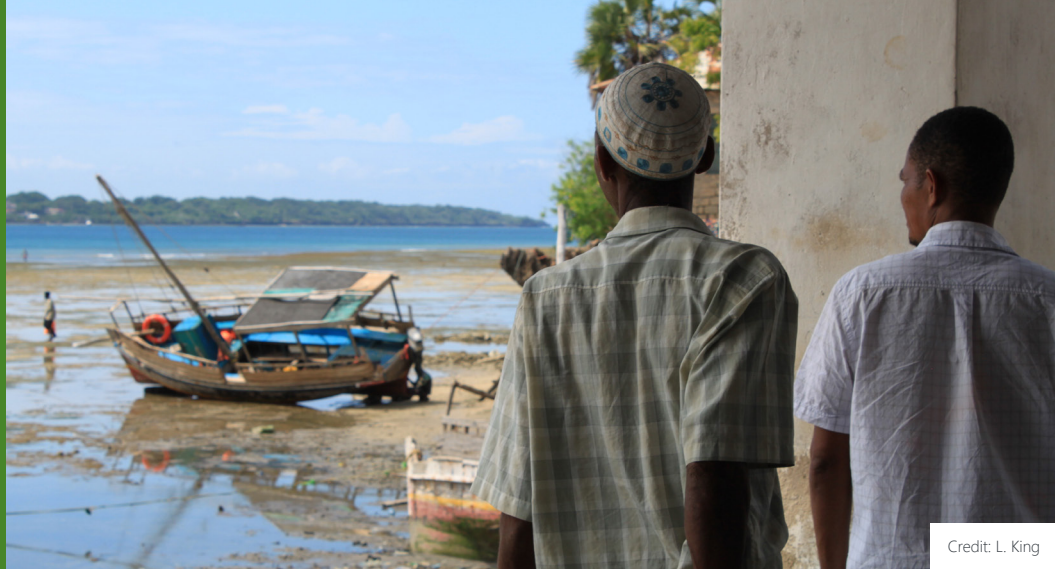


Credit: L. King

INFORMATION NOTE

Poverty and the Darwin Initiative

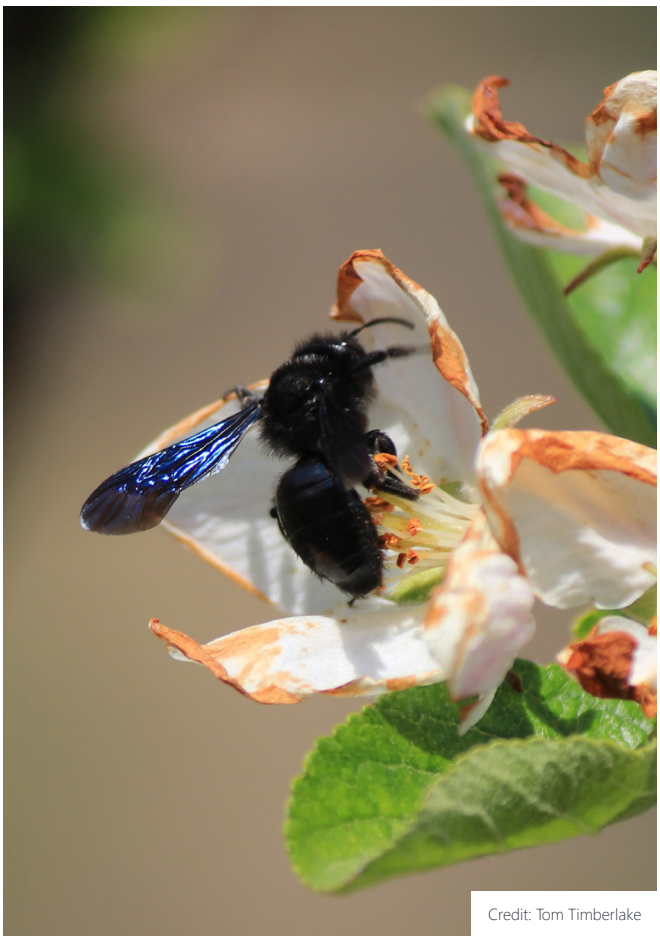
Introduction:

This information note has been developed to support Darwin Initiative projects and applicants understand what is meant by poverty reduction and how they can consider its broader contexts. 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 reduction.

