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GETTING THE SOCIAL ISSUES RIGHT

MAINSTREAMING SOCIAL BEST PRACTICES INTO OUR WORK AND WORKPLACE

FEBRUARY, 2014

WWF-MYANMAR

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I. WHAT IS THIS PAPER ABOUT?

As WWF-Myanmar grows into a strong, relevant and impactful office, we recognize the complex development context in which we work, and that our success in conservation is inextricably linked to the wellbeing of the communities that depend on natural resources. This paper lays out some suggested structures and frameworks to ensure that social considerations are mainstreamed into both our programme and our operations.

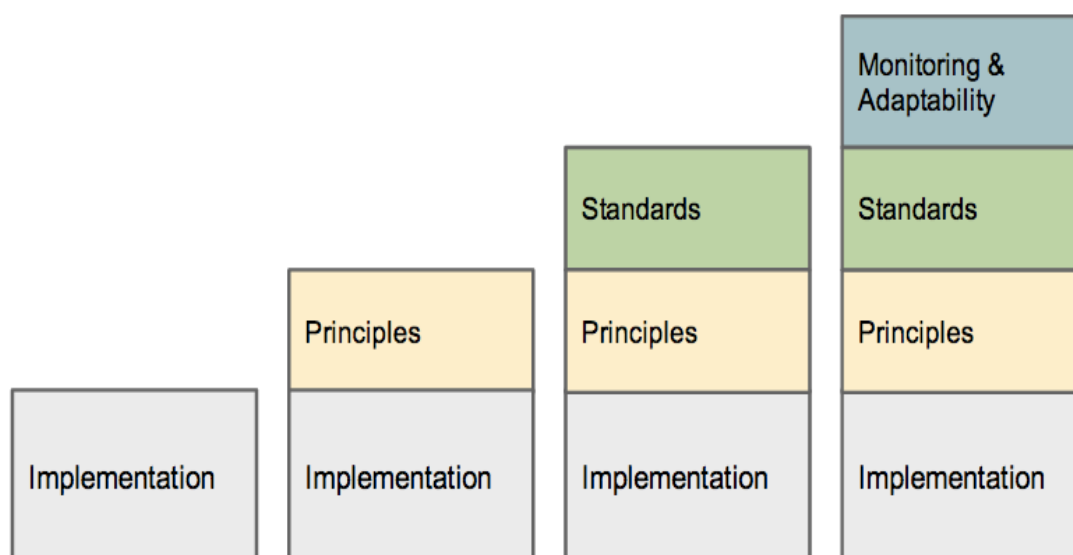
By **programme**, we mean those aspects that impact on the work we carry out, and includes areas such as planning, consultation processes, monitoring and evaluations, and communication. By **operations**, we mean those aspects that deal directly with how the workplace is run, and includes areas such as recruitment, employment policies, compensation, work culture and internal grievance procedures.

Of course, these two categories are interlinked, and progress in both, to some extent, will be necessary to ultimately ensure better social and environmental impact in the work that we do. Unless social equity is promoted and embodied within the workplace, delivery of these aspects in our work will most likely be incomplete. At the same time, delivering and learning from good practices in our programmes sustains diversity and tolerance within the organization.



II. HOW DO WE MAINSTREAM SOCIAL ISSUES?

One way to look at the evolution of an organization in terms of how it mainstreams an issue (for example, social, environmental, transparency, etc.) can be summarized in the graphic below.



The first level is that of **implementation**- an organization will start to work with no codified statement of principles or standards guiding their work. Some good (or bad) practices, may emerge, but they are case-specific, and often depend on the people managing projects.

Once an organization becomes conscious of a need to codify how it works, it will usually formulate some **principles**. These are mostly aspirational in nature, and give an overall vision of how the organization should act, without prescribing how to do so and are usually formalized in the form of a policy, statement of intent or statement of principles).

The next level of formalization is through **standards**. Once an organization recognizes that principles are too vague to implement, or induce various interpretations and duplication in methods, it will seek to standardize how it implements its principles. This may be in the form of systems (e.g. reporting, complaints mechanisms), operational guidelines, or “best practice” tools.

