples and local community stewards of sustainable development between January and June 2021 in the landscapes where WWF-Cameroon operates. In these consultations, communities were asked what they expected from WWF in terms of our engagement strategy and conservation approach, and also what activities would be most beneficial to their livelihoods. This feedback guided the development of the socio-economic strategy, which will ultimately support and make more effective WWF-Cameroon's engagement with communities. The strategy will prompt WWF to adapt its areas of intervention to meet the expectations and needs of communities. The socio-economic strategy will be publicly available in early 2023.



Emile Kotto, a Ba'Aka from the village of Mossapoula near Bayanga, who works in the Bai Hokou on the Western Lowland Gorilla habituation programme, helping to protect the rich biodiversity in Dzanga Sangha (CAR).

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B. CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

(1.) INTRODUCTION, CONTEXT, SUMMARY[3]

History. The Dzanga-Sangha Protected Areas (DSPA) complex is a 440,000 hectare protected area located in the south-western corner of the Central African Republic (CAR), in the Yobé-Sangha Prefecture. Established in 1990 by the CAR government with support from WWF, the DSPA encompasses a multi-use area, the Dzanga-Sangha Special Dense Forest Reserve, and Dzanga Ndoki National Park. The Sangha River Trinational Landscape is a designated UNESCO World Heritage site. The DSPA is a stronghold of the vulnerable African forest elephant and other iconic and threatened wildlife, including the endangered western lowland gorilla.

CAR has struggled with periodic conflict and civil strife. There have been two violent coups in the last 30 years, in 1995 and 2013, in addition to other failed attempts. Elections took place in 2016, bringing President Faustin-Archange Touadéra to power. Several years later, instability continued beyond the capital city of Bangui. In Bangui, where the security situation is less volatile, criminal and militia activity remains an obstacle to strong governance.

Despite ongoing turmoil, the DSPA continues to enjoy relative peace and stability. To this day, Dzanga-Sangha remains the only safe area (green zone) that the UN recognizes in CAR outside of the capital. The primary reasons for the markedly different security situation is the decades-old historical presence and effective operations of the DSPA programme. The DSPA includes the presence of a professional, trained ranger force and the protected area's critical role in bolstering the local economy – all of which have created this stable socio-economic and political environment.

3 As documented in the Management Response and the Year 1 report.

The Ba'Aka, a traditionally hunter-gatherer people, have inhabited the area that now encompasses the DSPA for a long time. When settlers from outside the region arrived and established communities, they treated the Ba'Aka as second-class citizens, denying them access to birth certificates, voting, education, institutional medical care, and legal recourse against mistreatment. Some of this discrimination persists to this day. WWF saw the creation of the DSPA not just as a powerful mechanism for conserving the area's diverse ecosystems and wildlife, but also as an opportunity to help the historically mistreated Ba'Aka peoples to have a greater voice in the management of their land and resources.

WWF's work in Dzanga-Sangha also sought to ensure that traditionally disadvantaged voices were heard – that there was a place and a process to air and resolve conflicts on an even playing field. For many years, this work in Dzanga-Sangha (and in many other WWF projects) was largely informal. But in 2016, in partnership with the Human Rights Centre and Ba'Aka community association, that system – known as a conflict resolution and grievance system – was formalized and has become a model for how to provide a path to justice and a voice to people when things go wrong, particularly in high-risk areas. The centre is staffed by a lawyer, a deputy community liaison officer, and 26 village monitors, 85% of whom are Ba'Aka.

To further improve inclusiveness, the Board (*comité de suivi*) – which is the highest decision-making body of DSPA – now includes a representative of the local communities and one observer from the Ba'Aka community as well as an observer from women's groups.

Socio-economic development support. Since the start of WWF's work in this landscape in 1990, WWF has invested in supporting community welfare and livelihoods. Amongst other things, this work has included support for education, as well as health services:

- **Support, since the creation of the Human Rights Centre, in registering over 500 birth certificates** for Indigenous Ba'Aka children, who otherwise could be denied basic citizenship rights such as the ability to attend school, get a paying job, vote or run for office.
- **Free medical services** provided to Ba'Aka community members at a WWF-supported hospital. There is also a mobile medical service that travels to remote Ba'Aka encampments to provide vaccinations and medical services as needed, and to bring specialists to treat complicated cases.
- **Designation of 315,900 hectare Dzanga-Sangha Special Reserve** as a mixed-use area within the DSPA that allows for Ba'Aka communities and others to hunt, forage for forest products and engage in other traditional practices.

2020-2021. More recently, we have worked to progress the commitments made in the Management Response and actions documented in the Year 1 Implementation Update. To deliver on our mission through more inclusive conservation, our work from 2020-2021 has included the following:

- **Supporting the Human Rights Centre.** WWF helped set up and continues to support the Human Rights Centre in Bayanga and is working closely with the Sangha Tri-National Trust Fund to incorporate the centre as an integral part of the future Dzanga Sangha Foundation.
- **Partnering in ranger training.** WWF-CAR signed an agreement with Chengeta Wildlife regarding the training and continuous mentoring of rangers in DSPA. In partnership with WWF, Chengeta Wildlife has developed a training programme for rangers that integrates human rights and social policies based on international norms.

2021-2022. WWF-CAR has continued to take action in 2022 (further developed in the 'Report back on 2022') by:

1. **Continuing to support the Human Rights Centre.** WWF is committed to working towards improving the sustainability and independence of the Human Rights Centre in Bayanga. This year, we continued efforts to support funding for the Human Rights Centre through the Sangha Tri-National Foundation.
2. **Ongoing partnering in ranger training.** WWF is committed to improving the ongoing human rights training it provides to rangers with the support of its safeguards experts and employing good international practices. We have continued to work with Chengeta Wildlife to embed human rights into ranger training curricula, support inclusive recruitment processes and share expertise on monitoring.
3. **Collaborating with the Ministry of Justice.** Implementing environmental and social safeguards through a reinforced partnership with the CAR's Ministry of Justice.

Challenges and lessons learned. While the above progress has been registered, there remain some challenges:

- Building the institutional capacity of the Human Rights Centre in Bayanga remains a challenge. The centre needs to strengthen its own management and financial capacity, including being able to manage larger grants. This institutional strengthening is required to enable the centre to become a fully independent entity and to assure national and international donors that the centre is managing their financial support efficiently, as recommended by the Independent Panel report.

(2.) REPORT BACK ON 2022

More detailed information on the points described above is provided below.

1. Continuing to support the Human Rights Centre.

Working to guarantee sustainable funding for the Human Rights Centre through the Sangha Tri-National Foundation (FTNS).

The Human Rights Centre has been present in Bayanga – the largest town in the region – since 2015, and is administered by an independent human rights organization, *Maison de l'Enfant et de la Femme Pygmées* (MEFP). WWF helped establish the centre and provide technical assistance and funding. The centre works to ensure respect for human rights and provides legal and judicial support to victims of maltreatment and other abuses punishable by law in CAR.

The centre is recognized and respected by local communities. In addition to providing birth certificates and other legal documentation to help individuals claim their rights as citizens, it has also become the place where complainants now go to deliver their grievances. In a country plagued with violence and instability, its existence is a deterrent against the use of force as a means of settling disputes between members of the community. The centre has a grievance management mechanism, which was developed with the participation of community members and validated by all parties during a workshop organized in Bayanga.

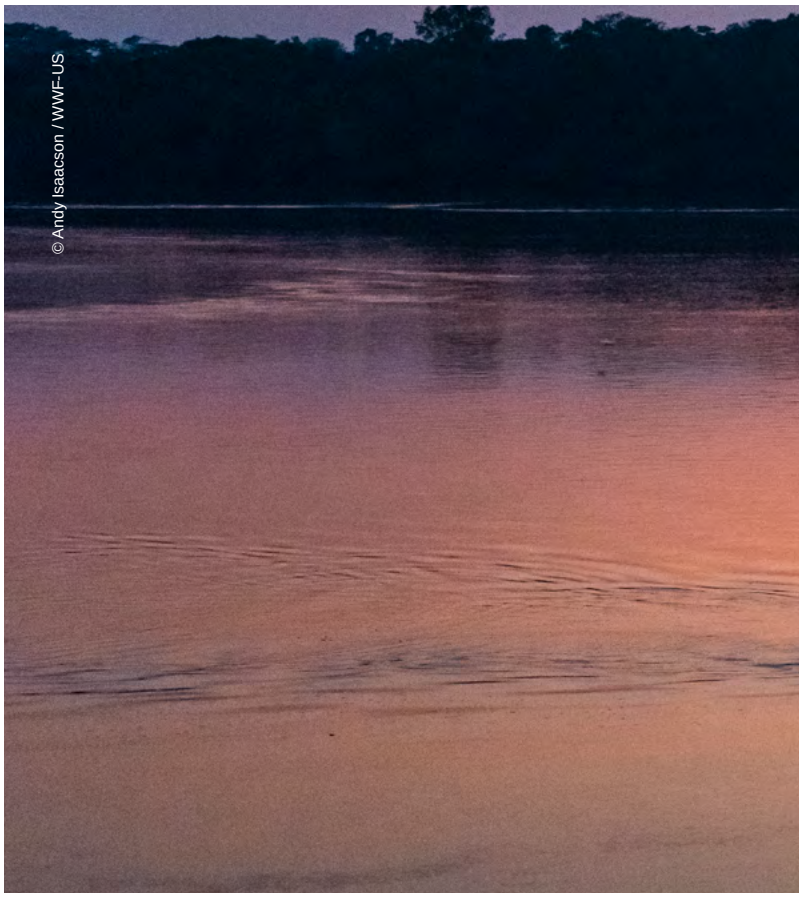
The Human Rights Centre also carries out awareness campaigns and promotes equal rights of Indigenous populations, in particular the Ba'Aka peoples. It advocates that the Ba'Aka are taken into account and included in all social representation bodies, such as local development committees and town halls. The Human Rights Centre also carries out education and training to promote equal rights of Indigenous populations.

The improved awareness-raising efforts have translated into greater use of the Human Rights Centre in Bayanga between January and July 2022. For reference to the Dzanga-Sangha complaints channel, see: https://dzanga-sangha.org/complaintresolution/

Sharing lessons learned and replication. The centre has become a model for CAR and the region. At the national level, a partner organization, African Parks Network, has reached out to WWF to understand and learn from the Bayanga centre for its work in the east of the country in Chinko Nature Reserve. It is keen to replicate the Bayanga model. Similarly, as part of WWF's work in Ngotto Forest Reserve, located halfway between Dzanga-Sangha and Bangui, a centre for human rights like the one in Bayanga will be created with funding from the World Bank.

At the regional level, Lobéké National Park in Cameroon has sought to replicate the Bayanga model, and also requested a learning exchange trip between the two centres. In the Republic of the Congo, Nouabalé Ndoki National Park is also working to replicate the model.

The following progress has been achieved in 2022:


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- Obtaining funding from FTNS to enable the centre to provide legal and judicial assistance to victims of abuse or mistreatment. This funding is channelled through WWF-CAR as part of the Dzanga-Sangha annual work plan.
- Appointing a WWF-CAR focal point with the Human Rights Centre – as well as acting as the first point of contact, this staff member assists the centre manager in data collection and reporting back to the Dzanga-Sangha management on a monthly basis.
- Approving a complaints management mechanism, signed by all stakeholders, which now serves as a reference for complainants.

2. Ongoing partnering in ranger training and monitoring.

Working with Chengeta Wildlife to embed human rights into ranger training curricula, support inclusive recruitment processes and share expertise on monitoring.

Inclusive recruitment. Chengeta Wildlife supported the recruitment of 25 rangers in 2022 through an open and transparent recruitment process; there are now 12 rangers who identify as Indigenous Peoples and, additionally, 12 women rangers out of the 128 rangers operating in DSPA.

The inclusion of members of Indigenous communities as rangers demonstrates the value placed on Indigenous knowledge of landscapes and ecosystems. Non-Indigenous colleagues have benefited from the knowledge and know-how of Indigenous colleagues during joint missions.



WWF supports the steps taken to reflect the diversity of local society in ranger composition. There is an expectation that this diversity will aid in further reducing conflict between rangers and local communities by increasing sentiments of respect and understanding.

Training. WWF-CAR partners with Chengeta Wildlife on the training and continuous mentoring of rangers in DSPA. In collaboration with WWF, Chengeta Wildlife has developed a training programme for rangers that integrates human rights and social policies based on international norms.

Over the last year, the number of human rights modules in Chengeta Wildlife's ranger training programme has increased. In June 2022, Chengeta Wildlife completed targeted human rights training for all rangers in Dzanga-Sangha, currently numbering 128.

Monitoring. Rangers have been employed by Dzanga-Sangha since the establishment of the protected area in 1990, and have been an integral part of its conservation successes. They have confiscated well over 3,000 guns, 26,000 rounds of ammunition and 750,000 snares. Thanks to their efforts, declining elephant populations have recovered and great ape populations remain stable. Over the past year, WWF has been working with our partner Chengeta Wildlife to support anti-poaching teams to use and analyse data collected via the Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool (SMART). SMART is a technology system that provides a platform to collect, measure and evaluate data to improve the effectiveness of wildlife conservation efforts and law enforcement monitoring.

The rangers from Dzanga-Sangha also form part of an innovative governance structure based at Niangouté camp in the south of Dzanga-Sangha. It is composed of personnel of the three nations of the Sangha Tri-national World Heritage site who jointly patrol the border between these countries.

3. Collaborating with the Ministry of Justice.

Implementing environmental and social safeguards through a reinforced partnership with the CAR Ministry of Justice.

WWF has strengthened its cooperation with the CAR Ministry of Justice. The aim is to increase the understanding of environmental and social safeguards as a critical factor of social cohesion. This collaboration also offers an opportunity to solicit stronger support from the Ministry of Justice so that the Ministry can better take care of victims.

In this context, in August 2022, WWF provided financial support for a trip by a team from the court of appeals in Bouar province. The five-person team visited and monitored all of the tribunals, judicial clinics and prisons under the court's jurisdiction. This visit was the first in two years. The objectives include identifying all cases related to transboundary poaching incidents, as well as cases of gender-based violence and cases of alleged abuse of Indigenous communities that had not yet gone to trial.



C. DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

(1.) INTRODUCTION, CONTEXT, SUMMARY[4]

History. WWF has been established in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) since the early 1980s and has played an important role in the creation or management of most of the protected areas, including Virunga, Kahuzi-Biega, Okapi Wildlife Reserve and Salonga. We have been active in Salonga through a co-management agreement since 2015.

Salonga National Park (SNP) lies in the Salonga-Lukenie-Sankuru forest landscape within the central region of the DRC. The landscape straddles an area of some 10 million hectares. The park covers an area of 3.4 million hectares, making it the largest tropical forest park on the African continent and the third largest protected rainforest in the world. The area is a bastion of biodiversity – a critical habitat for bonobos (an estimated 40% of the remaining world population), forest elephants, Congo peacock and other threatened species.

The agency with responsibility for protected areas in the DRC is the *Institut Congolais pour la Conservation de la Nature* (ICCN), which is a public enterprise under the supervision of the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development. DRC law prohibits most activities in national parks and other protected areas, including bringing firearms and other hunting weapons within park boundaries; fishing of any kind; hunting or killing any wildlife except in self-defence; and constructing houses, farms and sheds.

Weak governance, poor infrastructure and government services, the remoteness of the landscape, other factors make Salonga a particularly complex environment in which to operate.

4 As documented in the Management Response and the Year 1 report.

Socio-economic development support. In partnership with ISCO, OXFAM and others, WWF has supported efforts to foster the livelihoods of communities based on the improvement of agricultural techniques, market access, strengthening of community governance structures and the creation of value chains. WWF-DRC has supported socio-economic development activities within communities living in the landscape, including:

- **Social Forestry.** A key focus recently has been on social forestry, and providing tenure and securing access rights for forest-dwelling communities through the designation of community concessions, permitted under new national legislation, supported by the government, WWF, public donors and other conservation organizations. WWF has started work with communities countrywide to establish community concessions, where rights have been transferred. Forty such concessions have been created across the DRC, of which six are in Salonga pending sign-off by the governor of the Tshuapa province.
- **Agriculture.** WWF has helped support the establishment of 499 local development committees, farmer organizations and coffee producer associations.
- **Community development.** WWF and other development partners are critical given the limited institutional government presence in the region. WWF has supported the development of two community health centres, supported microenterprises (e.g. soap making), and invested in literacy education for BaTwa people. Project spending for staff salaries and other operational costs also contribute to the local economy.

2020-2021. More recently, WWF has worked to progress the commitments made in the Management Response to the Independent Panel Report, and actions documented in the Year 1 Implementation Update to deliver on our mission through more inclusive conservation. In DRC, WWF conditioned future engagement with ICCN on establishing a new partnership that better integrates human rights and accountability. We committed to this in the Management Response and reported on its implementation in the Year 1 progress update report.

- **ICCN Human Rights Directorate.** In 2020, with WWF's support, ICCN established an internal directorate to oversee compliance with human rights obligations. The mandate of this directorate includes all national parks and involves ensuring that cases of human rights malfeasance are escalated, reviewed and addressed.
- **Agreement with ICCN.** WWF negotiated a new partnership agreement that met the conditions laid out in the Management Response, including that all law enforcement operations and activities are compliant with WWF's Principles for Enforcement and Rangers and that the conduct guide applies to all ICCN staff responsible for law enforcement. WWF's opposition to the resettlement of communities was also affirmed in the new ICCN/WWF partnership agreement. The agreement was signed in 2021 for a duration of five years.
- **Rolling out the conduct guide.** As signalled in the Management Response, we co-developed a conduct guide with ICCN for government rangers in Salonga based on international norms, which would also serve as the foundation for reviews and improvement of nationally agreed codes of conduct and procedures. The conduct guide for rangers has been in use since December 2019, and all rangers now sign the code upon completion of their training cycle.
- **Human rights symposium.** Recognizing the need for collaboration between in-country conservation and human rights organizations and donors, WWF supported the convening of the May 2021 symposium on human rights to discuss the actions the park authority should take to increase protection, and at which ICCN's new human rights directorate was presented to donors and partner NGOs.

2021-2022. In this second year since the Panel's recommendations were released, WWF and ICCN established a closer working relationship and greater alignment and agreement on the necessity of taking a human rights-based approach to law enforcement in the country.

