

# Information Note

## Poverty and the Darwin Initiative



Women in Mohamed Qol, Sudan, Credit: Tarik ChekChak

### Key Messages

- All funding for Darwin Main, Post, Fellowship and Partnership projects is now Official Development Assistance (or ODA)
- This recognises the fact that the Darwin Initiative protects and enhances biodiversity as part of sustainable development and therefore contributes to the economic development and welfare of developing countries
- All Darwin Initiative projects contribute to both biodiversity conservation and poverty reduction in developing countries
- A key challenge is capturing how projects will positively influence both biodiversity and poverty reduction. To do this effectively, projects must consider the multiple dimensions of poverty - poverty isn't just about money
- Please note that Darwin Plus projects, working in UK Overseas Territories, are funded via different revenue streams and have different eligibility criteria

A common misconception of applicants to the Darwin Initiative is that poverty is solely focused on money. This Information Note has been developed to help Darwin projects and applicants understand what is meant by poverty reduction, and to provide some ideas of how to measure their impact on it, with examples adapted from real projects.

The Darwin Initiative supports developing countries to conserve biodiversity and reduce poverty. The Darwin Initiative provides grants for projects working in developing countries and Darwin Plus (funded by Defra and FCO) provides grants in UK Overseas Territories (OTs).

#### Projects support:

- the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)
- the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-Sharing (ABS)
- the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA)
- the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)
- the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands
- the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)
- the Convention on Climate Change (CCC)

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Credit: Tree Aid

## What do we mean by poverty?

Poverty is not solely about a lack of money. It encompasses a range of diverse issues that are required to fulfil basic needs and better one's life with dignity, which are often country and context specific.

This list is not exhaustive but provides examples of some of the challenges facing the world's poor, particularly with regards to biodiversity:

- Lack of access to resources including food, water, energy, land
- Lack of infrastructure such as transport which hampers access to markets, hospitals, schools, ports, airports etc.
- Lack of access to clean water and sanitation
- Lack of access to services including education, healthcare, finance etc.
- Loss of ecosystem services causing instability such as water security, food security
- Climate change impacts causing instability
- Poor governance including the lack of community voice in decision making, and a lack of gender equality

Although there is rarely a simple cause and effect relationship, Darwin Initiative projects will often be tackling the causes of poverty, which can frequently be linked to environmental degradation and biodiversity loss.

### The Global Goals for Sustainable Development

The UK Government is committed to taking action to achieve the **Global Goals for Sustainable Development (SDGs)**. Adopted by the UN in 2015, and building on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the SDGs are 17 Global Goals to end extreme poverty and build a better world by 2030.

### The SDGs

- SDGs call for action from all countries
- They aim to address the root causes of poverty and the universal need for development that works for all people
- The goals cover the three dimensions of sustainable development; economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection
- The 17 goals are underpinned by 169 targets covering a wider thematic range - many of which are directly relevant to core Darwin priorities, such as conservation of "Life on Land" (Goal 15) and "Life below Water" (Goal 14)
- Standalone Goal 5 "Gender Equality" highlights the importance of gender considerations in international development, and something we ask all Darwin projects to directly address in line with **UK Government's International Development (Gender Equality) Act**
- Applicants and Darwin projects are required to define and report upon how they contribute to the attainment of SDGs





Fishermen in 'Farol' migrant camp, Mozambique, repairing their net, Credit: Our Sea Our Life

## Darwin and poverty reduction

Since its launch in 1992, all projects funded by the Darwin Initiative have had to show how they are contributing to building capacity in biodiversity conservation. In 2011, an additional objective - contribution to poverty alleviation - was introduced and remains a requirement of all Darwin projects.

There is a growing body of literature that examines the complex relationships between biodiversity and poverty. However many applicants to the Darwin Initiative still find it challenging to describe, and demonstrate, how their project will contribute to poverty alleviation.

Whilst most projects are able to demonstrate a relationship between biodiversity and poverty for the context in which they plan to work, many struggle to define how their project will affect positive change in capacity for effective biodiversity conservation and poverty reduction.