The final layer that is needed for an organization to “walk the talk” is the ability to **monitor** how it is doing on meeting its commitments, learn from success and failures, and to **adapt**, where necessary. This may be operationalized through M&E standards, systematic collection of social indicators, peer reviewing, and the promotion of adaptability in senior management.

In the case of WWF, with over five decades of implementation, the Network has many examples of good practices in mainstreaming social issues into its work. It has committed to a set of principles – WWF’s four social policies (gender, poverty, indigenous peoples, human rights) – that guide the way in which we work. At the regional and global levels, the SD4C Network as an advocate, information network and technical advisor to WWF programmes on how to better integrate social dimensions into their work¹.

WWF is on the road to standardizing social aspects into our programmes (e.g. PPMS), and operations (e.g. global complaints resolution mechanism) globally. For the time being, however, WWF offices are expected to adapt WWF’s social commitments to their local context and define for themselves the best ways of implementing them into their work.

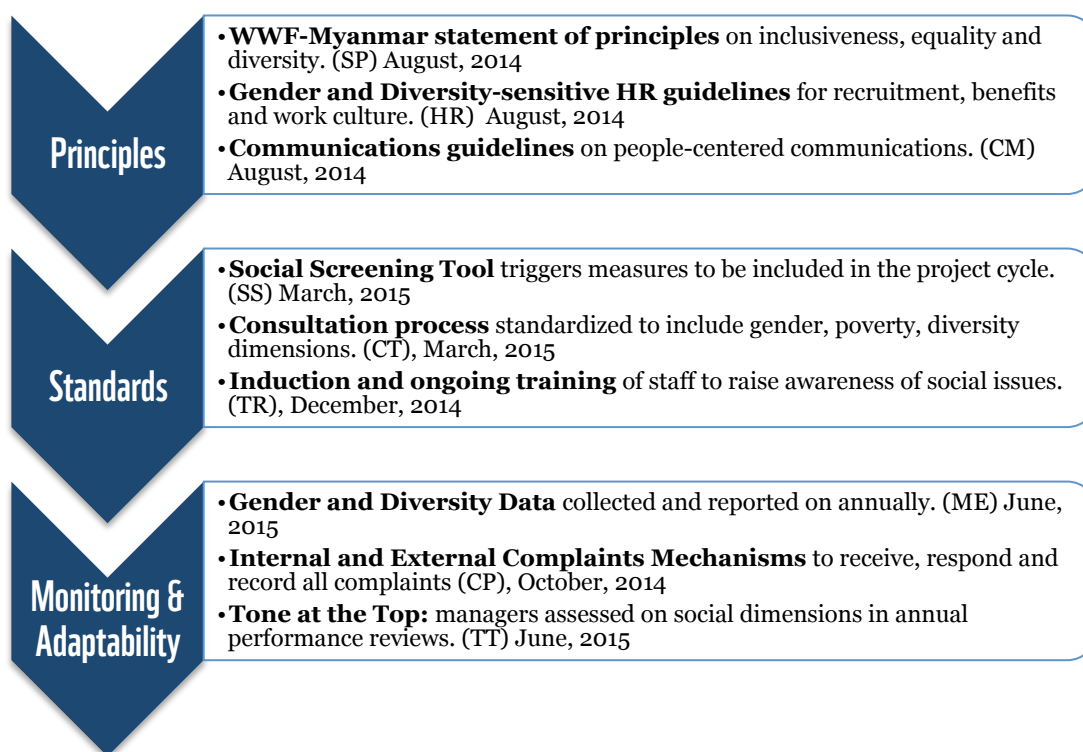
¹ For example, the 2013 report « Linking Green Economies & Sustainable Livelihoods for Rural Wellbeing in Asia »

III. AN ACTION PLAN FOR WWF-MYANMAR

Given the WWF institutional framework, and the country context in which we work, we recommend implementing the following measures to ensure that WWF-Myanmar has the appropriate structures and systems in place to address social issues adequately. This approach is also being discussed within the SD4C group and various focal points in GM to be constantly refined and rolled out to all GM offices.