As mentioned above, WWF and ICCN have navigated the first year under the new partnership agreement for co-management of the Salonga National Park, signed in October 2021 and in effect for five years. Under this agreement, ICCN's ongoing and primary responsibilities are the management of law enforcement and law enforcement staff, and site security. ICCN is being assisted in law enforcement training and strategy by Chengeta Wildlife, an international NGO specializing in conservation-related law enforcement. Chengeta Wildlife and WWF have a long-term partnership that was further extended with a new MoU in June 2022.

WWF provides technical, administrative and logistics support and seeks funding for the Salonga project. Shared responsibilities include the development of site protocols, park management, research and biomonitoring, implementing rural development activities with communities in the buffer zone, establishing a grievance mechanism and promoting improved inclusive governance. This work has continued in 2022.

The engagement of partners with expertise in law enforcement (Chengeta Wildlife) and human rights (JUREC, a national NGO) has significantly contributed to the objective of promoting ethical law enforcement in the park. These actions are part of a broader and systematic effort to strengthen human rights protections in the context of protected area management in the DRC. The creation of operating conditions to allow for the protection of human rights – be it through policy or reform – requires a multitude of actors including government, donors and other conservation and development organizations. In the negotiation of a partnership agreement with ICCN, we have continued to press for systems change to strengthen human rights protections by the government, particularly in relation to Indigenous Peoples.



In 2022, progress was made with ICCN adopting a grievance mechanism to be implemented in all protected areas in the country. The grievance mechanism was influenced by and adheres closely to the mechanism that was developed for Salonga.

Challenges and lessons learned. While the above progress has been registered, challenges remain:

- **Funding.** Delays in the receipt of funding were experienced in 2022, impacting the implementation of the park's operational plan. This resulted in staff layoffs, the cessation of rural development activities and delivery of contractual obligations to ICCN, and stalling of projects centred on the voluntary demarcation of park boundaries and securing community tenure over forest concessions in buffer zones. In late 2022, multiple funding contracts with public and private sector donors were signed, providing a more stable multi-year financial outlook.
- **Engaging Chengeta Wildlife.** Engaging Chengeta Wildlife as a long-term partner will help ensure regular monitoring of ranger performance. At the moment, however, we are able to retain Chengeta Wildlife for periodic training blocks only due to funding shortfalls. Communications equipment for the rangers has been purchased but funds to build the command and control centre, which is a key element in effective monitoring.
- **Grievances.** While the grievance mechanism is starting to work and grievances are starting to be logged, in some instances we have not moved fast enough to escalate issues properly.

(2.) REPORT BACK ON 2022

More detailed information on the points described above is provided below.

1. Advancing the professionalization of law enforcement.

One of the key provisions in the ICCN/WWF partnership agreement is to engage professional law enforcement trainers. WWF staff in DRC are not trained in law enforcement and ICCN staff have not had the opportunity to access international-standard law enforcement training. The selected law enforcement organization, Chengeta Wildlife, specializes in conservation and the application of the law in the context of respect for human rights. They provide ongoing training for rangers and advice on park protection strategies, infrastructure planning and equipment needs. They also work with ICCN managers employed in the park to raise their capacity for planning and implementation of ethical law enforcement.

In 2019, WWF contracted Chengeta Wildlife for a first training session targeted at all ICCN rangers and



managers, which was interrupted by travel restrictions due to COVID-19. Chengeta Wildlife resumed the interrupted training session in November 2021, with a basic training session, including training on respect for human rights, completed by 266 rangers. On completion of their training, all rangers sign the ICCN-approved code of conduct and are given the summary "100 lines" from the code to carry with them as a reference.

In April and May 2022, advanced training was held for 27 rangers concentrating on those posted to patrol areas closest to the Monkoto headquarters. In October 2022, Chengeta Wildlife began a two-month training session. The training was broken up into two components. The first was theoretical and trained rangers on the necessary practices and procedures for wildlife protection; 34 rangers attended this session. The second session was on leadership development and human rights, and the use of biomonitoring and GPS devices that allow rangers to collect accurate records of patrol tracks, identify the location of incidents and complete wildlife surveys while on regular patrols.

Chengeta Wildlife, in collaboration with ICCN and with support from WWF, has also prepared an infrastructure and law enforcement development plan. This will place eight main patrol posts along the borders of the park, allowing rangers to control known and likely access routes for poachers and to cover ground while on regular patrols more efficiently and comprehensively. More than 20 existing two-person patrol posts within the park will be decommissioned, and the long-term plan is to post a stable contingent of 38 rangers to each of the larger eight patrol posts.

2. Embedding environmental and social safeguards and social policies in our work.

Progress on ensuring that an Environmental and Social Safeguards Framework (ESSF) is in place for the Salonga landscape has been delayed, primarily due to the length of time to negotiate a new partnership agreement between ICCN and WWF that meets WWF's conditions. After this was signed in October 2021, WWF continued the process of contracting a consultant to complete the impact assessment and mitigation framework and carry out stakeholder consultations in conservation project areas, in line with our ESSF.

In preparation for these consultations, a working group was formed with members representing government, partners and communities. Two meetings of the group have been held to inform them of the ESSF process and for them to discuss and understand their role. WWF-DRC has hired an ESSF officer who is facilitating the group meetings and guiding them through the process.

The expected results from the impact assessment and risk mitigation framework are that WWF will have a comprehensive understanding of the social and environmental risks of all programmes that WWF supports in the landscape and an appropriate, timely and effective risk mitigation plan in place to reduce or eliminate any negative impacts of project activities. A new contract was signed with a consultant for the development of a mitigation framework, targeting a March 2023 deadline.

3. Launching an inclusive process for third-party managed grievance mechanisms.

Grievance mechanisms in Salonga. In September 2021, the then-interim Director General of ICCN (who left that post in September 2022) committed to developing a common grievance mechanism to be applied in all protected areas in DRC. In June 2022, the ICCN Human Rights Directorate held a pre-validation workshop for the 'Guide on Complaints Mechanism for all Protected Areas in DRC', which was developed with the support of the German government and our local partner, JUREC. The draft shared in June 2022 is very closely aligned with the mechanism that is being put in place in Salonga, and WWF anticipates no disruption to our activities once the ICCN guide is adopted.

Activities related to grievances in 2022. The ICCN-WWF partnership agreement includes a commitment to engage an independent agency responsible for ensuring that human rights are protected within the larger Salonga programme. JUREC has been contracted for three years to ensure that all communities in the Salonga landscape have access to a grievance mechanism.

In the first half of 2022, JUREC reached 110 villages, mostly within close proximity to Monkoto, where the coordination office for Salonga is located. The first-year evaluation process was completed in late March, and following an internal review process, the second-year contract was signed at the end of May. Now that this mechanism is in place, we expect grievances to be raised more frequently. We will focus our efforts on the proper management and escalation of complaints in line with our process.

On the staffing and operations of the grievance mechanisms, progress has been made: 20 field monitors have been appointed and equipped with bicycles and cell phones to facilitate communication between remote villages and Monkoto. JUREC has been trained to improve its financial and administrative management, and how to maintain a database of all complaints. It has greatly improved its proficiency and confidence in developing the grievance mechanism, as demonstrated through its support to draft the ICCN complaints mechanism that will be applied in all protected areas in DRC.


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A joint investigation team was set up to review complaints transmitted to the park management unit, including a legal affairs and litigation officer of the Salonga National Park Management Unit and two JUREC lawyers. Investigations related to the rangers have been taken and reports are being finalized. WWF has asked the deputy site manager to take sanctions in the application of ICCN staff regulations for the rangers found at fault. Cases related to the compensation of communities living in the park, before its creation, are currently under review by the government. For reference to the WWF-DRC country-level complaints channel, see: https://www.wwfdrc.org/politique_de_gestion_des_plaintes_au_wwfrdc/

We remain committed to tackling the issues of forest-use rights and involuntary resettlement. There have been no actions taken by the government either to advance or restrict access rights or resettlement in the past year. As a result, no discussions between the Ministry of Environment and Rural Development and WWF took place concerning community access to park resources. Under DRC law, resource extraction from Salonga National Park, as a Category II protected area, is not allowed.

4. Ensuring the long-term sustainability of Salonga National Park.

A consultation has been initiated to investigate foundation models for park governance and to draft a plan that ICCN and WWF can implement to establish a Salonga Foundation that will assume responsibility for all aspects of park operations including governance, fundraising and partner engagement. The consultation is expected to be completed in early 2023. Instituting a Salonga Foundation will raise the profile of the park, with greater reach to attract funders, while enabling the park to rise to international standards of protection and management by securing long-term partnerships with technical experts, local and international NGOs, and community leaders.





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D. THE REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

(1.) INTRODUCTION, CONTEXT, SUMMARY[5]

History. Espace TRIDOM Interzone Congo (ETIC) is a conservation programme of the Ministry of Forest Economy and Rural Development and WWF that covers 2.1 million hectares in the northern part of the Republic of the Congo (ROC) on the border with Cameroon. Therein, the biologically rich Messok Dja forest is home to endangered forest elephants, western lowland gorillas and chimpanzees, and is a key animal migration corridor between Cameroon and the ROC. Messok Dja is a forested area within ETIC of nearly 150,000 hectares that has been proposed for designation as a protected area by the government.

WWF has been focusing its efforts on empowering local communities to engage in the process and ensure that Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) has been obtained and maximizing conservation outcomes whether or not a protected area designation materializes. WWF is advocating that the FPIC process will lead to an agreement between stakeholders that allows for the effective inclusion of communities in protected area management, including a change in law if needed.

Socio-economic development support. Since the start of WWF's work in this landscape (2005), we have also invested in community development activities, including:

- **Establishing a multi-stakeholder platform for natural resource management and governance around Messok Dja.** It is composed of local communities, Indigenous Peoples, members of the private sector and government representatives. The platform decides and implements the activities with the support of the community team of the ETIC programme. It also includes a community-led complaints system.

5 As documented in the Management Response and the Year 1 report.

- **Supporting education efforts,** including building or renovating schools, providing school materials to local students (including Ba'Aka children), funding teachers and leading educational awareness programmes.
- **Establishing a community insurance system for human-wildlife conflict,** which pays participating farmers for damages incurred to property by wildlife, in particular elephants and great apes.

2020-2021. More recently, we have worked to progress the commitments made in the Management Response to the Independent Panel Report, and actions documented in the Year 1 Implementation Update. To deliver on our mission through more inclusive conservation, our work from 2020-2021 has included the following:

- **Strengthening our engagement with Indigenous Peoples and local community stewards** of sustainable development through advocating for the inclusion of more Ba'Aka community members in government ranger teams and hiring Indigenous Peoples liaison officers.
- **Supporting FPIC in Messok Dja.**
- **Advancing environmental and social safeguards implementation** in the ETIC landscape by seeking external input and conducting stakeholder consultations, carrying out an environmental and social impact assessment, and beginning to develop a mitigation framework.

2021-2022. In 2022, efforts have continued and work has progressed in the areas summarized below (further developed in the 'Report back on 2022').

1. **Continuing to strengthen our engagement with Indigenous Peoples and local community stewards of sustainable development.** We leveraged the multi-stakeholder platform to gather insights and perspectives from local communities to better inform our work.
2. **Embedding environmental and social safeguards and social policies in our work.** The environmental and social management plan for ETIC has been finalized and includes the opinions and recommendations of stakeholders gathered through the multi-stakeholder platform. The plan was approved by WWF's Conservation Quality Committee (CQC) in February 2022 and will continue to be implemented in line with our ESSF.
3. **Improving our grievance mechanisms.** WWF-ROC has supported the multi-stakeholder platform in updating the complaints mechanism, by adding aspects concerning the safety of complainants against retaliation.
4. **Revising the ETIC MoU.** We have finalised the first part of incorporating WWF's environmental and social safeguards and human rights principles into the ETIC landscape agreement by negotiating and agreeing a new Cooperation Agreement with the ROC government in November 2022. The Cooperation Agreement is the primary agreement on which our MoUs with the ROC government are premised on. With the Cooperation Agreement now in place, we will now commence the review and renewal of the ETIC MoU.
5. **Supporting a code of conduct and supporting disciplinary consequences for government rangers.** We continued to support the ETIC disciplinary council and advocate that all allegations and penalties for misconduct are properly investigated and reviewed.
6. **Providing input into the design of the national training curriculum for rangers.** WWF-ROC has drafted a training guide on compliance with human rights for wildlife law enforcement officers and government rangers. A total of 45 rangers from ETIC and Ntokou-Pikounda National Park (NPNP) received human rights, ethics and compliance training in 2022.
7. **Establishing a country-office presence and building our capacity.** WWF initiated negotiations with the ROC government to establish a country office presence in Brazzaville for more efficient operations (heretofore, managed from the regional hub in Gabon). We also hired a Country Coordinator and Finance Manager. The recruitment process was finalized in November 2022 for a Conservation Manager, and the selected candidate is expected to be onboarded in early 2023.

Challenges and lessons learned. While the above progress has been registered, there remain some challenges:

- The WWF-ROC is a small team, and due to staff turnover, the office suffered morale issues and weakened capacity. This challenge is being resolved through the hiring described above.
- In addition, the remote finance and human resource management by WWF-Gabon has further complicated the management of the WWF's programme in the ROC. As noted above, these should be resolved with the institutional presence based in Brazzaville.

(2.) REPORT BACK ON 2022

More detailed information on the points described above is provided below.

1. Continuing to strengthen our engagement with Indigenous Peoples and local community stewards of sustainable development.

In December 2019, a multi-stakeholder platform for natural resource management and governance around Messok Dja was established. The platform brings together local authorities, Indigenous Peoples, local communities, female leaders, ETIC programme leadership, and representatives from the government and private sector (logging concessions and mining). The platform decides and implements community development activities with the support of the community team of the ETIC programme. It also includes a community-led complaints system.

We continue to leverage this multi-stakeholder platform in the execution of our place-based work in Messok Dja; for example, in gathering insights and feedback on how best to mitigate impacts and risks arising from our activities. This was done in the development of the Environmental and Social Mitigation Plan for ETIC (refer to section 2 below).

2. Embedding environmental & social safeguards and social policies in our work.

The ETIC landscape, including the proposed protected area of Messok Dja, was screened for risks and identified as having special considerations[6] and elevated risks. In 2021, we sought external input and conducted stakeholder consultations, carried out an environmental and social impact assessment, and began developing a mitigation plan.

In line with our Environmental and Social Safeguard Framework (ESSF), we have continued our work to finalize an Environmental and Social Mitigation Plan for our place-based work in ETIC. Through this process, we seek the voice, opinions and views of those who may be impacted by our place-based work and embed these in the design and operationalization of our activities. In WWF-ROC we did this by leveraging the multi-stakeholder platform.

Our collaboration with community members and Indigenous Peoples allowed for the joint definition of roles and responsibilities to facilitate the effective management and mitigation of potential risks and adverse impacts. The mitigation measures, which frame our activities and how we perform and carry out projects, were amended and subsequently approved by the ETIC multi-stakeholder platform.

As such, the mitigation plan was developed in consultation with the community. In February 2022, the ETIC Environmental and Social Mitigation Plan was approved by the CQC and will continue to be implemented in line with our ESSF. This will allow us to effectively implement the ROC government's vision for Messok Dja.

6 As per our ESSF, special consideration landscapes are those with potential for significant adverse social or environmental impact because they are in fragile or conflict-affected states, in regions with significant histories of systemic human rights abuses, or have multiple risks that are complex and compound each other.

3. Improving the grievance mechanism.

Grievance mechanisms were put in place in the ETIC and NPNP landscapes in 2017 and 2019, respectively. The grievance mechanisms are open to anybody, designed to respect confidentiality if requested, and can receive complaints in any official ROC language or the mother tongue of the affected party. Implementation of the ETIC mechanism shifted to a local multi-stakeholder platform – consisting of representatives from Indigenous Peoples and local community stewards of sustainable development, local authorities, local associations, etc. – when it was formed in 2017.

The complaints mechanism is managed by a special committee, the Complaints Management Commission, comprised of the following representatives:

- Representatives from the multi-stakeholder platforms (where these are functional in ETIC and in Ntokou for NPNP) or village representatives.
- Representatives from local NGOs (if any).
- The relevant village chief linked to the grievance under investigation.
- The ETIC or NPNP complaints focal point.
- A WWF team member of the Wildlife Crime Unit.
- Any relevant outside member (e.g. witnesses, local NGO representatives, local government employees etc.).

WWF has supported the Complaints Management Commission in improving the complaints mechanism by adding aspects concerning the safety of complainants against retaliation. These include:

- Exclusion of members of the Complaints Management Commission if they are found to be directly or indirectly involved in the complaint.
- Referral to the judiciary for common law cases such as serious physical assaults, which can be made at any time during the implementation of the procedure.
- The possibility of recourse for the complainant, at any time, for complaints relating to WWF activities to the WWF Ombudsperson who is placed at the international level and whose involvement does not depend on the severity of complaints at the local level.
- The introduction of sanctions against persons involved in the implementation of the complaints and conflict management procedure, who make threats or have attitudes likely to intimidate or corrupt the complainant and/or witnesses. Protection has also been extended to witnesses.

In the ETIC landscape, every complaint filed since the establishment of the mechanism in 2018 has been closed. Refer to the case study on grievance mechanisms in Section 4.

4. Revising the ETIC MoU.

In February 2022, WWF-ROC and the ROC government signed a one-year extension of the ETIC landscape agreement to provide time to facilitate a joint evaluation of the agreement and revise it to incorporate human rights principles. As a first step, WWF and the ROC government have signed a new Cooperation Agreement in November 2022, that incorporates WWF environmental and social safeguards and human rights principles in all the target landscapes, including in ETIC.

Next steps include a joint evaluation of the ETIC MoU and negotiation of a new MoU for the ETIC landscape, aligned to the Cooperation Agreement.

5. Supporting a code of conduct and disciplinary consequences for government rangers.

WWF continues to advocate for the government to adopt the code of conduct at the national level. WWF has made clear that the adoption and effective implementation of the code of conduct are prerequisites for its continued provision of support to rangers.

The ETIC code of conduct includes guidance on the prevention of misconduct, corruption and discrimination; ensuring ethical behaviour; good local community engagement; respect for Indigenous peoples; and respect for human rights. Breaches are grounds for disciplinary action, including dismissal, which is the responsibility of the government upon recommendation by the ETIC disciplinary committee.

The ETIC disciplinary committee – composed of government officials and WWF-ROC representatives – was established in 2018 when the ETIC code of conduct for rangers was adopted. The disciplinary committee issues verdicts on allegations of misconduct. These are later ratified by government representatives.



