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# Briefing: Climate-Smart Pro-Poor Conservation

An evolving framework for exploring conservation programmes

## Policy pointers

1. Climate-smart, pro-poor conservation (CSPPC) is a new and innovative approach to conservation pioneered by WWF-UK and the WWF Offices and Programmes with whom it works.
2. CSPPC has the potential to deliver a triple win of securing ecosystem services, tackling climate change, and improving the wellbeing of poor women and men.
3. Implementing CSPPC requires a combination of principles from each of the two more established fields of climate smart conservation and pro-poor conservation.
4. There is no blueprint for CSPPC – different CSPPC programmes or initiatives are likely to have different emphases on climate smart and pro-poor principles, according to the different contexts within which they are operating and their different ways of working.

## Summary

The terms “Climate-Smart Conservation” and “Pro-Poor Conservation” are both established in the conservation lexicon. The combined term - Climate Smart, Pro-Poor Conservation (CSPPC) – however, is not. CSPPC is a new and innovative approach to conservation pioneered by WWF-UK and the WWF Programmes with whom it works. As currently characterised in WWF’s work, the overall objective of CSPPC is “to influence policies and practices so that they sustain or restore ecosystem services and tackle climate change, in order to secure and/or improve the wellbeing of poor women and men.” While there is no blueprint approach to CSPPC, a review of the literature highlights a number of key principles or characteristics associated with climate smart conservation and with pro-poor conservation. We suggest that for a conservation programme or initiative to be termed as CSPPC it should reflect a mix of these. In this briefing we present a framework to support conservation managers, project teams and other interested parties in exploring and understanding different programmes’ approaches to CSPPC.

## Introduction

The terms “Climate-Smart Conservation” and “Pro-Poor Conservation” are both established in the conservation lexicon. The combined term - Climate Smart, Pro-Poor Conservation (CSPPC) – has not been used by conservation academics or practitioners other than by WWF-UK in relation to its portfolio of programmes that is supported with funding from the UK Department for International Development (DFID). WWF-UK does not specifically define the term CSPPC but the overall objective of the portfolio of work “to influence policies and practices so that they sustain or restore ecosystem services and tackle climate change, in order to secure and/or improve the wellbeing of poor women and men” provides some insights, as do the anticipated outcomes:

- Communities safeguarding the ecosystems and ecosystem services upon which they and others depend in an equitable and adaptive manner.
- Policy frameworks and practices relating to adaptation, REDD+ and low carbon development are climate smart, environmentally sustainable and designed to secure and/or improve the well-being of men and women living in poverty.
- Government and private sector policies, practices and priorities relating to investment in infrastructure and natural resource extraction/use are climate smart, environmentally sustainable, and designed to secure and/or improve the well-being of women and men living in poverty.

Here we propose an analytical framework for understanding CSPPC which can be used to characterise the approach of different initiatives.

## What is Climate-Smart Conservation?

The term “Climate Smart” first appeared in the academic literature in the journal *Development* in 2008 where it was used to help frame adaptation efforts, with the proposition that development must manage long term climate change<sup>i</sup>. Since then the most common usage of the term has been in the context of agriculture. This was initiated by a background paper from the FAO in 2009 that explored the potential synergies and trade-offs for food security and agricultural mitigation including options to mitigate emissions associated with agriculture (ie through carbon sequestration), and use agriculture to mitigate global climate change<sup>ii</sup> (ie through biofuel production). FAO proposed that climate smart agriculture (CSA) was necessary to articulate the transformation agriculture must undergo to meet the related challenges of food security and

climate change<sup>iii</sup>. CSA has garnered international support from governments, intergovernmental organisations, financing institutions and the private sector who have voluntarily joined a Global Alliance to advance CSA in practice<sup>iv</sup>. Civil society organisations have, however, been more sceptical, proposing that the concept of CSA is simply a “greenwashing” of industrial agriculture<sup>v</sup>. In recent years a variety of related concepts have been promoted including climate smart landscapes, climate smart development, climate smart disaster risk reduction and climate smart cities.

