

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR COMMUNITY-DRIVEN CONSERVATION

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A just world that values and conserves nature.



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INTRODUCTION

This document presents eight guiding principles describing effective and inclusive Community-driven Conservation: community-based natural resource governance (including management and conservation measures).

IUCN NL is in support of Community-driven Conservation. Based on our experiences in the field and from key literature, Community-driven Conservation proves to be an effective strategy for nature conservation and sustainable and inclusive development (see Annex I).

IUCN NL recognises that secure community land and resource rights are essential for the sustainable management and effective conservation of forests and other ecosystems. However, national (or regional) legal frameworks may push for community-driven conservation, with or without the recognition of community land rights.

There are global movements and mechanisms that push for the (legal) recognition of community-driven conservation: OECMs and ICCAs (see Annex II and III).

IUCN as a global federation of NGOs and governments is committed to recognise, strengthen, protect and support Community-driven Conservation (see Annex IV).

The eight guiding principles for Community-Driven Conservation are derived from Elinor Ostrom's research and have been adjusted based on the experiences of the partners of IUCN NL and on diverse literature (see Annex V).

These guiding principles can guide CSOs, communities and conservation practitioners in understanding and dealing with essential elements in community-driven conservation like sustainability, local decision-making dynamics and power relations.

We would like to thank the Myanmar CSO TRIP NET who has contributed to the final choice and formulation of the guiding principles by testing them in the Community-driven Conserved forests in Kamoethway. TRIP NET acknowledges the value of these principles as a checklist.

The principles should not be taken as a blue print but are a guideline to address essential issues in effective Community-driven Conservation; they should be adjusted to the local context as appropriate.

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GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR COMMUNITY-DRIVEN CONSERVATION

1. **Clearly defined boundaries: user groups, territory and usage zones**

Establish the boundaries between legitimate users and non-users and boundaries that define a resource system and/or a usage zone: who is entitled to access to what?

2. **Clear rules fitting local circumstances**

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to community-driven conservation and resource management. Unlike a government-led protected area, the rules for community-driven conservation territories and its usage zones should be dictated by local people and local ecological needs, reflecting the current land use and future needs, and based on indigenous and local knowledge of the environment and cultural practices.

3. **Participatory, gender-inclusive decision-making**

Ensure that those affected by the rules can participate in defining and in modifying the boundaries and the rules. People will be more likely to follow the rules if they had a hand in writing them. Involve as many people as possible in decision-making and take into account gender-differentiated interests, knowledge and power balances.

4. **Inclusiveness and fair distribution**

Ensure that all people have a voice in defining the boundaries and rules and that the benefits obtained by users from a common-pool resource are fairly distributed. Pay particular attention to marginalized groups including, but not limited to, those living in poverty, women, youth, children, ethnic minorities and other environmentally vulnerable groups, based on their specific contexts.

5. **Monitoring Community-driven conservation territories**

Once rules have been set, communities need a way of checking that people are keeping to them. Community-driven conservation territories don't run on good will, but on accountability. Develop a system, carried out by community members, for monitoring members' behaviour (social monitoring) and monitoring the resource (environmental monitoring).

6. **Conflict resolution, Restorative Justice and Sanctions**

Community-driven conservation areas work best when people who break the rules are not just banned or punished; that tends to create resentment.

When issues come up, resolving them should be informal, cheap and straightforward. That means that anyone can take their problems for mediation, and nobody is shut out. Problems are solved rather than ignored because nobody wants to pay legal fees. In some cases you can build on traditional conflict resolution mechanisms. See also Restorative Justice: a system of criminal justice which focuses on the rehabilitation of offenders through reconciliation with victims and the community at large. See: <https://earthrestorativejustice.org/article/35054/iucn-report-restorative-justice-responses-to-environmental-harm>

Develop systems of warnings and fines, as well as informal reputational consequences in the community.

7. **Right to organize**

Make sure the rule-making rights of the community are respected by outside authorities (national, provincial or village government, park authority).

8. **Community-driven conservation nested within larger networks**

Some things can be managed locally, but some might need wider regional cooperation - for example a conserved watershed forest might depend on a river that others in the upstream are using as well. Build responsibility for governing the natural resources in nested tiers from the lowest level up to the entire interconnected (eco)system.

ANNEXES: FURTHER EXPLANATIONS AND REFERENCES

I. Community-driven Conservation

Indigenous peoples and local communities are active as both custodians and defenders of their territories of life, and particularly so in the face of undesired, destructive appropriation and 'development'.