We have grouped three actions under each mainstreaming “step”, to be developed in consultation with the relevant staff/teams. More specific information on the content of these measures are grouped in the following section, which discusses some of the key social issues in Myanmar, as well as some of the proposed measures to address them.

Social Mainstreaming: Three Actions in Three Steps by end FY15



The abbreviations in brackets refer to the specific measures listed in the issues section hereafter, which are to be included in the actions listed above. In some cases, are to be “owned” by a specific team or individual within the organization. In others, they refer to a specific document or system to be developed and implemented within the office.

IV. GENDER

Though Myanmar scores better than many of its neighbours in some gender indicators², many other areas still require attention and action. They are: unequal pay for similar work, less women represented in elected office and weaker voice and influence than men in politics, high maternal mortality rate, insufficient access to reproductive and basic health care services, rising rates of HIV/AIDS in women and lack of sex-disaggregated data across sectors.

Gender is one of the four issues for which WWF has a global policy. At this level, prescriptions remain largely aspirational, both for operational and programmatic components. Each office is expected to define the best way to ensure equality between men and women both in our work and in our workplace.

For WWF-Myanmar, the key approach in implementing the global gender policy is in having a limited number of key actions/mechanisms intended to raise awareness of staff, as well as give equal opportunities to men and women

Operational

- **gender-sensitive recruitment:** All candidate shortlists should contain at least 30% of each gender and for senior level positions, interview should be gender-balanced and sensitivity to gender issues should be gauged in the interview process. (HR)
- **monitor progress:** WWF-Myanmar collects sex-disaggregated data on its staff and produces a short annual report on a few key gender indicators. (i.e. sex ratio at top, middle and lowest staff gradings, sex ratio for top, middle and bottom earners, sex-disaggregated data on access to travel, trainings and promotions). (ME)
- **family-friendly work environment:** WWF-Myanmar provides a family-friendly work environment to employees, so that women and men can meet their responsibilities both at work and at home. This includes flexibility around work schedules, possibility for tele-working, a generous parental leave package, and a limited number of “compassion days” to care for sick dependents. (HR)

Programmatic

- **gender-sensitive planning:** In projects/programmes that have a high risk of increasing inequalities between men and women, or have a high potential for empowering women and girls, project managers are expected to integrate specific actions to mitigate risks and improve opportunities throughout the project cycle, as well as report on gender in their M&E plans. (SS)
- **women and men have voice in consultations:** Where consultations with local communities are included in the project cycle, project managers must ensure that opinions and inputs give fair representation to both sexes, and measures should be taken to ensure that women feel safe and free to voice their opinions. (CT)
- **we communicate gender equality:** In WWF-Myanmar’s communications products, both women and men are represented in images and quotes and every effort is made to reduce gender stereotypes. Where WWF convenes public conferences, every effort is made to ensure gender balance amongst speakers. (CM)

² According to UNICEF data, Myanmar scores better than China, India and the same as Thailand in terms of women’s literacy and secondary education rates, however in other areas such as maternal mortality, Myanmar falls behind Thailand and China (though is still better than India). (http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/myanmar_statistics.html)

Myanmar falls significantly behind in terms of equal pay, political representation of women and weaker influence in politics. <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2013/09/19/Myanmar-Gender-Equality-and-Development>

V. ETHNIC DIVERSITY

The majority population in Myanmar is Burman (approx. 68%), who occupy most positions of prestige and power. Other groups include Shan (9%), Karen (7%), Rakhine (4%), Chinese (3%), Indian (2%), Mon (2%), Other (5%).

Many minorities have been side-lined over the years, excluded them from formal employment, education, land tenure rights and even identity, which has resulted in extreme poverty for certain segments of these populations. Ethnic tensions and inequalities have been and are still a major cause for armed conflicts, displacement of people, poverty, exile and unsafe living conditions.

