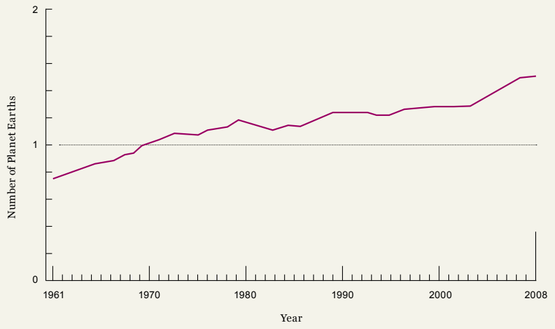
THE STATE OF THE PLANET

Over the past 40 years there has been an unprecedented and largely irreversible loss of forests, wetlands, coral reefs and other ecosystems – and the species that live in them. At the same time, land and water has been consistently over-consumed. The result? Since 1970, people's demand for natural resources has exceeded the Earth's capacity to provide them. In fact, we now take 50% more each year from nature than the planet can replenish (Figure 1).

Figure 1:
Number of planet Earths required to meet global demand on nature, 1961-2008



This means we would need 1.5 planets for the world to replenish all the natural resources we currently demand. We would need three planets by 2050 if we keep consuming at the rate that is predicted (Figure 2).

Figure 2:
Number of planets required to sustain humanity's demand for natural resources in 2050

INEQUITABLE CONSUMPTION

LOW-INCOME COUNTRIES HAVE EXPERIENCED A 60% DECLINE IN SPECIES POPULATIONS, WHILE HIGH-INCOME COUNTRIES HAVE AVOIDED LOSSES

Also, these resources are not consumed evenly: high-income countries use the vast majority of the planet's productive land and water, while middle and low-income countries demand much less from nature. Yet it is those low-income countries that are suffering far greater losses to their wildlife and natural habitats – and the water, food and energy these provide. Between 1970 and 2008, low-income countries experienced a 60% decline in species populations, while high-income countries avoided any losses. In effect, high-income countries are outsourcing the loss of species and habitats to lower-income countries. For example, the increasing demand for soy products in Europe and the US has resulted in forests being cleared in the Amazon, to make way for soy plantations. Such inequitable degradation of ecosystems will prevent economic, social and environmental sustainability from being achieved within the environmental limits of our one planet.

Proportionally, high-income countries would require more than three planets to sustain their current levels of consumption, compared to middle-income countries that rely on a little more than one planet and low-income countries that draw on only two thirds of the planet's resources.

INTERCONNECTED CHALLENGES

THE POOREST 40% OF THE GLOBAL POPULATION ARE THE MOST AFFECTED

Industrialisation – more specifically our dependency on fossil fuels and significant changes in the way we use land – have put our planet on a pathway towards global warming of 4°C by the end of this century. Such an outcome would prevent us from eradicating poverty. It would lead to increased levels of desertification and land degradation, especially deforestation, as well as droughts and floods – impacts that are hitting poorer countries and communities first and hardest.

In addition, modern day consumption and production has degraded the natural world. The continued destruction of ecosystems, especially forests, will limit the availability of food, water and fuel. And it will bring about further greenhouse gas emissions, leading to further global warming. The poorest 40% of the global population, who directly depend on the services of ecosystems to meet their basic needs and provide them with livelihoods, are the most affected.

There is a fundamental link between poverty, climate change and ecosystems degradation. Indeed, to achieve sustainable development within the means of our one planet we must tackle poverty, climate change and the destruction of ecosystems in an integrated way.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES

There are three major international opportunities before the end of 2015, the outcomes of which together have great potential to protect ecosystems, tackle climate change and eradicate poverty – and hence contribute to sustainable development. They are:

The UN Post-2015 international development framework should reinforce the international community's commitment to poverty eradication and sustainable development. This will include a set of new Sustainable Development Goals, which will be agreed in September 2015.

The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change conference in November/December 2015 aims to develop a global agreement that will tackle the causes and impacts of climate change and bring about strong and ambitious international action from 2020.

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) envisages a world living in harmony with nature. In October 2014 the CBD will review the progress of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets of the CBD, and come to an agreement on a potential roadmap to enhance implementation to meet the Aichi Targets.

