

Report of the

# Community Conservation Resilience Initiative

June 2018



Community  
Conservation  
Resilience  
Initiative



Global  
Forest  
Coalition



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## Community Conservation Resilience Initiative (CCRI) June 2018

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**Front and back cover photo:** Women planting trees in Kenya, Indigenous Information Network, Kenya. **Inside cover photo:** View of the forested Great Rift Valley Kenya, Jeanette Sequeira

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# Overview

The Community Conservation Resilience Initiative (CCRI) is a global initiative that has been documenting and reviewing the findings of bottom up, participatory assessments by 68 communities in 22 different countries, assessing the resilience of community conservation initiatives and the support that should be provided to strengthen these initiatives. This report outlines the observations and recommendations from communities in 12 of those countries, in Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Georgia, Ghana, India, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan and Tanzania, and includes summaries of each. It complements the global CCRI report published in 2015, which reported on communities' assessments in Chile, Ethiopia, Iran, Panama, Paraguay, Russia, Samoa, Solomon Islands, South Africa and Uganda.

The 2015 report can be read and downloaded at: <http://globalforestcoalition.org/ccri-global-report/>.

The aim of the **Community Conservation Resilience Initiative (CCRI)** is to contribute to the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity's 2011-2020 Strategic Plan and Aichi Targets, by providing policy advice on effective and appropriate forms of support for community conservation.





# The communities involved in this report are:

The Afro-descendant community from La Alsacia, and the peasant communities of La Reserva Barbas de Mono and La Reserva Maklenkes, in **Colombia**.



The communities of Sakorintlo and Okami in **East Georgia**, in the region of Shida Kartli of Kaspi Municipality; and the community of Merjevi in West Georgia in Sachkhere Municipality.



Six rural communities in **Tajikistan**—Jonbakht, Sarikhosor, Dektur, Mulokoni, Dashtijum and Obigarm.



In **Ghana**, the communities of Kpoeta and Saviefe Gborgame in the Weto Range of the Upper Guinean Forest of West Africa; and the coastal community of Avuto bordering the Avu Lagoon.



Three indigenous Bambuti Babuluko Pygmy communities, Banama Longa, Bana Mukomo and Banaka Mughogho, in the territory of Walikale, in the province of North Kivu, in the **Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)**.



The Wiri, Sanya and Lawate communities in Siha District, and the Ngasini community in Kahe, in Moshi Rural District, all of whom are in the Kilimanjaro Region of **Tanzania**.





In **Kyrgyzstan**, Shabdan village, Chuy Oblast; Zhyrgalan village near Issyk-Kol Oblast; and the village of Kashka-Suu in Dzhinal-Abad Oblast.



Communities in three areas, the Barandabhar corridor, Basanta corridor and Panchase landscape in **Nepal**.



Five villages in **Sabah, Malaysia** —Sg. Eloi in the Pitas district, Alutok in the Tenom district, Kiau at the foot of Mount Kinabalu in the district of Kota Belud, Mengkawago in the district of Tongod, and Terian in the district of Penampang, on the mountains along the Crocker Range.



In **Sri Lanka**, traditional snake-bite healers and a traditional rice farming community living in the Kegalle district of the Sabaragamuwa province; and traditional kitul tappers from Central province.



Two indigenous communities in **Kenya**, the Maasai from Transmara, Narok County, and the Rendille from Kargi, Kamboye, Korr and Logologo of Marsabit County.



In **India**, Taungya forest villages inhabited by Rabha and Jharkhandi tribes and other local communities living in the Buxa-Chilapata forest area in the state of Bengal, Eastern India; indigenous Gonds in the Tadoba Andhari National Park and Tiger Reserve in the state of Maharashtra, Central India; and in the Banni Grasslands in the state of Gujarat, in Western India.



In several countries, numerous additional neighbouring local communities were directly or indirectly involved in the CCRI process as well.



# Key Findings

All the communities included in this report are, in one way or another, highly dependent on the biodiversity that they coexist with in their territories, and almost all are actively engaged in managing their natural resources in keeping with their culture and traditions. Numerous communities are also regenerating damaged habitats.

However, all the communities are struggling, to different degrees, with a wide range of internal and external threats that impact the resilience of their conservation practices and their capacity to protect their environment. The Community Conservation Resilience Initiative is designed to explore the many ways in which communities protect biodiversity, and how their vital work can be supported.

## Community Conservation Practices

Some of the communities are **located in intensely biodiverse ecosystems**. For example, the Bambuti Babuluko Pygmies' territory in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is home to flagship species such as the mountain gorillas of the Kahuzi Biega National Park and in the Ikobo-Pinga forests, and Shabdan villagers in Kyrgyzstan share their home with snow leopards, ibex and golden eagles. But biodiversity is endangered and communities can see the changes themselves. In Kenya, for example, communities observe that in the past the Nyekweri Kimintet Forest and Marsabit were abundant with flora and fauna but they can see the biodiversity is now declining. In Ghana, the Avuto community on the shores of the Avu Lagoon (within the Keta Lagoon Complex Ramsar Site) is aware of its importance for

migratory birds and the threatened *Sitatunga* (*Tragelaphus spekii*, an amphibious antelope species).

**Communities participating in the CCRI interact with and use biodiversity in many different ways.** For instance, in La Alsacia in Colombia, the Afro-descendant community has a deep knowledge of their natural heritage, with their own names and classification systems for fauna and flora, and internal regulations to monitor harmful activities. In Mengkawago, in Malaysia, the forest-dependent Sungai Rumanau community still maintains its knowledge of harvesting wild honey from bees that establish their hives in a particular tree species (*Menggaris sp.*). By harvesting honey sustainably, the community protects the surrounding forest

area, providing broader environmental benefits. In Sri Lanka, Kitul trees (*Caryota urens*) provide sweet flower sap, timber and edible flour, and traditional snakebite healers use freshly harvested medicinal plants to cure snake bites (while respecting snakes as top predators and indicators of resilient ecosystems).

In Georgia, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan communities are heavily dependent on collecting non-timber forest resources, especially wild fruits, mushrooms and nuts. For example, in Sarikhosor and Dashtijum villages, in Tajikistan, some 20 local varieties of mulberry provide berries as food for humans and domestic animals, leaves for producing domestic silk, and wood for carving utensils and musical instruments. In Obigarm in Tajikistan the community



preserves local healing and thermal waters, keeping local water sources clean by prohibiting cattle from drinking from or trampling them, and protecting them from erosion by planting trees. The pastoralist Rendille people of Logologo in Kenya have planned migration routes for their livestock, which allow for the regeneration of vegetation.

Communities' cultures and traditions are often closely aligned with safeguarding critical ecosystems and endemic species, and **many restrict what can be hunted, gathered or grown, and when, including through the use of taboos and reverence for sacred sites.** For example, the Bambuti Babuluko Pygmies in DRC have strict regulations on hunting. A large mammal may only be killed in exceptional cultural circumstances, when authorised by an elder or ancestor, and hunting for sport or profit is completely prohibited. In Ghana, all three CCRI communities are part of the Ewe ethnic group of Ghana, Togo, Benin and Nigeria, with their own religion of a Supreme God, Mawuga Sogbo-Lisa (Male-Female God), with a related focus on conserving nature

through sacred groves and sites, taboos, totems, observations and practices. In Tanzania, community members talk about foodstuffs used, and related benefits and taboos, soil fertility, seed security and land and water use, and how they use various plants and wild animal parts and byproducts to make different medicines. They also talk about how they use a range of indigenous tree species for their livelihoods, bee keeping, health problems, construction and agroforestry.

Similarly in Malaysia, the Murut Tahol of Alutok, Ulu Tomani, a community of forest dependent hunter-gatherers, practice 'tavol' in preparation for large and important occasions such as weddings. This prohibits hunting and resource gathering in specific areas of the forest for specific time periods. In Tajikistan, traditional knowledge and practices are tailored to local ecosystems, and include respect for wild animals, and bans on hunting or collecting medicinal plants in cases of their depletion, to allow the local fauna and flora to regenerate.

**Managing their water resources** is also extremely important for

communities. In Ghana all the CCRI communities are engaged in Community Resource Management Areas (CREMAs) based on their traditional conservation practices and have ongoing buffer zone planting projects to protect watersheds and water resources. For instance, the Kpoeta community is restoring the Tsii waterfalls, using GPS (Global Positioning System) to demarcate the site of the falls and boundary and enrichment tree planting. In the community of Terian in Malaysia, the rice-growing peasant community depends on the Terian River, and is working to strengthen its community watershed management system, with a micro-hydro turbine to generate electricity and a gravity-fed water system to provide clean water. In Colombia, the peasant communities have organised themselves into community action boards or collectives, managing community aqueducts and reserves for example. Even in Georgia, where communities are struggling with deprivation and a lack of autonomy and motivation, people continue to preserve nearby forests for cultural and traditional reasons, and villages protect their water resources.