Without defining the 'how', projects are less able to measure and evidence their work.

“ many applicants to the Darwin Initiative still find it challenging to describe, and demonstrate, how their project will contribute to poverty alleviation ”

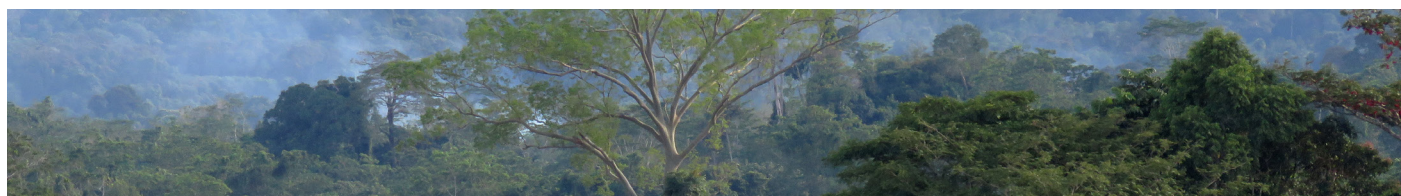
## How to evaluate the contribution to poverty reduction

### 1. Country eligibility and ODA

All Darwin applications are assessed to make sure they are eligible for ODA support. The first step is to make sure the project is operating in an **eligible** developing country.

With the exception of India, if the proposed project is in a country defined as least developed, lower or lower middle income (first three columns of Table 1) it is eligible for Darwin Initiative funding. If the proposed project is in a country listed as Upper Middle Income (i.e. in the fourth column), the project must be able to demonstrate at least one of the following criteria:

- a) advancing knowledge, evidence and impact in other least developed or low income countries, either within the same region or other regions
- b) delivering global public goods benefits by, for example, advancing our understanding of local - global impacts and/or strengthening understanding of/evidence for global dimensions of biodiversity conservation/sustainable use and poverty reduction
- c) making serious and unique research advancements on a critical issue as a result of specific circumstances of the middle income country, that could not be made elsewhere. This justification should be presented in the case for support as well as in the logframe, identifying where there are clear impacts to be gained



## Table 1 - Countries eligible for Darwin funding

(please see the latest guidance for the most up to date list of eligible countries)

Least Developed Countries	Other Low Income Countries	Lower Middle Income Countries	Upper Middle Income Countries
Afghanistan	Kenya	Armenia	Algeria
Angola	Korea, Democratic	Bolivia	Belize
Bangladesh	People's Republic	Cameroon	Botswana
Benin	Tajikistan	Cape Verde	Brazil
Bhutan	Zimbabwe	Congo, Rep.	China
Burkina Faso		Côte d'Ivoire	Colombia
Burundi		Egypt	Costa Rica
Cambodia		El Salvador	Cuba
Central African Rep.		Georgia	Dominica
Chad		Ghana	Dominican Republic
Comoros		Guatemala	Ecuador
Congo, Dem. Rep.		Guyana	Fiji
Djibouti		Honduras	Gabon
Equatorial Guinea		India*	Grenada
Eritrea		Indonesia	Iran
Ethiopia		Kyrgyzstan	Iraq
Gambia		Micronesia, Federated	Jamaica
Guinea		States	Jordan
Guinea-Bissau		Mongolia	Kazakhstan
Haiti		Morocco	Lebanon
Kiribati		Nicaragua	Libya
Laos		Nigeria	Malaysia
Lesotho		Occupied Palestinian	Maldives
Liberia		Territories	Marshall Islands
Madagascar		Pakistan	Mauritius
Malawi		Papua New Guinea	Mexico
Mali		Philippines	Namibia
Mauritania		Sri Lanka	Nauru
Mozambique		Swaziland	Niue
Myanmar (Burma)		Syria	Paraguay
Nepal		Tokelau	Peru
Niger		Uzbekistan	Samoa
Rwanda		Viet Nam	South Africa
São Tomé & Príncipe			St Lucia
Senegal			St Vincent & the Grenadines
Sierra Leone			Suriname
Solomon Islands			Thailand
Somalia			Tonga
South Sudan			Tunisia
Sudan			Turkey
Tanzania			Turkmenistan
Timor-Leste			Wallis and Futuna
Togo			
Tuvalu			
Uganda			
Vanuatu			
Yemen			
Zambia			