All three UN processes are the result of commitments made at the 1992 Rio Conference on Sustainable Development. While each of them is an important outcome in itself, in combination they could amount to more than the sum of their parts. Taken together they offer the potential for a cohesive global response and to identify synergies and opportunities that will enable sustainable development.

A concerted effort to ensure success on all three fronts can ensure that people everywhere thrive and live in harmony with nature.

FRONT COVER: PASHUPATI CHOUDHARY WEEDING IN LAMAHAI, WESTERN TERAI, NEPAL. WWF'S TERAI ARC LANDSCAPE (TAL) PROGRAM INTRODUCED THE IDEA OF MINT (MENTHA ARBENSIS) FARMING IN ORDER TO REDUCE HUMAN/WILDLIFE CONFLICT AND TO INCREASE A FARMER'S INCOME THROUGH GREATER PROFIT MARGINS AND ALLOWING THEM TO GROW CROPS DURING THE OFF SEASON. © SIMON DE TREY-WHITE / WWF-UK

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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MARGARET WANJIRU MUNDIA'S STORY

RENEWABLE ENERGY PRODUCTS WOULD PROVIDE PEOPLE LIKE MARGARET WITH ENERGY SECURITY, AND A HEALTHIER SMOKE-FREE KITCHEN, WHILE REDUCING THE PRESSURE ON NEARBY FORESTS

Like 2.7 billion others, Margaret Wanjiru Mundia, a farmer in central Kenya, cooks and heats water with wood and charcoal. She plants trees on her property to ensure a source of fuel wood. Margaret also has a small solar panel that enables her to charge her mobile phone, and powers a light which means she can read in the evening. Renewable energy products, including solar panels and biogas stoves, would provide Margaret with energy security and a healthier smoke-free kitchen, while reducing the pressure on nearby forests.

Margaret's livelihood opportunities depend directly on the natural environment that surrounds her. As competition for land increases and the negative impacts of climate change take hold, Margaret has reoriented her farm and implemented basic conservation measures to improve soil and water retention. As a result, her yields have increased dramatically. Her neighbours have followed suit, and with their increased productivity the same farms are supporting more people.

Not much goes to waste on Margaret's farm, although that's unlikely to be the case for Kenya's urban dwellers who, like many of us, are unable to grow our own food and manage waste responsibly. But, by asking questions and showing a commitment to sustainability we can all help push retailers to improve efficiency along their supply chains.

We all have a relationship with nature and its services. But people like Margaret directly depend on them every day.

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MZEE KIONGA'S STORY

© ALVO OFUMANE / WWF MOZAMBIQUE

FISH IN NEAR-SHORE WATERS HAVE DECLINED DUE TO UNSUSTAINABLE FISHING PRACTICES

Mzee Kionga, 76, is a village elder from Somanga on the south-eastern coast of Tanzania. He has been fishing on and around local reefs since his youth. He, like many others, has observed that "fish in near-shore waters have declined due to unsustainable fishing practices including dynamite and juya [beach seine]".

Others in the region, including Rajabu Mohammed Soselo, attribute a fall in fish stocks to changes in the weather – higher temperatures and shorter rainfalls have reduced river flows – and damage to coastal sand dunes. "Fish species that were normally caught are no longer available. We can no longer afford the food prices and it is increasingly difficult for me to make a living," says Rajabu.

Declining fish stocks are likely to have an impact on the nutrition levels of local community members as fish accounts for more than 50% of people's animal protein in some less developed countries in Africa and Asia, particularly among coastal communities.

Responding to these problems, Mr Kionga joined Somanga's beach management unit (BMU) – a community-based fishing organisation that aims to improve the way inshore fisheries are managed. The work of WWF-UK and WWF-Tanzania in supporting the establishment of collaborative arrangements, such as BMUs, between communities and the government for the co-management of freshwater and marine fishing grounds gives local men and women the power to make decisions about the things that matter most to them: securing nutritious food, preserving the local environment and protecting livelihoods.