CCRI assessment in Colombia. Jeanne Lieberman and Censat Agua Viva





Mapping threats to community conservation in Kyrgyzstan. BIOM/GFC

In addition to traditions and cultural practices, **the CCRI reveals an additional range of self-organised community initiatives and other more formal processes and structures** that provide good examples of ways that community forest/ecosystem management and regeneration can be facilitated, by communities themselves, and by others.

For example, Nyekweri Kimintet borders the Maasai Mara National Park and is a significant breeding area for elephants from the reserve. In 2005 community members formed the Nyekweri Forest Kimintet Trust to strengthen their ability to conserve their biodiversity. The trust covers 6,000 acres, and helps to secure and ensure the continued protection of land dedicated to the conservation of biodiversity, preventing its conversion to other land uses. In Sg. Eloi in the Pitas district in Malaysia, the community relies on the mangrove forest for protein, fuelwood and medicinal plants, as well as for spiritual purposes. Community members have responded to the clearance of mangroves by a large-scale shrimp-farming project by working to protect, restore and sustainably use their own community mangrove forest on

the basis of their customary uses and practices. They are appealing to the company, state government and related agencies to stop the clearing of the mangroves and assist with restoration.

In communities in Kyrgyzstan, villagers have taken the initiative to conserve endangered wild apple tree varieties that are important because of their high levels of resistance to diseases and unfavourable weather conditions. Village school students have transferred trees from a dedicated nursery to village households and planted others in the wild, and created an ethnobotanical garden in the school. Other community-initiated projects are effectively combating illegal tree felling, poaching and grazing, and one of the communities has arranged for special protection and ecosystem restoration to protect a family of endangered Indian porcupines (*Hystrix indica*).

#### **Other systems that facilitate community conservation are more formally established.**

Tanzania is a good example of what can be achieved, with all registered villages having a democratically-elected Village Council. This has committees responsible for developing village plans and making decisions on

environment, health, community development, education, land, water and community forests. The CCRI communities in Wiri, Sanya, Lawate and Ngasini villages have established tree nurseries to plant indigenous trees around water sources, farms and forests, to counter the impacts of climate change, clean the air, and provide building materials, fuel, medicines and animal fodder. They have returned to traditional organic farming and are keeping bees; and have started consultations with the local government to control water utilisation by large-scale farmers adjacent to rivers.

Nepal, well known for its system of legally-recognised community forests, is another example. Its Community Forest User Groups are critical to the conservation of biodiversity and ecosystems, with 35% of the income from the community forests going to poor forest dependent households to conduct income-generating activities. The Community Forest User Groups have helped to stop forest encroachment, support biodiversity conservation and ecosystem restoration, and reduce soil erosion, landslides and floods. Local communities have persuaded the government to hand over further parts of the national forests.





Illegal logging and mining in indigenous areas and territories in DRC. PIDP-KIVU/GFC

## External Threats

All the communities in the CCRI are struggling with external threats to the resilience of their community conservation initiatives and their ability to continue to manage, conserve and regenerate natural resources.

One of the commonest and starkest external challenges is that posed by the spread of **industrial-scale agriculture and forestry**, driving deforestation and toxic contamination. Community members in Tanzania, for instance, identify **agricultural expansion and agrochemicals** that kill beneficial organisms as the main threats to forests, land and rivers, along with illegal deforestation and climate change. When agricultural investors and large-scale farmers cultivate adjacent land they divert water flows away from the communities, leaving them with inadequate water for agricultural production and domestic use. Water pumps also spill oil into fresh water sources. Communities in Ghana and Georgia also highlight the visible impact that synthetic pesticides are having on their biodiversity, including pollinators.

The spread of **monoculture tree plantations**, such as oil palm, is particularly devastating and is a driver of violence in Colombia where land grabbing is rife. Territories and communities are vulnerable to institutions, such as Colombia's National Federation of Coffee Growers, which promise food security while offering **technological packages** (that include credit systems, and technical advice to use monocultures and agro-toxics in place of coffee grown with traditional systems) that create dependency and have the opposite impact on the communities. Kitul tappers in Sri Lanka describe how industrially produced chemical alternatives are undermining the market for the traditional sweet treacle they produce.

The CCRI assessment in India observes that **pastoralism as a way of life and livelihoods is in a state of flux all over the world** and that life in the Banni Grasslands is similarly disrupted. Development policies have incentivised milk production in a way that undermines pastoral practices, and the increase in the

number of animals is threatening to exceed the grasslands' carrying capacity.

**Industrialised fish production** poses similar problems. One of the communities in Kyrgyzstan explains how the authorities are converting part of the flood-plain forest into fish farms, causing great damage to natural flood-plain ecosystems and the biodiversity of Chon-Kemin Natural Park. In Avuto, in Ghana, the commercial use of monofilament nets threatens sustainable artisanal fishing.

**Extractive industries** are also a key threat, especially in Colombia, DRC, Ghana and Kenya. DRC has sizeable mining and water reserves that are attracting the attention of large mining companies; small-scale mining activities are problematic for the pygmy communities as well. In Ghana, the inhabitants of Avuto fear the opening up of their territory for the exploitation of oil and gas by multinational companies; and the Rendille women in Kenya identified sand mining as a major problem.



Various different types of **infrastructure** are also noted as damaging to the communities and their territories, both in terms of immediate impacts and the significant economic and cultural change infrastructure often brings with it. **Road developments** are high on the list for communities near the Los Maklenkes reserve in Colombia, as they are for the remote Mulokoni community in Tajikistan, which is worried that the planned construction of a year-round road will lead to a massive inflow of tourists, forest

Villagers in Avuto, Ghana, are concerned about the damming of the River Tordzie upstream, which will affect inflow into the lagoon, leading to water insecurity. The community in Barbas de Mono, Colombia, is worried about privatisation of community-managed aqueducts. **Lack of water**, for domestic use and for irrigation, is also a major issue for all the CCRI communities in Georgia. They attribute this to the incorrect distribution of water resources and inadequate management. In Sakorintlo, the

communities already engaged in sustainable ecotourism. The communities in Zhyrgalan in Kyrgyzstan are worried about the ecological impacts of increasing organised and non-organised tourism, such as backcountry skiing in wintertime and trekking in the summer time. Tourism is also a concern for the communities in Santander in Colombia, and Kiau in Malaysia.

As a result of all these trends, conflict over land and resources is an enduring threat, with



Livelihoods dependent on pastoralism are under threat around the world. **Souparna Lahiri/GFC**

users and hunters. The communities in Kyrgyzstan also raise the alarm about the long-term impacts that China's 'One Belt One Road' initiative may have on territories and biodiversity.

**Dams** also pose a significant threat to some communities and their territories. Terian, in Malaysia, is among nine villages in danger of being submerged or relocated by the development of the proposed Kaiduan Dam.

problem is even more acute because the water source is in a conflict zone that is not controlled by Georgia and the citizens no longer have access. In Okami drinking water is polluted, and heating water is also problematic because the villagers are not allowed to collect firewood from the protected forests nearby. This drives illegal wood cutting.

**Unsustainable tourism** poses a threat to many, including for

industrialisation and corporate globalisation exacerbating **landgrabbing, displacement and associated threats** to the defenders of territories. This is a particular concern for the communities in Malaysia and Colombia. In Malaysia, in the Sg. Eloi community's territory, the mangrove forests they rely on are being cleared in the name of shrimp farming. The communities' staunch defence of the mangroves has resulted in community leaders



facing threats—part of a growing global trend of threats towards indigenous leaders and environmental defenders.

**Violence and instability in any form** make it almost impossible to manage and conserve territories. This is especially evident in La Alsacia in Colombia, where decades of armed conflict have led to the displacement and abandonment of territories, restrictions on travel and mobilisation for reasons of safety, and problems with anti-personnel

**displaced** from their rich mountain forest ecosystem in the Soviet period. They are now returning to their ancestral lands up in the mountains, planting gardens and orchards, but the relocation of many different communities that were originally sent down to the valleys is contributing to overpopulation and land degradation.

Communities can clearly see how **climate change** is impacting their territories. In Kenya, it is diminishing fresh water resources

domestic use. In Ghana climate change impacts include drought and the drying of the Avu lagoon, and flooding.

The spread of **invasive species** is a further problem. Communities in both India and Kenya note that the deliberate propagation of the highly invasive *Prosopis juliflora* is a menace. In India it has displaced different varieties of grasses, herbs, and shrubs that are vital to the health and wellbeing of the Banni livestock; and in Kenya it has had similarly negative impacts on



Communities replant damaged mangrove forests in Sabah, Malaysia. PACOS Trust

mines in some places. All this has contributed to a loss of knowledge about territories. This is a fundamental problem, as it is difficult to appreciate and defend something that is no longer well known. There are also concerns that the current (fragile) peace process may lead to exploitation of the area by third parties.