\*Please note that only projects based in the 8 poorest states in India are eligible for funding through this scheme - Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and West Bengal



## 2. The quality of project design

All Darwin applications are assessed to make sure their design is robust; a badly designed project is less likely to contribute to poverty reduction. Issues which are considered include:

### **Sustainability and Legacy**

This has always been an important component of project quality for Darwin. projects must be designed to leave a legacy that is sustainable across their social, economic, and ecological objectives. Applications for projects that do not consider sustainability, such as those that have a very short-term focus and will require future injections of

cash or resources to maintain momentum, are unlikely to receive funding.

### **Value for Money**

All Darwin projects must deliver excellent Value for Money. Projects that seek to improve the livelihoods of a small group of people are unlikely to be selected for funding, although there may be exceptions. For example, highly dispersed populations in a challenging landscape or indigenous peoples at high risk may reasonably justify targeting a small number of people. A judgement will be made based on the value of funds requested and the size of the expected impact.



*Ripe coffee berries ready for picking,  
Credit: Sheko Woreda, SNNPR*





*Making the firebreak guideline,  
Credit: WILD Foundation*

### 3. Monitoring and Evaluation

Darwin projects must be designed in a way that enables them to monitor, and evaluate, their progress and achievements during the lifetime of the project. A project's monitoring and evaluation framework must be able to capture the intended poverty reduction benefits from project interventions.

Having a robust monitoring and evaluation plan in place helps ensure that work is kept on track, and any challenges and potential problems identified early on. It allows projects to demonstrate their progress and provide evidence of achievement and impact. In addition, the indicators and means of verification that are a fundamental component of any M&E plan are the tools that will be used by external evaluators to verify project achievements recorded in the Final Report.

Therefore, applications that fail to demonstrate through their logframe and application form that they have sufficiently robust M&E processes in place to capture both biodiversity and poverty reduction impacts are unlikely to be selected.

#### **Common mistakes to avoid include:**

- Failing to include detail of baseline conditions in the logframe. If there is no understanding of the baseline conditions then it becomes very difficult to measure change

- Confusion between activities, outputs, indicators and means of verification. There are plenty of online resources that can help those struggling with logframe terminology
- Including too many outputs. General consensus is that 5 outputs should be considered the maximum for projects of this size
- Indicators that are unable to measure achievement and quality, and only measure activity. For example, carrying out a workshop is not a measure of capacity being built in an institution. Further exploration of how this training is being put to use in an institution would be necessary to demonstrate capacity being built
- A lack of clear links between means of verification, indicators, and outputs

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Good M&E is integral to effective project management and should not require substantial increased investment in time and resources. Good conservation and development projects have M&E inbuilt from the design stage. Projects that view M&E as an add-on requirement from Darwin and approach it as a 'tick-box' exercise are unlikely to be sufficiently robust to measure achievements in terms of economic or welfare development

that members of the team have skills and expertise in this area. Do not feel the need to shoehorn personnel into roles that are not suitable for them. If you lack the skills and expertise within your organisation consider partnering with, or subcontracting, a group that can provide these skills.

### **M&E for poverty reduction**

In order to increase your chance of successfully being awarded a Darwin project, applicants must clearly identify:

- what the benefits would be
- who would feel these benefits
- when they would feel these benefits
- how these benefits would be measured by the project

Additionally, projects which have a social scientist or specialists with experience of implementing sustainable development projects on their team may be more likely to receive funding.

Further information on improving your project's M&E system can be found in the application guidance as well as in our dedicated Information Notes on **Logical Frameworks** and **M&E**, which include advice and examples on how to make strong, "SMART", indicators.