The contribution of Indigenous and local communities to biodiversity and mitigation of climate change is impressive:

- They hold and manage a significant part of the Earth's most biodiverse regions - their territories contain an estimated 80% of the world's biodiversity and cover nearly 25% of the world's surface - and play a vital role in conserving lands, seas and resources.
- They manage at least 22% (218 gigatons) of the total carbon found in tropical and subtropical forests (including both above- and belowground sources). Indigenous Peoples' lands intersect with around 40% of all protected areas and more than 65% of the most remote and least inhabited lands on Earth.¹
- They cultivate strong cultural, livelihood and spiritual relationships with their natural environments and have developed and often maintain traditional management practices and knowledge that contribute to biodiversity conservation and to the sustainable use of natural resources.² "[Our] knowledge systems have been developed and continue to be developed through our interaction with our lands and territories. Without access to our lands we lose our connections with our ancestors and our knowledge."³

The territories of indigenous and local communities are often governed as 'commons' - natural resources that groups of people manage for individual and collective benefit - and show an enormous variety of governance institutions, from committees of elders to user groups to village assemblies. They likewise exhibit widely varying management approaches, from seasonal migration to rotational farming. Common rights over territories and natural resources intertwines with traditional knowledge, practices and spiritual and material values and is closely related to biodiversity and culture.

In managing territory and resources, indigenous peoples use social mechanisms and customary governance structures to ensure equitable access to resources, and thus build the social fabric of resilience in the face of environmental change. These mechanisms and structures may include customary law and rituals.

Secure community land and resource rights are essential for the sustainable management and effective conservation of forests and other ecosystems.

¹ **Indigenous and Community Response to the IPCC Special Report on Climate Change and Land (August 2019)**
<https://ipccresponse.org/our-response>

² <https://www.iucn.org/commissions/world-commission-protected-areas/our-work/cultural-and-spiritual-values-protected-areas>

³ **Saul Vicente, Indigenous Peoples, Marginalized Populations and Climate Change Expert Meeting (IPMPCC, 2011)**

II. Other Effectively Conserved Areas (OECMs)

The Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 is a framework for the effective implementation of the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD). Protected areas provide the foundation of national biodiversity

Aichi Biodiversity Target 11

By 2020 at least 17% of terrestrial and inland water and 10% of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well-connected **systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures**, and integrated into the wider landscape and seascape (emphasis added).

conservation strategies and delivery of 'Aichi' Target 11 (see box).

Parties to the CBD recently included "other effective area-based conservation measures" (OECMs) in Target 11 because they recognise that some areas outside the recognised protected area networks also result in the effective in-situ conservation of biodiversity. OECMs can contribute to the achievement of Aichi Target 11 in many ways, e.g., conserving important ecosystems, habitats and wildlife corridors, supporting the recovery of threatened species, maintaining ecosystem functions and securing ecosystem services, enhancing resilience against threats, and retaining and connecting remnants of fragmented ecosystems in developed areas. OECMs can also contribute

to ecologically representative and well-connected conservation systems, integrated within wider landscapes and seascapes. OECMs can include territories and conserved areas governed by all four governance types, i.e., by governments, private actors, Indigenous Peoples and local communities, and areas of shared governance.⁴

Next to officially Protected Areas, there are three categories of OECMs (see Figure 1). The categories are illustrated with examples from Karen communities in Kamoethway, Tanintharyi, Myanmar, who through a democratic and bottom-up process decided upon nine forest conservation categories and established detailed rules and regulations for each forest zone.⁵

- Conservation is Primary objective**
 Some communities govern and manage their territories with the explicit intention to conserve nature and thus maintain the long-term wellbeing of both humans and non-humans. For others, an explicit conservation objective is not needed, as the survival and productivity of nature, the reproduction of the community and life itself are implicit values. Rather, they may be explicit about protecting spiritually or culturally significant places, securing the natural resources needed to sustain livelihoods, or preventing disasters. For example, in Kamoethway, the Karen

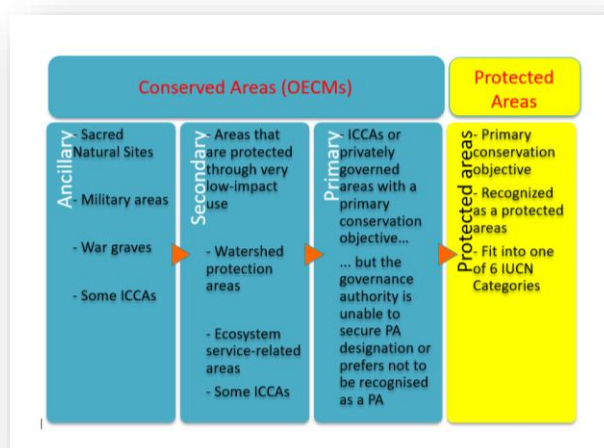


Figure 1 Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures

⁴ https://www.iucn.org/sites/dev/files/content/documents/guidelines_for_recognising_and_reporting_oecms_-_january_2018.pdf

⁵ http://www.burmapartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Book_We-Will-Manage-Our-Own-Natural-Resources-English.pdf

communities established 'Wildlife Sanctuaries', where all human activities are prohibited to ensure a safe habitat for wildlife, to increase the populations of endangered species, to protect the value of the forest ecosystem and to maintain the co-existence of indigenous people and wildlife.