In Tajikistan the communities in Jonbakht and Sarikhosor are also dealing with the fallout from being

and causing extreme drought in Marsabit. Community members from Nyekweri Kimintet Forest report that drought is increasingly impacting biodiversity, as well as water, and that this is exacerbating wildlife-human conflict. In Tanzania changing rainfall patterns have caused Lake Magadi in Wiri village and the River Lawate in Lawate village to dry, which, together with deforestation, is seriously impacting the availability of water for irrigation and

livestock and indigenous species. In Ghana invasive water hyacinth is a significant problem.

**The socio-economic circumstances** that communities experience, including their access to basic services, also have a significant impact on communities' capacity to independently conserve, manage and sustainably benefit from their local ecosystems and related natural resources, as well as impacting



their livelihoods and employment, education and health.

This is a notable problem in Georgia, especially in the village of Okami, where the communities face high unemployment and little autonomy (although the CCRI assessment itself has inspired and motivated the community to take an interest in and start learning about the opportunities that organic agriculture could offer them). Similarly, the village of Sakorintlo suffers from an absence of basic infrastructure and high unemployment, and Merjevi has major problems with the unsustainable use of natural resources, and waste water management.

The Rendille women in Kenya and the community of Jonbakht in Tajikistan also raise the issue of **population growth** as a key problem, and the villagers in Kashka-Suu in Kyrgyzstan note that falling economic well-being combined with increasing competition for natural resources among the local population generates conflict.

For **Indigenous Peoples** such as the Babuluko pygmies in DRC, the overexploitation of resources by other communities is a major challenge to their way of life and resilience. This includes illegal artisanal logging, artisanal mining, overhunting, the overexploitation of non-timber forest products and slash-and-burn agriculture. These problems are aggravated by the fact that the legal regimes that apply to natural resources, such as mining and oil and gas, do not recognise customary land. The communities are also having to deal with recurrent armed conflicts, pillaging, land grabbing, conflicts related to the use of land and the falsification of land titles.

On a smaller scale **illegal settlers** (sometimes displaced communities) and **poaching** are also issues that rank high on the list of community concerns. In Kyrgyzstan poaching was identified as a key risk by all three villages.

The CCRI assessments from Ghana and India reflect on the fact that opposition to community

conservation efforts and resilience has its **roots in the colonial era**, when most community conservation areas progressively lost their importance, value and status, and natural resources such as timber were monetised and traded by colonial companies. This exploitative approach has continued after independence as natural resources continue to be seen as an easy source of government revenue.

Other observations about various negative impacts that the state and local government can have on communities' resilience include corruption, leading to the biased implementation of legal frameworks for biodiversity conservation, access to land and agricultural land use; urban policy-makers ignoring the needs of rural communities; inconsistencies between different government departments; and a lack of local authority autonomy which disincentivises local policy-making.



Discussing the roles, rights and needs of women in community conservation, in Kenya. Jeanette Sequeira/GFC



Another key finding of this report is that the same communities that are doing so much to conserve and manage their local biodiversity are often impacted by the **imposition of protected areas that overlap with their traditional territories.**

This can lead to the displacement or **exclusion of communities**, or severely restrict their capacity to access and manage their territories. Both have severe implications for the communities' health and nutrition, livelihoods, and spiritual wellbeing.

For example, in Tajikistan the communities of Sarikhosor and Dashtijum are close to a local protected area dedicated to tourism and recreation, where the Forestry Agency harvests fruits and nuts. However, the local population has no access to these resources. Because of problems like this a series of conflicts over natural resources has been escalating over the last few decades in Tajikistan. In the Tadoba Andhari National Park and Tiger Reserve (TATR) in India, which is inhabited by Gonds, grazing is limited to the sanctuary

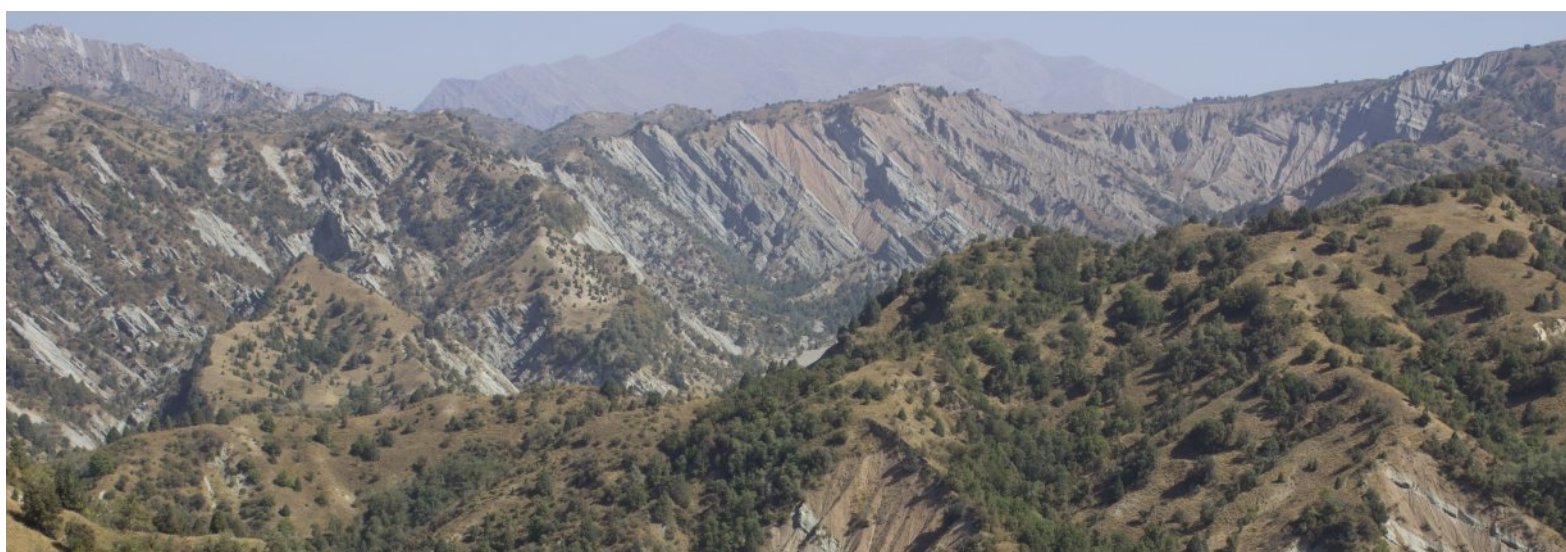
area, and the collection of non-forest timber products and minor forest produce including Tendu leaves is prohibited in the National Park and Tiger Reserve completely. Villagers are struggling for their existence and the right to live with dignity, to conserve and protect their forests, biodiversity and livelihoods.

In Malaysia, the Kiau community lost ownership of forests that were their customary territory back in 1964, when the state government designated most of these forests as a state park, and their traditional practices of hunting and gathering were prohibited. Although the forests were subsequently excised from the park in the 1980s, they still belong to the state, and the community has no security in terms of land tenure. They are worried about tourism development and its impacts, as an area has been opened for land title applications by interested companies. In Terian, also in Malaysia, the community has also struggled to get recognition of parts of their territory, including hunting

grounds, which overlap with the Crocker Range Park.

In DRC, the **creation of protected areas without the Free Prior and Informed Consent of the communities** has had severe negative impacts on forest communities, especially the pygmies, resulting in eviction from their land and restrictions on their right to use the resources. Police surveillance has been used to implement these changes, sometimes leading to human rights violations. Local authorities and conservation organisations have often ignored the Indigenous Peoples' conservation practices, and have often shown a blatant disregard for forest peoples' rights, despite the existence of relevant international human rights agreements, some of which have been ratified by DRC.

**In other protected areas, licensing regimes restrict communities' resource use.** This is the case in Kyrgyzstan, where all three local communities participating in the CCRI initiative are located in close proximity to,



Mountain landscapes in Tajikistan. Noosfera/GFC



or within the territory of, protected nature reserves. Shabdan villagers are obliged to get permits from the Forestry Department to use wood and non-wood forest products, such as mushrooms, berries and medicinal plants, and grazing cattle is regulated with special 'pasture tickets'. In Zhyrgalan special permits are required for hunting; and in Padish-Ata, another State Nature Reserve near the village of Kashka-Suu, cattle grazing, tree felling and hunting are all prohibited. In Mengkawago, in Malaysia, activities such as

working circles. The communities have formally registered as the Banni Breeder's Association (BBA), claiming their right to land resources under India's Forest Rights Act. They launched a programme to regenerate the grasslands around ten villages in 2011, as part of a broader struggle to assert community rights over their lands and the management of the grasslands.

As observed in the Colombian CCRI, the community management and conservation approach is very different to the **protected areas**

self-management, and can create dependence that weakens the communities' basic processes.