Much of the internal conflict of the country stems from the marginalization of these minorities, many of whom formed rebel groups, which remain active today. Their demands mainly revolve around greater autonomy and recognition of their religious and cultural practices. Though it is likely that a general ceasefire agreement will soon be agreed between the Myanmar Government and 14 rebel groups, long-held stereotypes and social structures will take time to dissolve.

Much of Myanmar's potential – and risk – for conserving its wealth of natural resources hinges on the recognition of local (and often ethnic) communities' land rights. Land-grabbing and unsustainable business practices are already occurring in many areas where ceasefires have been declared, disempowering local communities from finding more sustainable solutions to managing their natural resources.

In addition to ethnic tensions within the country, to be considered are the historic, political and economic power imbalance between Myanmar and “developed” countries.

This is why it is of utmost importance that WWF do everything in its power to create a safe, inclusive and just work environment for all staff, regardless of ethnicity or national origin, as well as actively promote tolerance and inclusiveness in our work in Myanmar.

WWF has no overarching statement on ethnic diversity as such; our statement of principles on indigenous peoples applies in part to these issues, though the question of ethnic diversity is broader. The recommendations below include, but are not limited to the commitments made in that document.

Operational

- **diversity in recruitment:** All shortlists should contain at least one candidate from an ethnic minority. At senior level, shortlists should not contain more than one expatriate (non-Burmese) candidate. In addition, the HR representative on interview panels is responsible for assessing candidates' awareness of/openness to promoting diversity in the workplace. (HR)
- **monitor progress:** WWF-Myanmar collects data on the ethnic identity of staff and produces a short annual report staff diversity. (i.e. breakdown of ethnicities at WWF-Myanmar) (ME)
- **bridging the linguistic divide:** WWF-Myanmar to support staff needs for language instruction and improvement – Burmese language classes for non-Burmese speakers, and English language classes for non-English speakers. (TR)

Programmatic

- **ethnic/indigenous assessments:** all projects taking place in high-risk regions (i.e. regions where ethnic conflict is high, or where indigenous peoples are known to live), as well as projects likely to have high risks/opportunities in relation to ethnic diversity, must undergo a diversity assessment in the project planning phase, with appropriate mitigation/promotion measures integrated throughout the project and M&E plan. (SS)
- **rights-based design:** Especially since uncertain land-tenure rights and ethnic communities tend to overlap, integrating rights-based approaches into our programme design is essential for relevancy and impact. (SS)

VI. POVERTY

In the coming years, while opportunities continue to grow for those with material and human capital, inequalities within Myanmar are set to increase. In this context, poverty will remain a challenge especially in rural areas, where access to basic infrastructure is still severely lacking.

Since many of Myanmar's most vulnerable populations live in areas of high conservation value and depend on natural resources for their livelihoods, WWF-Myanmar will be closely confronted by issues of poverty in our programmes.

Poverty is one of four issues for which WWF has a global social policy. The rationale is based both on ethical and practical considerations, and the overall tone remains largely aspirational.

The policy is a commitment by WWF to carry out and advocate for equitable, pro-poor approaches to conservation, as well as to taking into account the tradeoffs between immediate development needs and long-term environmental gains in our engagements.

Operational

- **decent salaries for all staff** : WWF-Myanmar commits to paying all staff and contracted workers a fair and decent salary and benefits for their work. HR will set minimum salaries and will re-benchmark them regularly, in consideration of the fast-changing labor market of the country. (HR)

Programmatic

-**pro-poor planning**: WWF-Myanmar projects screen for risks/opportunities with regards to poverty and where identified, integrates pro-poor approaches into planning, implementation and M&E. (SS)

-**the poor have a voice in consultations**: Where WWF is involved in regions or sectors where poor people may be affected (either negatively or positively) by our work, WWF will ensure that consultations give voice to the poor in communities and integrate their perspectives into project planning and implementation. (CT)

-**adequate mitigation**: Where WWF projects may negatively affect vulnerable populations, an in-depth assessment is carried out in consultation with affected communities, and appropriate mitigation measures are agreed and committed to. (SS)

- **rights-based design**: Since land-tenure issues disproportionately affect poor populations, integrating rights-based approaches into our programme design is essential for relevancy and impact. (SS)

VII. CROSS-CUTTING

In addition to the above issues-based measures, certain standards and structures needed are cross-cutting in nature. These are outlined below.

