



LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND

TALKING POINTS

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Environmental dimensions of 'Leaving No One Behind'

'Leaving No One Behind' (LNOB) is an important principle emphasising the **universal nature** of the 2030 Agenda, and WWF welcomes this theme for the 2016 High Level Political Forum (HLPF).

The concept of LNOB applies to all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets in all countries and should be effectively implemented at all levels. LNOB should explicitly address the environmental dimension of sustainable development.

The natural environment provides the resources and services upon which human well-being and prosperity depend. HLPF 2016 represents an opportunity to build a deeper understanding of the environmental dimensions of LNOB in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Natural resources: 'wealth of the poorest'

Everyone depends directly or indirectly on natural resources for food, water, fresh air, fuel, fibre, medicines, building materials and commodities, **the poorest people often rely directly on these natural resources** to fulfil basic needs, for their livelihoods and to generate income. For example, 2 billion people, including 350 million of the world's poorest people, rely on forest ecosystems for shelter, livelihoods, water, fuel and food. Fisheries support more than 260 million jobs, including 50 million small-scale or subsistence livelihoods in places where alternative livelihoods could be very hard to find. Natural resources are often one of the only assets the poorest have at their disposal, and income from natural resources can act as a stepping stone towards economic empowerment. Often, Indigenous Peoples and other groups are run by traditional economies that are based on subsistence and non-monetary measures of wellbeing, including natural resources. **Security of rights to land, territories and natural resource** is a core part of wealth and wellbeing and essential for poverty eradication. **Managing natural systems sustainably is essential to support those most at risk of being left behind.**

The poorest: the most vulnerable

When natural ecosystems are damaged through environmental pollution, soil erosion, deforestation, unsustainable water abstraction and climate change, it is often the **poorest and most marginalized who are impacted first, and most, by basic needs, livelihoods and health**, despite being the least responsible for causing it. Exposure to environmental risk factors is also unequally distributed, often related to income, social status, employment and education, gender, age or ethnicity.

Unequal impacts from climate change stem from the fact that poorer and more marginalized communities are more likely to live in areas vulnerable to the impacts of climate change – flood plains, river deltas, low lying coastal regions, rain stressed areas, areas prone to landslips or

erosion, marginal or polluted land – and to rely on livelihoods that are vulnerable to climate impacts such as subsistence farming, collecting natural resources, fishing etc. Those most left behind have the least capacity to adapt and have the least resilience to climate change impacts.

Without urgent action on environmental degradation and climate change more people will be pushed into extreme poverty and get left further behind. The principle of LNOB should be implemented by ensuring effective management, monitoring and compliance of the integrity and sustainability of natural systems.

Natural systems: 'first line of defence' for the poorest

Natural systems are the “first line of defence” against disaster impacts, degraded ecosystems and climate change. For example, coastal mangrove forests can protect inland communities from the impacts of storms and tidal surges and this can be particularly important for most left behind as they are most vulnerable to climate change impacts. Likewise, environments that are already degraded or damaged are less resilient to the impacts of climate change and disasters. **Good management of natural systems can be a ‘win-win’ when it comes to supporting those most left behind with co-benefits for livelihoods, climate change adaptation and mitigation, reliance and nature.**

Enablers for ‘Leaving No One Behind’

It is essential to have the right governance structure and normative framework in place at all levels of societies to ensure that no one is left behind.

Strengthen participatory and representative decisionmaking

Opportunities and access need to be provided for inclusive participation in transparent decisionmaking processes and in the conceptualization of policies and programmes that affect their lives in the context of natural resource management. For many of those at risk of being left behind, this includes decision-making about land and natural resources. This includes accessible communication, information channels and access to justice that favours the inclusion of the most vulnerable and marginalized. **Participatory and representative decision-making processes with regard to environmental and natural resource dimensions are not well defined in the 2030 Agenda and need to be strengthened.**

Mainstreaming environmental and human rights in the 2030 Agenda

Mainstreaming environmental and human rights in implementing and monitoring the 2030 Agenda will be critical to LNOB. Environmental justice is an essential element in the fight against discrimination, poverty and inequality. Environmental harm can interfere with human rights, like the rights to life, health and many other rights. Often it especially affects the most vulnerable groups of society, like women, children and indigenous peoples. **It is crucial that obligations relating to environmental protection based on existing international rights-based commitments are implemented.**