The Colombian CCRI also considers that the promotion and application of the **green economy model**, within the context of the peace process, is harmful to the communities' conservation initiatives because it threatens to undermine traditional conservation values, especially by promoting the further commercialisation of nature.



Pastoralists in the Banni grasslands in India are experiencing restrictions on their movement. Sahjeevan/GFC

hunting are similarly prohibited without a licence. Pastoralists in the Banni grasslands in India are also experiencing restrictions on their movement as a result of the Forest Department staking its claim over the grasslands in 2009 when it announced a Working Plan to manage this protected area. The plan aims to restrict grazing and fragment the grasslands into

**model** imposed by the state and large conservation NGOs. It is not about buying and isolating portions of land, but considering the people linked to the process and their knowledge, culture and skills, as well as land and physical space. Furthermore the protected area model threatens essential aspects of the communities' resilience, such as autonomy and



## Internal Threats

A key and seemingly entrenched trend is the gradual hollowing out of rural communities around the world as young people facing the above external threats migrate to cities in search of employment, with a concomitant loss of traditional knowledge and practices that support nature conservation. This also exacerbates the uncontrolled use of natural resources. A vicious circle is established. The CCRI from India adds that most of the internal threats identified by the

Colombia, additionally observe that this is exacerbated by an educational system that distances children from their territory and the rural way of life. Communities in Tanzania report that their cultural diversity is experiencing a substantial reduction in quality too, because of external technologies that disrupt livelihood systems, especially amongst the younger generation.

A direct consequence of these trends is the emergence of

inefficiently and inexpertly managed.

Similarly, **deforestation** for commerce, charcoal-making and brick-building continues to be a problem for communities trying to conserve their local forests and natural resources, as the communities in DRC, Ghana, Georgia, Kenya, Tajikistan and Tanzania describe. Energy poverty is a contributory factor because governments are not providing affordable alternative fuels. In the



Discussing internal threats to community conservation in Tanzania. Salome Kisenge/GFC

communities there are a result of misguided state intervention, the intrusion of commercial interests and the influence of 'mainstream' cultural practices.

**Urban migration and/or loss of traditional knowledge**, together with declining interest in the peasant way of life, are listed as key internal threats by communities in Colombia, Georgia, Ghana, India, Kenya and Sri Lanka. The communities in Santander,

**unregulated over-grazing by livestock**, especially by neighbouring communities, which is seen by many communities as a major challenge to community resilience and conservation, including in the Banni Grasslands in India, and in Georgia, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Tanzania. These observations include concerns about the expansion of pastureland at the expense of natural vegetation, and pastures being increasingly

village of Okami in Georgia, for example, local forests are protected and collecting firewood is prohibited, but the villagers cannot afford alternative fuels. The local government does issue special permits for the local population to collect firewood elsewhere, but only in forests 40-50 km and people cannot afford the transport costs. As a result local forests tend to get cut illegally.





**Embroidery project, Colombia:** As part of their CCRI initiative the community in Los Maklenkes chose to study their local fauna through the traditional practice of embroidery, which is culturally associated with women. However the men and the children took it up as well, helping to redress the gender imbalance. After finding out about the experience the other communities replicated it.

CCRI assessment in Los Maklenkes, Colombia. Fundaexpresión and Censat Agua Viva/GFC

The CCRI's gender-based approach fostered internal observations about gender-related issues in the communities, especially around the different and sometimes changing roles played by women and men with respect to community conservation and the inter-generational transfer of traditional knowledge, and about the different impacts experienced by men and women when the communities' resilience and way of life are undermined.

The transfer of traditional knowledge by women to younger generations is critical (and the CCRI assessments themselves helped to revitalise this transfer). The CCRI also found that in some case studies the young people involved became very engaged in and enthused by the assessments and were eager to revitalise and document traditional knowledge.

This is an important finding, including in terms of considering future ways to stem outward migration from rural villages.

**In some communities, women's contribution to community conservation is respected and their leadership on issues is appreciated.** For example, in Kyrgyzstan the law dictates that there should not be more than 70% of citizens of the same gender involved in the use of natural resources—so resource use solutions have to work well for both women and men. The CCRI assessments showed that although men and women have different experiences and practices in relation to the use of and conservation of natural resources, women's engagement in decision-making is supported. In the village of Kashka-Suu, for example, women are well represented in the local council

and women's committees have created environmentally-oriented business initiatives.

The CCRI in Ghana shows that the women in all three communities have extensive knowledge about nature conservation, which they use for production, processing and marketing, health care, and energy generation, and men and women do the same kind of work. The women participate in communal decision-making meetings, but they **tend to shy away from leadership positions.** In both Ghana and Tanzania women are less likely to own land and this limits their status and, as a result, their involvement in environmental conservation matters.

The pygmy communities in DRC observe that women provide for their families and communities by generating and using natural





Traditional fishing practices in a forest area managed by communities, in Nepal. **Ramesh Bhushal**

resources wisely. As both consumers and producers and because they take care of their families, they educate their children and are concerned with preserving the quality of life for present and future generations, and have an important role to play in the promotion of sustainability.

In some communities the CCRI assessments reveal that **women may have rights that they are not aware of**. For instance, in Nepal, despite some strong policy provisions aimed at maintaining gender equity and social inclusion in the Community Forestry Development Programme Guideline, there are still gaps in practice when it comes to maintaining gender equity and social inclusion in the executive committees of the Community Forest User Groups, and socially marginalised groups have limited awareness about their legal rights

with respect to community forestry.

In the communities in Kimintet and Logologo, in Kenya, women play key roles in conserving biodiversity and holding traditional knowledge. However patriarchy is an issue in both communities, with women being perceived as inferior and decisions being made solely by the men. Kenya's 2016 Community Land Act is geared towards ensuring gender equality and tenure security, but women are not aware of their rights yet. Similarly in Los Maklenkes, in Colombia, patriarchy restricts women's access to various activities and community processes, such as the Community Action Boards. This situation is largely determined by men, who decide which spaces or activities their partners and/or daughters may take part in.

In Georgia's Sakorintlo village local women are mostly involved in household activities; and the CCRI in India describes how greater interaction with the modern 'mainstream' traditional role of women is creating change, but not necessarily in a positive way—even in the case of the matrilineal Rabha community, men are increasingly taking decisions and women are reduced to household responsibilities and child rearing. In Sri Lanka, rural women who used to have safe jobs earning a substantial living are now more likely to be providing unskilled labour to Middle East businesses to provide a basic living for their family.



The CCRI assessments involved legal reviews. Some of the key findings from these relate to the varying extent to which **communities have land tenure and resource rights**. For example, Tanzania has a **dual land tenure system**, in which both statutory and customary land tenure are recognised, enabling the maintenance of customary land rights in the villages (although this does still discriminate against women). In La Alsacia in Colombia, the Afro-descendant community are

enjoyed by Colombian peasant communities.

Some countries also have laws relating to communities' rights to manage forests. In DRC, for instance, **community forestry is regulated by a legal framework** that recognises and protects the communities' customary land rights in forest areas, and awards forestry concessions to local communities which include specific provisions relating to their management and exploitation. The implementation of these

resources are also recognised, by the Forest Act 1993 and Forest Regulation 1995. Local communities have the right to claim adjoining national forests to manage as community forest, and although the government has shown considerable reluctance to actually hand the forests over, the majority have now been transferred. However, Indigenous Peoples are still struggling to protect their customary rights and forest use-related informal practices, which are yet to be recognised in the forestry



Community meeting in La Alsacia, Colombia. **Jeanne Lieberman and Censat Agua Viva/GFC**

organised as a Community Council—a form of internal administration created through Article 5 of Law 70, which recognises their **collective land ownership** and seeks to protect the identity and rights of black communities as an ethnic group. They have suffered multiple forced displacements in their history, so they lodged an appeal under this law to obtain their collective property land title. However similar rights are not

regulations is the result of a long participatory process in which civil society has played an important role in the defence of local communities and Indigenous Peoples in DRC. The process is unique, primarily because it is participatory and includes all social groups (youth, women, elders, Bantu and Pygmies).

In Nepal the tenure rights of Community Forestry User Groups over the forestlands and

legislation and forest management plans.

The assessments also found that in some countries there are legal provisions that could be effective, but they still need to be implemented. For example, Ghana took an important step forward with its 2012 Forest and Wildlife Policy, which explicitly supports traditional autonomy for the management of sacred forests and community conservation



forests for biological and cultural diversity. The 2016 revised National Biodiversity and Action Plan (NBSAP) is also quite promising, since it focuses on the implementation of all the Aichi Targets. The next step is to implement these policies effectively.