The Darwin Initiative encourages and supports a wide range of projects 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 the project, poverty benefits are clearly identified, captured, and reported upon.

Key Messages

- All Darwin Initiative projects should contribute to both biodiversity conservation and poverty reduction in eligible countries. Check the current list of eligible countries in the latest "Guidance for Applicants" on the Apply page on the Darwin Initiative website.
- 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.



Credit: Tom Timberlake

Defining poverty

Within their application, all projects are asked to consider the context in which the project seeks to work, and this should include an explanation of how poverty is understood in the project. Projects are encouraged to think beyond economic deprivation in their approach to tackling poverty. This can include approaches such as community-based natural resource management, and the development of biodiversity-sustaining agroforestry plots to diversify crops and support food security.

Poverty 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.

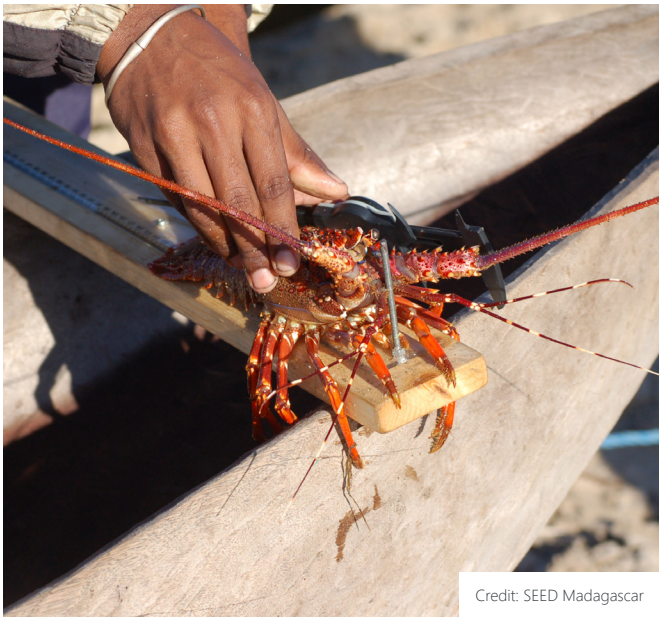
This list is not exhaustive but provides examples of some of the challenges facing the world's poor, particularly with regards to biodiversity:

- Lack of access to resources including food, water, energy, and land
- Lack of infrastructure such as transport which hampers access to markets, hospitals, schools, ports, and airports
- Lack of access to clean water and sanitisation
- Lack of access to services including education, healthcare, and finance
- Loss of ecosystem services causing instability such as water security and 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 tackle the causes of poverty, which can frequently be linked to environmental degradation and biodiversity loss.

All projects are encouraged to consider whether their project can approach poverty reduction in more expansive and creative ways that address elements of multi-dimensional deprivation and injustice. In order to do this, it is essential to engage with key communities and stakeholders from the design stage; doing so can help develop more creative, locally relevant, and effective strategies.

Considering poverty reduction in more expansive and creative ways is crucial to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which aim to end poverty through inclusive and sustainable development. Addressing inequalities and injustices is directly linked to individuals' ability to meet their basic needs, whether due to a lack of access to income or essential services such as healthcare, security, and education. Without a multi-dimensional understanding of poverty, these goals cannot be achieved.



Credit: SEED Madagascar

Country eligibility

All Darwin Initiative projects contribute to both biodiversity conservation and poverty reduction in eligible countries. The eligible country list for the Darwin Initiative can vary from other funds that Defra support (including the Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund) and between funding rounds, so it is important to check the relevant application guidance. Please see the latest "Guidance for Applicants" on the Apply page for further information. Darwin Initiative is expected to be mostly focused on Low Income and Lower Middle-Income countries. Project applying to work in an Upper Middle-Income Country must clearly demonstrate a stronger case for support.