As a member of the disciplinary committee, WWF advocates that all allegations and penalties for misconduct are properly investigated and reviewed, and that all criminal cases are referred to local prosecutors. To mitigate against the risk of abuses on patrols, we also use this platform to support the continued use of independent observers and patrol control rooms for monitoring ranger patrols, which have been in place for ETIC patrol missions since 2019.

From June 2021 to October 2022, disciplinary action was taken against three rangers related to breaches in ethical conduct. As a result, one ranger did not have their contract renewed.

In 2022, work was also carried out on the revision of the performance bonus system to better incentivize the application of the code of conduct. An updated version of the bonus scheme has been developed and finalized by WWF-ROC. Work is ongoing to secure formal approval and adoption.


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6. Providing input into the design of the national training curriculum for rangers.

WWF-ROC continued to support the training of rangers on human rights, ethics, criminal procedures and gender issues. WWF-ROC continued to work with its partners to identify local third-party training providers. Trainers who participated in these sessions were experts from the Ministry of Forest Economy, the Ministry of Justice and other relevant sectors. WWF teams also provided training support. A total of 45 rangers from ETIC and NPNP received human rights, ethics and compliance training in 2022.

WWF has been also working to draft a training guide on compliance with human rights for wildlife law enforcement officers and rangers across the ETIC and NPNP landscapes. The final draft of this document was submitted in late 2021 to the government and the National Human Rights Commission for their review and validation. Once validated, this guide will be used country-wide to orient and harmonize training modules on codes of conduct and human rights for rangers and other personnel involved in wildlife law enforcement.

7. Establishing a country-office presence and building our capacity.

WWF has been operating in the ROC through the regional office in Gabon. In mid-2022, WWF initiated negotiations with the ROC government to establish a country-office presence based out of Brazzaville. This permanent institutional presence, in closer proximity to decision makers and project sites, will facilitate WWF's work logistically and operationally. From June to October 2022, discussions focused on the content of the country agreement, including a workshop with the participation of the Ministry of Forest and Economy and WWF colleagues to finalize the draft agreement. In addition, in November 2022, a cooperation agreement was signed between the ROC government and WWF-ROC amid the backdrop of UN Climate Change Convention COP27. Preparations are currently underway to commence office registration with the Ministry of the Interior. This will allow WWF to offer employment contracts to staff directly from the ROC. Following this, an application will be made for a country agreement.

WWF's presence in the ROC is a foundation upon which to strengthen our capacity in the country. For local administrative reasons, a period of staff turnover was necessary before renewing our hiring efforts to put in place our team. We have since gone on to hire a WWF-ROC Country Coordinator and Finance Manager. The recruitment process was finalized in November 2022 for a Conservation Manager, and the selected candidate is expected to be onboarded in early 2023.

The remote finance and HR management by WWF-Gabon has complicated the management of the ROC programme, but this should be resolved with the institutional presence in Brazzaville. Negotiations with the government are ongoing and until these are finalized we expect staff turnover. As a result, the country's capacity in ETIC and NPNP might be weaker than initially planned for the remainder of 2022. We expect full staffing capacity to be reached in early 2023.



E. INDIA

(1.) INTRODUCTION, CONTEXT, SUMMARY[7]

History. The Kaziranga Karbi Anglong Landscape (KKL) is located in the state of Assam in north-eastern India. The landscape covers an area of about 2.5 million hectares and encapsulates a national park, a tiger reserve, nine wildlife sanctuaries and two elephant reserves, along with numerous reserve forests and district council reserve forests. A critical feature of the landscape is the corridors that maintain connectivity between Kaziranga and the Karbi Anglong Hills. WWF-India has been working in this landscape since 2004 to secure habitat connectivity for wild animals so they can move freely between Kaziranga National Park and the Karbi Anglong forests.

As per the most recent 2011 census, Assam has a population of 31.21 million, of which 86% is rural. The Indigenous population is 12.45% of the total population of the state. The landscape is home to diverse ethnic communities of which many are classified as "Scheduled Tribes" by the government of India. For historical and other reasons, the north-east of India is economically less developed than many other parts of the country. The limited economic opportunities, small and marginal landholdings, and annual flooding exacerbate levels of poverty within the landscape.

The strict law enforcement by the government for the protection of rhinos in Kaziranga has led to continuing disagreement between the forest department, local authorities and local communities. In some cases, law enforcement measures have led to conflict with communities. In such cases, authorities have taken action to put in place legal processes for enquiry and redress. While WWF-India is not involved directly in law enforcement activities, we are sensitive to these situations and speak up where required.

7 As documented in the Management Response and the Year 1 report.

Socio-economic development support. WWF-India works directly with communities that reside in the periphery of the protected areas, in critical wildlife corridors and in villages affected by human-wildlife conflict to support the diversification of livelihoods, provide access to clean and alternative energy, enhance food security and promote community stewardship of forests and wildlife. Some examples of this support include:

- Diversification of livelihood options including support for activities like weaving of traditional clothes, food processing, and improved farming, fishery, and animal husbandry practices.
- As part of a community-based tourism initiative, WWF-India has helped form groups of tourism service providers from the local communities and organized capacity-building programmes on sustainable, community-based tourism practices.

2020-2021. More recently, we have worked to progress the commitments made in the Management Response and actions documented in the Year 1 Implementation Update. To deliver on our mission through more inclusive conservation, our work from 2020-2021 has included the following:

- **Developing a grievance redressal process.** Launched in November 2020, all relevant staff in the head office and those involved in place-based work have been trained in the use of a grievance mechanism in accordance with WWF's environmental and social safeguards and tailored for specific conditions in India. It has been translated into 12 languages and published on the WWF-India website. It has been rolled out at a community level in the Kaziranga-Karbi Anglong landscape.
- **Strengthening internal safeguards capacity and orientation.** WWF-India has recruited a Safeguards Coordinator and Senior Social Development Specialist, both of whom work closely with the landscape teams on the environmental and social safeguards roll-out.

2021-2022. During the past year, we have focused on building capacity and strengthening our internal processes on social safeguarding and completing our landscape screenings. We have completed an environmental and social mitigation framework for the Kaziranga Karbi Anglong Landscape.

To help communities get the right kind of grievance redressal, we have collated, and put into locally accessible formats, information on the different levels of government grievance mechanisms in the districts where WWF-India works.

In line with our commitments made in the Management Response, we have also continued our efforts to ensure that law enforcement training supported by WWF-India integrates human rights. We are also working towards integrating a human rights module into the curriculum of all ranger training colleges in India.

Challenges and lessons learned. While the above progress has been registered, there remain some challenges:

- Timelines on project implementation have been extended due to limitations of travel and holding village meetings with large numbers of people. The state governments introduced strict protocols to protect the rural population from the spread of COVID-19, which limited our visits to the villages. Even where visits to rural areas were permitted, gatherings of more than 10-15 people were restricted. In some cases, village communities also were hesitant to come for meetings.
- It was difficult to find the right experts in human rights with an understanding of conservation issues to contribute to the human rights training module. This delayed the development of the module, which is now in progress.



(2.) REPORT BACK ON 2022

More detailed information on the points described above is provided below.

1. Rolling out our grievance redressal process.

The grievance redressal process has been established and translated into 12 languages – Assamese, Bengali, Kannada, Karbi, Hindi, Ladakhi, Malayalam, Marathi, Nepali, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu – so that communities on the ground in the places where we are present can understand it. The grievance redressal process is a system that WWF-India has set up in line with the core standard on grievance mechanisms to resolve any grievances about our work from the communities we work with.

In addition, district-level government grievance redressal mechanisms have been collected and registered for 89 districts and over 200 revenue development blocks located in 14 states where WWF-India is present.[8]

The grievance redressal process has also been rolled out in villages around Kaziranga and was well received by both tribal and non-tribal communities. Villagers have been informed about the process and how to raise a complaint. The village heads/leaders have been provided with copies of our process in the local language. This will enable households to reach out to us directly and voice their concerns. The villagers expressed appreciation for WWF-India's action, especially since the documents were in the local language. They also mentioned that since they know WWF staff well, the preferred mode of resolution will be face-to-face discussions rather than any written complaints. They did, however, feel that this process allows them to access WWF directly.

For reference to the WWF-India country-level complaints channel, see: https://www.wwfindia.org/comments_and_concerns/

2. Expanding the grievance redressal process.

Along with the WWF-India grievance redressal mechanism, we also share information with communities on the government redressal mechanisms. This is important as communities may have grievances that are outside the mandate of WWF-India to address. Government mechanisms have to be updated regularly and this is a time-consuming task. New districts and revenue blocks get carved out from existing ones and new offices are created, which requires updating information and support capacity.

8 Every Indian state is divided into districts, which are the main administrative unit. Each district is further divided into revenue development blocks for effective administration. India has 780 districts and over 6,500 blocks.



3. Building human rights capacity.

We have built the capacity of our staff, especially staff in conservation project areas, in understanding and upholding human rights. WWF-India is working with partners including the Global Tiger Forum, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, National Tiger Conservation Authority, state forest departments, NGOs and individual experts to develop a human rights module that will be embedded in the ranger training curriculum in colleges across the country.

To gain acceptance for the inclusion of a human rights training module, between 2020 and 2022 WWF-India conducted a series of regional workshops on the revision of the current training content for rangers. The idea of and need for including a module on human rights was discussed at each of these workshops, and an overall agreement was reached. WWF also carried out a test run of a draft human rights module with rangers in one landscape. We are now in the process of finalizing the content of this module in consultation with human rights experts. Once this is developed, it will be tested at different sites and it will then need to be formally embedded into the curricula of the ranger training colleges.

4. Embedding environmental & social safeguards and social policies in our work.

Social safeguards screening in five landscapes and one programme have been completed, in line with our ESSF. It was a challenge to adapt the Safeguards Screening Tool to our River Basin programme as it is not a discrete landscape, but a set of actions across a large basin with very diverse stakeholders. We think this can be a model for other programmes that may not be well-defined landscapes but nonetheless have significant interactions with local communities. As of August 2022, of the five landscapes screened, reviews have been completed in three landscapes.

The environmental and social mitigation framework for the Kaziranga Karbi Anglong landscape has been submitted. It has been approved by the WWF Conservation Quality Committee.

5. Strengthening internal capacity.

WWF-India has conducted a detailed legal analysis to assess concerns that might have legal implications as and when they arise. An internal group has been put in place to review and escalate concerns around human rights issues.



Terai Arc, © WWF-Nepal/Sayastha Tuladhar

F. NEPAL

(1.) INTRODUCTION, CONTEXT, SUMMARY[9]

History. WWF began working in Nepal in 1993. Since then, the country has transitioned through a series of failed or strained governments for decades. For years the central themes of WWF-Nepal's work have been improving the livelihoods and well-being of local people, reducing pressure on and restoring forests and wildlife, and elevating the very close connection between human and ecosystem health in Nepal. WWF-Nepal has long included livelihood and community forestry experts on its staff. Conservation was challenging during the period of unrest due to many factors, including safety and security concerns, but WWF maintained a presence in the field even during the worst times of the insurgency, helped by its close relationship with local communities. A focus of WWF's work in Nepal has been Chitwan National Park.

The Chitwan National Park has an area of 93,000 hectares, comprising grasslands, wetlands and forest. It lies in the low-lying Terai area of southern Nepal and is part of the Terai Arc Landscape. This landscape straddles the Nepal/India border and covers over 2.5 million hectares of land stretching from the Bagmati River in the east to the Mahakali River in the west. The forests and grasslands within this area harbour one of the world's highest densities of tiger and the second largest population of greater one-horned rhinoceros.

The Terai Arc is home to more than 7.5 million people with several ethnic groups represented including Banariya, Chepang, Danuwar, Majhi and Tharu. The population of the Terai increased rapidly after malaria was eradicated in the 1940s and many people moved down from the hills, clearing forest for agriculture and livestock husbandry. The Terai is now the "rice basket" of Nepal; the main sources of income for households are agriculture, animal husbandry, direct employment and remittances.

9 As documented in the Management Response and the Year 1 report.

Socio-economic development support. With the coming of peace in 2006, WWF-Nepal continued its efforts to benefit both people and nature. We ensured an inclusive approach to conservation approach to conservation was emplaced and, as an institution, systematically mainstreamed sustainable livelihoods and social safeguards as a major strategy for all conservation work in Nepal. Following the major 2015 earthquake, WWF provided emergency supplies and supported communities to rebuild their lives, building back better and greener for a more sustainable future. A few specific examples of activities include:

- Livelihood support for forest-dependent households in corridors and buffer zones through forest enterprises such as homestays and commercialization of forest product.
- Support for forest restoration and improved watershed management in the Churia Hills, resulting in greater quality and quantity of water supplies.

2020-2021. More recently, we have worked to progress the commitments made in the Management Response and actions documented in the Year 1 Implementation Update. To deliver on our mission through more inclusive conservation, our work from 2020-2021 has included the following:

- **Beginning a process to strengthen the application of human rights principles in conservation work.** In 2021, WWF-Nepal conducted a joint consultation and assessment of human rights policy and practice gaps in Chitwan National Park and its buffer zone, working together with the Forum for Protection of Consumer Rights Nepal (FPCR-N) and the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC).
- **Strengthening WWF-Nepal staff capacity on safeguards, including the recruitment of a new safeguards specialist.** This position was filled in February 2021 and is currently supporting the full roll-out of environmental and social safeguards processes and mitigation plan activities in Nepal, and strengthening WWF's country-level grievance mechanism.
- **Instituting new requirements for WWF-Nepal sub-grantees.** Grant clauses have been changed to include safeguards components. For example, sub-grantees must now place complaint boxes in their offices and establish committees to review complaints.

2021-2022. In this update, we highlight the progress WWF-Nepal is making in meeting these commitments by incorporating and strengthening the human-rights-based approach in its programmes and activities, exercising agency by proactively reaching out to partners and stakeholders on WWF's social policies and safeguards, and building its own capacity to fully implement the WWF Environmental and Social Safeguards Framework (ESSF).

The WWF Management Response for Nepal prioritizes a series of actions grouped under three major themes (further developed below):

1. Proactive work through new partnerships to address human rights issues related to protected areas management at the national level, including building capacity, improved monitoring and new channels for grievances.
2. New and more proactive measures to strengthen the inclusion of marginalized groups in conservation projects and activities.
3. Strengthening WWF-Nepal's internal capacity to better identify and escalate concerns around human rights issues and ensure that an operational and accessible grievance mechanism for stakeholders and rights holders is available.

Challenges and lessons learned. Over the past year, WWF's experience in applying a human-rights-based approach to its work has generated important insights, lessons and challenges, shared below:

- We understand that institutional capacity on human rights and the human-rights-based approach remains lacking in government, community forest and buffer zone partners, and further training and awareness raising needs to be incorporated into these relationships. Likewise, there is a need to strengthen awareness of the human-rights-based approach in local communities.
- WWF has been able to productively use influence and agency to sensitize traditional partners, such as the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation, on the importance of the human-rights-based approach to conservation. Additionally, WWF has been able to form new relationships with non-traditional organizations such as NHRC and National Foundation for Development of Indigenous Nationalities (NFDIN) to explore new ways of strengthening rights-based conservation approaches more broadly in Nepal.
- We have also seen that applying the ESSF systematically to our work is a gradual process of improvement that works best when we learn by doing. We see challenges in building capacity among our partners and at the community level. However, we also see this as a gradual process of improvement that is working and can bring positive change.

(2.) REPORT BACK ON 2022

More detailed information on the points described above is provided below.

1. Promoting human rights and protected areas.

WWF-Nepal has formed a new partnership with the NHRC that aims to address underlying challenges and mitigate risks related to protected areas management and human rights in Nepal.

As previously reported, with the FPCR-N and the NHRC, an assessment of human rights policy and practice gaps in Chitwan National Park was conducted. Based on the assessment, a training manual was developed for protected area authorities, buffer zone management committees and buffer zone users committees. The human-rights based training manual was launched jointly by NHRC and WWF at Chitwan on 10 March 2022, at an event attended by national and local government, other NGO stakeholders and partners (including the FPCR-N and National Trust for Nature Conservation), and local buffer zone committees. Outreach and training activities were conducted at three sites in Chitwan district as part of the launch.

Other activities, developed under the partnership and designed to strengthen understanding and practice of the human-rights-based approach in the context of protected areas, include sensitization training on human rights, inclusion and safeguards for chief wardens, Nepali Army commanders assigned to protected areas and community leaders chairing buffer zone committees.

This has been further expanded to include a human rights training and sensitization initiative for government law enforcement and wildlife crime prevention employees nationally. Already, under this initiative, multiple training activities have been conducted with the wildlife crime branch of the Nepal Police on human rights sensitization during wildlife crime control procedures. Over 100 police officials in all seven provinces of Nepal have received this training, which was conducted by the provincial chapter of the NHRC. Training was also provided to 183 protected area and divisional forest office staff, including rangers, assistant forest officers and assistant conservation officers, who are involved in wildlife crime control across the country. Related training on human rights, safety and security was also given to the armed police force responsible for border security, including controlling illegal trade in wildlife body parts.

WWF-Nepal has also been working with the NHRC and the FPCR-Nl to explore the feasibility of creating a monitoring and alert system that could be applied nationally to identify and strengthen responses to human rights issues arising in and around protected areas. This has proven to be a challenging area to address given that the government manages responses following internal government protocols and, after a detailed analysis of the issues, we have determined with our partners that such an initiative will not be feasible to institute.

However, non-state actors such as WWF are well positioned to exert influence and advance recommendations that can lead to positive change on human rights in and around protected areas. For example, WWF-Nepal has actively



and consistently communicated with the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation on the need to adhere to international human rights standards.

WWF-Nepal is also working on the development of a local-level participatory monitoring programme by Indigenous leaders and NHRC representatives that will focus on WWF's ESSF and progress on the implementation of mitigation plans in the Terai Arc Landscape. This monitoring is being designed to better incorporate the perceptions and interests of Indigenous communities into programme areas. An ESSF joint monitoring visit with the Monitoring Evaluation and Learning unit has been conducted in the Terai Arc and will subsequently be extended to other WWF working sites.

2. Supporting the inclusion of marginalized people in Nepal in WWF's conservation work and more broadly.

As the government of Nepal has no established policies or procedures for Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC), WWF partnered with the National Foundation for Development of Indigenous Nationalities (NFDIN) to develop government guidelines on FPIC. NFDIN has now completed a draft set of national FPIC guidelines, which, as of October 2022, is now endorsed by the committee chaired by the Prime Minister. WWF is working on an FPIC roll-out in province-level project sites, raising awareness, and sensitizing partners on the FPIC government guidelines. WWF will continue to strengthen partnerships and collaborate with Indigenous Peoples organizations and conduct capacity-building programmes on FPIC and local-level participatory monitoring with Indigenous Peoples representatives as mentioned above.