The Kenyan government is similarly well advanced in matters of policy and legal instruments, with laws that give every citizen the right to a clean and healthy environment, including the right

**Communities may also struggle to benefit from their legal rights.** In India communities are endeavouring to assert their rights over natural resources under, for example, India's Scheduled Tribes & Other Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006. Previously, since colonial times, the forest communities had lost their forest rights and were not allowed to follow their traditional conservation practices. This historic and unique legislation restores the traditional rights of

forests and to practice their traditional livelihoods, but in practice they are threatened by expanding protected areas, potential forced relocation, and the loss of access to natural resources. This lack of support for communities' existing rights over their forests and grasslands is impacting communities' own initiatives and eroding the knowledge with which they manage and govern their forests.



Community women (Chilapata-Buxa) discussing women's role in conservation. **Souparna Lahiri/GFC**

to have the environment protected for the benefit of present and future generations; recognising Indigenous Peoples; defining forests as natural resources; and classifying community forests that are vested in the communities as community land. Yet the Constitution does not provide for the conservation and preservation of forests, and there is a noted lack of legal protection for community forests.

the forest communities in India, and further empowers the communities to govern their forests through Gram Sabhas, which are traditional village councils consisting of every adult member of a settlement.

However, the Forest Department and the State are creating hurdles to implementation. For instance, the CCRI communities assessed should be able to enjoy their customary rights over their



# Summary Reports







# Colombia

## Introduction

In Colombia, Afro-descendant communities and peasants from La Alsacia, La Reserva Barbas de Mono and La Reserva Maklenkes have been participating in the CCRI since 2016, representing diverse territories, ecosystems and livelihoods.

The Afro-descendant people of La Alsacia lives in the southwest of the country, on the western cordillera in the department of Cauca. [1] They are organised as a Community Council—a form of internal administration created through Article 5 of Law 70, which recognises collective land ownership and seeks to protect the identity and rights of black communities as an ethnic group [2]. They have suffered multiple forced displacements in their history, so they lodged an appeal under this law to obtain their collective property land title. They inhabit and protect a mountainous area of land, measuring approximately 1,088 ha, of which 600 ha are for conservation.

The communities of the Los Maklenkes and Barbas de Mono reserves are on the other side of the country, on the eastern mountain range in the department of Santander. Their reserves are 12 and 55 ha respectively, but surrounding them are self-declared family

reserves of up to 113 ha, all belonging to the Colectivo de Reservas Campesinas y Comunitarias de Santander (a participatory process to conserve the Andean forest started in 2008 by communities with the support of Fundaexpresión). These community

organisations are peasants and, unlike the Afro-descendant community in La Alsacia, they have no special rights. They are organised into community action boards or collectives, managing community aqueducts and reserves for example. Los Maklenkes is very close to the fourth most populous city in the country, Bucaramanga, and feels the impacts of tourism. Barbas de Mono is located in a rural area that was

severely affected by the armed conflict up until a few years ago.

In Colombia, decades of armed conflict have seriously impacted communities and their capacity to conserve their territories. The most



Children participate in CCRI assessment, La Alsacia Community Council. Jeanne Lieberman and Censat Agua Viva/GFC

Surrounding environment, Barbas de Mono Reserve. Fundaexpresión and Censat Agua Viva/GFC





common reaction has been the displacement and abandonment of territories, and Colombia has more internally displaced persons than any other country (7.4 million in 2016). [3] Parents have restricted the places that children and young people can travel to, and there are problems with anti-personnel mines in some places. All this has contributed to a loss of knowledge about territories. This is a fundamental problem, as it is difficult to appreciate and defend something not well known.

and Urban Expressions in Bucaramanga in September 2017. The dynamics and contribution of the proposed national coordination body, as outlined in the CCRI methodology, was vital. [4] This group of people—the project advisors—come from different areas of knowledge and activities, interpreting the communities' thinking and practices, and orienting or providing reflections that are then taken back to the communities and other bodies.

amount of time analysing their role and fundamental contributions, and considering the perceptions women have about their communities' needs and opportunities.

A legal review identified regulations that may either benefit or negatively impact community management initiatives. Two instruments approved for the promotion and application of the green economy model, within the context of the peace process, are considered to be harmful to the

CCRI process, La Alsacia Community Council. **Jeanne Lieberman and Censat Agua Viva/GFC**



Butterfly in the Barbas de Mono Reserve. **Fundaexpresión and Censat Agua Viva/GFC**



All the communities have been aware of the CCRI assessment process since its inception in 2014, and they agreed to participate representing communities with similar experiences and challenges. In 2016 a national workshop emphasised the relationship between megaprojects and their impacts on the communities' territories, highlighting the role of community conservation initiatives. The communities also met and exchanged their various reflections and advances at the Festival of Rural

Taking gender concerns into account, both in terms of principles and methodologies, and prioritising the participation of all groups within the communities, methodologies were developed that reflected the cultural practices of each population, to promote the participation of girls, boys, young people and women. To facilitate the participation of women some activities were carried out in their homes. In Barbas de Mono community, women participated the most, they spent a considerable

communities' conservation initiatives because they could undermine traditional conservation values, especially by promoting the further commercialisation of nature. [5,6] These are the Document CONPES 3886 Policy Guidelines and National Program for Payment for Environmental Services (PES) for Peacebuilding [7] and Decree 870 of May 25, 2017, which establishes payments for environmental services and other incentives for conservation. [8]



# Community Conservation Resilience Initiative

In La Alsacia the community has a deep knowledge of their natural heritage. They have their own names and classification systems for fauna and flora, and internal regulations to monitor harmful activities. For example, they prohibit the planting of crops for illicit use due to their environmental, social and cultural impacts. The community stressed the need to read and understand outside interests and threats in order to be

ignorance of their own culture and the adoption of foreign ones.

- The armed conflict and its actors, whatever their origin.

Political instability has involved threats to black, peasant and indigenous leaders and communities; clashes between armed groups, including the armed forces of the state; restrictions on mobility within the territories; and either forced

the FARC, because the armed conflict previously prevented access to the area and stopped its exploitation by third parties. Also, there are still armed confrontations near the village, and several communities have been subject to new threats. [9] This is a common experience in Colombia, and disputes over land, mainly in Afro-descendant territories, are intensified by the rapid expansion of oil palm monocultures.



Wildlife in La Alsacia Community Council. **Jeanne Lieberman and Censat Agua Viva/GFC**



Environment around Los Maklenkes Reserve. **Fundaexpresión and Censat Agua Viva/GFC**

able to address them. In their situation, which is similar to that of hundreds of communities in Colombia, the main threats inherent in the dominant development model and the implementation of the peace agreements are:

- A strategy to vacate territories on the part of the government and other actors with diverse interests.
- A loss of collective memory and an ignorance of history, which among other things, may lead to an

displacements or the confinement of the population in the hamlets, both of which have been experienced in La Alsacia. The current peace agreement signed between the government and the current FARC political party is welcomed but the situation remains fragile and makes community management of the territory very difficult. They are pleased that the conflict has receded but are now concerned about what may happen to the conservation area within the context of the peace agreement with

The community near the Los Maklenkes reserve observed that one of the reasons why they are such a cohesive and resilient community is because of the way they have stayed together in the times of crisis and conflict they have had to endure. Rather than abandon their territory, losing their lives' work and their means of survival, they chose the highly risky strategy of sending delegates to negotiate with armed actors so that they could remain.



The greatest impact of the CCRI in Santander has been to encourage leaders to think about strengthening their community conservation processes, and to create an understanding that this is not about preservation, but about promoting opportunities for more families to benefit from and enjoy nature. In processes that are complementary to the CCRI, both communities have defined their biodiversity monitoring objectives (as has the community in La Alsacia), and within the CCRI they undertook activities to understand and demonstrate the positive impact of community conservation actions. In Los Maklenkes, identification and monitoring of threatened and endangered birds protected in the peasant reserve area is being undertaken. In Barbas de Mono, bird diversity in agricultural areas is being compared with that within the reserve.

The CCRI's gender-based approach fostered internal observations in the communities, one of which identified the limited participation of women in community processes and activities as one of the main threats to its resilience. The inhabitants close to Los Maklenkes observed that patriarchy restricts women's access to various activities and community processes, such as the Community Action Boards. This situation is largely determined by

men, who decide which spaces or activities their partners and/or daughters may take part in. As part of their CCRI initiative the community chose to study their local fauna through the traditional practice of embroidery which is culturally associated with women. However the men and the children took it up as well, helping to redress the gender imbalance. After representatives of the two communities met, the community in La Alsacia also

embarked on an embroidery project, which proved so popular that the majority of families in the community are now aware of the CCRI project, with the active participation of children and their parents.