Operational

- **statement of principles:** WWF-Myanmar to re-frame and adopt SD4C statement of principles³ on inclusiveness, equality and diversity, which lays out the basic values we adhere to, integrating the Myanmar context. This short (one-page) document is intended to set the expectations of how staff relate to each other, their work, and their professional relationships externally. (SP)

- **internal complaints:** any issues or complaints pertaining to the above areas should be addressed, by preference, between the parties involved. However, when doing so is ineffective or poses a threat to the affected party, any employee subject or witness to discrimination, harassment or abuse in the workplace is required to report it, in writing, to the country director, any member of the Greater Mekong Senior management team, or to the Greater Mekong Representative. All written complaints will be taken seriously and will receive a response within two weeks. Above an office size of 20 staff, WWF-Myanmar to appoint an ombudsperson to mediate between staff in cases of conflict. (CP)

- **tone at the top:** managers are expected to model gender- and culturally-sensitive behavior and are responsible for reporting on how they promote equality and diversity in their bi-annual performance reviews. (TT)

- **induction and staff awareness:** all new staff to WWF-Myanmar are made aware of WWF's social policies and WWF-Myanmar's statement of principles, and are expected to uphold them. Staff are regularly encouraged to promote inclusiveness and diversity, and to voice injustices they may encounter. (TR)

Programmatic

- **external complaints:** WWF-Myanmar makes explicit and visible the procedure by which external complaints should be addressed. System is in place for receiving, responding and recording external complaints. (CP)

- **social screening:** all WWF-Myanmar projects undergo a simple social screening procedure to identify risks and opportunities in poverty, diversity and gender. Where risks and/or opportunities are identified, project teams integrate prescribed measures into their project planning, implementation and M&E. (SS)

- **we communicate the human face of conservation:** in all WWF-Myanmar's communications, we strive to put a human face to our work and make explicit the linkages between people and environment. (CM)

³ WWF Social Principles and Policies Brochure:

<https://sites.google.com/a/wwf.panda.org/social-development/home/policies/policies>

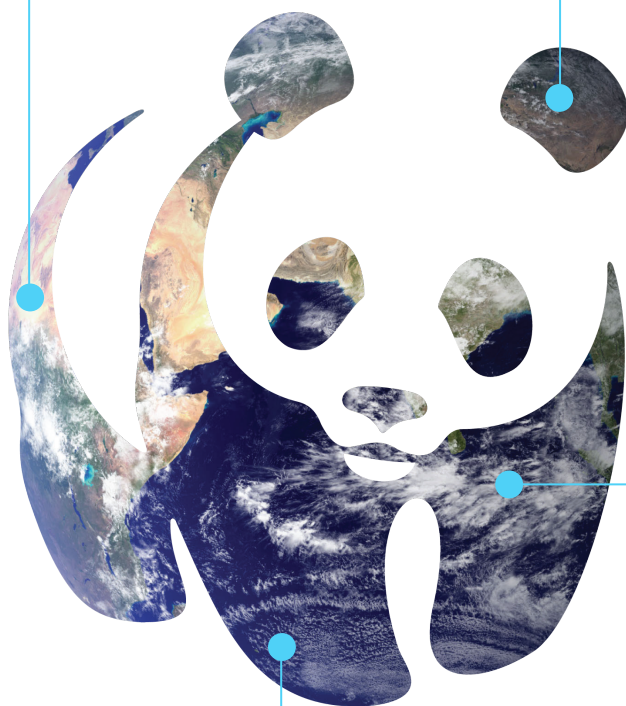
SOCIAL ISSUES IN MYANMAR

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Two thirds of Myanmar's population still live in rural areas, where a quarter of children are underweight

6%

Six percent of parliamentary seats are held by women.



\$ 1600

Gross Domestic Product per capita; a third of the population lives in poverty

16%

Sixteen percent of rural areas are electrified.



Why we are here

To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.

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