- **Conservation is Secondary objective**

"Secondary conservation" is achieved through the active conservation of an area where biodiversity outcomes are a secondary management objective. For example, in Kamoethway, the Karen communities established 'Utilisation Forests', areas that are protected through very low impact use because there are restricting rules for obtaining local construction materials such as timber, bamboo and rattan; burning and rotational farming is prohibited, cutting trees is only allowed in places where there will be less impact and they must replant trees to replace those that they have cut.

Another example of this OECM category are corridors, sites managed to provide ecological connectivity between protected areas or other areas of high biodiversity, thereby contributing to their viability, may also qualify under this OECM category.

- **Conservation is an Ancillary objective**

Ancillary conservation refers to areas that deliver in-situ conservation as a by-product of management activities, even though biodiversity conservation is not a management objective. For example, the main objective of Umbilical Cord Forests in Tanintharyi is to provide adequate forest trees for the traditional umbilical cord ceremony whereby the umbilical cord of a new-born baby is attached to a selected tree. In these forests it is forbidden to cut, destroy or burn trees or to collect firewood or vegetables and herbal medicine.

ICCAs can be found in all three OECM categories.

III. Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas (ICCAs)

Most of the information in this paragraph is copied from the website of the ICCA Consortium.⁶

The ICCA Consortium is the key global network that connects indigenous and community grassroots with global and national policy on in situ biodiversity conservation. The Consortium has legitimacy, enjoys support from IUCN and other players (WWF, UNDP) and represents the recent trend in indigenous and community-based governance of protected and conserved areas.

ICCAs:

A close association is often found between a specific indigenous people or local community and a specific territory, area, or body of natural resources. When such an association is combined with effective local governance and conservation of nature, we speak of an "ICCA". ICCA is an abbreviation for "territories and areas conserved by indigenous peoples and local communities" or "territories of life". The term "ICCA" is an abbreviation for a phenomenon that has many diverse manifestations and names in cultures and locations around the world. These include wilayah adat, himas, agdals, territorios de vida, territorios del buen vivir, tagal, qoroq-e bumi, yerli qorukh, faritra ifempivelomana, qoroq, CREMA⁷,

⁶ <https://www.iccaconsortium.org>

⁷ **The Community Resource Management Area (CREMA) mechanism in Ghana:**
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3720029/>

ancestral domains, country, community conserved areas, territorios autonomos comunitarios, sacred natural sites, locally-managed marine areas, and many others.

The following three characteristics identify an ICCA:

- There is a close and deep connection between a territory or area and an indigenous people or local community. This relationship is generally embedded in history, social and cultural identity, spirituality and/or people's reliance on the territory for their material and non-material wellbeing. Click
- The custodian people or community makes and enforces decisions and rules (e.g., access and use) about the territory, area or species' habitat through a functioning governance institution.
- The governance decisions and management efforts of the concerned people or community contribute to the conservation of nature (ecosystems, habitats, species, natural resources), as well as to community wellbeing.

Most ICCAs are potential OECMs (see Appendix II).

In the last decades, ICCAs have become known and recognised as essential features for the conservation of nature, sustainable livelihoods, the realisation of collective rights and responsibilities, and the wellness of living beings on our planet—all of which are under attack by a variety of economic and political forces. They include cases of continuation, revival or modification of traditional practices, some of which are of ancient origin, and also include new initiatives, such as restoration of ecosystems and innovative uses of resources employed by indigenous peoples and local communities in the face of threats and of opportunities.

Communities can register their ICCAs at the international level on an online information platform for Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas, where communities themselves provide data, case studies, maps, photos and stories which result in useful statistics and analysis on featured ICCAs around the world.

The UN Environment – World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) based in Cambridge, UK, provide communities with two compatible ways of registering its ICCA⁸:

- The ICCA Registry: A dedicated international ICCA Registry.⁹
- The World Database on Protected Areas (WDPA): in case the ICCA fits the protected area definition of the IUCN.¹⁰

Before you register, however, it is important that an ICCA undergoes a peer-support and review process, to be confident that it is a genuine ICCA, that appropriate procedures for the registration, such as Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), have been followed, and that appropriate standards are met.

Benefits of registering for communities¹¹

- Registration may contribute to security, ownership, and potential legal status of land and resources.