The Los Maklenkes community identified the erosion of traditional knowledge and practices as a threat to their biodiversity, heritage and culture. Similarly, for the community that manages the Barbas de Mono



Seed-saving in Barbas de Mono Reserve. Fundaexpresión and Censat Agua Viva/GFC



Preparing food, Los Maklenkes Reserve. Fundaexpresión and Censat Agua Viva/GFC





Drying seeds, Barbas de Mono Reserve. Fundaexpresión and Censat Agua Viva/GFC

dependency and imposing conditions that actively prevent food sovereignty within the communities. The problem in this regard is addressed by several authors. [10]

- An educational system that distances children from their territory and the rural way of life, to the detriment of popular knowledge and traditions.



Beekeeping in Barbas de Mono Reserve. Fundaexpresión and Censat Agua Viva/GFC

potential privatisation of community managed aqueducts, and community co-optation by mining companies (resulting in a lack of interest from other families in organisational and resistance processes). In this context, they felt that territories and communities are vulnerable to specific threats such as:

- Institutions, such as the National Federation of Coffee Growers, promising food security while offering technological

Finally, there is a repeated experience of the interests and needs of the communities being ignored, by urban policy-makers, by large conservation organisations and even by entities supposedly supporting grassroots processes. The community management and conservation approach is very different to the model imposed by the state and large conservation NGOs. It is not about buying and isolating portions of land, but considering the people linked to the process and their knowledge, culture and skills, as well as land and physical space. There is a high risk for community initiatives when essential aspects of the communities' resilience, such as autonomy and self-management, are pushed aside to give greater importance to the role of external actors. Such 'assistance' can create dependence that weakens the communities' basic processes.

reserve, the main threats listed related to the dominant development model being imposed from the cities, including potential road development, the development of tourism, the

packages that include credit systems and technical advice about monocultures and agro-toxics in place of coffee grown with traditional systems, creating



## Conclusions and Recommendations

It is important to prioritise territorial management initiatives that have emerged from the communities. They have legitimacy, a greater probability of permanence, and benefit both human populations and ecosystems. Successful community conservation is based on effective organisation, with broad participation and ownership, where autonomy and community organisation is the priority, and other aspects, such as legal norms, are seen as being complementary rather than the priority. Projects or proposals for advocacy in communities must always be created and agreed upon by them; never devised and imposed from outside the territory. Processes should not be detached from wider contexts either. Community management strategies should provide spaces for dialogue, reflection and debate within civil society, and between the people and the state.

The community with the highest risk of expulsion from its territory identified their capacity to organise, recognise and value the community as an extended family—that must stay together and mobilise together in an autonomous way—as being key to resilience. These elements can be strengthened through their own educational processes, which they can implement themselves.

Popular education was recommended as an important strategy generally, including in relation to respect for people's rights and state policies. This would help the communities to recover part of the assets they have lost, and identify what has been or is being imposed on them. In this sense, the peasant way of life is reclaimed as a reason for pride and an option for a dignified life.

Encouraging productive strategies associated with community management and conservation spaces is critical to the communities' resilience. This includes dismantling the paradigm created by official systems of protected areas, which treats conservation and the presence of local communities and their

productive activities as being mutually exclusive. Agroecology and community management of forests are alternative frames of reference that guarantee a successful political approach that takes territorial and organisational dimensions into account.

In the Los Maklenkes reserve, for example, productive activities compatible with the care of the natural heritage within the reserve include the use of non-timber forest products and the propagation of orchids. In Barbas de Monas the community decided that keeping bees would be a productive activity that is good for biodiversity and would bring the community together—there are now hives



Identifying wildlife, La Alsacia community. Jeanne Lieberman and Censat Agua Viva/GFC



managed by families and others that are managed by the community as a whole. Women peasant leaders who carry out productive practices in forests and agroecosystems recommended combining long-term activities, such as timber production, with those that provide short-term results. This is to awaken and maintain interest in long-term components, as well as responding to the pressing needs of families.

Including recreational or sharing activities is important too. Meetings or assemblies do not have to be limited to a political or organisational dimension. They can promote well-being by considering other perspectives which are usually not allocated enough time. Problems and their solutions can be prioritised, while still leaving time for 'Buen y

Bien Vivir' (Good Living and Well Living).

From a legal perspective, it is imperative to review gaps in legislation, 'pending' legislation, and state obligations relating to the rights and claims of Indigenous Peoples, Afro-descendant and local communities. For example, after 24 years, the Presidency has recognised a delay in the implementation of Chapters IV, V and VII of Law 70 of 1993, which deals with "rights of land use, protection of natural resources and the environment; mining resources in the territories of Afro-Colombian communities and on economic and social development respectively". [11]

It is important that the state ensures that the necessary conditions are in

place to ensure that these rights can actually be enjoyed, and people can remain in their territories. For example, among the communities that took part in the CCRI, the one that has suffered the most in terms of threats and pressure to leave their territory is the Afro-descendant one. This is the only community out of the three that actually has legal status recognising their rights in the territory.

Suitable strategies should encourage the participation of a greater number of families in the conservation and community management process, and make the processes and initiatives of community conservation, sovereignty and productive autonomy more visible.



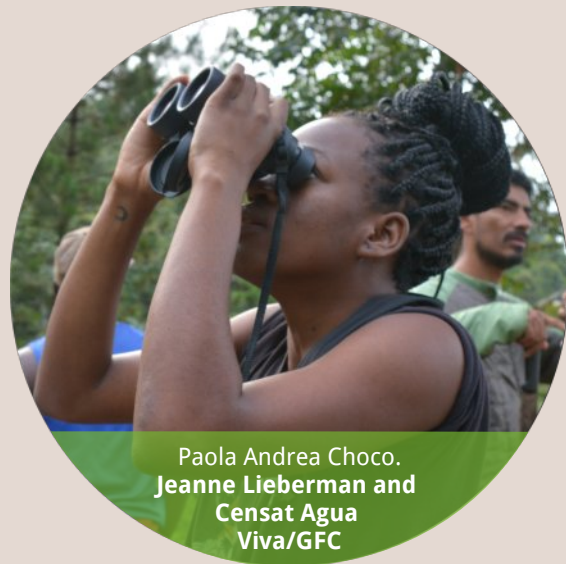
Playing in the waterfall, La Alsacia community. Jeanne Lieberman and Censat Agua Viva/GFC



# Testimony

Paola's motivation stems from her roots within the territory and her community. She believes that solutions must come from the community itself as this creates innovative teachings which will reach and influence everyone, whilst making the most of the fact that they are a small population. She feels threatened by the proximity of a rural municipal area where ex-FARC combatants are settled. These people say that they will become part of the region, but without adopting or knowledge of the internal regulations of the Community Council, which may have a variety of negative impacts and affect the territory's conservation area.

**Paola Andrea Choco, La Alsacia Community Council**



Paola Andrea Choco.  
Jeanne Lieberman and  
Censat Agua  
Viva/GFC

**This summary is based on a full CCRI report about the communities' conservation resilience assessment in Colombia, which can be found here: <http://globalforestcoalition.org/community-conservation-resilience-initiative-ccri-full-country-report/>**

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# Democratic Republic of the Congo

## Introduction

The Pygmies of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) are the oldest and most traditional Indigenous Peoples in the east of the country. They are highly regarded by other ethnic groups for their values, their ability to live in harmony with nature and their knowledge of plants, animals and their habitats. The Pygmies engage in a series of sustainable activities without causing harm to the ecosystems. There is a high level of social cohesion in their community and they live a life of peaceful coexistence. In the zone, the Pygmies adapt to the life of their neighbours, the Bantu.

The Bambuti Babuluko Pygmies live in the heavily wooded province of North Kivu in the Walikale territory. They hunt and gather food to survive and some engage in subsistence agriculture. The CCRI assessment was carried out in what is to be their future community forest concession called “Kisimbosa Chamakasa”. The literal translation of the name is the hand with five fingers (hills); “Kisimbosa” means fertile territory. Four Pygmy villages are located within the area: Kissa, Kilali, Lufito and Kambushi.

This territory is home to world-renowned forest ecosystems that are extremely rich in biodiversity and to important endemic animal

and plant species, including flagship species such as the mountain gorillas of the Kahuzi Biega National Park and in the Ikobo-Pinga forests. There are also, however, sizeable mining and water reserves in the region that are attracting the attention and greed of transnational corporations and large conservation organisations. A large residential zone is also being threatened by small-scale mining activities.

There are also protected zones in the region, including the Kahuzi Biega National Park and the Maiko National Park. A large portion of the forest is not under the protection of these zones and, even so, it is still in a good state of conservation. This is mainly due to the significant contribution of

the Bambuti and local communities in the region (who depend on these forests) to their conservation thanks to their non-destructive traditional resource use and management system.

Women provide for their families and communities by generating and using natural resources wisely. As both consumers and producers who take care of their families and educate their children and are concerned with preserving the quality of life for present and future generations, women have an important role to play in the promotion of sustainable development.