The application of WWF's ESSF to the Terai Arc Landscape identified the potential for restriction of access to resources and project benefits among some marginalized groups as an issue for further examination. Following this, WWF-Nepal commissioned a study of policy gaps that limit the inclusion of marginalized groups in community resource management institutions. The goal of the study is to improve understanding of the issue and generate proposals on how the policy framework for community-based forest and buffer zone management in Nepal can be strengthened or revised for greater inclusivity. Findings are due to be shared at the end of 2022.

Additionally, WWF-Nepal has taken a series of operational steps to support greater inclusion of marginalized and vulnerable groups in its programmes, including strengthening grant agreements with a new provision to prioritize the victims of human-wildlife conflict, as well as Indigenous Peoples, women and disabled people, in project activities. WWF-Nepal is piloting a monthly review of the application of this provision in Chitwan National Park jointly with project staff and park authorities.

This effort is being supplemented by stakeholder engagement activities such as piloting a day-long interaction with buffer zone communities in the Madi Valley of Chitwan National Park to provide orientation on gender and social inclusion, human rights, WWF policies in general, Terai Arc Landscape programme guidelines and the ESSF. Participation in this event included a total of 27 buffer zone communities represented by buffer zone user groups, community forest user groups and community-based anti-poaching units, as well as by the Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities, Dalit organizations, Madi municipality ward representatives, Chepang organizations and journalists.

The event included a discussion to improve understanding of inclusion and benefits sharing for marginalized and vulnerable groups in buffer zone institutions and conservation programmes. In total, WWF programme work benefiting disadvantaged, marginalized and Indigenous communities reached over 1,700 households during the fiscal year.

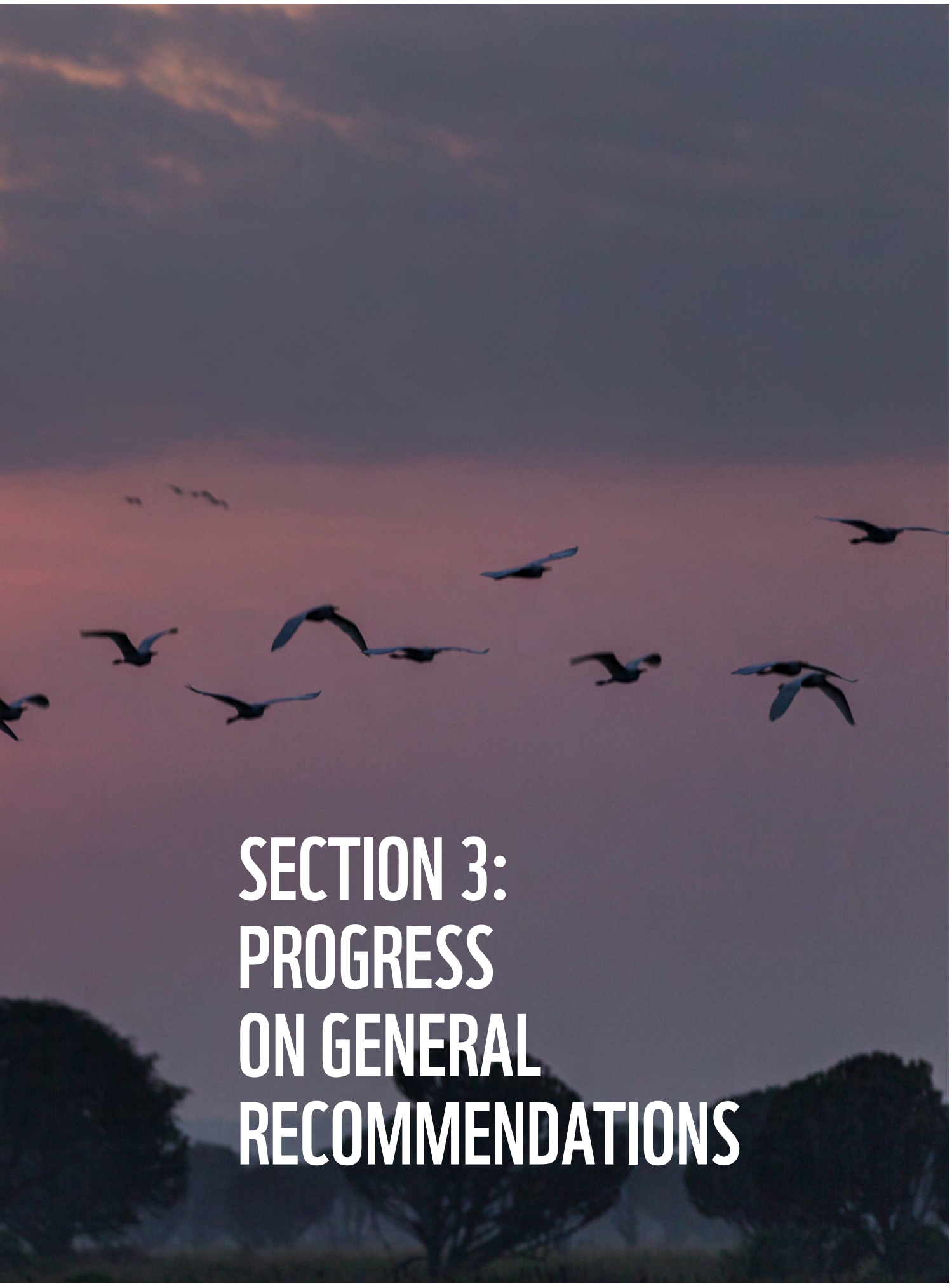
3. Strengthening WWF-Nepal capacity on human rights and inclusive conservation.

WWF has continued to strengthen the capacity of its staff and the operational procedures needed to embed human rights and inclusive conservation as pillars of its work in Nepal. The ESSF has been fully applied to the Terai Arc Landscape and the Mountain Landscape where WWF-Nepal carries out programmatic work with local communities. This includes the completion of safeguard screenings, risk categorization of the landscapes, development of stakeholder engagement plans and preparation of environmental and social risk mitigation frameworks. A wide cross-section of WWF's staff, including country-office senior leadership and programme, operations and communications departments, have been involved in the training and development of these safeguard measures. And WWF-Nepal's safeguards specialist, who joined the Nepal office in 2021, has led a process to systematically integrate WWF safeguards and social policies into annual work planning and budgeting for the organization.

WWF-Nepal has also conducted additional analysis and stocktaking to improve the function and accessibility of its country-level grievance mechanism by making it more available to local partners and sub-grantees. It has translated the grievance mechanism into the Nepali language and displayed informational posters at project sites to broaden local access. WWF-Nepal is also taking additional steps to train sub-grantees on the use of grievance mechanisms and to institute their own internal grievance procedures. For reference to the WWF-Nepal country-level complaints channel, see: wwfnepal.org/together_possible/grievance_mechanism

Finally, WWF-Nepal reported last year on making updates to its sub-grantee agreements to give greater emphasis to human rights, including a provision to prioritise Indigenous Peoples, vulnerable groups and human-wildlife conflict victims in project implementation. As mentioned in the previous section, greater numbers of marginalized people are beginning to benefit from WWF's work due, in part, to these changes. A qualitative review of the effectiveness of the new sub-grant provisions suggests that the rights-based approach and greater emphasis on Indigenous groups is a factor in driving positive change.


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SECTION 3: PROGRESS ON GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

A. NETWORK GOVERNANCE

In order to deliver more inclusive conservation and champion equitable sustainable development, we need to ensure consistency across the various legal entities that comprise our network for the implementation of our ESSF and complaints channels in 2022. As per our commitments in the Management Response, we continued to embark on a series of governance enhancements centred on:

1. Developing the Office of the Ombudsperson Operating Framework;
2. Complaints channels and management;
3. Safeguards implementation through the network-level Conservation Quality Committee (CQC);
4. Increasing influence of Indigenous Peoples perspectives throughout WWF;
5. Building human rights capacity within our network.

A more detailed reflection on 2022 is included below.

1. Developing the Office of the Ombudsperson Operating Framework.

The ESSF is designed to increase positive environmental and social outcomes. When ESSF standards are not met, affected individuals or groups need a trusted way to voice and resolve their concerns and complaints. The Office of the Ombudsperson underpins the ESSF, along with the WWF International Safeguards office.

WWF is committed to strengthening its accountability and to ensuring that trustworthy mechanisms are established at relevant levels. This will enable affected stakeholders, including local communities and Indigenous Peoples, to raise concerns about ESSF compliance and have them addressed in a timely and consistent manner.

Accordingly, the WWF Office of the Ombudsperson has been created as a critical component of WWF's efforts to:

- Strengthen its programmatic work through compliance with ESSF commitments.
- Further strengthen WWF's relationships with communities through stakeholder engagement.
- Strengthen its institutional accountability in terms of the ESSF.
- Improve the environmental and social outcomes of its work.

The focus in 2022 for the Office of the Ombudsperson has been working on defining its mandate, scope and functions through the development of the proposed Operating Framework. This was approved for consultation at the September 2022 meeting of the WWF International Board. Following WWF internal consultations, the Operating Framework is undergoing public consultation – the second public consultation undertaken by WWF (the first concerned our ESSF).

The process of developing the Operating Framework helped to highlight the urgency of various other actions that WWF needs to undertake to further strengthen grievance mechanisms at the local level and the places we work. We plan to do this in the coming year.

Alongside establishing the Office of the Ombudsperson, WWF continues to follow its Response Protocol for Human Rights Abuses.

2. Complaints channels and management.

Locally driven needs – especially of local communities – require a multi-layered approach to the management of grievances and complaints, whether they are raised by staff or communities. We have made progress in the past two years on achieving the goals of our complaints management system, which are to facilitate accountability and locally appropriate responses to non-compliance with WWF's commitments. This includes:

- Communities impacted by WWF's activities understand and can access the means to raise grievances.
- Staff understand how to raise, escalate and respond to grievances, complaints or allegations.
- Effective processes to escalate high-risk issues to network leadership are in place, for stronger accountability.



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Txai Suruí, Indigeneous Leader, Member of WWF-Brazil Council

There are two core channels to receive complaints: (i) at the global level[1] and (ii) at the country (national) level[2]. As of December 2022, 89% of all WWF office sites have published either a global or their own national complaints system in line with our Speak Up! core standard. This is in comparison to November 2021, where we reported that 48 offices (approximately 63%) had established country-level grievance mechanisms.

3. Safeguards implementation through the network-level Conservation Quality Committee.

Having put into place an ESSF, we needed to establish a mechanism for quality control and assurance. Accordingly, we created the CQC in February 2020. It is comprised of a group of highly experienced and regionally representative WWF CEOs and conservation directors. The CQC ensures a systematic approach to the identification, review and sign-off of special-consideration landscapes and projects in the places WWF operates. Sign-off is based on adequate risk mitigation plans.

CQC also provides a central platform where the main risk areas related to our conservation activities can be discussed in a structured manner. Conversations so far have, for example, touched on our work with Indigenous Peoples and on law enforcement, and have resulted in the production of specific policies and standards that provide clear guidance to the network.

Projects. The CQC meets regularly and brings additional rigour to how WWF designs projects and operates at the landscape level. Five projects across Cambodia, the DRC and the ROC were under review between November 2021 and November 2022, all of which were signed off by the CQC. In some instances, the sign-off was conditional on additional measures being put in place to allow for adequate risk mitigation.

Landscapes. Following a pilot phase, the CQC has now consolidated a landscape sign-off process that requires robust submissions and includes the major landscape-level analyses required to give CQC confidence that risks raised through the ESSF process are being adequately managed. In 2022, three special-consideration landscapes have been signed off in India, Nepal and the ROC.

1 In line with our Speak Up! core standard, online systems are available to receive complaints from local communities. These systems also receive whistleblowing reports related to allegations of WWF staff misconduct or negligence, including fraud, harassment, safeguarding and other concerns in WWF's operations.

2 In addition to the globally available systems noted above, each WWF office is meant to have its own system available to local communities and appropriate to their context. This means that grievances, complaints and allegations can be raised in one of the above global systems directly or to an office-run mechanism, which may include a local email, phone or postal address.

4. Increasing influence of Indigenous Peoples perspectives throughout WWF.

This year, we have sought to increase the influence of Indigenous Peoples perspectives throughout WWF:

Diversity on the WWF International Board.
The WWF International Board approved the expansion of its membership, from 13 up to 15, to allow for increased diversity at a rate faster than would have been afforded by the regular rotation of trustees. This was done in respect of WWF's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion. Further, in the last year, the WWF International Board welcomed two new trustees, Rosette Rugamba (Rwanda) and Dr. Paula Kahumbu (Kenya).

The International Board has also approved the appointment of an Indigenous Peoples trustee on the board and the recruitment process has been initiated.

Furthermore, with two new appointments in two different offices in 2022, the number of Indigenous Peoples representatives on WWF governance boards and advisory groups now totals 10 (seven and three, respectively). These trustees sit across seven different offices in the WWF network.[3]

Advisory group of Indigenous Peoples.
In the Management Response, WWF committed to establishing a group of Indigenous Peoples which would advise and give feedback to WWF on Indigenous Peoples-related issues. It is foreseen that the advisory group will be composed of WWF Indigenous trustees, as well as external Indigenous leaders. WWF has been working with an Indigenous leader to steer the development of this advisory group, which we aim to make operational in 2023.

5. Building human rights capacity within our network.

In the Management Response to the Independent Panel report we stated our intention to establish a Human Rights Advisory Group of external experts in order to advise on specific human rights positions or interpretations. The Year 1 report gave an estimate of June 2022 for the group to be established.

While retaining the contracted human rights expertise that was referenced in the Year 1 report, we decided to delay the establishment of the group until three other processes have been concluded:

- the revisions to the social policies and ESSF (which determine the final scope of the Human Rights Principles) - this is now expected to be completed during Q1 2023;
- an assessment of internal human rights capacity (initiated in the first half of 2022);
- a strategic and visioning process for the Conservation Initiative on Human Rights (see below for further detail – due to be completed in February 2023).

The outcomes of these three initiatives have obvious implications for the expertise that we require – and whether this expertise is best utilized through an advisory group or another form of support.

Conservation Initiative on Human Rights (CIHR).
The CIHR was established in 2009 by seven international conservation organizations including WWF. Centred on four guiding principles,[4] the CIHR has been a forum for discussion, with monthly meetings for members and, historically, in-person events and progress reporting. In early 2022, members agreed on the need to review the mission, operating structure and governance of CIHR, and consultants were subsequently hired to lead the strategic and visioning process. Seven consultations took place throughout the summer of 2022, engaging a cross-section of both human rights and conservation organizations together with other subject matter experts. Four strategic areas of focus were identified through this process: internal structure; safeguard framework; collective statements; and involvement of Indigenous Peoples' organizations. Recommendations from this consultative stage are being finalized, after which current CIHR members will have a period of time for internal review and consultation before the visioning process is concluded in early 2023 (and publicly communicated).

3 The following offices have Indigenous Peoples on their governance boards and advisory groups: Australia, Brazil, Canada, Nepal, New Zealand, Sweden and USA.

4 1. Respect human rights. 2. Promote human rights within conservation programmes. 3. Protect the vulnerable. 4. Encourage good governance.

B. OPERATIONS & SAFEGUARDS IN CONSERVATION PROJECT AREAS

WWF's ESSF is designed to minimize unintended adverse social or environmental impacts in our work, and to demonstrate respect for human rights.

Through the ESSF, we seek to fulfil stakeholder engagement. This helps ensure the voice, opinions and views of those who are impacted by our place-based work are included, engaged and consulted in the design and operationalization of our activities. Where relevant, stakeholders who are most vulnerable will be given special attention and consideration. By implementing this framework, we are formalizing our engagement with Indigenous Peoples and local community stewards of sustainable development and seeking to help support human rights and deliver sustainable benefits to people and nature in all our operations.

We have registered the following progress and lessons-learned in implementing this framework in the last year, as we continue on our journey to better and more inclusive conservation.

1. Advancing project operations and safeguards implementation across all landscapes where we operate.

Through the ESSF, we engage in impact assessments and "checks and balances" to help identify possible risks to communities and the environment and help ensure action to avoid or, where not feasible, to mitigate them.

In 2021, we focused on establishing the baseline for ESSF implementation. This means consolidating a detailed database of all landscapes we operate in, building staff capacity and putting in place the systems to increase our efforts to operationalize safeguards. More information is provided in the Year 1 Implementation Update.

In 2022, we have focused on the implementation of the framework itself. There are four key steps to implementing safeguards throughout our place-based activities. These are:

(a) Screening of environmental and social risks. Landscapes and seascapes are screened for environmental and social risks, safeguard-relevant impacts and cross-cutting issues linked to the social policies.