### **Skills and expertise and poverty reduction**

Darwin projects by nature comprise partnerships. It is not necessary therefore for the lead organisation to have all the skills required to undertake the project. However, it is essential that there are skills and expertise within the project team capable of undertaking the work outlined. For example, if a project is about generating business plans for local businesses, it is essential that the project proposal can demonstrate (in CVs and the narrative)



Family life on Maio,  
Credit: Jeff Wilson - FFI





*Wandering albatross and RRS James Clark Ross at Bird Island, Credit: David Barnes*

## Measuring poverty reduction

### Non-monetary poverty measures

Many of the applications to the Darwin Initiative try to describe their contribution to poverty alleviation through monetary changes. This is only one of many ways in which poverty is measured and understood.

Knowledge of what causes poverty and what an intervention can do to influence those causes will often show that the contribution a Darwin Initiative project can make is non-monetary. Such a contribution could cover issues such as health and nutrition, literacy, gender equality, and inclusion in decision-making and planning.

### Direct and indirect support

The UK government provides some help directly to poor people, whilst other support goes into creating the right environment for people, their state institutions, and the private sector, to help themselves. This may mean that the contribution the Darwin Initiative project makes may not be a direct one (such as a project creating eco-tourism jobs) but an indirect one (such as a project improving the integration of national biodiversity planning into tourism planning to create incentives for growth in the eco-tourism industry).



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### Projects with direct benefits

Some projects will provide direct benefits. In these cases we would expect to see details in the proposal of:

- The number of people/number of households/size of population expected to benefit
- The type of benefit they expect to have
- If the benefit is expected to be monetary (i.e. through improved or more stable incomes, avoidance of loss of income etc.), then projects are expected to be able to demonstrate an understanding of the baseline conditions and the expected change in income. For example, provide information on the current income at household level and the expected change i.e. 250 households currently on \$1 a day expected to rise to \$1.20 a day by year 3.





*Early morning view of Atlantic Forest, Credit: Keith Madden*

### **Projects with indirect benefits**

Indirect benefit projects may be contributing to a long-term goal of poverty reduction, but are not expected to have an explicit benefit for developing countries by the close of funding.

However, they still need to have a clear route by which their work will contribute to long-term objectives. For example, a project researching more effective agricultural techniques that can support biodiversity whilst also improving yield may provide limited benefits in the short term. However, if the project can demonstrate that the research will feed directly into local and/or national processes to improve yield on a wider basis this project could score well. The pathway to impact is important at this stage.