To strengthen advocacy for the recognition, defence and promotion



Women from the Bambuti Babuluko Pygmy community. PIDP-KIVU/GFC



of the rights of indigenous peoples and for the protection of their living spaces and means of survival, the *Programme Intégré pour le Développement du Peuple Pygmée* (PIDP, or the Integrated Programme for the Development of the Pygmy People) has launched a series of activities. The objective of these activities is to promote Indigenous Peoples' rights to access natural resources and to manage them. One of the initiatives is a community forestry programme in the Pygmies' territories.

In the DRC, community forestry is regulated by a legal framework comprised of: the Constitution (namely articles 34, 53, 56 and 207); Law n° 011/2002 on the forestry code (especially articles 22, 111, 112 and 113), which recognises and protects the communities' customary land rights in forest areas; Decree n° 14/018 from 2001, which establishes the procedures for awarding forestry concessions to local communities; and Ministerial Order n° 025 / CAB / min / ECNDDCCJ / 00 / RBM / 2016, which contains specific provisions related to the management and exploitation of the forestry concession by local communities.

The implementation of these regulations is the result of a long participatory process in which civil society played an important role in defending local communities and Indigenous Peoples in the DRC. The process is unique, primarily because it is participatory and includes all social groups (youth, women, elders, Bantu and Pygmies). The objective of these initiatives is to guarantee the sustainable management and use of forests and natural resources for the benefit of current and future generations.

Our forests are registered with the *Division des Forêts Communautaires* (Community Forests Department) under the number ENR 006 / NK / 2015 as a collective concession. Our concession is on the list of community forestry concessions that will receive the legal titles awarded by the governor of each province following the publication of Ministerial Order no. 25 by the Ministry of the Environment and

Bana Mukomo and Banaka Mughogho, all from the Bambuti people of the Walikale territory attended the workshop. They stressed the importance of respect for their land rights, ending violence, improving security in the region and making improvements to public services such as schools, roads, hospitals and sociocultural centres. They also affirmed the need to stop investment projects that are



Men from the Bambuti Babuluko Pygmy community. PIDP-KIVU/GFC

Sustainable Development.

In February 2017 a two-day capacity-building workshop geared mainly toward the Pygmy indigenous communities was held in Goma, North Kivu, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It was organised by PIDP Shirika la Bambuti in collaboration with the CCRI regional resource person. More than 20 representatives of the Kisimbosa Chamakasa forest communities from Banama Longa,



Fisherman. PIDP-KIVU/GFC

destructive and appropriate land, such as the mining projects initiated on Bambuti land and territories without their prior and informed consent.



# Community Conservation Resilience by the Bambuti Babuluko indigenous community

The Babuluko Pygmies gather non-timber forest products and take only what they need. By doing so, they preserve the natural resources. In practice, killing a large mammal while hunting is not allowed, except during cultural ceremonies in which the elders/ancestors may authorise it.

Only subsistence hunting is allowed. Hunting for sport or for profit is not permitted in Pygmy culture. Customary hunting methods and tools include spears, hunting dogs, axes, nets with coarse or fine mesh ("Makila" and "Kabanda"), bush fires

months: it begins with the planting of a banana tree and the harvesting of the first bunch of bananas indicates that it is time to return. Nowadays, however, the ritual lasts two months (July and August) in order to coincide with the main school vacation period. While this practice continues to be specific to the Babuluko Pygmies, other communities also use it, but under the supervision of Indigenous Peoples who have been identified and recognised in the zone.

The overexploitation of resources by other communities is a major

Recurrent armed conflicts, pillaging, land grabbing, conflicts related to the use of land and the falsification of land titles are also permanent threats.

Local authorities and conservation organisations ignore the Indigenous Peoples' conservation practices and historical efforts and show a blatant disregard for forest peoples' rights despite the relevant international instruments and mechanisms, some of which have been ratified by our country. The creation of protected areas without FPIC has also had

severe negative impacts on forest communities, as it resulted in their eviction from their land and it imposed restrictions on their right to use the resources. This has compromised not only their means of subsistence, but also their very survival. Police surveillance was used to implement these changes, which sometimes led to human rights

violations (as in the case of Itebero in the lowlands of the Kahuzi National Park).

The plan to create an ecological corridor from Itombwe to Mont Hoyo, passing through Walikale and Watalinga territory, represents another example of this kind of threat.



Illegal logging and mining in indigenous areas and territories. PIDP-KIVU/GFC

and traps. Vines are used to trap animals instead of nets because they inflict less pain on the trapped animals. Leopard skin and teeth are jealously guarded for use in traditional ceremonies.

Pygmy circumcision is an initiation ritual for Bambuti Bawta Babuluko boys that marks their passage from adolescence to adulthood. This ritual, most of which is usually carried out in the forest, used to last several

challenge to the Babuluko communities' way of life and resilience, especially practices such as illegal artisanal logging; mining without the free, prior and informed consent of the Pygmies; overhunting; the overexploitation of non-timber forest products and slash-and-burn agriculture. These problems are aggravated by the fact that the legal regimes that apply to natural resources, such as mining and oil and gas, do not recognise customary land.



## Testimony

M. Mukelenga Ksilembo is an elder from the Babuluko Pygmy community. He speaks about the Babuluko Indigenous Peoples' traditional knowledge and practices and describes how they have contributed to the preservation and protection of forests and large mammals in the Kisimbosa Chamakasa forests. "Our land and territories are our livelihood. Preserving them is our profession and our identity. The fruit and non-timber forest products are our source of energy, our pharmacy and our economy. No one can destroy the source of livelihood. This is why we take care to conserve our natural resources and our biodiversity. Without forgetting the known threats, large mammals such as the great apes (chimpanzees) and leopards can be seen in our forests again despite their disappearance over 30 years ago."



## Conclusions and main recommendations

The communities recommended that all stakeholders take measures to strengthen and apply the Bambuti Babuluko Indigenous Peoples' traditional ways of managing and governing natural resources and biodiversity. This could be facilitated by helping the communities better understand their forest rights enshrined in the DRC's well-defined legal framework and by strengthening these rights. This must include the demarcation of indigenous lands through participatory mapping processes. The community also seeks to strengthen their socioeconomic and cultural initiatives and to improve their economic capacity so they can be more involved in community forestry.

The community also underlines the importance of maintaining the intergenerational transmission of traditional knowledge and offering an environmental education to their children and those of their neighbouring communities. They hope others will better understand

their way of life and practices thanks to the works of art they create and the cultural events that they organise.

### Recommendations for others

- Reinforce the traditional and community regulations and respect for the hunting and fishing seasons within the Babuluko Pygmy community of Kisimbosa Chamakasa, which are applicable to their neighbours, the Bantu.
- Advocate for the recognition of the Indigenous Peoples' governance of biodiversity through the establishment of a system of community-conserved areas. In general, in accordance with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), the protection of indigenous land and the respect and recognition of their specific rights guarantee that these international instruments should be mechanisms that are widely known at the national and local level.

- Follow up on the reforms (agrarian and land) underway in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to ensure that customary systems and traditional indigenous management of the territories are integrated into the country's policies. Produce a book on the historical occupation of the Bambuti Babuluko Pygmy communities and their location, including current and previous threats and the concerns about the development of Indigenous Peoples, addressed to the Congolese state.
- Combat slash-and-burn agriculture, mainly by recognising women's role in rural areas and women workers in the agricultural sector. Give women access to training, land, natural resources, production factors, credit, development programmes and cooperation organisations.
- Implement initiatives to combat poverty through the promotion of income generating activities.

**This summary is based on a full CCRI report about the communities' conservation resilience assessment in DRC, which can be found here: <http://globalforestcoalition.org/community-conservation-resilience-initiative-ccri-full-country-report/>**





# Georgia

## Introduction

The CCRI assessment in Georgia involved three communities. Two of them, Sakorintlo and Okami, are in East Georgia, in the region of Shida Kartli of Kaspi Municipality. The other, Merjevi, is in West Georgia, in Sachkhere Municipality. The communities all differ in terms of their natural, social and cultural conditions.

The village Sakorintlo is located in the Khvemo Chala Community (an administrative area that consists of several villages), close to the border of the conflict area in Tskhinvali region. It has the status of High Mountain Village, and is located 13 km from the regional centre.

According to a census in 2014 it has a population of about 114 people, 61 men and 53 women. The village of Okami is similarly at the centre of a community that consists of six villages. It is 15 km from the regional centre and home to about 1,401 people, including 701 men and 700 women. Merjevi village is located in the centre of its community, and has 1,449 people, including 716 men and 733 women.