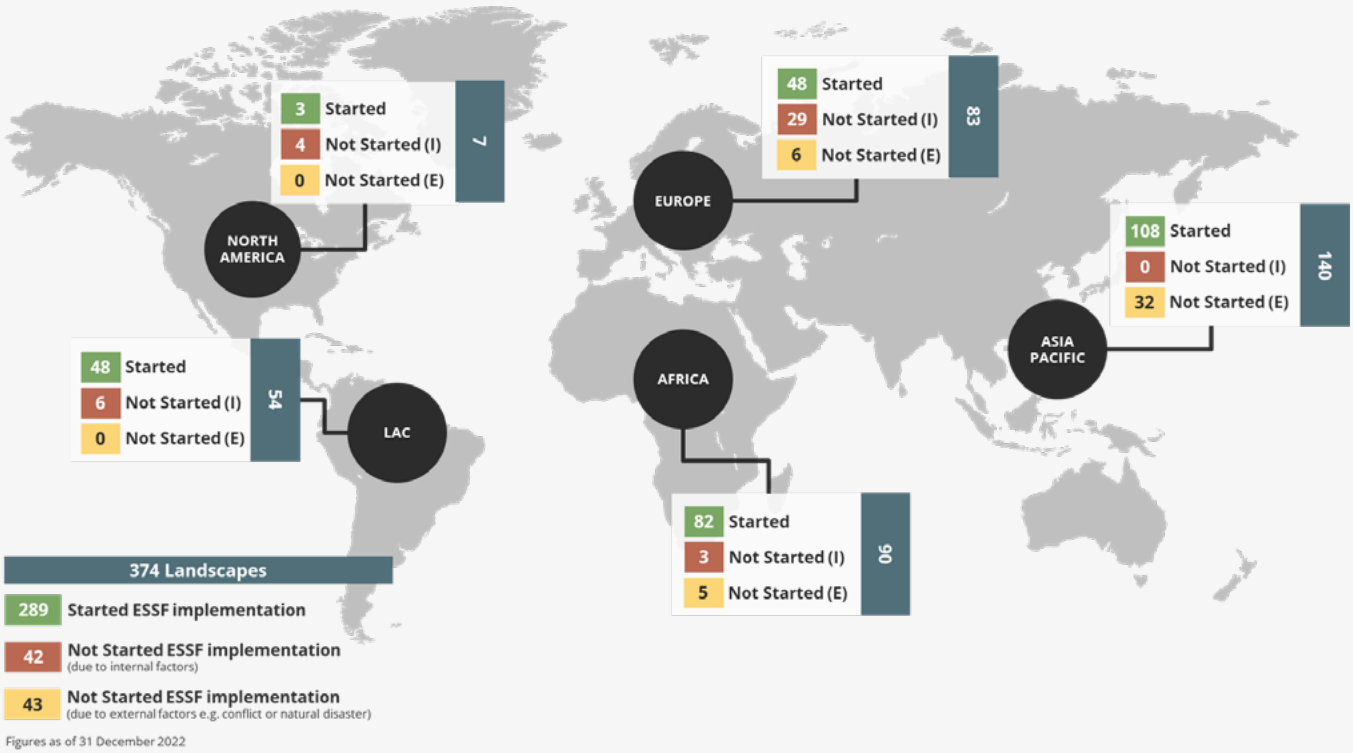
(b) Confirmation of risk categorization. Based on review of the completed screening, an accredited safeguards expert assigns a risk category via a categorization memo. The assigned risk category specifies the nature of any further due diligence and/or impact assessment that is required and frames potential avoidance or, where not feasible, mitigation actions for identified issues and impacts.

(c) Mitigation (development of an environmental and social mitigation framework, as applicable). The outcomes from any further impact assessment and mitigation planning are captured in respective documents and summarized in a compliance memo, which also specifies ongoing monitoring requirements. The Environmental Social Impact Assessment and Environmental Social Mitigation Framework are approved by the country teams, safeguards team and, in some instances, relevant committees must provide approval.

(d) Adaptive management. Based on the monitoring outcomes, the mitigation framework is adapted to reflect any changes to baseline conditions, contextual factors or activities undertaken. This ensures that it remains fit for purpose.

By the end of 2022, 289 of 374 (77%) of our landscapes and seascapes in which WWF carries out its place-based activities have started implementation of our Environmental and Social Safeguards Framework (ESSF). There are 85 landscapes that have not started ESSF implementation for a variety of reasons, including eligibility and work being put on hold (e.g. due to conflict or natural disaster). In comparison, in November 2021 we reported that screening had been completed for 93 of 382 landscapes and seascapes (24%) and that we had advanced efforts underway in 127 landscapes and seascapes.

ESSF implementation with a regional breakdown (data as of 31 December 2022)



2. Prioritizing ESSF implementation in special consideration landscapes.

The ESSF applies the principle of proportionality to risk management at landscape level. This means that priority is given to determining mitigating actions and enhancing risk management in places with weak governance, poor records of human rights protections and inadequate access to justice and rule of law. This is outlined in the standard on environmental and social risk management.

Within our 374 landscape and seascape baseline, 50 were provisionally identified as candidates for additional due diligence and review, primarily based on their location in Fragile and Conflict-affected Situations (FCS). This is a formal requirement of the current ESSF, which states that such landscapes are 'special consideration'. As due diligence progressed in these landscapes, it became evident that the drivers for fragility, conflict and violence affected landscapes differently, with some more directly impacted than others. We have therefore started to adapt our approach, reviewing the outcome of the mapping of FCS factors to landscapes and then determining if further 'special consideration' requirements are warranted or not (e.g. use of independent experts in subsequent stages of ESSF implementation). This adaptation was endorsed by WWF's Network Executive Team in November 2022 and, as a result, it will ensure that additional resources are directed to those landscapes that require them the most (i.e. those that are directly affected by the outcomes of fragility, conflict and violence).

3. Establishing mechanisms to hear and address grievances at the landscape level.

WWF interventions in landscapes are expected to yield positive environmental and social outcomes. However, the implementation of some conservation activities have the potential to result in unintended negative impacts. When these are identified, affected individuals or groups need a trusted way to voice and resolve their concerns and complaints.

In some locations, specific risks will necessitate a landscape-level grievance mechanism. In these instances, WWF will work in collaboration with local partners to make these mechanisms both available and accessible to local communities. All grievances received at this level should be escalated through the country-level complaints channel.

There are currently eight landscapes with a dedicated landscape-level grievance mechanism. The structure of these systems varies: some are independently run by local organizations, and others are jointly managed by WWF and other stakeholders. As mentioned in the Management Response and Year 1 report, dedicated third-party managed grievance mechanisms are established in Lobéké National Park (Cameroon) and the Dzanga-Sangha Protected Area (Central African Republic). Since then, third-party landscape grievance mechanisms have been established across Boumba Bek National Park (Cameroon) and Salonga National Park (Democratic Republic of the Congo). Additionally, there are landscape grievance mechanisms in Gamba and Minkebe/TRIDOM (Gabon) and Messok Dja (ETIC) and Ntokou-Pikounda National Park (both in the Republic of the Congo). In all cases, we have experienced challenges in their establishment, scope,

relationship to other complaint mechanisms and overall governance structures, including timely notification of complaints received. However, these mechanisms are being used and we are seeing the valuable role they play as a fundamental pillar of stakeholder engagement and a transparent and trusted way for potentially affected people and communities to voice and seek resolution to their concerns. A case study from Salonga National Park on early lessons learned in grievance management is included below.

In geographies of the scale of the Congo Basin (3.4 million km^2, which is 500,000 km^2 larger than India), it is natural that the dilemmas of where, how and how many landscape-level grievance mechanisms to put in place are challenging – not to mention, the logistics required to overcome the remoteness of many areas where we work. In particular, we are still struggling to receive concerns in a timely manner from systems run by local organizations that receive community grievances both related to and not related to WWF activities. Work is ongoing in Dzanga-Sangha, Lobéké,and Salonga to address exactly this challenge. In addition, the systems have proven costly to set up and operate. An ongoing challenge is to secure sustainable funding for these mechanisms.

We need to build capacity locally to resolve grievances that are raised at a local level. We plan to redouble efforts in 2023 to assess the appropriate models for grievance handling (existing mechanisms, new ones foreseen, and the now established Office of the Ombudsperson), and map out how to address the above challenges and dilemmas, in an emerging grievance handling ecosystem that is maturing.

4. Building capacity and expertise to operationalize ESSF implementation.

Over the last year we have built internal capacity across the network, particularly in three areas:

(a) Training of trainers. In 2022 we continued to deliver environmental and social safeguards training across the network to support capacity building and understanding for ESSF implementation. This training has evolved into a 'training of trainers' format to better respond to the need to build project manager capacity. These sessions focus on the project cycle and address the foundational concepts, methodologies and tools related to environmental and social safeguards. The main objective is for participants to gain the necessary skills to help landscape and project teams integrate environmental and social safeguards into their work. Across 2021 and 2022, three regional sessions were held in Africa, Asia and Europe with a total of 130 participants.

(b) Mentors. Landscape teams can request mentors to help complete the landscape screening process. This increases the likelihood of a successful subsequent review by an accredited safeguard expert. Throughout the WWF Network, there are 80 safeguard practitioners who can fulfil this role.

(c) Accredited safeguard experts. WWF's safeguards framework mobilizes safeguard experts to provide quality assurance and approvals across the WWF portfolio globally. This allows for environmental and social issues to be adequately addressed across all landscapes throughout all stages of WWF engagement within them (from concept to exit). While the WWF International safeguards team has a global oversight role and four staff in regional head roles, the safeguard system is designed to be supported by a network of technical experts who are able to provide independent support and quality assurance.

As of late 2021, 14 colleagues were accredited as safeguard experts and 7 more have been accredited as of late 2022, thereby giving a total of 21 accredited safeguard experts across the network.

The continued accreditation of safeguard experts is an important enabler of the continued screening and categorization of landscapes, development of impact assessment and mitigation frameworks, and ultimate implementation. During 2023, we intend to increase the overall number accredited and to progress existing accredited safeguard experts to the next level of accreditation, allowing for more delegated authority as a result.

CASE STUDY #1
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO -
EARLY LESSONS ON GRIEVANCE MANAGEMENT – THE CASE OF SALONGA NATIONAL PARK

INTRODUCTION

It was determined that the risks present in the Salonga landscape – including the scale of geography, communication barriers, the vulnerability of Indigenous Peoples and the capacity constraints of local government authorities – necessitated a dedicated landscape-level grievance mechanism to better reach local communities. This is in addition to the existing complaints channels available in the country office and globally.

As detailed in the section on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the ICCN/WWF partnership agreement includes a commitment to engage an independent human rights organization for the promotion of human rights within all activities in the Salonga National Park and for the establishment of a complaints mechanism. JUREC has been contracted for three years to ensure that all communities in the Salonga landscape have access to a grievance mechanism.

The engagement with JUREC, WWF's and ICCN's human rights partner tasked to implement a community grievance mechanism in Salonga, provides rich lessons learned on the importance of (i) trusted community engagement; (ii), swift and clear information flows; and (iii) clear roles of, and collaboration between, partners to appropriately address grievances.

A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT

WWF, JUREC and ICCN have critical and interdependent responsibilities, based on the WWF-ICCN partnership agreement and agreements between WWF and JUREC, which require close collaboration and coordination for park-related community grievances to be managed in a timely and just manner. Under the partnership agreement, ICCN and WWF have jointly committed to support JUREC in the establishment of the mechanism, and to establish, within six months of its signing (in 2021), standard operating procedures to effectively respond to allegations of human rights violations raised against park staff. While we have jointly struggled to complete these procedures according to the desired timeline, a draft protocol is currently under review.

Amongst other objectives, JUREC is developing, implementing and managing a community grievance mechanism through which Salonga community members can submit concerns or complaints regarding negative impacts that are related to conservation activities. They can also raise grievances unrelated to park activities: in these cases, WWF and ICCN will not be involved in the response.

ICCN is accountable for all law enforcement operations including ranger employment, oversight and discipline. ICCN must respond to any allegations raised against their employees and take appropriate disciplinary action. If grievances relate to WWF's staff, WWF will undertake appropriate fact finding or dispute resolution in collaboration with JUREC, and carry out appropriate disciplinary or corrective measures. In instances of ranger misconduct, WWF must leverage its agency to hold ICCN accountable to respond, and can propose disciplinary measures to ICCN.

LESSONS LEARNED

- **Community engagement and trust.** More attention has to be paid to the approach and cultural context of community engagement. The visits by JUREC and provision of communication systems will facilitate engagement, and allow concerns to reach JUREC quickly. These actions are building bonds of trust. The challenge will be to maintain this trust enabled with more technology and direct outreach, and achieve satisfactory and timely response to grievances raised. JUREC must manage community expectations, and lean on WWF and ICCN to address cases where relevant. WWF must use its agency on ICCN in cases involving ICCN employees. WWF expects to receive monthly updates from JUREC.
- **Collaboration in response.** A working group of JUREC, ICCN (including their new Human Rights office), and WWF staff review grievances received. The frequency of these meetings is still being worked out. The challenge is to maintain a healthy balance between retaining JUREC's independence and keeping all actors accountable to their commitments.
- **Information sharing and clarity of roles.** We need to understand better what each partner is doing to respond to each grievance. The case logging and management system is under review to ensure relevant information on progress per case is clear.
- **WWF accountability.** Instances of non-timely escalation of information within the WWF Network are being addressed with additional expertise and resources in our local offices and plans for more training. JUREC is now submitting briefings to WWF on a monthly basis.
- **Compliance of contractual commitments.** The development of written protocols or procedures in response approaches and information sharing are still in progress and need urgent attention to be completed in the near future.
- **Capacity, competencies.** Grievance mechanisms require dedicated human and financial resources, as well as expertise in areas outside of WWF's traditional skill base. The "market" for these competencies is very limited, especially in countries like DRC.
- **Financial sustainability.** There is an urgent need to find long-term, sustainable and sufficient funding for this and other such systems.
- **Scaling up.** A key challenge we face is that this is only one landscape. Despite significant focus, we are still struggling to scale up independent grievance mechanisms across all landscapes.


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C. SUPPORT FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT

Nature transcends nations and borders and as such, WWF has adopted the 'landscape' approach to conservation. WWF's mission is to conserve nature, aiming to ensure that any use of natural resources is sustainable. There are many examples where nature has a high economic value, perhaps as a legal commodity (such as timber in some contexts) and in other cases as contraband (timber in some contexts, as well as elephant ivory or totoaba, for example). Commonly, these kinds of resources are the subject of illegal harvesting and/or trade and, as with any other valuable resource, they should be the subject of legitimate law enforcement measures by relevant authorities. This may involve state agencies but it can also involve measures taken by landholders, whether these are private or community-led.

WWF plays a supportive role in law enforcement, acknowledging that it is the responsibility of government and state partners to protect and preserve their natural capital. In instances where WWF engages with nature-related law enforcement, it is to support the competent state (or community) partners with the knowledge, training and resources they need to be able to conduct conservation law enforcement measures in accordance with international human rights laws and standards.

This means helping government partners to ensure that certain basic requirements are met, including an understanding of human rights and adhering to a code of conduct. WWF may provide funding and support equipment (e.g. communications equipment) to support law enforcement officials in their important work. We may also do the same to support communities, Indigenous or otherwise, to maintain the integrity of their own land and resources.

WWF's engagement with law enforcement is guided by our standards and values. WWF also adheres to the exclusions list, which are activities considered ineligible for WWF-managed and WWF-supported activities.

Furthermore, through our involvement with the Universal Ranger Support Alliance (URSA), a collaboration of eight international NGOs, we have contributed to driving forward the objectives of URSA's five-year Global Action Plan, covering five thematic areas.[5] Most recently, in December 2022 at the Montreal COP15, URSA published a policy brief on Essential Planetary Health Workers: Positioning Rangers Within Global Policy. The policy calls on global leaders across multiple sectors to recognize the ranger profession as essential planetary health workers and to position rangers more effectively within global conservation.

Progress in 2022 can be mapped back to the recommendations of the Independent Panel and to these five thematic areas. Where WWF provides support for government-discharged law enforcement activities, we committed in the Management Response to take additional steps to implement the necessary due diligence processes and frameworks to advance human rights protections by responsible government entities. Below is a reflection on our work in 2022.

1. Strengthening our risk assessment measures through a law enforcement due diligence tool.

Owing to the dramatic upsurge in illegal activities – including hunting and extraction of renewable natural resources -– one response of the conservation community, governments, multilateral institutions and NGOs such as WWF has been to increase support to conservation law enforcement, particularly in and around government-managed protected areas.

In line with the commitments identified in WWF's Management Response, WWF has developed a Due Diligence Tool for Conservation Law Enforcement Support in Protected Areas ("due diligence tool") as a screening tool for evaluating a new or existing partnership with a government agency charged with law enforcement in protected areas, focusing specifically on the law enforcement mandate. When using this tool, users draw upon the identification of activities, partners and risks from the ESSF screening process to create a baseline description of WWF's engagement in the protected area.

The due diligence tool applies to any WWF office that is directly or indirectly (i.e. via a third party) supporting law enforcement activities in the protected area. This includes when risks related to conservation law

5 The five thematic areas of the objectives are: (i) advocacy, representation and recognition; (ii) capacity; (iii) employment and welfare; (iv) equality and equity in the ranger sector; (v) community relations, ranger conduct and accountability.

enforcement are surfaced in landscapes or seascapes through the ESSF screening process, described in the previous chapter. Such support to conservation law enforcement includes, for example, training, purchase of field equipment, law enforcement monitoring, financial support, ranger travel and per diem.

The tool enables WWF offices to evaluate and screen the legal, operational and human rights framework and capacities of government agencies and other partners involved in conservation law enforcement, including their weaknesses and gaps, with the aim of determining when support should or should not be provided. It provides a platform to identify the risks associated with the partner agency. It also facilitates the development of an action plan for each relevant WWF office. This might, for example, include actions to develop detailed guidance or standard operating procedures regarding specific types of enforcement support activities, in order to manage risks and strengthen the conservation law enforcement support framework within a country.

The due diligence tool was reviewed and tested in eight WWF offices (Cameroon, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mexico, Nepal, Peru and Zambia), and their constructive input on relevancy and usability was incorporated into the subsequent iteration. The revised due diligence tool was signed off in June 2022 for a progressive roll-out across the network through to June 2024 and will involve all WWF offices that directly or indirectly support law enforcement activities in protected areas.

2. Raising awareness of and advocating for the adoption of the International Ranger Federation Code of Conduct.

WWF is committed to supporting ethical and equitable conservation law enforcement.

We are a founding member of the Universal Ranger Support Alliance (URSA). URSA was established in September 2020 and is based on the principle that a holistic approach needs to be taken to reform the ranger workforce and establish a network of well-supported, professionally competent, motivated, responsible and representative rangers. Through URSA, we are working in collaboration with seven conservation NGOs to develop policies, tools and standards to achieve URSA's vision.

Through this partnership we supported the development and release of the International Ranger Federation (IRF) Global Code of Conduct (CoC) in April 2021. This is the first-ever global CoC for rangers that can be adapted to the local context by relevant authorities.

In 2022, we actively worked to raise awareness of the CoC and advocate for its adoption:

- Eight joint virtual workshops with IRF, the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN OHCHR) and URSA were planned in 18 languages[6] to create awareness of the CoC among ranger employers, ranger associations and conservation organizations. These were organised from June 2022 to September 2022 across the Caribbean, Central Africa, China, East and Southern Africa, Latin America, North America, South Asia, South East Asia and Oceania. To date, 310 rangers and other stakeholders have participated. Four upcoming workshops will focus on China, East and Southern Africa, and Southeast and South Asia.
- The Game Ranger Association of Africa (GRAA) became the first regional ranger association to officially endorse the IRF CoC in March 2022, making adoption mandatory for all its members. The GRAA was founded in 1974 and represents 1,800 members from 26 countries in Africa.
- The Cameroon and Nepal governments have shown willingness to adopt the CoC by creating review committees to adapt the IRF CoC to the local context.
- The Africa Protected Areas Congress, which took place in July 2022, published a Call to Action for People and Nature which explicitly advocated for "stronger support and resourcing of rangers, including community rangers accountable to communities to conduct their critical and diverse work professionally, responsibly and accountably in a way that respects human rights" and urged governments and other organizations to adopt the CoC.