Best practice for poverty reduction strategies for Darwin Initiative projects

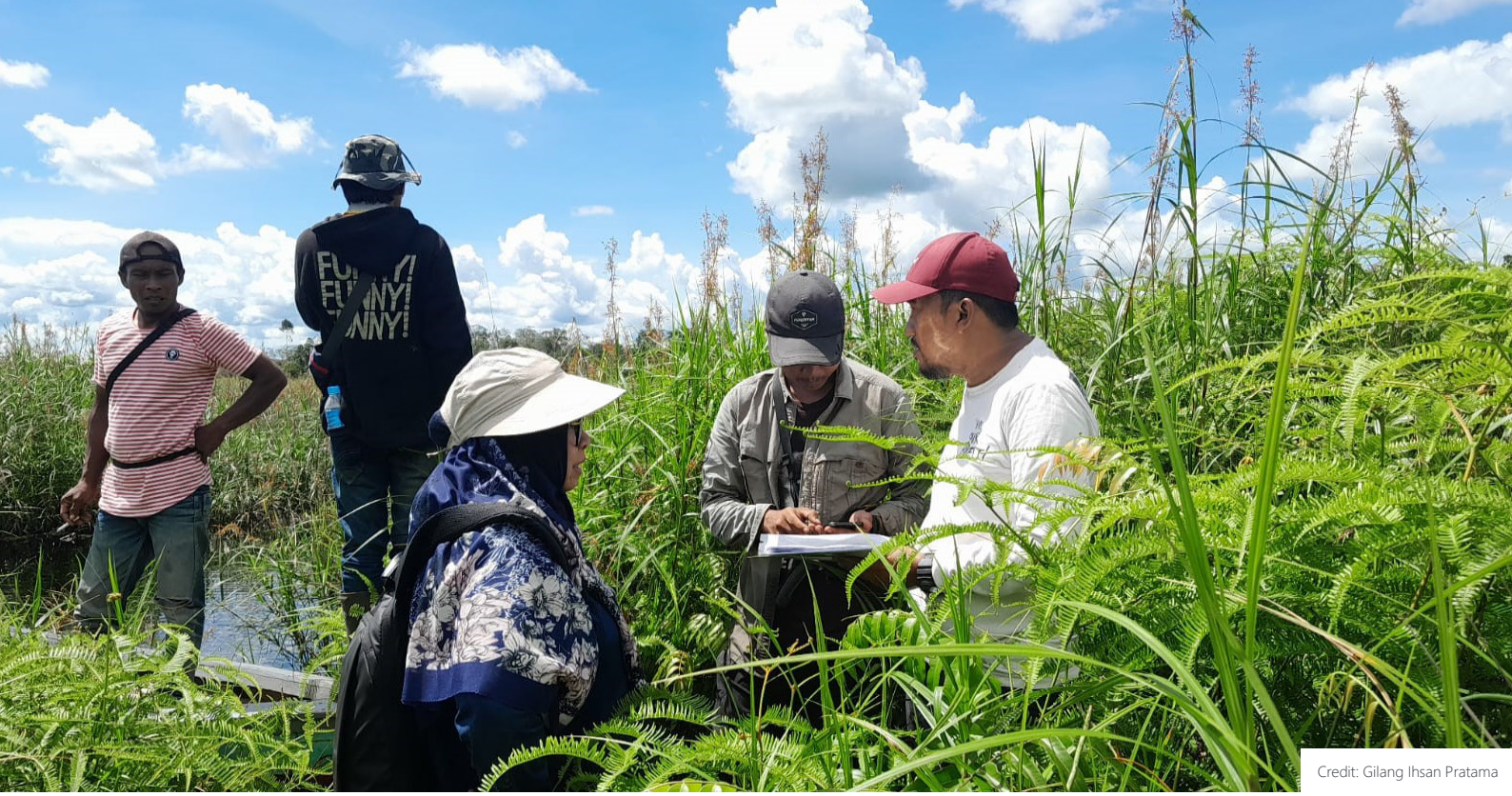
All projects funded under the Darwin Initiative should consider the following points when designing their approach to poverty reduction.