The concept of climate smart conservation appeared around the same time as CSA in a publication by the WWF Central America Regional Programme Office and EcoAdapt in 2009<sup>vi</sup>. The authors did not define the term but highlighted four key principles:

1. Protect adequate and appropriate space to support natural processes, places, and features that minimize or mitigate the effects of climate change.
2. Reduce non-climate stresses, such as habitat degradation and destruction, overharvesting, pollution and invasive species.
3. Adopt adaptive management, including creative measures to ameliorate the effects of climate change and modifications of more traditional approaches.
4. Reduce the rate and extent of climate change (mitigation).

The first definition of climate-smart conservation was provided by a coalition of US federal and state agencies and non-governmental partners, led by the National Wildlife Federation (NWF) who describe it as “the intentional and deliberate consideration of climate change in natural resource management, realised through adopting forward-looking goals and explicitly linking strategies to key climate impacts and vulnerabilities”<sup>vii</sup>. The definition is framed by four over-arching themes:

1. Act with intentionality, both deliberately and transparently, to link climate impacts (direct and indirect) to conservation actions.
2. Manage for change, not just persistence – respond and manage change, do not assume that change can always be resisted.
3. Reconsider conservation goals, not just strategies. Climate informed reconsideration may not require a wholesale revision, but may reveal a need to adapt goals such as what (the conservation target), why (the intended outcomes), where (the relevant geography) and when (the relevant timeline).
4. Integrate adaptation into existing work and processes.

Although newly framed as “climate smart conservation”, these principles draw heavily on related and more established concepts including those of ecological resilience and ecosystem-based adaptation.

The US non-profit organisation Point Blue, has adapted the NWF approach, but no other conservation organisations – with the exception of WWF (Box 1) – make direct reference to CSC (although all acknowledge the importance of climate change and pursue a range of strategies to promote nature-based adaptation and mitigation). A key issue for WWF (and presumably many other organisations) is however, understanding what CSC means in practice, and how this differs from existing conservation and livelihoods practices (and from other approaches such as ecosystem-based adaptation and REDD+).

### Box 1. Climate Smart Conservation in WWF

WWF's focus on CSC originated from a review of the scale of challenges presented by climate change to WWF's operations, which concluded that the organisation should embed climate smart principles into its monitoring and reporting, portfolio screening, knowledge and capacity building and decision support tools and guidance. WWF defines CSC as an approach to 'understanding and preparing for current and future changes in Earth's climate, with the aim of building the resilience of human and natural systems, and contributing to climate mitigation'. The WWF Network Climate Adaptation Team have elaborated five principles to further describe CSC:

1. Understanding the implications of climate change including how human responses might lead to changes in other conventional threats.
2. Developing and implementing no-regret actions that address current threats, do not erode options for responding to future climate change, and avoid contributing to greenhouse gas emissions.
3. Taking an integrated approach to adaptation, contributing to nature conservation and to fair and equitable sustainable development.
4. Active learning to build capacity and work collaboratively to plan and respond to increasing change and uncertainty.
5. Bringing about changes in policy that create an enabling environment across scales (local to international) for adaptive governance.

As with the NWF principles, these draw on other WWF work on related concepts including its work on resilience. WWF's "RACER" tool ([http://wwf.panda.org/what we do/where we work/arctic/what we do/climate/racer/](http://wwf.panda.org/what_we_do/where_we_work/arctic/what_we_do/climate/racer/)), for example, is intended to assess ecological resilience in the Arctic and whether this will persist under different climatic conditions in the future.