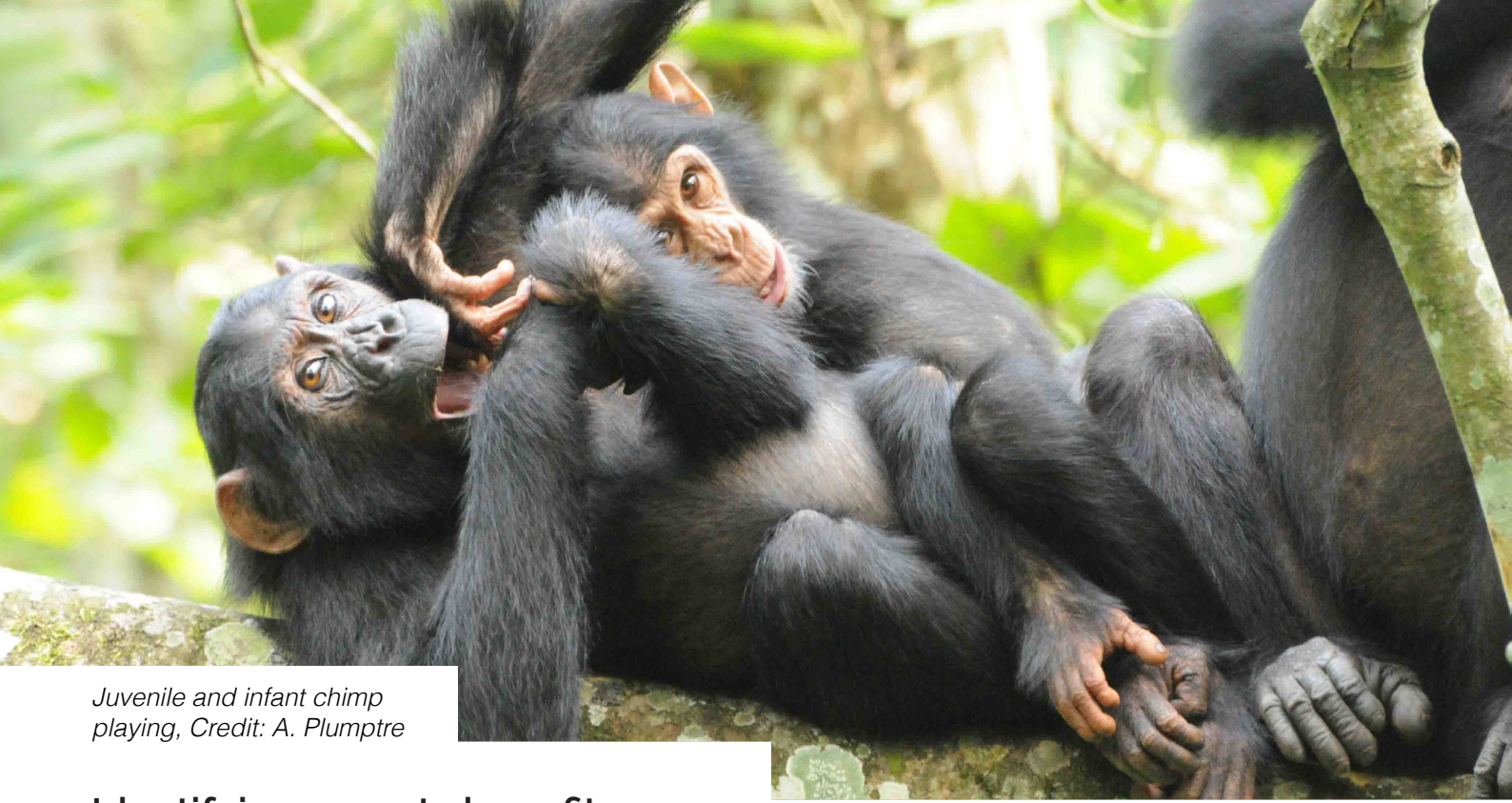
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A research project that has no plans for impact other than a dissemination strategy in the final year of the project is unlikely to score highly. However, a research project that is firmly entrenched in national policy discussions or national/local/regional development programmes is likely to score well.





Juvenile and infant chimp playing, Credit: A. Plumptre

## Identifying poverty benefits

As a science orientated fund we expect applicants to draw upon existing evidence when designing their projects. Applicants should look systematically at the relationship between poverty and biodiversity when they conceptualise and design their projects, and our information note '**Understanding Poverty and Biodiversity Links**' could help projects think about this.

For example, project design should consider:

- what is causing the change in biodiversity status?
- how does it relate to poverty or efforts of people and/or states to alleviate poverty?
- what interventions may be implemented that will create incentives to change these causal factors?

Where exploitation of biodiversity is a means of survival, there will be inevitable trade-offs between arresting the exploitation and those surviving on it. There is also the potential for positive co-benefits related, for example, to a more sustainable and equitable use of the biodiversity and its downstream services. In both cases it is essential that applicants are capable of identifying what the benefits (and trade-offs) of their work might be, and that they clearly indicate how they will measure their contribution to poverty alleviation and biodiversity conservation.