Locally-led approaches

- **Framing the narrative:** all projects are encouraged to think of conservation as part of a wider social, political, economic, and cultural context. It is crucial for projects to understand the historical contexts that have shaped communities and project areas rather than accepting definitions of certain communities as problematic. Projects should reference the historical and contemporary drivers of poverty and inequality in their area and explain how the project interventions have been designed to address them or, at a minimum, avoid exacerbating them[1].

- **Co-design with communities and/or stakeholders:** all projects are encouraged to develop and design projects with high levels of participation and collaboration with local communities and/or relevant stakeholders. This should include engagement with local communities and locally based organisations to understand colonial legacies, historically determined, and unjust power relations. People engaged in behaviours being addressed through project interventions can provide essential insights about how best to tackle poverty and biodiversity challenges that projects are designed to address, in ways that are fair. All projects should use participatory methods, and work in close partnership with locally based organisations. A co-design approach would take this further by ensuring that the conceptualisation and design of the project is firmly led and owned by local communities and/or relevant stakeholders.

[1] For more direct guidance on how to design projects that can contribute to the decolonisation of conservation, see: https://doi.org/10.2458/jpe.5969



Credit: Gilang Ihsan Pratama

Integrating Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI)

All projects are required to demonstrate gender sensitivity. This should include alignment with the principles of GESI, which acknowledges how gender intersects with other identities (disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, race, ethnicity, and socio-economic status). This means more than just being attentive to the gender balance of team members. It includes considerations on the "complex way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap or intersect and attempts to recognise the impact of these effects on the experiences of individuals and groups"[2]. This further demonstrates the importance of framing the narrative correctly, as doing so allows one to more meaningfully engage with GESI[3]. See the GESI Ambition statement and other GESI resources on the GESI page on the Darwin Initiative website for more detail.

Partnering with development or poverty organisations

It is essential that all project teams have the appropriate capabilities and knowledge for undertaking the work outlined. For example, if a project is about generating business plans for local businesses, it is important that the project proposal can demonstrate (in CVs and the narrative) that members of the team have the relevant skills and expertise. Do not shoehorn or place personnel into roles that are not suitable for them. Furthermore, in order to address poverty effectively it can be helpful to partner with organisations with relevant expertise in these areas. Projects are encouraged to work with organisations that specialise in development and/or poverty reduction to create more effective strategies.

Considering poverty reduction as central to the project

All projects funded under the Darwin Initiative are required to contribute to poverty reduction; poverty reduction should therefore be central to the project design. All projects should steer away from treating poverty reduction as an 'add on' to a conservation project and rather, if possible in the context, strive to be transformative in the longer term by addressing wider structural issues like land rights and empowerment of marginalised communities.

Sustainability and legacy

This has always been an important component of project quality for the Darwin Initiative. 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 that will require future injections of cash or resources to maintain momentum, are unlikely to receive funding.

Value for Money

All Darwin Initiative 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 involving a small number of people. A judgement will be made based on the value of funds requested and the size of the expected impact.

[2] For more direct guidance on how to design projects that can contribute to the decolonisation of conservation, please refer to Corbera, E., Maestre-Andrés, S., Collins, Y.A., Mabele, M.B. and Brockington, D., 2021. Decolonising biodiversity conservation. Journal of Political Ecology (Online). Available at: https://journals.librarypublishing.arizona.edu/jpe/article/id/5969/download/pdf/

[3] Please see IUCN Gender Analysis Guide, Spring 2021, available here.

Credit: ZSL

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) of poverty reduction

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

General information on improving a project's MEL system can be found on the MEL page of the Darwin Initiative website. This section focuses on the MEL of poverty benefits.

In order to increase the chance of successfully being awarded a Darwin Initiative 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

Identifying a project's contribution to poverty reduction

As a science-orientated fund, it is expected that 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.

For example, project design should consider:

- What is causing the change in biodiversity status?
- How does this relate to poverty?
- Are there any other initiatives (previous or ongoing) in the project area working to reduce poverty?
- Considering the context, what interventions can the project implement that will create incentives to change these causal factors of biodiversity loss?