### What is Pro-Poor Conservation?

The term "pro-poor conservation" was first used in 2002 by IUCN and by the UK Department for International Development (DFID). Responding to the poverty alleviation agenda enshrined in the Millennium Development Goals, IUCN produced a policy brief in which pro-poor conservation is described as "Putting Conservation to Work for the Poor" and encouraged governments to inter alia allocate greater rights and responsibilities for the use, management and ownership of environmental assets to the poor, including through equitable governance structures and appropriate policy and pro-poor market mechanisms<sup>viii</sup>. The DFID Wildlife and Poverty Study - a report commissioned by DFID as it considered the viability of continuing to invest in conservation projects, given its poverty reduction mandate - highlighted that international wildlife conservation had placed considerable costs on poor people. Despite this, the degree to which poverty issues had been mainstreamed and monitored within conservation institutions was low. The Study therefore defined pro-poor conservation as "integrating poverty issues into the work of the leading conservation organisations" <sup>ix</sup>. Responding to these studies, Roe *et al*<sup>x</sup> proposed pro-poor conservation as a new narrative, "where conservation is integrated into development and poverty reduction agendas." Roe and Elliott<sup>xi</sup> suggested that pro-poor conservation can be defined in a number of ways:

- By outcomes: conservation that delivers net benefits to poor people.
- By process: a progressive change in practice of conservation organisations – from using poverty reduction as a tool for better conservation through to using conservation in order to deliver on poverty reduction.
- By actions: conservation strategies that are explicitly designed to address the challenge of poverty reduction and development strategies that recognise the role of biodiversity conservation.
- By drivers: conservation that puts poor people and their priorities at the centre of decision-making.

In practice, different organisations – and individuals - have different perspectives on the links between biodiversity conservation and poverty alleviation and their roles and responsibilities in addressing these links<sup>xii</sup>. This in turn influences the approach to pro-poor conservation that they might – or might not – take (Box 2).

While the specific narrative of “pro-poor” conservation was driven by a response to the new poverty reduction agenda of the late 1990s and 2000s, the debate about the links between conservation and different aspects of poverty is much older. In particular, concern for human rights and social justice has long been on the conservation agenda way before any pro-poor terminology became commonplace. Many still favour an emphasis on a “rights-based” approach to conservation, although Fisher *et al*<sup>xiii</sup> see poverty reduction as a fundamental human right that conservation should be committed to support - thus making the link between the rights-based and pro-poor agendas.

#### Box 2. Pro-poor conservation in WWF

In 2009, WWF produced a global policy statement on which specifically commits to the network to pro-poor conservation: “In many instances, particularly where poverty levels are high and people are heavily dependent on natural resources for their wellbeing, WWF will take a proactive position, embracing a pro-poor approach to conservation, and making special efforts to enable local people to play a key part in crafting solutions for sustainable development”.

WWF’s approach to pro-poor conservation recognises that in some cases poor people present a threat to conservation – pro-poor conservation is thus a pragmatic approach. It also embraces the principles of “do no harm”, however, recognising that at times conservation can cause negative impacts on poor people which must be avoided or mitigated: “Where conservation goals are jeopardized by poverty or, conversely, the goals themselves threaten to further marginalize poor people, WWF will adopt pro-poor approaches. Such approaches put people at the centre of the analysis and the forefront of any intervention, seeing them as key to the solution rather than as part of the problem.”

### A Framework for Climate-Smart, Pro-Poor Conservation

The academic and grey literature on climate smart conservation and on pro-poor conservation reveals a variety of principles or characteristics of each approach. Some of the principles are common to both climate smart and pro-poor conservation (and indeed to many aspects of good conservation practice in general), but the majority are specific to one or the other approach. For an approach to be termed as CSPPC rather than just CSC or PPC, we suggest it should reflect a mix of CSC and PPC principles and characteristics. Table 1 presents a set of principles for CSPPC based on a synthesis of the principles extracted from the literature and then further categorised to reflect the

extent to which they seek to actively use conservation to achieve either climate change or poverty reduction goals.