⁸ <https://www.iccaconsortium.org/index.php/register-your-icca-internationally/>

⁹ <http://www.iccaregistry.org/>

¹⁰ **IUCN Protected Area Categories:** <https://www.iucn.org/theme/protected-areas/about/protected-area-categories>

¹¹ <http://www.iccaregistry.org/en/participate/benefits-and-considerations>

- Discussing and documenting an ICCA can strengthen community ties and help communities to appreciate the multiple values of their ICCAs.
- Registration supports communication within the community and between generations, potentially helping to preserve traditions and encourage participation of youth.
- Case studies provide the opportunity to showcase an ICCA and its achievements, history and challenges to an international audience. Information and traditional knowledge that may otherwise be threatened can be stored online and protected.

IV. IUCN - Community-driven Conservation and Indigenous Peoples' organisations

The 5th IUCN World Parks Congress (Durban, 2003) adopted 32 Recommendations, 7 of which explicitly referenced to Community Conserved Areas and closely related terms and concepts. The recommendations urged commitment to value and use all protected area knowledge systems, whether scientific or traditionally based. The Durban Accord committed to recognise, strengthen, protect and support community conservation areas.¹²

At the IUCN World Conservation Congress in 2016 (Hawaii), the IUCN Members Assembly voted to create a new category of IUCN membership for Indigenous Peoples' Organisations (IPOs), strengthening the recognition of their rights, participation, voice and role in IUCN. As of October 2019, the IUCN members include 17 IPOs (Meso and South America: 10; North America: 4; Africa: 1; Asia: 2).¹³

The Indigenous Peoples' Organisations (IPOs) - as a distinct and mobilised constituency within IUCN - developed a strategy identifying joint priorities for advancing their rights and issues in conservation¹⁴. The strategy, among others, outlines actions to promote the creation of a system of indigenous protected areas that strengthens the use, management and conservation of natural resources by indigenous peoples. The IUCN Global Programme on Governance and Rights and the Commission on Environmental, Social and Economic Policy (CEESP) are supporting the further development and implementation of the IPOs' strategy.

As a result of their meetings, the IPO members requested that an IPO Council be appointed to the IUCN Council. They nominated Ramiro Batzin, Maya Kaqchikel from Guatemala and Executive Director of IUCN member organization Sotzil. The request was approved by Council in May and Ramiro attending his first IUCN Council meeting in October 2018 in South Korea.

V. Ostrom's principles for governing the commons

In the 1990s, political scientist Elinor Ostrom¹⁵ effectively countered Hardin's essay "The Tragedy of the Commons" by proving the importance of the commons - natural resources that groups of people manage for individual and collective benefit - around the world. There are good examples of commons that have been managed by and for ordinary people for generations, and are still functioning. There are also examples of wrecked pastures and over-exploited fishing grounds, failed commons where a resource was mismanaged and destroyed. Elinor Ostrom studied both kinds, and in 1990, based on her extensive work,

¹² <https://www.iccaconsortium.org/index.php/2003/12/31/the-durban-accord-from-the-5th-world-parks-congress-wpc-durban-south-africa-2003/>

¹³ <https://www.iucn.org/about/union/members/how-become-member-iucn>

¹⁴ <https://www.iucn.org/theme/governance-and-rights/about/indigenous-peoples>

¹⁵ In 2009, Elinor Ostrom was awarded the Nobel Prize in Economics for her lifetime of scholarly work investigating how communities succeed or fail at managing common pool (finite) resources such as grazing land, forests and irrigation waters.

she proposed eight principles for how commons can be governed sustainably and equitably in a community.¹⁶

The eight guiding principles in this document are derived from Elinor Ostrom's principles. The main changes we made are:

- Instead of the word commons, we have used the term Community-driven Conservation.
- We have made use of the more accessible language used by Jeremy Williams in his description of the principles.¹⁷
- We have merged principles 6 (sanctions) and 7 (dispute resolution).
- We have added a new principle on inclusiveness and fair distribution.
- We have extended the principle on group boundaries (1) with boundaries for territories and usage zones.
- We have added the term gender-inclusiveness to participative decision-making (3).
- We have expanded the principle on monitoring members' behaviour (5), social monitoring, with environmental monitoring.

And again, it cannot be emphasised enough, **the guiding principles should not be used as fixed rules but as guidelines to ensure that attention has been paid to all aspects of sustainable and inclusive Community-driven Conservation.**

¹⁶ <http://www.onthecommons.org/magazine/elinor-ostroms-8-principles-managing-commmons#sthash.NRQ8T2iD.J2ejjXRx.dpbs>

¹⁷ <https://makewealthhistory.org/2018/01/15/elinor-ostroms-8-rules-for-managing-the-commons/>