Where exploitation of biodiversity is a means of survival, there will be inevitable trade-offs between stopping the exploitation and supporting 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 can identify what the benefits (and trade-offs) of their work might be, and that they clearly indicate how they will measure their contribution to poverty reduction and biodiversity conservation.

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
- Safe water
- Shelter
- Vulnerability

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

Non-monetary poverty measures

Many of the applications to the Darwin Initiative try to describe their contribution to poverty reduction 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.

Credit: RBGE Nepal

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).

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.

Projects with direct benefits

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

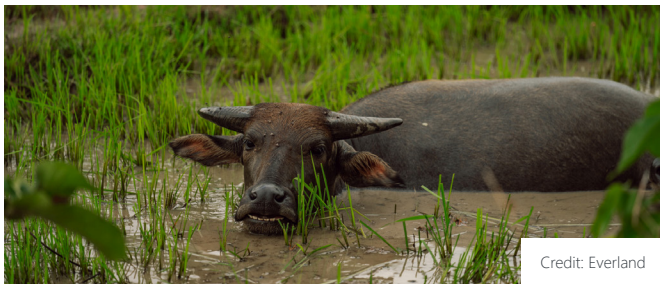
- The number of people / number of households / size of population expected to benefit
- The type of benefit they expect to have
- If the benefit is expected to be monetary (i.e. through improved or more stable incomes, avoidance of loss of income etc.), then projects are expected to be able to demonstrate 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.

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 eligible 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 testing 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 it 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.

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

A 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 project that is firmly entrenched in national policy discussions or national / local / regional development programmes is likely to score well.



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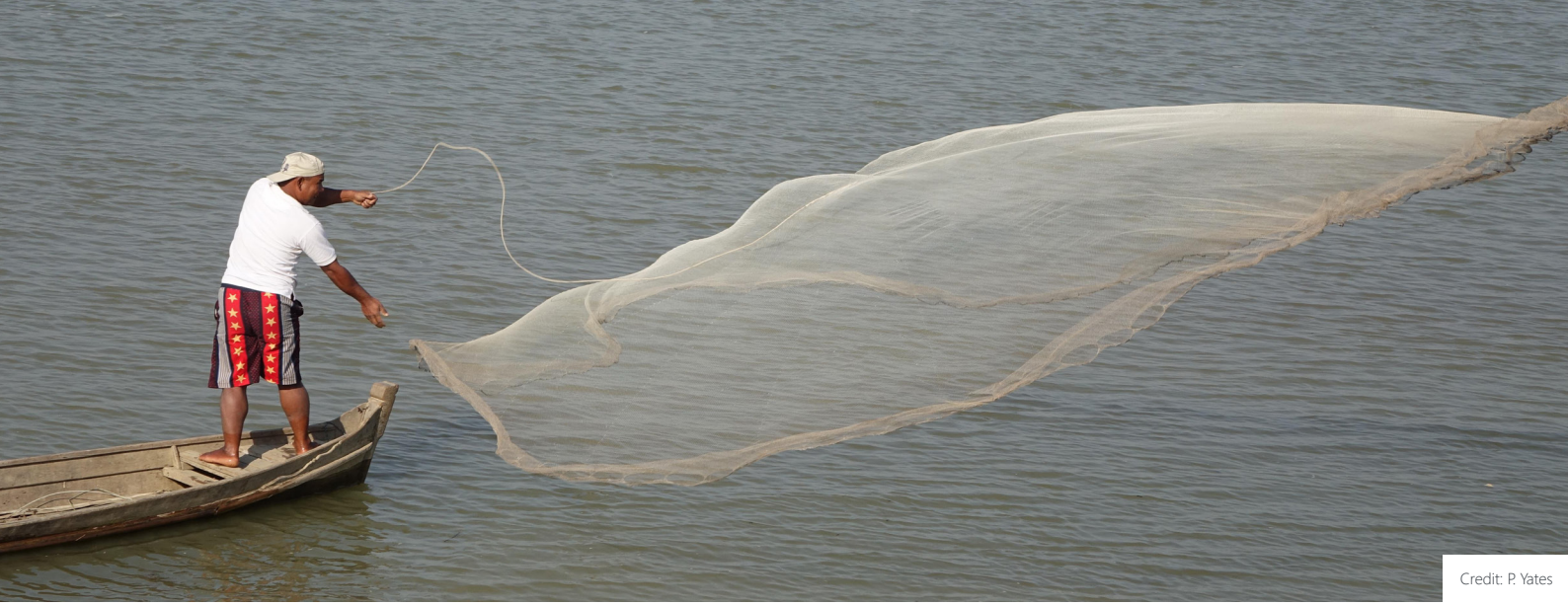