The principles are not intended to be equivalent across the different columns. While we have tried to align similar overarching approaches – such as “do no harm” or “do good” the positioning in the table reflects nothing more than this. The principles are also not intended to be ordinal – ie there is no scale or value judgement implied in the order in which they are presented within each column. And finally, they are not intended to be exclusive – different approaches to CSPPC will reflect different combinations of principles. The key point, however is that CSPPC is the intersection of pro-poor and climate smart conservation as shown in (Figure 1). The location of interventions within the framework is not static and CSPPC programmes may have more emphasis on pro-poor than climate smart while others may be more climate smart and less pro-poor (Figure 2). This emphasis is also quite likely to change over the period of the project/programme – highlighting the nature of CSPPC as a “journey” rather than a formulaic approach.

Figure 1: A Framework for characterising CSPPC programmes

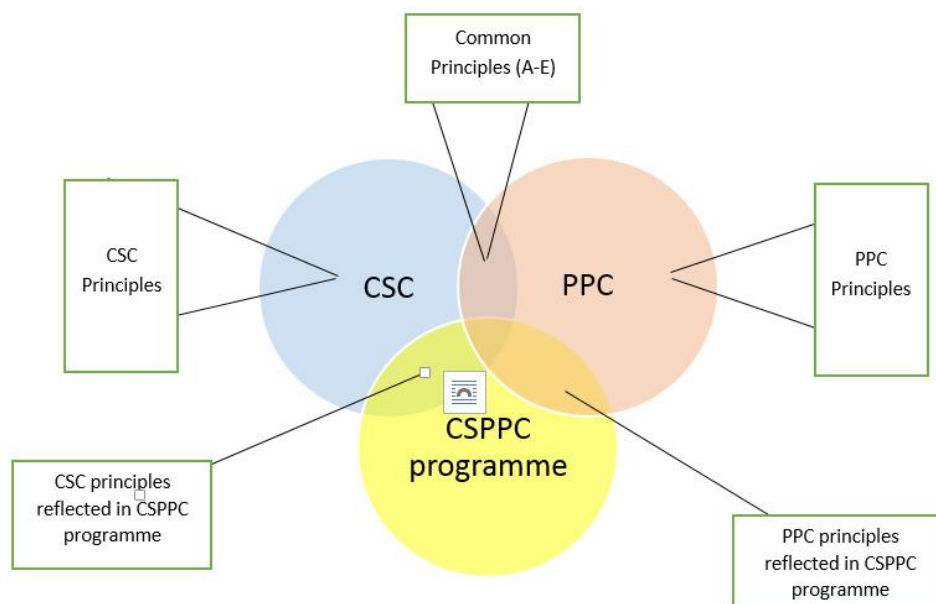
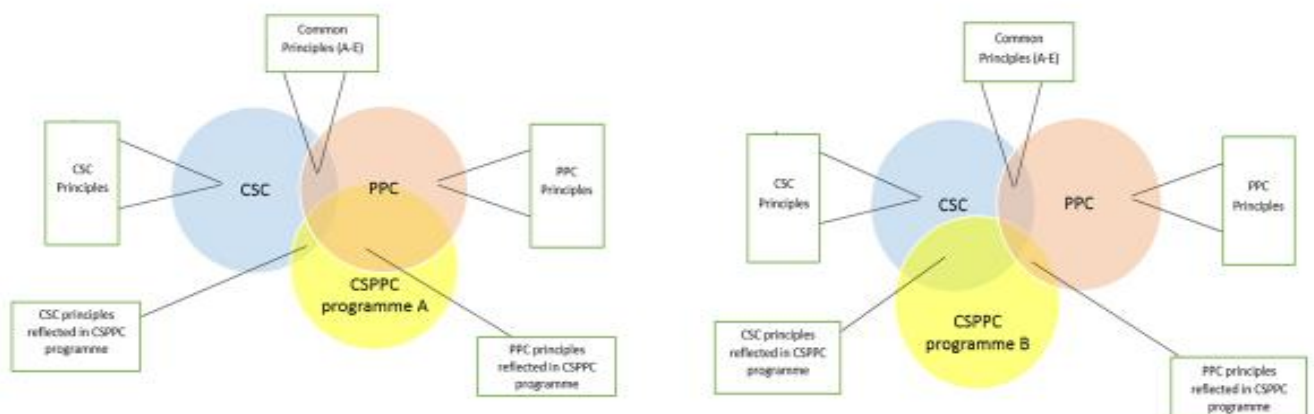