3. Engaging in partnerships to integrate the ranger CoC into training programmes.

The CoC is an aspirational document that should inspire rangers and provides good practice guidelines that enable an effective and professional ranger workforce. The intention is for the CoC and its values to be adopted by ranger groups and institutions and be adapted to the local context. Once the CoC has been adopted, it is integrated into ranger training programmes and made easily available. WWF has supported this in a number of ways:

- IRF and URSA hosted the first face-to-face training in Phnom Penh, Cambodia on 17-18 August 2022 for rangers, employers and ranger associations from Asia. Similar training took place for African stakeholders between 14-18 September 2022 in Kasane, Botswana, in collaboration with the GRAA. Both training events were financially supported by IUCN and WWF.
- A digital, self-learning and interactive training course for rangers on the CoC is being developed with Force For Nature (one of the founding members of URSA) in multiple languages.
- A human rights expert has been hired to develop training material for the implementation of the CoC, which will include a 90-minute virtual awareness package and a 12-hour face-to-face training course for rangers. A virtual training package has already been completed in consultation with IRF, URSA members and UN OHCHR and is currently being used for the CoC virtual workshops.

6 Assamese, Bahasa Malay, Bahasa Indonesia, Bengali, Burmese, Dutch, English, French, Hindi, Khmer, Malayalam, Mandarin, Nepali, Singhal, Spanish, Tamil, Thai, Vietnamese.



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- Bhutan became the first country to officially endorse the IRF CoC in May 2021. It conducted its first (ranger) training of trainers in June 2022 where 25 rangers were trained to deliver the new curriculum, which includes the CoC.
- WWF-India is supporting the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change to incorporate human rights and the CoC in the ongoing project of reforming the training curriculum of 28 government ranger training colleges. Some 2,000-2,500 rangers are trained annually in these colleges.

4. Strengthening our work to build trust between rangers and communities.

The roll-out of the CoC is further strengthened by our work in building trust between rangers and communities. A strong and trusting relationship is crucial for effective protection and management of conservation areas, yet establishing and maintaining trust is challenging.

As a reminder, WWF's global study on the working conditions of rangers, Life on the Frontline, published in 2019, reported that 82.2% of rangers believe that they cannot deliver their duties effectively without the support of communities. At the same time, 20.5% feel that communities don't trust them.

To examine this issue, URSA, supported by the Voices for Diversity programme, initiated a scoping project, Building Trust with Rangers and Communities, exploring through consultation with diverse stakeholders what is meant by the concept of trust, and developing a series of good practices for rangers, illustrated by examples from conservation project areas. The findings were published in May 2022. The long-term aim is to develop and test a solid foundation upon which to gather further input and examples of good practice in order to create more harmonious relationships between communities and rangers.

5. Reviewing the nexus between gender, illegal wildlife trade and conservation.

Despite increasing awareness of the importance of considering and integrating gender into conservation approaches, the understanding of gender dynamics in wildlife crime and gender-informed responses to illegal wildlife trade have, until recently, been seriously overlooked.

Integrating gender presents an opportunity for conservation approaches to become more efficient, while at the same time achieving positive human rights impacts. With this in mind, WWF commissioned and worked with an external gender expert to analyze gaps, develop recommendations and identify priorities in addressing wildlife crime through a gender lens.

The report, authored by Prof Joni Seager and WWF, *Gender and Illegal Wildlife Trade: Overlooked and Underestimated* is available in English, French and Spanish[7]. A digital practical gender framework was also

7 The executive summary is available in Burmese, English, French, Malagasy, Portuguese, Spanish, Swahili and Vietnamese.



produced to guide conservation practitioners on how to integrate gender in illegal wildlife trade programming.[8]

WWF released the report through the IUCN-USAID partnership Advancing Gender in the Environment and released the toolkit in collaboration with the World Bank Global Wildlife Programme. We have been working to deepen understanding of the importance of bringing a gender lens to counter illegal wildlife trade through engagement with external actors, such as the EU Parliament and the European Commission.

A report, *Towards Gender Equality in the Ranger Workforce: Challenges & Opportunities*, also authored by Prof Joni Seager, provides the first comprehensive and global analysis of the challenges and opportunities for bringing gender equality into the ranger workforce. The report was produced by URSA, supported by the Voices for Diversity programme and other partners, and launched via a webinar.[9]

Reference to the importance of integrating gender considerations into addressing illegal wildlife trade was subsequently recognized in the UN General Assembly Resolution Tackling Illicit Trafficking in Wildlife (2021) – see also commentary. This was the first time in any illegal-wildlife-trade-related global policy instrument that gender has been addressed.

Following this UN resolution, WWF convened a side event on "Gender in CITES" at the II High-Level Conference of the Americas on the Illegal Wildlife Trade in Colombia, 5-6 April, 2022. Panama, the host country for CITES COP19, subsequently submitted a formal agenda item on gender in CITES for consideration by the Parties at CITES COP19 in November 2022. WWF supported this by co-convening a COP19 side event on "Gender in CITES" with Panama and the World Bank-led Global Wildlife Programme.

6. Appointing a new Director of Ethical Law Enforcement.

We have made progress in strengthening our law enforcement capacity with the hiring of a seasoned expert in security and human rights. Formerly a security and human rights advisor for the corporate sector, she joined WWF in August 2022 as the Director of Ethical Law Enforcement. Her role is to ensure that WWF has the right structures, guidance, capacity and training in place so that our work supporting conservation law enforcement is of the highest possible standard, and adheres to and promotes international human rights laws and standards.

8 Available in English, French, Malagasy and Vietnamese.

9 Panel representatives included IRF, Game Rangers International, the Zambian Department of National Parks and Wildlife, Re:wild, Punjab Wildlife Department in Pakistan, and Exploring Womanhood Foundation in India.



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Pangolins are the most trafficked animal in the world. Over the past decade, over a million pangolins have been illegally taken from the wild to feed demand

7. Continuing our work to monitor law enforcement with the Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool (SMART).

WWF is a founding member of the SMART partnership and actively serves on the SMART steering committee.

SMART is a technology system that provides a platform to collect, measure and evaluate data to improve the effectiveness of wildlife conservation efforts and law enforcement monitoring. Originally piloted in seven sites in 2011, SMART is currently active in over 80 countries and 1,000 sites worldwide to support a broad range of conservation management activities, including biodiversity conservation, law enforcement and tourism.[10] It is being used globally to monitor activities ranging from human and bear interactions in the United States to counting rabbits in Spain to support lynx recovery efforts.

WWF leverages the SMART system for law enforcement monitoring. Through data collection, analysis and assessment, SMART provides anti-poaching, law enforcement and management efforts with the information required to make informed and decisive action. This is used not only for management and enforcement purposes but also increasingly for accountability, as the tool helps to understand what rangers are doing and where.

WWF supports SMART implementation in 256 sites across the globe. It helps in monitoring the efforts of rangers and the use of resources that WWF provides to authorities (e.g. patrol vehicles). As of 2022, the tool has been made available in 17 languages and this level of accessibility has supported its dissemination around the world.

We are also continuing to expand the implementation of SMART by coupling it with ranger training in wildlife law and human rights. For example, a training seminar was held for 30 rangers in Cameroon (Lobéké National Park), which focused on the implementation of SMART, wildlife laws and procedures, and human rights. This was subsequently integrated into the ranger training curriculum.

In addition to leveraging the SMART system for law enforcement monitoring, in October 2021 WWF collaborated with the SMART partnership to launch SMART Collect, a citizen science tool designed for remote data collection. A mobile version of SMART Collect, which can be used by Indigenous People and local community stewards of sustainable development, was launched in July 2022 for testing.

10 Source: SMART

D. THIRD-PARTY ASSURANCE

As noted in the Year 1 Report, WWF is committed to respecting and advocating for human rights, particularly those of Indigenous Peoples and local community stewards of sustainable development who may be impacted by our conservation efforts. Our work is guided by the fundamental principle that positive outcomes for both people and nature depend on firmly anchoring and integrating human rights into conservation practices. While the duty to protect human rights lies with governments, WWF recognizes that businesses and organizations, including ours, have an important role in contributing to positive human rights outcomes.

Below is an overview of the progress we have made in 2022 toward strengthening third-party assurance of human rights.

1. Sharing affirmative statements on human rights with government partners.

Last year, we shared our "*Affirmative Statement on WWF's Commitments to Human Rights*" with our government partners in Cameroon, CAR, DRC, India, Nepal, and the ROC. We have been assessing how best to reach out in a similar way to government partners in an additional seven countries that are also considered 'high-risk landscapes', using World Bank data on Fragile and Conflict-affected States (FCS). We have recently reached out to government partners in four of these additional countries, and we will also do so in the other three countries.

We have also agreed to put a system in place to address countries that could be deemed 'high risk' in the future. This will allow for adaptive management of risks and an appropriate response by WWF should the FCS list be altered to include additional landscapes where we work.

This system will trigger review and outreach (as with the countries above). Our affirmative statement will be provided if there is an existing agreement with a government. As agreements are entered and/or renewed, WWF will negotiate the inclusion of appropriate provisions on our ESSF and human rights commitments. The WWF Conservation Quality Committee will oversee the implementation of this process.

2. Updating contractual clauses to further embed WWF's human rights commitments.

As detailed in the Management Response, WWF will include ESSF and human rights commitments in negotiations for new and renewed contracts with governments and other partners implementing area-based programmes, and our templates are being amended to reflect this and promote consistency.

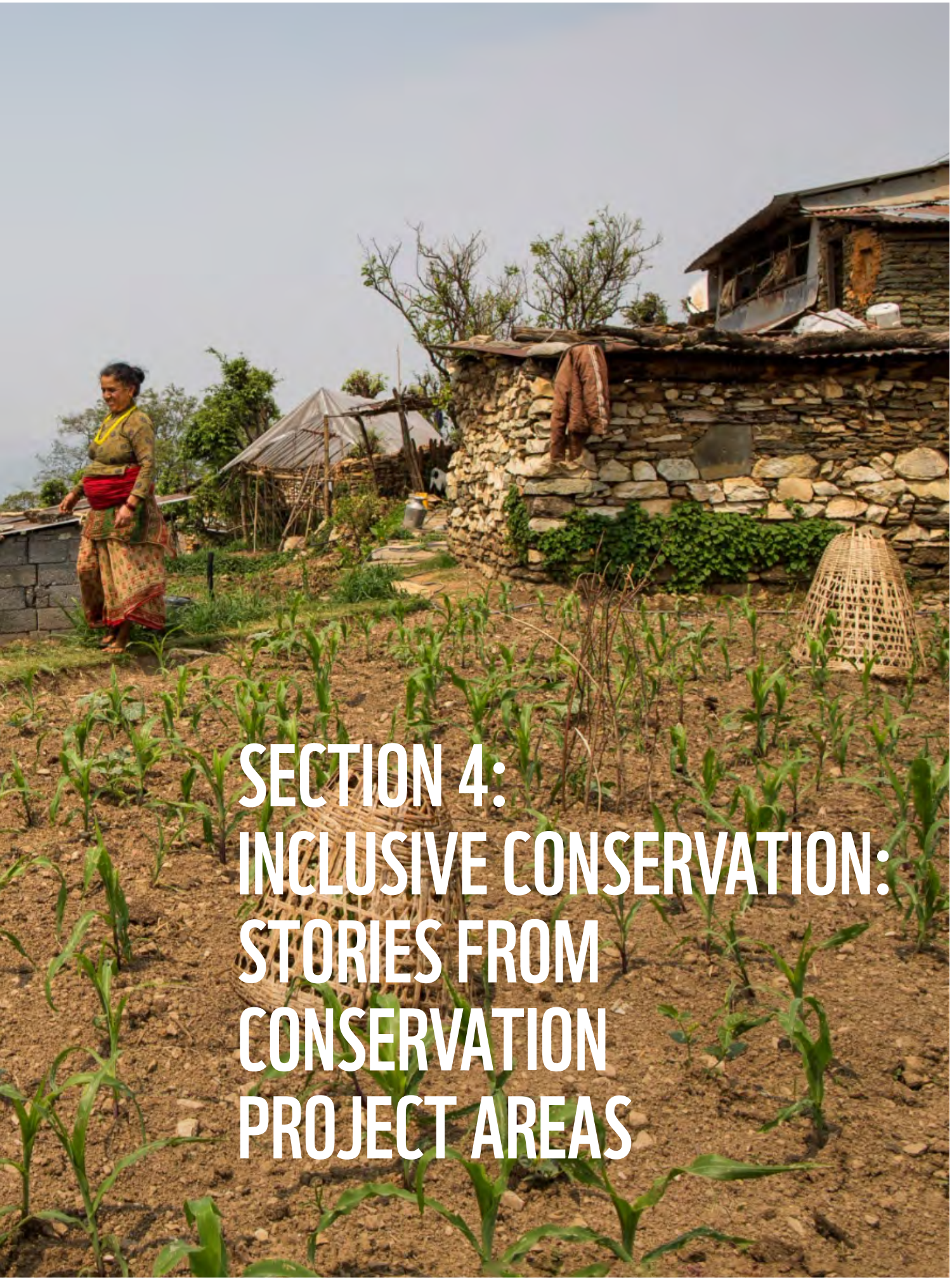
In 2022, WWF developed contractual clauses to be used across the network for all new project implementation agreements in place-based programmes. In line with WWF's Management Response, the new clauses make clear that support for human rights as set forth in WWF's ESSF is an integral part of our contractual agreements. Under these clauses, recipients of WWF funding must notify WWF of any credible allegations of human rights abuse related to the work and ensure their response complies with the ESSF. WWF further reserves the right to modify, suspend and/or ultimately terminate any of its activities or funding that, in its sole judgement, fail to comply with the ESSF.

These clauses were developed in consultation with an external human rights expert and other stakeholders. This language has been finalized and, once it has gone through internal governance approvals, it will be translated and shared with every WWF office for their implementation. The new contractual clauses will ensure further consistency in our efforts to embed appropriate clauses on our ESSF and human rights commitments into relevant contracts.

While these new network clauses were under development, WWF has sought to include similar clauses on our ESSF and human rights commitments in country agreements with governments in several places. These negotiations are still ongoing.



Terai Arc, © WWF-US / Karine Aigner



SECTION 4: INCLUSIVE CONSERVATION: STORIES FROM CONSERVATION PROJECT AREAS

We have included 14 case studies in the Human Rights and the Environment Report 2022, from across our global network – four from Africa (including one in Section 3.B.3 above), four from the Americas, five from Asia and one from the Caucasus region. These case studies bring to life WWF's journey towards the delivery of impactful and inclusive conservation.

We have sought to share an account of milestones achieved, challenges uncovered as well as lessons learned in our place-based work as we continue to deliver on our mission to sustain the natural world for the benefit of people and nature. The stories shared in this report cast a spotlight on our conservation practice across the six of WWF's key intervention areas – climate, food, forest, freshwater, oceans and wildlife – and link these to our broader ambition of embedding human rights in conservation and the roll-out of WWF's environmental and social safeguards.

AFRICA

CASE STUDY #2: THE REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO – SUPPORTING AN INDEPENDENT COMPLAINTS MECHANISM

The Dja-Odzala-Minkebe Tri-national (TRIDOM) landscape, stretching across Cameroon, Gabon and the Republic of the Congo (ROC), contains some of the richest biodiversity and largest areas of intact forest on the planet. Lying between three large protected areas is a 21,000km^2 expanse of forest in the Republic of the Congo known as the "Interzone". Since 2005, WWF's ETIC (Espace TRIDOM Interzone Congo) project has been working to support conservation and wildlife management in the area, most of which is covered by large logging concessions. Under a co-management agreement with the ROC government, we have provided training and support to the Forest Service, and are supporting the designation of a potential protected area in Messok Dja, a vital ecological corridor for forest elephants and other large mammals.

One of the project's challenges is having an impartial and independent mechanism for managing complaints. The Independent Panel's report recommended that complaints mechanisms should be managed by an external NGO to guarantee their autonomy. However, while we have taken steps to identify and involve local civil society organizations, there are few NGOs in this remote landscape with the capacity to take on such a role; most are based in Brazzaville, the capital, and so may also be unfamiliar with the context in rural areas.

Since 2019, complaints have been managed by a multi-stakeholder platform for natural resource management set up as part of the ETIC project. The platform's complaints management committee includes representatives from the public sector administration, civil society and local communities. WWF provides technical and financial support.

When we presented the findings of the Independent Panel's review, the multi-stakeholder platform confirmed its willingness to manage the complaints mechanism. We have, however, been taking steps to ensure external oversight. We have requested the National Human Rights Commission to oversee the committee's decisions on any complaints relating to human rights violations, and complaints can also be made directly to the Commission.

We also worked with the multi-stakeholder platform to develop terms of reference specifying the roles and responsibilities of the complaints management committee. The terms of reference clarify the scope of the committee's decisions. In turn, the committee must share feedback from communities on their understanding of and confidence in the complaints mechanism, including its fairness, effectiveness and impartiality.

Operating the complaints mechanism requires annual funding of €50,000 across the ETIC landscape. Committee members need training in areas such as how to hold hearings, conduct investigations, write minutes and formulate relevant and fair conclusions. And additional efforts are needed to enable Indigenous Peoples to access the complaints mechanism.

Nevertheless, the structure is proving effective. To date, the committee has closed serious cases that have led to disciplinary processes, resulting in the dismissal of four law enforcement officers.

Having community members on the committee creates local ownership, and community members find it easy to file complaints directly with committee members who may live in the same village. At the same time, WWF's support for the mechanism allows us to anticipate direct solutions, escalate issues directly in the network and adapt our project management.



CASE STUDY #3: SOUTH AFRICA – LEADERSHIP TRAINING FOR RANGERS

The Great Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area, spanning Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe, is home to spectacular wildlife, including key populations of African elephants and rhinos. Over the last decade, these species have come under increasing threat from poaching and trafficking in ivory and rhino horn, controlled by transnational criminal syndicates.

WWF's Khetha programme has been working within this landscape since 2018. A seven-year agreement with USAID, the programme seeks to address the threats that illegal wildlife trade poses to flagship species and communities.

Rangers in Kruger National Park and other protected areas play a critical role in preventing poaching and protecting wildlife on the ground. Under increasing pressure from the escalation of poaching, the nature of their work has shifted away from conservation tasks toward an almost exclusive focus on law enforcement.