Credit: P. Yates

Measuring a project's contribution to poverty reduction

How to measure a project's contribution to poverty reduction 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; baselines should be established. In some cases, to help better understand a project's contribution, it might be useful to understand how things change outside the target area, to enable comparison between non-intervention and intervention sites; is it possible to establish a counterfactual?

2) What is the expected change?

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

3) How will the project measure this change?

Commonly used phrases such as 'stronger', 'better', 'more representative' are often meaningless. Could an indicator (qualitative or quantitative) be used to identify the expected amount of change? Projects 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 can be found on the MEL page on the Darwin Initiative website.

Additional issues to consider

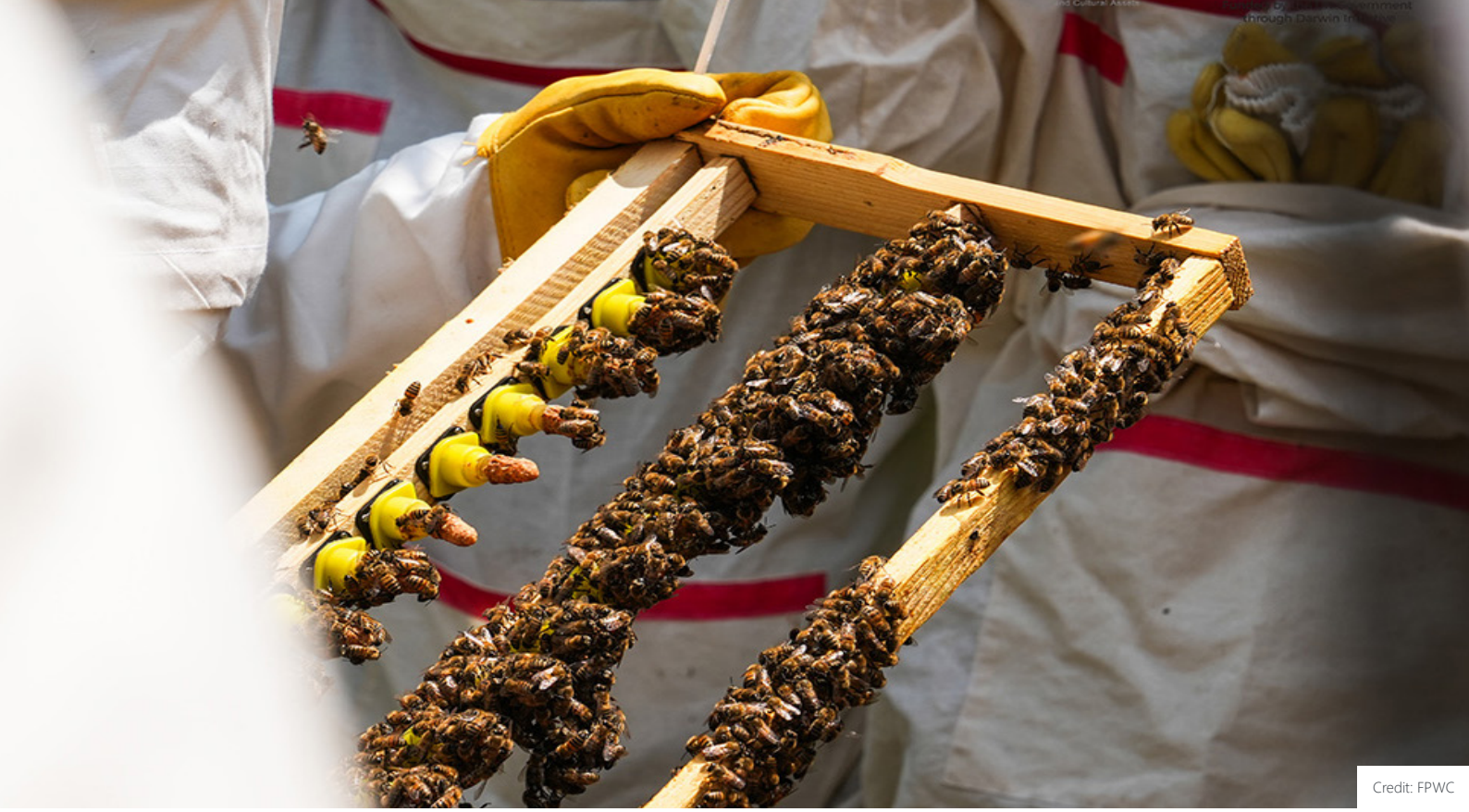
From experience, there are common challenges that regularly arise in Darwin Initiative applications. The following are routes that are often proposed for long-term sustainable biodiversity conservation with varying degrees of success.