Figure 2: Applying the CSPPC framework to different programmes



**Table 1: Principles for Climate Smart and Pro-Poor Conservation**

Climate-Smart (CS) Principles	Pro-Poor (PP) Principles
<p>1. "Do good": Deliberately contribute to tackling climate change through conservation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Contribute to building the resilience/adaptive capacity of local communities (CBA)</li> <li>b. Enhance the capacity of ecosystems to reduce climate vulnerabilities and adaptive capacities <i>for people</i> (EBA)</li> <li>c. Build ecosystem and species resilience to climate change (conserve adequate and appropriate space to enhance adaptation capacity)</li> <li>d. Contribute to climate change mitigation through emission reductions and removals</li> </ul>	<p>1. "Do good": Deliberately contribute to improving human well-being through conservation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Enhance wellbeing of local people at conservation sites</li> <li>b. Ensure delivery of ecosystem services critical for wellbeing at the landscape level</li> <li>c. Contribute to national <u>sustainable development</u></li> </ul>
<p>2. Ensure that project impacts are sustainable in a changing climate (climate proofing)</p>	<p>2. Deliberately target benefits at the poorest or more vulnerable groups</p>
<p>3. "Do no harm": Avoid or mitigate activities that may undermine resilience/adaptive capacity of people and ecosystems</p>	<p>3. "Do no harm": Avoid or mitigate negative social impacts that create or exacerbate poverty</p>
<p>4. Recognise differences in distribution of climate change impacts (between localities, between rich and poor, between men and women etc)</p>	<p>4. Recognise differences in distribution of social impacts of conservation (between men and women, rich and poor etc) <u>ie Social differentiation</u></p>
<p>5. Identify and manage trade-offs (between adaptation and mitigation, with adaptation approaches, between CS and other goals)</p>	<p>5. Identify and manage trade-offs (between different groups of poor people, between different PP approaches, between PP and other goals)</p>
<p>6. Adopt adaptive management and learning- by-doing to reflect changing climate conditions and uncertainties</p>	<p>6. Ensure equity in distribution of costs and benefits at different levels and between different groups</p>
<p>7. Reduce other environmental stresses (so as not to exacerbate climate-induced impacts)</p>	<p>7. Recognise and protect the rights of marginalised groups, Indigenous Peoples and local communities</p>
<p>8. Focus conservation goals on future conditions not past</p>	<p>8. Focus conservation efforts on species and/or sites that are important to</p>

	poor people
9. Prioritise actions based on use of best available climate science and knowledge (including Traditional Ecological Knowledge)	9. Ensure participation in decision making and access to information by poor, women, Indigenous peoples and other marginalised groups
<b>Common Principles</b>	
A. Understand the local/national context (past, present and future)	
B. Work across scales (local to global)	
C. Collaborate and communicate across sectors and disciplines	
D. Use ecosystem/landscape level approaches	
E. Tackle the policies, institutions and processes that present barriers to CS or PP achievements (create an enabling environment)	

## Next steps

The CSPPC framework proposed here, describes a theoretical construct of CSPPC. The next stage in this process is to apply the framework to different practical situations in a range of different contexts (policy and practice; regional to national to local scales; sites to landscapes) and to test the relevance of the different principles in these different contexts. And to use this framework to facilitate reflection and learning within and between WWF programme teams; and to develop case studies which showcase what CSPPC can look like in practice and learning to date. The framework will be updated based on experience from this initial application. We welcome feedback on both theory and practice.

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The briefing has been written by Dilys Roe, IIED, based on a literature review prepared for WWF-UK by Dilys Roe, Phil Franks, and Francesca Booker (all IIED), with inputs from Rebecca Saunders and Mike Morris (WWF-UK).

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