Credit: Paul Bates

## Commonly identified poverty benefits

Roe et al (2014) outline commonly identified poverty benefits for biodiversity conservation projects:

- assets
- cultural enhancement
- education
- employment
- empowerment
- energy security
- food security
- health
- income
- safewater
- shelter
- vulnerability

Roe, D. et al. (2014) Which components or attributes of biodiversity influence which dimensions of poverty? *Environmental Evidence*, 3(1), p.3





*Sewing up a sack of processed coffee, Credit: Indrias Getachew*

## Measuring your contribution to poverty alleviation

How to measure a project's contribution to poverty alleviation will depend entirely on the situation being targeted. However there are a few key questions that will apply in every situation.

### 1) What is the current situation?

For any piece of work it is essential to understand what the current situation is; establish a baseline.

In some cases to better understand your project's contribution it might be useful to understand how things change outside your target area, to enable comparison between non-intervention and intervention sites; is it possible to establish a counterfactual?

### 2) What is the expected change?

Have you developed a target for the expected change by the end of your funding period? For example, management committees for natural resources will have 20% more female members by year 3.

### 3) How will you measure this change?

Commonly used phrases such as 'stronger', 'better', 'more representative' are often meaningless. Could you use an indicator (qualitative or quantitative) to identify the expected amount of change? You could even use a proxy indicator. For example, measuring bacterial load of freshwater sources as a proxy indicator of health.

More detailed guidance on these issues is available in the '**M&E and the Darwin Initiative**' and '**Logical Frameworks**' Information Notes.

### Additional issues to consider

From experience, there are common challenges that regularly arise in Darwin applications. The following are routes that are often proposed for long-term sustainable biodiversity conservation with varying degrees of success.

### Reliance on ecotourism as an alternative livelihood measure

This is a commonly proposed method for Darwin projects to increase local livelihoods while reducing destructive behaviour. This approach has been demonstrated to have longevity in poverty reduction and biodiversity conservation in multiple situations. However, often the issues are far from simple and require specific skills to achieve a sustainable end point, particularly in the timeline of a Darwin project.

Therefore issues to consider for projects seeking this route could be:

- Are there figures of tourist numbers to back up the argument – current and projected? Is there an existing market for this type of tourism?
- Is this an area likely to benefit from ecotourism? Is there access for tourists? Are you seeking to attract national tourism or international tourism? Is there sufficient infrastructure to cope with higher numbers of tourists?
- Is there a risk that increased pressure from tourism could exacerbate existing threats to biodiversity? How will the project mitigate against this risk?



- Do you have personnel/partners on the project with expertise in establishing ecotourism ventures? This may include marketing and business development. Are there any links to the private sector to boost numbers of tourists?
- How many households would be positively affected by ecotourism? Does this represent good value for money?

**Reliance on alternative income generating activities to compensate for reduced access to resources/ change in destructive behaviour**

Alternative income generating activities are commonly proposed as a route to poverty reduction while reducing destructive behaviours. This is a challenging concept since it requires a shift in behaviour for a group of people if it is to be considered ‘alternative’ and not just ‘additional’. Therefore, the activity needs to provide at least an equal return on investment for communities. Ideally activities need to provide a higher level of income for a lower level of effort for it to achieve any form of sustainability since reversal of behaviour is common.

Projects that rely on producing marketable goods, such as handicrafts, can often find it incredibly challenging since these tend to depend on women who already fulfil multiple roles within the household. Key issues to consider for projects adopting this approach include:

- Are there figures of expected return on income generating activities proposed?
- Are there clear routes to market for goods/products being produced? Is there demand for these goods? Would you have to create a new market for these goods? E.g. highly ethical goods are often higher cost and can require a niche market. If there is not yet a specific market for these goods, substantial

time and resources will need to be committed to establishing one.