Reliance on ecotourism as an alternative livelihood measure

This is a commonly proposed method for Darwin Initiative 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 Initiative project. Assumptions should not be made that benefits from tourism will automatically flow to poorer communities, but rather consider how the project will ensure this happens.

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, or is there evidence of a viable market? If so, is there an understanding of how the market functions and what the key constraints are?
- Is this an area likely to benefit from ecotourism? Is there access for tourists? Is the project 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?
- Are there 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?
- Is the logframe capable of measuring progress? Does it feature indicators of behaviour and incentives, including commercial performance of supported livelihood strategies / business models.



Credit: FPWC

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 from the income generating activities proposed?
- Are there clear routes to market for goods / products being produced? Is there demand for these goods?
- 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.
- Would the project 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.
- Is there a clear consideration of the specific incentives that need to be in place to shift behaviour from the status quo to more conservation-orientated outcomes?
- Is there a clear consideration of the specific incentives needed to sustain results beyond the project's lifetime?
- Are there personnel / partners on the project with clear expertise in income generating activities, marketing, business development etc.? Does the project team include private sector partners, and are there plans to collaborate with market actors (beyond immediate beneficiaries) during implementation?
- How many households would be affected? Are there clear figures on the expected rise in income expected i.e. 400 households 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?
- Is the logframe capable of measuring progress? Does it feature indicators of behaviour and incentives, including commercial performance of supported livelihood strategies / business models.

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, the ITPGRFA, and CMS often find it harder to identify and measure their links to poverty reduction. Nevertheless, they are subject to the same requirements as those projects aiming to address commitments under the CBD.

The examples and questions below should be considered by projects to support robust project design:

- Does the project address poverty issues in an indirect way, for example through the development of institutional frameworks or improving governance at the national level in an eligible country? Will improved governance lead to more equitable benefit sharing?
- Policy change can be hard to affect during the timescale of a Darwin Initiative 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.