But addressing wildlife crime in such a vast, diverse and complex landscape is not just a law enforcement problem. Long-term solutions depend on the cooperation of communities who live near protected areas. These communities, who often bear the costs of living with wildlife, have not always shared in the benefits or participated in decision-making around wildlife management. They also lack economic opportunities and face high levels of inequality.

Working in these challenging circumstances, rangers – many of whom are recruited from nearby communities – require skills and knowledge that go well beyond the conservation training of the

> "Rangers with the required leadership skills and knowledge are better motivated and capacitated, and as a result are more effective in their work and better able to contribute to holistic, long-term solutions."
>
> Khungeka Njobe
> WWF-South Africa

past. Developing leadership skills is particularly important to build trust and motivate teams.

Khetha responded to this need by helping develop a training curriculum and materials in leadership skills for rangers and ranger services, through extensive consultation with wildlife agencies. The Braveheart Ranger Leadership Development course, accredited by the Southern African Wildlife College, aims to cultivate strong values, improve problem-solving, encourage perseverance and promote strong people skills.

The course aims to build "soft" skills in the ranger corps that are not typically part of ranger training. It takes participants through an understanding of areas such as human rights, conservation and law enforcement ethics, community involvement, conflict resolution and risk management. The style of delivery encourages reflection, group work and interactive discussions.

Several Braveheart training courses have taken place over the last year. To date, 95 rangers from Mozambique and South Africa have completed the three-week course with support from the Khetha programme, along with 20 rangers from KwaZulu Natal supported by a German government grant. The South African Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment now wants the course to be rolled out to wildlife agencies across the country, and WWF is working with the Southern African Wildlife Trafficking Hub to identify further training opportunities across the region.

While the impact of training takes time to realize and is hard to directly measure, participants say that being acknowledged as leaders has increased morale and motivation. The training also brought together rangers from different contexts and landscapes to share experiences, learn from each other and discuss solutions to the challenges they face, and has enabled the development of informal support networks across the landscape.

"While rangers are the key personnel on the ground in addressing wildlife trafficking, they also need to be equipped to contribute to the required systemic change to address wildlife trafficking in the long term," says Khungeka Njobe, Head of Programmes at WWF-South Africa. "Rangers with the required leadership skills and knowledge are better motivated and capacitated, and as a result are more effective in their work and better able to contribute to holistic, long-term solutions."

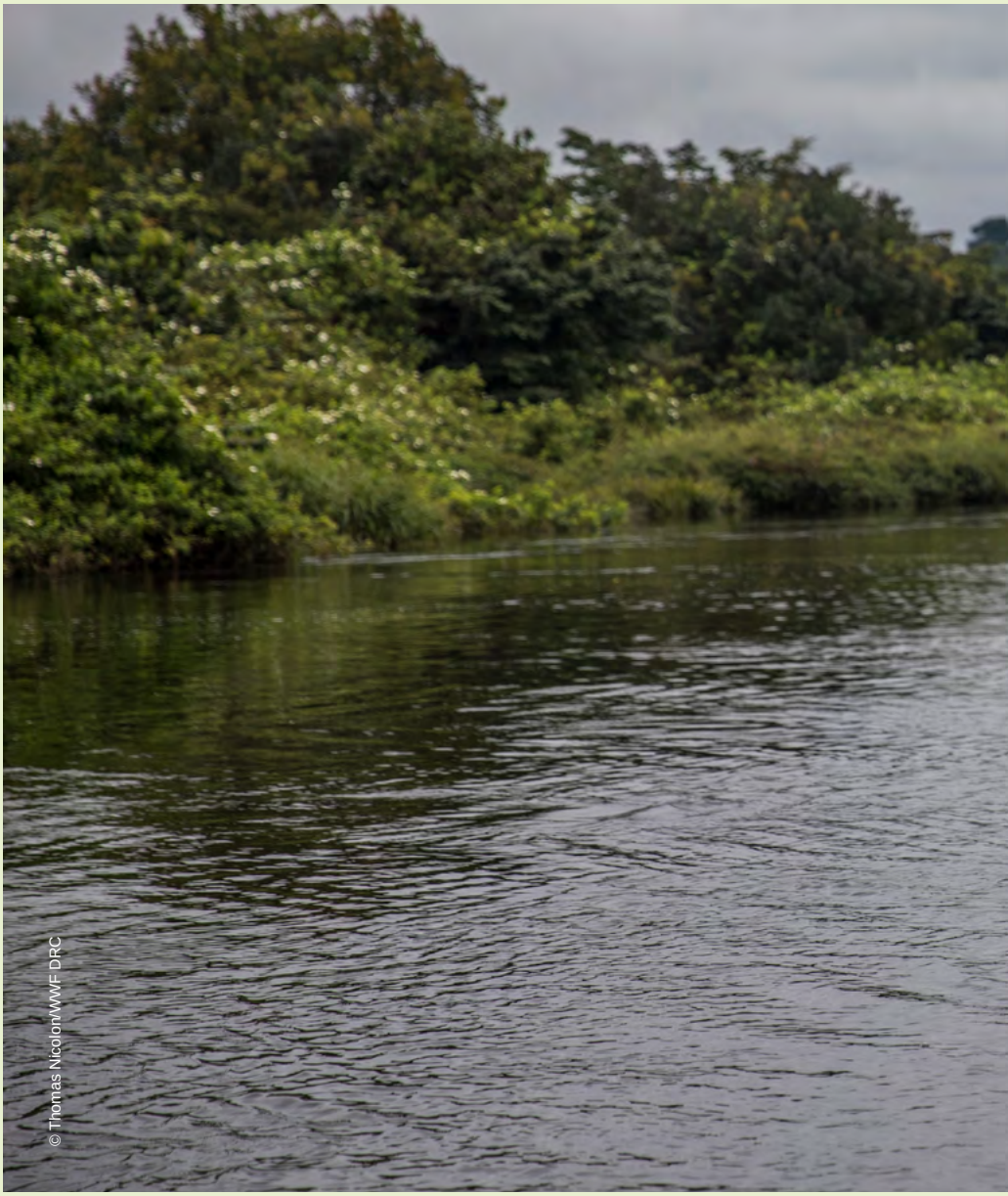


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CASE STUDY #4: DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO – COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND RANGER TRAINING IN SALONGA NATIONAL PARK

WWF co-manages Salonga National Park in the Democratic Republic of the Congo with the Congolese Institute for the Conservation of Nature (ICCN). To make it easy for local people to raise any issues or concerns, WWF is putting in place a complaints mechanism accessible to all rural residents in the buffer zone around the park. The three-year project to embed the complaint resolution process in park operations, began in March 2021, and is being carried out by Juristes pour l'Environnement Congolais (JUREC), a local NGO with expertise in human rights.

During the first year, JUREC held consultations with political representatives, park managers and other authorities to make them aware of the objectives of a complaints mechanism. They also began consultations with 50 villages, which subsequently appointed 14 field monitors (around one for every four villages) to help transmit any complaints originating in remote sites. This work will accelerate over the next two years to contact around 500 communities within the 20 km buffer zone and put in place a network of field monitors to cover the whole landscape.



At the same time, WWF has been supporting efforts to professionalize the park's rangers and raise awareness around human rights. We contracted Chengeta Wildlife, a non-profit law enforcement agency, to work with rangers and managers from ICCN. Chengeta Wildlife provides basic training for new eco-guards, advanced training and leadership training for more senior rangers and managers, and support for ICCN to develop a five-year strategy to increase the effectiveness of park protection.

The first basic training course began in February 2020 and, although the pandemic interrupted this phase for over 18 months, 266 rangers had completed basic training in human rights, code of conduct and patrolling techniques by November 2021. In April and May 2022, Chengeta Wildlife carried out higher-level training for 27 rangers, and a third training session is planned before the end of 2022.

Regular and repeated training sessions, as well as periodic evaluations of patrol effectiveness by Chengeta Wildlife, aim to professionalize the rangers and instil respect for human rights as the foundational principle of law enforcement activities.



CASE STUDY #5: COLOMBIA – DEFENDING THE DEFENDERS

One of the most biodiverse countries in the world, Colombia is also one of the most dangerous for those who stand up for the right to a healthy environment. The NGO Global Witness recorded 290 killings of land and environmental defenders – also referred to as environmental human rights defenders – in the country between 2012 and 2020. Many of those killed are Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian communities (descended from enslaved Africans) seeking to defend their ancestral lands and natural resources.

During more than half a century of internal conflict in Colombia, state forces, paramilitaries and illegal groups fought for control over land and resources, with local communities caught in the middle. Although a peace agreement between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) was signed in 2016, the situation for environmental defenders has worsened. Emerging illegal groups have taken advantage of the withdrawal of FARC from territories it used to control, leading to an increase in deforestation rates and illegal land grabbing. These remote areas suffer from weak state capacity to deliver security, justice, basic services and economic opportunities.

Many of the areas most affected by the conflict are also priority areas for conservation. WWF has a long history of working with Indigenous Peoples and local community stewards of sustainable development in Colombia, particularly in the Chocó-Darién ecoregion. This has included defending their rights, supporting community-led conservation, and building the capacity of communities to manage their resources and participate in regional planning and decision-making. In the current situation, though, it is vital to understand that



promoting conservation can affect and even threaten people's lives, and to take whatever steps we can to protect those we work with.

As part of its efforts to integrate safeguards and human rights into its strategy and programme design, WWF-Colombia has been introducing a conflict-sensitivity approach. Following the "do no harm" principle, this has involved developing a set of guidelines to better understand the conflict dynamics, how our interventions interact with these, and the steps we need to take to ensure our work reduces negative outcomes and increases positive ones. Through this, we aim to positively contribute to social cohesion, stability, human rights and peace building.

An important aspect of this work is to improve our ability to better understand situations and conditions of risk, build alliances with organizations specializing in conflict analysis, as in the case of our work with the Ideas for Peace Foundation, and develop better tools to support community leaders and other environmental human rights defenders whose personal safety is at risk. In October 2021, for example, we organized an exchange of experiences with environmental leaders and defenders to develop safeguards for community leaders to prevent or manage political and social risks. The safeguard measures range from generating information and security communications to guiding them regarding protection routes to using contact with expert human resource organizations with whom WWF has established contact.

We have also worked to strengthen local community defence mechanisms known as the "environmental guard" or "Indigenous guard", which seek to protect the communities' land and way of life. We have supported them to analyse the risks they face and plan mitigation measures.

Additionally, WWF-Colombia is currently working with other organizations such as Save the Children, proposing alternative sustainable livelihoods so that children, adolescents and their caregivers who live in vulnerable communities improve their socioeconomic conditions, removing them from the risk of becoming linked to armed groups.

At the same time, we are calling for greater protection for environmental human rights defenders through high-level national and international advocacy and mobilizing media awareness. This includes pushing for the ratification of the Escazú Agreement, which will allow for greater access to information, public participation, and social and environmental justice in Colombia.





CASE STUDY #6: BRAZIL – SUPPORTING INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN THE BRAZILIAN AMAZON TO USE TECHNOLOGY TO DEFEND THEIR TERRITORIES

In the Amazon, 3 million Indigenous inhabitants are at the forefront of conservation, with Indigenous territories playing a crucial role in protecting the rainforest and its priceless biodiversity.

In recent years, Indigenous territories in Brazil have come under increasing threat. Illegal logging, hunting, mining and land grabbing are on the rise, and there has been a sharp increase in deforestation and forest fires. These threats have been fuelled by the weakening of law enforcement and action against illegal activities. As a consequence, violence has escalated and threats have increased against Indigenous Peoples and other environmental human rights defenders.

Empowering local communities with the tools and knowledge to actively monitor and report threats has never been more important. Since 2019, WWF-Brazil has been supporting Indigenous organizations to use technologies to protect and monitor their territories. The technology is helping them to defend the rainforest, advocate for their rights and raise awareness, as well as increasing the safety of community patrols when exercising the right to monitor their lands.

Our main focus is the state of Rondônia, where we work in partnership with the Kanindé Ethno-Environmental Defense Association and several local Indigenous associations. In four Indigenous territories (Uru-Eu-Wau-Wau, Sete de Setembro, Pacaas Novas and Igarapé Lourdes), we have supported communities to use technologies such as drones, mobile phone apps



A surveillance team navigates through the Jamari River inside the Uru-Eu-Wau-Wau indigenous territory.

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(SMART) and remote-sensing data to track and report illegal activities.

We have held hands-on training in using drones, SMART and other technologies, and have worked together with communities to design monitoring programmes that combine science and technology with traditional knowledge and local governance. Local people have been trained to gather, process and manage data including high-resolution maps, photos and geographical coordinates, as well as receiving training on safety and human rights. To date, 25 Indigenous monitors have been trained, and six drones are in use to patrol the four territories.

As a result, Indigenous communities and civil society organizations are now better equipped to present evidence of deforestation and invasions, raise complaints with the relevant authorities and press them to take effective action. The drone pictures and videos have also helped to bring attention to their struggle in international fora such as UN climate summits and in national and international media.

In addition, technology can reduce the risks faced by frontline environmental defenders. For instance, using drones and remote-sensing enables communities to monitor and document deforestation and raise the alarm at a safe distance, avoiding direct confrontation with illegal loggers – though it is important to be aware of the risk of retaliation or an escalation of violence as territories become better protected.

Whenever possible, we promote peer-to-peer training to further build local capacity, as Bitaté Uru-Eu-Wau-Wau, president of the Uru-Eu-Wau-Wau Indigenous People's Association, explains: “It makes me very happy to help my relatives from another group and pass on the knowledge to them. Some of the Indigenous monitors who participated in the previous course are piloting the drones very well and are already multiplying this knowledge. With this, we are forming a network of Indigenous Peoples capable of monitoring the territories much more frequently and efficiently.”



CASE STUDY #7: UNITED STATES – RESTORING BISON WITH NATIVE NATIONS IN THE NORTHERN GREAT PLAINS

For thousands of years, Indigenous Peoples stewarded the Great Plains in North America, alongside the bison they depended on for food, shelter and tools, as well as spiritually and culturally. After the arrival of European colonists, bison were nearly wiped out to subjugate the Native people. Today, Indigenous Peoples are leading efforts to return bison to the Northern Great Plains, one of the world's last four remaining temperate grasslands.

Native nations manage some of the largest intact grasslands in North America. But nearly half of their lands in the Northern Great Plains are leased to non-Native operators to grow crops and raise livestock that provide little benefit for Native communities. Although many Native nations want to restore their communal bison herds, resources supporting their efforts are scarce. WWF works with Native nations who seek to restore bison by supporting the development of a network of trusted partners that they can draw upon to achieve their vision, helping secure large land bases and necessary infrastructure, seeking science and policy that support sustainable management, and facilitating access to sources of bison for conservation herds.

One example is the Wolakota Buffalo Range project. Beginning in 2020, WWF accepted an invitation to partner with Sićaŋġu Co, the economic engine of the Sićaŋġu Lakota nation in what is known today as the state of South Dakota. WWF provided funds to secure a 11,200 hectare lease,





and help them realize their vision of establishing the largest Native owned and managed bison herd in North America, returning bison to their land after a 140-year absence.

With WWF support, Sićaŋġu Co has been able to access around US$6 million through partnerships with foundations, corporations and Federal agencies to fund the project's implementation. Partners have also provided technical and business advice, while the US Department of the Interior provided nearly 800 surplus bison from its own herds at no cost. WWF and Sićaŋġu Co have also worked together to start a dialogue with neighbouring landowners to address any concerns and prejudices.

Two-and-a-half years into the project, there are over 1,000 bison on the range including new calves. Bison are now being harvested for consumptive and traditional use by community members and for commercial markets, contributing to the economic sustainability of the project. Ecological monitoring shows the grasslands are recovering after prolonged overgrazing by cattle.

"While working side by side with our Native nation partners, WWF has recognized that we can open certain doors, but that it is their right and choice alone to walk through them," says Dennis Jorgensen, WWF-US Bison Program Manager. "We can't and don't attempt to make choices for them. When working with Indigenous Peoples, our true power and role as an organization is to bring opportunity and resources that support their vision. As a result of our success at Wolakota, other Native organizations are considering how we might work together to bring similar energy, networks and resources to accelerate a larger vision of returning bison to Native nations across North America."

"The sacred relationship between Native nation communities and the buffalo is part of a shared story of strength, resilience and economic revitalization," says Wizipan Little Elk, former CEO of Sićaŋġu Co. "To do anything good requires healthy relationships and partnerships, so we are incredibly thankful for all of our partners."



CASE STUDY #8: PERU – SUPPORTING INDIGENOUS-LED ENTERPRISES IN THE PERUVIAN AMAZON

The Peruvian Amazon covers large expanses of well-connected and well-conserved tropical rainforest that, among other global benefits, maintains stable populations of jaguar, which can serve as an indicator for the health and long-term viability of these critical forests. A diverse mosaic of Indigenous territories, Indigenous peoples living in voluntary isolation, protected areas, conservation concessions allowing for timber or Brazil nut harvesting or ecotourism development, and smallholder farms and cattle ranches guides land use in the region and supports local livelihoods. The region is also subject to widespread environmental degradation and social change from threats that include unregulated gold mining, coca farming, illegal timber extraction, large-scale infrastructure and energy development, and deforestation caused by the expanding industrial agricultural frontier.

WWF-Peru has built long-standing relationships and developed programmes of work with Indigenous communities in the Peruvian Amazon in support of the principle of self-determination of Indigenous Peoples and within the framework of Indigenous governance and seeking the collective good. One focal area involves strengthening and promoting Indigenous enterprises with sustainable production activities. Indigenous enterprises have been identified by Indigenous communities and their representative federations and governance bodies as important channels for the sustainable and traditional use of natural resources of their titled lands and to improve their livelihoods. Indigenous Peoples promote such enterprises to generate income and contribute to food security. Their operations are based on knowledge exchange and on respect toward their forests and rivers.

WWF supports Indigenous federations and communities to address the significant challenges and obstacles to effective Indigenous enterprises: logistical issues such as reliable energy and transport, social issues such as internal equity and benefit sharing, and external threats such as illegal extraction on Indigenous lands.

Over 40 Indigenous enterprises benefiting over 100 communities have been identified as potential candidates for support through an Indigenous-led selection process. As part of the USAID Amazon Indigenous Rights and Resources (AIRR) project, WWF-Peru is currently working with 14 enterprises selected from this group through AIDESEP (Interethnic Association for the Development of the Rainforest) and in partnership with the Nonprofit Enterprise and Self-Sustainability Team (NESsT), an organization investing in social entrepreneurs. The enterprises include agroforestry, handicrafts, aquaculture, tourism, and Brazil nut and palm fruit harvesting.