As a result of their work with the government, some fishermen along the Tanzanian coast have increased their catches by 130%. Community-managed conservation associations like BMUs play an important role in supporting the re-establishment of sustainable fishing practices and increasing fish stocks along the entire Tanzanian coastline.

WWF UK 2014

More than the sum of its parts:

integrated action on poverty, climate change and ecosystems

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT WHICH CAN ENABLE US TO THRIVE ON OUR ONE PLANET REQUIRES INTEGRATED ACTION ON POVERTY, CLIMATE CHANGE AND ECOSYSTEMS.

Inclusive low-carbon development can allow us to keep global warming to below the dangerous threshold of 1.5°C.

- To limit global warming to less than 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels will require limiting CO2 emissions to 655-815GtCO2 between 2011 and 2050. This means that if greenhouse gas emissions stay at current levels we will exceed the limits in 12-17 years.
- Decarbonisation of the energy that we use and more efficient management of that energy are key to cost-effective mitigation: WWF promotes a world powered by 100% renewables by 2050, which will be a great help in efforts to limit warming to 1.5°C.
- By 2050, markets for low-carbon technologies could be worth at least US$500bn.

A stable climate will result in significant economic, social and environmental benefits for all people – especially poor and vulnerable communities.

- Sustainable development and eliminating poverty will be a much greater challenge in a world where warming exceeds 2°C above pre-industrial levels.
- Local temperature increases in excess of about 1°C above pre-industrial levels are already having negative effects on yields of major crops (wheat, rice and maize) in both tropical and temperate regions. Without adaptation this is expected to further erode food security.
- The majority of economic analysts agree that the costs of climate change impacts will exceed the costs of tackling it. Investing in mitigation and adaptation measures now will be cheaper than paying to remedy the damage in the decades ahead, and could thus prevent a slow-down in economic growth.

Addressing climate change will support the stabilisation and restoration of ecosystems.

- Addressing climate change can help prevent the loss of many species that face increased risk of extinction under projected climate change, especially as climate change interacts with other stressors such as changes to their habitats, overexploitation, pollution and the spread of invasive species.
- The Amazonian forest is the planet's second most vulnerable area after the Arctic. Climate change, deforestation, fragmentation, fire and human pressure place 97% of the remaining tropical dry forests in the Americas at risk.
- By avoiding climate change under medium to high-emission scenarios this century it is possible to limit further ocean acidification and thus help to protect polar oceans and coral reefs from further degradation.

Equitable and inclusive natural resource management will avoid exploitation of ecosystems goods and services.

- Managing fisheries sustainably could support the restoration of ocean ecosystems while also improving the profitability of fisheries.
- Fewer changes in the use of land, for the expansion of croplands in particular, will reduce threats to ecosystems.
- Better, more targeted use of agricultural fertilisers and improved management of wastewater and urban stormwater can improve water quality.
- People living in poverty often have little choice but to adopt short-term strategies such as the over-exploitation of natural resources, which are unsustainable and may lead to the increased vulnerability of people.

Equitable and sustainable natural resource management is a prerequisite to poverty eradication and underpins inclusive and sustainable economic development.

- Protection of forests will help to ensure continued access to wood fuel that 2.4 billion people living in developing countries depend on for cooking and boiling water.
- Sustainable management of agricultural lands and fisheries will contribute to the protection of livelihoods. According to the World Bank (2011): "Agriculture is a source of livelihoods for an estimated 86% of rural people (2.5 billion people) and provides jobs for 1.3 billion smallholders and landless workers." In addition, over 350 million people depend on fishing (both directly and indirectly) for their livelihoods.
- Allocating 2% of global GDP to green economy initiatives will, within 10 years, result in higher global GDP, compared with business as usual scenarios.

Sustainable resource management will help to halt the rise in emissions, then significantly decrease them by 2020 and keep global warming to below the dangerous threshold of 1.5°C.