- For handicraft style goods, are quality management processes proposed to ensure products are of suitable quality for market?
- Are there cultural issues to be considered i.e. traditional way of life, long-standing tradition of gaining livelihood? Projects that will require wholesale shifts in behaviour that are unlikely to provide pay-back for communities for a period of time, and which are therefore challenging to implement, may require a form of compensation until they begin to pay off.
- Are there personnel/partners on the project with clear expertise in income generating activities, marketing, business development etc.?
- How many households would be affected? Are there clear figures on the expected rise in income expected i.e. 400 HH rising from \$1 a day to \$1.50 a day by close of project? Have they piloted the project or are there examples of previous endeavours in the country that can provide assurance on the suitability of approach?
- What evidence is there to demonstrate that communities would be willing to reduce the utilisation of the natural resources in question, or to change their traditional modus operandi?

“ Alternative income generating activities are commonly proposed as a route to poverty reduction while reducing destructive behaviours ”



*Fisherman casting a traditional fishing net in Myanmar, Credit: Paul Bates*





*Ethiopian cotton farmer,  
Credit: Lesley King*

## Poverty considerations of CITES, Nagoya Protocol, Plant Treaty and policy projects

Projects working at the policy level and those addressing commitments under CITES, the Nagoya Protocol, and the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA) and CMS often find it harder to identify and measure their links to poverty alleviation. Nevertheless, they are subject to the same requirements as those projects aiming to address commitments under the CBD.

Below we present some examples these projects could consider whilst developing their proposal in the context of poverty alleviation and robust project design:

- Does your project address poverty issues in an indirect way, for example development of institutional frameworks or improving governance at the national level in a developing country? Will improved governance lead to more equitable benefit sharing?
- Policy change can be hard to affect during the timescale of a Darwin project. It might be more reasonable to demonstrate that the right people are being engaged. Evidence of engagement with the relevant high-level stakeholders throughout the course of a project will better demonstrate progress towards policy change than the dissemination of a policy brief at project-end alone

“Improved governance can lead to more equitable benefit sharing

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“Clearly articulating the broader, indirect beneficiaries of your project is crucial, especially in cases where there are few direct benefits that can be measured by the project

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- Will Access and Benefit Sharing agreements, or other laws developed under your project, improve options for people living in poverty? Clearly articulating the broader, indirect beneficiaries of your project is crucial, especially in cases where there are few direct benefits that can be measured by the project. Often measuring these indirect impacts in your logframe may prove more complicated than direct benefits, with particular challenges around attribution. We recommend use of proxy indicators - for example “number of meetings held which involve all relevant stakeholders (e.g. communities and private sector buyers) to discuss Mutually Agreed Terms”
- Does your project involve training? Improved capacity and educational opportunities can increase the livelihood options available to individuals in developing countries. Furthermore, adoption of the training of trainers approach will better ensure sustainability of the project, and limit the chance of “brain drain”, improving the poverty impact of your project





Credit: Brendan Howard

## Summary of Key Messages

This information note has been developed to help Darwin projects and applicants understand what is meant by poverty alleviation and how they can consider its broader contexts, as well as give an appreciation of Official Development Assistance (ODA) requirements.

We wish to encourage a wide range of applicants to the Darwin Initiative that directly and indirectly address poverty in all its forms. Using the advice and tips included in this information note will help to ensure that, whatever the focus of your project, poverty benefits are clearly identified, captured, and reported upon.

### Top Tips

- ensure your application clearly outlines the poverty benefits that will result from your project if funded
- ensure your logframe is capable of capturing your contribution to poverty alleviation using SMART indicators, with at least one indicator at the Outcome level to capture poverty benefits
- include on your team (or at least consult with during application writing) a development expert

- robust project design goes beyond simple considerations of poverty alleviation – it also encompasses sustainability, value for money, monitoring and evaluation and appropriate skills and expertise
- consider wider poverty benefits than just income, as changes in income can be hard to demonstrate in the timescale of a Darwin project

The Darwin Initiative aims to promote biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of resources around the world including the UK's Overseas Territories. Since 1992, the Darwin Initiative has committed over £161 million to 1,155 projects in 159 countries.

This learning note was produced by LTS International [www.ltsi.co.uk](http://www.ltsi.co.uk)

For more information on the Darwin Initiative see [www.darwininitiative.org.uk](http://www.darwininitiative.org.uk)