CITES: Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora

ITPGRFA: International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

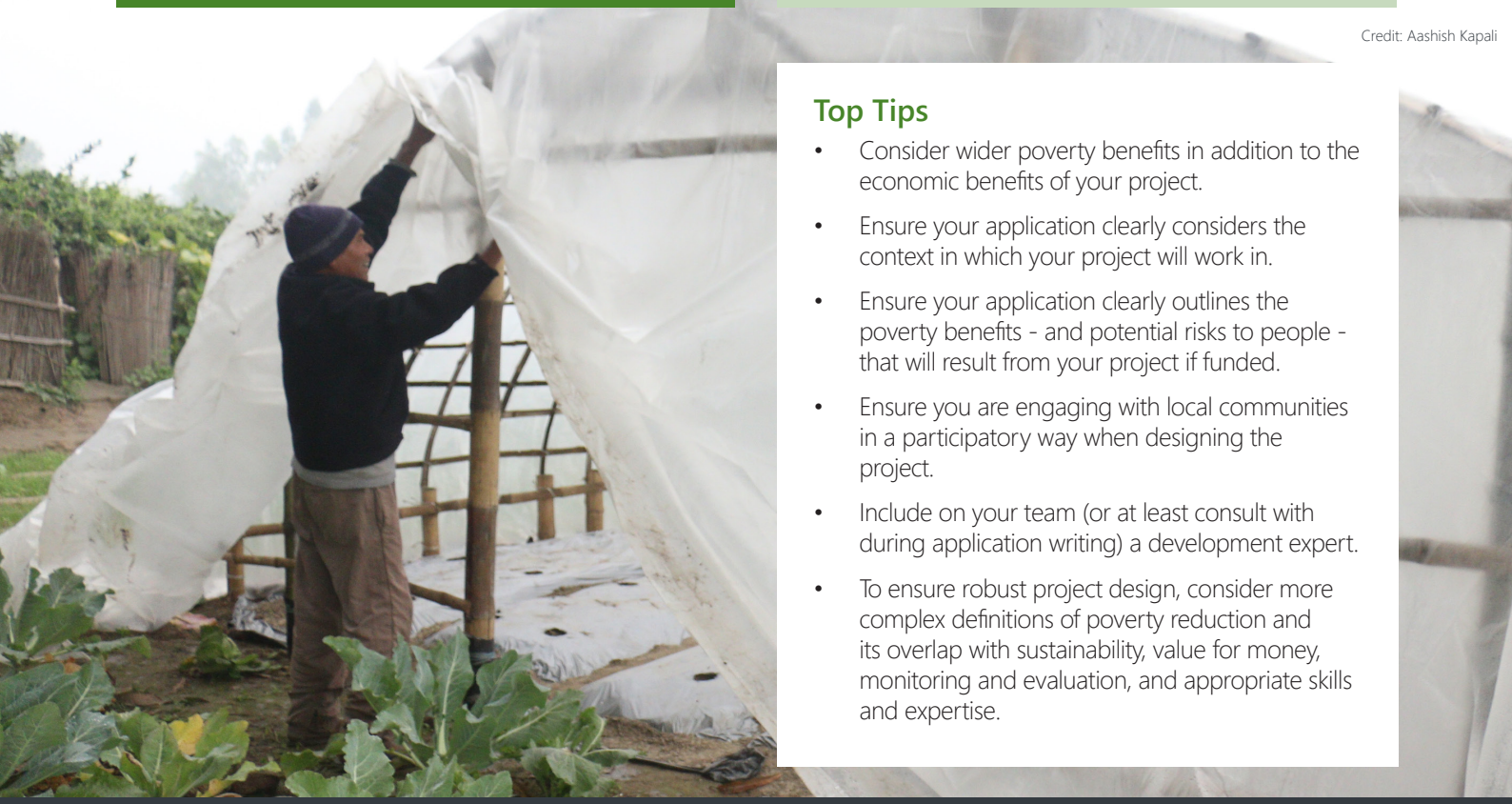
CMS: Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals

CBD: Convention on Biological Diversity

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

- Will Access and Benefit Sharing agreements, or other laws developed under the project, improve options for people living in poverty? Clearly articulating the broader, indirect beneficiaries of the 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 the project's logframe may prove more complicated than direct benefits, with particular challenges around attribution. In this instance, the use of proxy indicators is recommended - for example "number of meetings held which involve all relevant stakeholders (e.g. communities and private sector buyers) to discuss Mutually Agreed Terms".
- Does the project involve training? Improved capacity and educational opportunities can increase the livelihood options available to individuals in eligible 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 the project.

Improved governance can lead to more equitable benefit sharing.



Credit: Aashish Kapali

Top Tips

- Consider wider poverty benefits in addition to the economic benefits of your project.
- Ensure your application clearly considers the context in which your project will work in.
- Ensure your application clearly outlines the poverty benefits - and potential risks to people - that will result from your project if funded.
- Ensure you are engaging with local communities in a participatory way when designing the project.
- Include on your team (or at least consult with during application writing) a development expert.
- To ensure robust project design, consider more complex definitions of poverty reduction and its overlap with sustainability, value for money, monitoring and evaluation, and appropriate skills and expertise.