Work with these enterprises includes formalization, management training, investments in equipment, market and finance access, and more. Annual sales range from $1,000 to $150,000 and direct investments range from $5,000 to $20,000. Approximately 5,000 families have been supported in an area covering 600,000 hectares. A monitoring programme seeks to generate better understanding of the specific impacts Indigenous enterprises can bring to the governance and health of their forests, including the co-benefits of strengthening Indigenous federations to lead these processes and improved operational, administrative and communications capacity.

Renee Pujupat Taan, from the Nazareth Aquaculture Awajún Women Association (ASMAAN) which has brought together 120 aquaculture mothers of the Awajún Indigenous Peoples, says: “We have spoken with the mothers to start aquaculture activities. While we work, we think about how we are going to live, to eat, to educate our children. We harvest our fish, and we sell them. Our river is polluted because of the oil spill. We were told not to eat the river’s fish and we don’t bathe in the river either. When we do, our whole body itches. This is why we fish at the ponds. COVID arrived when we least expected it and we got very sick, and thanks to the fish we bred, we were able to drink some hot chilcano. And we use the proceeds of our sales to buy our medicines.”

“While we work, we think about how we are going to live, to eat, to educate our children. We harvest our fish, and we sell them. Our river is polluted because of the oil spill. We were told not to eat the river’s fish and we don’t bathe in the river either."

Renee Pujupat Taan
Nazareth Aquaculture Awajún Women Association (ASMAAN)

CASE STUDY #9: INDIA – COMMUNITY FOREST RIGHTS

India's Western Ghats mountain range is a global biodiversity hotspot. Its forests are home to the world's single largest Asian elephant population, the largest contiguous tiger population in the world and many endemic species. Numerous Indigenous communities also live in the region, many of whom are dependent on the forests for their sustenance, livelihoods and income.

The Kadar people – whose name means forest dweller – are the largest Indigenous group in one of the areas where WWF works. Classified by the government as a "particularly vulnerable tribal group", the Kadars mostly depend on Non-Timber Forest Product (NTFP) collection for their livelihoods. There are around 1,550 Kadars in the world, nearly two-thirds of whom live within the Vazhachal forest area located within the Western Ghats and Nilgiri Landscape.

Since 2007, WWF-India has supported the Kadars to get formal recognition of their right to control and manage the forest and its resources under India's 2006 Forest Rights Act. Nine tribal settlements (362 families) in Vazhachal have now received this collective right over 400km^2 of forest, which, among other benefits, enables them to prevent the development of a hydropower project that would have severely impacted a river on which they depend for fishing. Following this, another group of Kadars asked WWF-India to support them to obtain their rights within the Parambikulam National Park, an


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important tiger reserve. In 2018, five settlements were granted collective rights over 108km^2 in that park.

The communities practise their traditional systems of NTFP extraction and use their immense knowledge of ethnobotany to informally manage these areas. Since getting formal recognition of rights, they are developing a management plan to strengthen and enhance conservation within their resource-use area. This area includes a critical wildlife corridor and is part of a tiger reserve. Currently, in 2022, they are mapping the extent of invasive plant species in their area and have secured funding from the government of Kerala to remove invasives and plant local NTFP species for restoring the degraded patches of forests.

Putting Indigenous Peoples at the centre of WWF-India's work and supporting them to participate freely, make decisions, and co-develop their own strategies and approaches on how to conserve and manage the forests they depend on, has helped develop a model for a rights-based conservation approach in Kerala. WWF-India is working with Indigenous communities in other landscapes in the country using similar approaches.

Partnering with communities on rights-based approaches needs time and sustained engagement, and cannot be done in a short-term "project mode". Bringing together all actors to find common ground requires careful facilitation, deep listening and acknowledging multiple viewpoints. Along with building trust with Indigenous communities, WWF maintained a good relationship with the Forest Department, which is the formal custodian of most forest land in India. Providing tenure rights to communities was a new and complex process, but dialogue and meetings succeeded in keeping everyone on board, and community rights are now being accepted and scaled up.







CASE STUDY #10: NEPAL – EMPOWERING ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED AND MARGINALIZED WOMEN

Dalit people, and especially women, have been subjected to historical discrimination under Nepal's centuries-old caste system. Like other Indigenous groups, they have restricted access to social and economic opportunity. WWF-Nepal has been making targeted efforts to empower and foster inclusion of marginalized groups in conservation activities.

One notable example of this work has been the mainstreaming of gender equality and social inclusion of economically disadvantaged and marginalized women under the Hariyo Ban programme, funded by USAID. The vision for this programme was that if stakeholders are better able to conserve and benefit from natural resources and adapt to climate change in a manner that diversifies livelihoods, improves gender equality and social inclusion, and promotes good natural resource governance, then people and ecosystems in the target landscapes will be more resilient.

Through this programme and continuing efforts, WWF-Nepal seeks to empower and build the capacity of rights holders including Indigenous Peoples and local community stewards of sustainable development, the people living in poverty, women and youth, groups that are especially vulnerable to climate change and human-wildlife conflict. This allows for greater participation in community-based natural resource management groups, increasing awareness of policy and institutional mechanisms related to resource management, more equitable benefit sharing, and improved access to natural resources.

The video links below tell this story from the unique perspectives of some of the incredible women leading conservation work in Nepal.

VIDEO 1 VIDEO 2 VIDEO 3


Terai Arc, © Karine Aigner/WWF-US



CASE STUDY #11: THE PHILIPPINES – UNDERSTANDING AND MITIGATING RISKS TO FISHERS

Tuna fishing is vital for the livelihoods of communities around Lagonoy Gulf and Mindoro Strait in the Philippines. Important spawning grounds and migratory routes for yellowfin tuna lie not far from shore, and over recent decades a flourishing small-scale tuna fishing industry has developed. Around 3,000 fishers operate in each site, using hand lines and small vessels.

However, fishing communities in the area face numerous challenges. Recent years have brought increasingly strong typhoons, and devastating floods and landslides that destroy fishing vessels and houses as well as threaten human lives. Poverty is a major challenge, as fisherfolk are heavily disadvantaged in the supply chains for their catch. On top of this, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted supply chains and led to a loss of household income for many fishing families. Fishers are also feeling the effects of the declining health of the yellowfin tuna stock, exacerbated by weak management and a failure to regulate juvenile catch.

WWF-Philippines has worked in these areas since 2011, supporting sustainable fisheries management and socio-economic development in communities. As well as focusing on the conservation of natural resources, the project increasingly aims to strengthen the resilience of communities, including areas such as financial management and disaster preparedness.

By using the ESSF screening tool, WWF-Philippines has gained a deeper understanding of the socio-economic and conservation issues facing these communities, as well as the risks that its activities and advocacy work may have on fisherfolk. This is helping to design mitigation measures, explore trade-offs and find compromises that benefit both people and nature.

For example, to maintain the health of tuna stocks, WWF advocates for sustainable harvest strategies and harvest control rules – but there is the possibility that these would

> "All conservation work comes with risks, and we need to acknowledge what they are so we can take steps to avoid or mitigate them."
>
> Raisa Pandan
> Sustainable Tuna Partnership

restrict fisherfolk's livelihoods. Fish workers in commercial vessels – an even more vulnerable group than the artisanal fishers targeted by the project – could also be affected by quotas or seasonal closures.

The ESSF screening process helped to bring focus to this issue. In response, WWF-Philippines has designed mitigation measures to address the risks raised and is rolling out a grievance mechanism to address potential problems that may arise.

"WWF-Philippines is taking steps to make this grievance mechanism accessible to fisherfolk and make them feel more comfortable about bringing up their hesitations and doubts about the project, so we can work on solutions together," says Raisa Pandan, Technical Operation Manager of the Sustainable Tuna Partnership. "We'll also explore ways to support those who will be affected – for example, by lobbying the government to compensate those whose livelihoods may be affected by fishing restrictions."

ESSF screening, completed in January 2022, also drew attention to gender issues in stakeholder engagement. As a result, the project is introducing gender-sensitivity training, and hopes to improve the local communities' understanding of gender equality and gender-based violence.

"Initially, we were hesitant to name the possible risks that our activities could cause, because we did not feel as if they were issues that we could solve," says Raisa. "The process helped us re-evaluate our thinking. All conservation work comes with risks, and we need to acknowledge what they are so we can take steps to avoid or mitigate them."



© James Morgan / WWF

CASE STUDY #12: SOLOMON ISLANDS – EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH FINANCIAL LITERACY IN SOLOMON ISLANDS

Solomon Islands is one of the six countries that make up the Coral Triangle – the planet's richest centre of marine life. Since 1995, WWF-Pacific has been working in Western Province, one of nine provinces in Solomon Islands, where around 90% of the population lives within 5km of the coast. The predominantly Indigenous coastal communities are highly dependent on fishing for food and income.

These communities are highly vulnerable to the loss and degradation of coral reefs and other coastal ecosystems. Local threats such as overfishing, coastal development and pollution are compounded by a high population growth rate and the increasing impacts of climate change. By 2030, it is predicted that fisheries will no longer be able to meet demand. The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated the pressure as more islanders have turned to fishing after losing tourism-related jobs.

Indigenous Solomon Islanders are the legally recognized customary owners of coastal land and resources, particularly reefs and mangroves. Although they have sustainably managed their natural resources for hundreds of years, communities have limited capacity to effectively respond to today's challenges. Many lack the finance, tools, equipment and methods to manage their resources for the long term while dealing with pressing everyday needs.

"WWF supports sustainable community-based fisheries management, but for this to be successful there has to be an economic component," says Shannon Seeto, Solomon Islands Country Manager at WWF-Pacific. "We work with communities to build their capacity and resilience, with a particular focus on empowering women through microfinance initiatives and training in financial literacy and business skills. The work supports income diversification and economic resilience, and increases the number of women in natural resource management, decision-making and leadership roles."

After attending financial literacy workshops, women have established savings clubs, which help them to manage their finances and withstand economic shocks. During the pandemic, for example, members were able to continue to meet priority needs such as buying food and paying school fees.

The savings clubs also act as a revolving loan scheme, enabling participating women to borrow money to establish small businesses. These have included community-based tourism, poultry farms and silk printing. Sustainability criteria for loans ensure any new businesses are in line with WWF's conservation and environmental goals.

Starting from a single scheme with 40 members on the island of Gizo, savings clubs now involve more than 750 women across Western Province. Together they have saved around SI$520,000 (~US$64,000) and withdrawn ~SI$440,000 (~US$54,000), and established a number of sustainable businesses. WWF is now focusing on training local women from other communities, with the help of members from established women's savings clubs.

Good safeguards practices for gender equity have been intrinsic to WWF's work in Solomon Islands. The programme will be further buttressed by WWF-Pacific's gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI) programme, which began in July 2022 and is led by regional and local experts. This programme will help make gender empowerment central to project design. A landscape-level risk assessment has also recently been carried out, with a particular focus on the principles of human rights and gender equity, and measures will be developed to avoid or minimize any identified risks.

"WWF supports sustainable community-based fisheries management, but for this to be successful there has to be an economic component."

Shannon Seeto
WWF-Pacific



© WWF-Pacific

CASE STUDY #13: MONGOLIA – CO-MANAGING A RESERVE TO BENEFIT PEOPLE AND NATURE

Rising above the seemingly endless Mongolian steppes, KharYamaat mountain is home to unique ecosystems and a rich array of wildlife. The area became a designated nature reserve in 1998, and since 2013 WWF has been co-managing the reserve in partnership with the government and local herding families.

Local people have grazed their herds here for hundreds of years, living in harmony with nature. But the livestock sector in Mongolia has been growing, and native grasslands and the wildlife they support are coming under increased pressure. Too many livestock and poor grazing management are having negative impacts on the natural environment of KharYamaat.

As part of the legal arrangement governing KharYamaat, 36 native herders and their children who were already living in the area have the right to continue to live and raise their herds in the nature reserve. A tripartite agreement between WWF, the local government and these herding families is signed each year.

Because the management regime works in the interests of local people by limiting the number of outside herders coming into the nature reserve, they cooperate with WWF in supporting conservation activities. Under the agreement, herders are responsible for cleaning up garbage, taking measures to prevent fires around their houses and reporting illegal activities. They also participate in conservation efforts such as restoring water sources.

Although WWF-Mongolia employs local conservationists and supports local volunteer rangers, they have no power to enforce the law, which is the responsibility of local government partners. There is also no legal framework to compel local inhabitants to reduce the sizes of their herds, although these remain too high for the nature reserve to sustainably support. Instead, WWF focuses on raising public awareness and supporting local herders to improve sustainable grazing practices, develop alternative livelihood activities such as beekeeping, and actively participate in managing the nature reserve.

This approach has brought significant progress over the last few years. With community participation, three springs and a small lake have been restored, with dramatic results for wildlife: the number of bird species recorded at the lake jumped from 21 in 2019 to 61 in 2020, with endangered white-naped cranes among the returning species. Populations of red deer, Mongolian gazelle, roe deer and marmot have also increased within the reserve.

Equally importantly, WWF has helped to build the capacity of local government and communities to manage the reserve in a participatory way. In 2020, a co-management council for KharYamaat was officially established, consisting of representatives from local and national government, local communities and WWF. In recent meetings, the council has decided that the local government will continue to be responsible for the reserve when WWF's contract expires in July 2023. The focus now is on putting in place a multi-stakeholder management plan and structure that ensures the equal participation of local herders and communities.



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CASE STUDY #14: ARMENIA – CONFLICT AND CRISIS RISK

From establishing new protected areas and conserving Persian leopards to supporting local livelihoods and improving forest management, WWF has been active in the Caucasus for over 20 years. In late 2020, long-running border tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan flared up into a two-month war. WWF stopped all conservation project areas operations during this period close to the borderline and in areas where the fighting took place.

Despite a ceasefire, armed clashes have continued. Although the areas where WWF works are located more than 100 km away from the fighting, we wanted to make sure that the conflict did not have any significant impact on community members, WWF staff and other partners involved in our conservation work, in conservation project areas or in our offices in the region.

In 2021, WWF-Caucasus began mapping high-risk areas to assess any potential threat to local communities we work with. We revised our risk assessments for all our projects in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia in the light of the political tensions.

During this process, it became clear that our offices lacked specific knowledge on how to develop emergency plans, how to quantify the risks coming from the armed conflict, and how to respond to different threats in this changing environment. In response, staff were given training in these areas. The local team sought guidance from WWF International's Quality Assurance Committee and from other offices in the WWF Network that had encountered similar issues. They consulted external sources to learn about best practices, and tried to adjust these to the local characteristics.

For each project, WWF-Caucasus developed crisis response plans. These will be further refined in the coming year to allow communities to have sufficient information and knowledge on how to act in different emergency situations.

As part of this process, WWF-Caucasus developed a regional grievance redress mechanism, fitted to the local characteristics and translated into the national languages in the three countries. This was actively promoted in the target communities, not just to identify potential problems but also to hear about anything the communities considered important for their well-being. Project staff also regularly engage with communities to keep them updated about project activities and to get their feedback on how these could be improved.

"Community representatives are now better informed about how to act in case of emergency situations and how to seek help via state institutions as well as WWF," says Giorgi Sanadiradze, Regional Director of the WWF-Caucasus office. "Empowering communities and giving them guidance has strengthened their trust in us and our work.

"By having a better understanding of the political environment, we have been able to make adjustments to how we operate across the landscapes, and how we understand, define, avoid, mitigate and monitor different risks. We are also able to demonstrate that our staff have sufficient knowledge and capacity to respond to crisis scenarios and act quickly upon new challenges, at the same time protecting their life, health and security."

"By having a better understanding of the political environment, we have been able to make adjustments to how we operate across the landscapes, and how we understand, define, avoid, mitigate and monitor different risks."

Giorgi Sanadiradze,
WWF-Caucasus

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Poona Khaladel smiles at the camera. She's one of the women present at the (Community Forest User Group) CFUG community meeting in the Bhakarjung area of Nepal.

SECTION 5:
LOOKING AHEAD

As we continue to deliver on more effective inclusive conservation, we will listen to and work with communities, partners, donors, peers and experts to implement the changes needed. We will also continue to strengthen the leverage of our influence to help ensure that human rights are respected throughout our work. In 2023, our efforts will be centred on the challenges that we have identified in this report as well as rigorously implementing the issues identified. This will lay the groundwork for the review that will take place in 2024 to assess the progress on the implementation of our Management Response.

In November 2022, the Network Executive Team agreed that the year-three review, at the end of our Management Response implementation phase, will not be carried out by the Office of the Ombudsperson – in agreement with the Ombudsperson. Given that the Office of the Ombudsperson did not conduct the initial enquiry, it was not considered appropriate for the Office to determine compliance with the findings. Furthermore, the Office's adaptive mandate does not yet enable the Office of the Ombudsperson to conduct investigative processes. The evaluation will instead be carried out by a combination of human rights and inclusive conservation experts.

As we look to 2023 and beyond, we remain steadfastly committed to our mission for people and nature to thrive.

ACRONYMS

ABBREVIATION	DEFINITION
ARCC	WWF's Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee
CAR	Central African Republic
CIHR	Conservation Initiative on Human Rights
CoC	Code of Conduct
CQC	WWF's Conservation Quality Committee
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
DSPA	Dzanga Sangha Complex of Protected Areas in Central African Republic
ESSF	WWF's Environmental and Social Safeguards Framework
ETIC	*Espace TRIDOM Interzone Congo*, a joint conservation initiative of WWF and the government of the Republic of the Congo
FCS	Fragile and Conflict-affected States
FPCR-N	Forum for Protection of Consumer Rights Nepal
FPIC	Free, Prior and Informed Consent
GRP	Grievance Redressal Process
ICCN	The Congolese Institute for the Conservation of Nature *(Institut Congolais pour la Conservation de la Nature)* in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
IRF	International Ranger Federation
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
MEFP	*Maison de l'Enfant et de la Femme Pygmées*
MINFOF	Ministry of Forests and Fauna in Cameroon
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NET	WWF's Network Executive Team
NFDIN	National Foundation for Development of Indigenous Nationalities
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NHRC	National Human Rights Commission in Nepal
RACOPY	*Réseau Recherches Actions Concertées Pygmées*
ROC	The Republic of the Congo
SMART	Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool
TNS	*Tri-national de la Sangha*
TRIDOM	*Tri-National Dja-Odzala-Minkébé* transborder forest spread over three countries: Cameroon, the Republic of Congo, and Gabon
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
URSA	Universal Ranger Support Alliance



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