- Increased forest dieback owing to temperature rises poses risks for natural carbon sinks as forests release stored carbon when they die or degrade. These forest sinks are important to help reduce the build-up of CO2 emissions in the atmosphere.
- Sustainably managed agriculture and forests have the potential to deliver substantial – and comparatively cheap – reductions in emissions in the near term, potentially helping to close the 'gigatonne gap' before 2020. In fact, the IPCC predicts that this sector has the potential by 2100 to absorb more emissions from the atmosphere than it releases.
- Actions to reduce emissions include improving forest governance and law enforcement, tackling the drivers of deforestation, creating sustainable livelihoods for rural communities, and supporting emissions reductions through other approaches that include results-based payment mechanisms such as REDD+.

CORE PRINCIPLES

Universality

- The management of global public goods and global risks requires collective decision-making and action.
- All countries have a common responsibility, which is differentiated by taking into account national circumstances and capabilities.
- All actors – including governments, private sector and civil society – have a role to play.

Equity

- Equitable access to opportunities, rights, and basic goods and services including natural resources, is fundamental to a human-rights-based approach to development and poverty eradication.
- Equity between countries, within countries and across generations needs to be ensured.

Integration

- Integrated thinking around eradicating poverty and tackling climate change and ecosystems degradation and the potential for co-benefits must recognise the fundamental links between them.
- Synchronised approaches to multi-lateral frameworks can help to meet ambitious goals, improve policy coherence and avoid duplication of efforts.

WWF ASKS...

UN POST 2015 DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

- All relevant plans, strategies and programmes include climate change mitigation and adaptation action and put all countries and all relevant sectors on a low-emission development trajectory [by 2020].
- Triple the share of renewables in the global energy mix, as well as the global improvement rate in energy efficiency. Ensure universal access to clean, safe, secure and sustainable energy [by 2030].
- Increase [by x% year on year] the resilience and adaptive capacity of people living in poverty to environmental shocks and stresses [by 2030].
- The economic development goal should:
  - Decouple economic growth from environmental impacts.
  - Implement internationally comparable indicators to measure and report on the value of ecosystem goods and services.
  - Integrate biodiversity and ecosystems conservation measures into economic development strategies.
- Achieve equitable and inclusive management of natural resources and ensure equitable access to and allocation of ecosystem services.
- Protect and restore ecosystems and biodiversity.
- Ensure human activity is sustainable for future generations – e.g. by addressing desertification, deforestation, and global warming and its impacts such as ocean acidification.

UN FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

- Concerted efforts to close the gap between the emissions reductions that countries have promised up to 2020 and the level of effort that climate science says is needed. These efforts should include scaling up renewable energy and energy efficiency measures and efforts to reduce deforestation.
- Deliver a global agreement for the post-2020 period that will provide a strong signal that the world is on a path to limit warming to less than 1.5°C through low-carbon development. This would include:
  - Agreement on how countries will equitably share the responsibility for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
  - National efforts from countries in the post-2020 period to reduce their carbon emissions consistent with climate science, and an equitable allocation of responsibility for action.
  - Ambitious finance commitments from rich countries that have benefited from carbon-intensive economies to assist developing countries with the transition to a low-carbon future as well as with the impacts of climate change that are already evident.
  - A mechanism to ensure that countries' efforts are continually scaled up to be commensurate with the latest climate science.
  - Building resilience to climate change in vulnerable countries through a strengthened international framework for climate change adaptation and loss and damage.
  - Finalisation of the institutions of the UNFCCC that deal with finance, technology transfer, monitoring reporting and verification of emission reductions, adaptation, and loss and damage.

UN CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

- WWF urges COP-12 to adopt the draft decision on this agenda item from Document UNEP/CBD/COP/12/1/Add.2 with WWF proposed text changes, and particularly to call on Parties to:
  - Engage fully in the UN negotiations for post 2015 to ensure that the critical values of biodiversity and ecosystems are integrated into all relevant goals and targets, and that the post 2015 is a transformative agenda for the future of people and the planet.
  - Welcome the integration of biodiversity and ecosystem aspects into the proposed SDGs by the Open Working Group on SDGs.
  - Integrate biodiversity and ecosystem services into national poverty eradication strategies and national development, accounting and planning processes.
  - Note the necessity to meet the Aichi Targets and welcome the challenge to build further on them if the proposed SDGs are to be achieved.
  - Reflect these messages in the High Level Segment's Statement and the 'Pyeongchang Roadmap to 2020'.