The assessment consisted of a series of meetings in the villages with different stakeholder groups, including interested participants from local communities, local authorities and school teachers. The round table

meetings with local authorities were held to ensure mutual agreement, cooperation and information sharing. Separate meetings were organised with the teachers, because of their high level of interest in the initiative and their influence within the communities. Overall the

Sakorintlo community garden.  
Ilia Kunchulia/GFC



The Shamanadze family tree has been protected by locals for centuries, Merjevi community.  
Ilia Kunchulia/GFC



assessments addressed a wide range of issues including agricultural production, the importance of environmental protection and its benefits, and environmentally friendly technologies and methodologies that can contribute to local needs and solving local problems. A national conference was

also held bringing all the different stakeholder groups together, along with the national forest agency. It was a very successful meeting, and representatives from local communities felt supported and listened to as a result.

Due to the resulting increased interest and demand from the communities, a number of interested people were taken to Ereda village to visit Otar Potskhverashvili's organic farm. Here they could see methods for producing organic vegetables and fruits, and they found out about marketing, and renewable energy technologies and their development perspectives in Georgia, among other things. They also learned about how the farm conserves forest to protect its water resources. All of this inspired them further, and they asked many questions and appealed for assistance and consultations.

In the three target regions community-based non-profit organisations have now been established with the support of the project group. These organisations have started to establish programmes to support their communities. Two project proposals have already been prepared and sent to donors for funding, and one more is under development.



## Internal and external threats

The overriding factor influencing these rural communities and their environment is the extremely poor socioeconomic circumstances they endure, including high rates of unemployment and a general lack of economic activity. In Okami, for example, there is very little economic activity, and even though the village is only 60 km away from Tbilisi, the unemployment level is extremely high. Sakorintlo has similar

collection of non-timber forest resources, such as the medicinal plant bladderhut (*Stafilea colhica*), and different species of mushrooms and wild forest fruits. But there is no knowledge about or state support for the proper processing and transportation of the collected products so that they can be properly preserved and sold as high quality products, creating a source of income for the village.

One of the major problems communities face in both Eastern and Western Georgia is a lack of irrigation infrastructure, which is mostly caused by poor management of water resources and its incorrect distribution. In Sakorintlo, the village suffers from a lack of irrigation water because its source is now within the boundaries of an occupied zone, and Georgian citizens no longer have access. For Merjevi lack of irrigation



Meeting in the Merjevi community . Ilia Kunchulia/GFC

socioeconomic problems, including a lack of basic infrastructure and high unemployment, and is experiencing massive out-migration of local youth. Community participants in Merjevi also reported a very low level of economic activity, with the local communities living in deep poverty, and massive out-migration of both local youth and middle-aged citizens. Another key finding is that the distribution of tasks among women and men in the communities is not equal, with most of the household jobs being done by women, together with the collection of water and firewood.

This potential for development is well illustrated in Merjevi, where one of the main sources of income is the

Lack of general information about the environment is also a problem. For instance at the moment local communities often use cheap chemicals for soil, which results in degradation of soil quality and underground water, and damages their health. Pollution is a significant concern as well. For example, although Merjevi village has a central water supply system, and electricity and natural gas supplies, there are still numerous problematic issues including the unsustainable use of natural resources, ground and water pollution, and the fact that there is no waste water treatment system. This situation has severe implications for the overall health of the local population.

water is also a major concern because of its negative impact on local agricultural production. Okami has the same problem, and community participants described how it impacts the women in particular, as they have to make extra efforts to collect water from far away. The pollution of the drinking water is also a significant problem in the village.

Energy poverty is a highly problematic issue that results in illegal and uncontrolled forest cuts in the region. In Okami even heating water is problematic. Local people have to purchase firewood in the market, as nearby forests are under strict protection, and collecting wood there is now prohibited. The local



government does issue special permits for the local population to collect firewood, but only in forests that are 40-50 km away, and people cannot afford the transport costs. Due to this fact, illegal forest cuts frequently take place.

Similarly in Merjevi, due to high prices for electricity and natural gas and non-energy efficient housing, the local population collects firewood to satisfy basic energy needs. Illegal

forest cuts are taking place across forests with important ecological functions, to such an extent that the forests are becoming degraded.

Centralised government is also a concern. Local authorities have no power and thus no motivation to initiate new development strategies. The CCRI legal and policy overview found that local authorities prefer to follow governmental directives rather than come up with new initiatives of

their own. Participants in Merjevi also explained that the local population is not well informed about their rights, and the lack of local initiatives by the local authority means that communication between communities and local governments is very weak, and there is generally a lack of trust and hope for the future. As a result one of the major problems faced by communities is lack of enthusiasm and local initiative.



## Community conservation initiatives and environmental impact

In spite of these difficult circumstances all the villages have some conservation initiatives of their own devising. In some places people preserve nearby ecosystems including for cultural and traditional reasons, and villages also try to protect their water resources.

For example, in Sakorintlo local communities have an initiative to protect about 100 ha of natural oak forest. This started at the end of the last century, when all the nearby forests were under serious pressure because of the energy crisis. The local

communities still preserve the local forest due to agreement amongst the local population that it is important for them.

In Okami the forests eventually became so damaged by other villagers that the community started to protect their land themselves as well. For example, in Ereda community, where the organic farm mentioned above is located, there are now 50 hectares of naturally regenerated hornbeam forest that have conserved enough water for six wells in the valley.

In Merjevi the villagers stopped ploughing the lands after the Soviet Union collapsed, converting it to pasture and planting trees as well, in order to prevent landslides. They also protect forests around holy places and there is a community prohibition on people taking even the smallest stick from these forests. They also protect tree Kartna on Shamanadzes' hill, which is a community tree protected as part of the community's heritage.



## Testimony

"I didn't realize before how important environmental protection is for our lives. I didn't think about the links between environmental protection and social development. Our village suffers from various environmental problems and most of them are caused by people. Sometimes you don't realise that you're doing something terrible, that your children and future generations will suffer because of what you are doing today. This particular project helped us to think differently, it gave us the key to some of our problems and helped us to start finding solutions. We now know more about our rights, and the responsibilities of our authorities and we will demand changes for a better future. We want our children to know more about our rights to nature and our responsibilities as citizens".

**Villager from Sakorintlo community**



Meeting between Merjevi, Sakorintlo and Okami community members. Ilia Kunchulia/GFC

## Conclusions and recommendations

An important finding from this CCRI assessment is that the process itself, including the local and national meetings, significantly improved the motivation of involved stakeholder groups. It can be concluded from this that there is considerable scope for positive improvements with respect to community conservation, especially when community participants and local authorities have more autonomy and feel more in control of their future.

In particular, the region is already famous for its agricultural production and there is great potential for developing the organic agriculture sector, which would reduce pollution and benefit biodiversity as well as the communities. In Sakorintlo, for example, the village is rich in natural resources, including non-timber forest resources, and the local population already generates its main income from agricultural

activities selling the harvest in Kaspi local market and in Tbilisi. Developing organic production would be a good way of reducing unemployment in the village. Similarly Okami village is rich in natural resources and has the potential to develop environmentally friendly income-generating activities, but due to lack of management and an absence of planning, this potential has yet to be explored.

It is essential to raise local communities' capacities and knowledge about their rights and possibilities for participation in decision-making processes in their region, to foster their involvement in the management of natural resources more broadly.

Focusing on capacity building and awareness-raising for local decision-making bodies is also crucial, to invigorate local municipalities and

engage them in the development process.

NGOs can help to strengthen the rights and empowerment of communities facing these serious social-economic conditions, so that the communities are better able to use their constitutional rights to demand more actions from governments. NGOs can also play a role mediating with relevant authorities to overcome the bureaucratic barriers that exist in relation to gaining permission to collect and process non-timber forest resources. They can also organise educational activities to teach marketing and processing technologies and methodologies.

Finally there is a need to work on gender equality within the villages to balance the distribution of tasks among women and men.

**This summary is based on a full CCRI report about the communities' conservation resilience assessment in Georgia, which can be found here: <http://globalforestcoalition.org/community-conservation-resilience-initiative-ccri-full-country-report/>**





# Ghana

## Introduction

The Ghana CCRI is being implemented by The Development Institute in Kpoeta, Saviefe Gborgame and Avuto. Kpoeta and Saviefe Gborgame are about 85kms apart at different elevations along the Wetu Range of the Upper Guinean Forest of West Africa. [1] Avuto borders the Avu Lagoon within the Keta Lagoon Complex Ramsar Site (KLCRS), in Ghana's southeastern coastal savannah zone. It is an important site for migratory birds and the only Ghanaian site for the threatened *Sitatunga* (an amphibious antelope species). [2]

In all three communities women have extensive knowledge about nature conservation, which they use for production, processing and marketing, health care, and energy generation. Men and women do the same kind of work and women participate in communal decision-making meetings, but women tend to shy away from leadership positions. Traditional patrimonial inheritance affects women's status, although they can buy and own land if they can afford it.

The CCRI was based on participatory methods, including Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) [3],

participatory strategic planning and participatory mapping. A Project Advisory Committee was nominated, including development and gender NGOs, governmental experts and community representatives. Community teams were supported to use participatory questionnaires, focus groups, transect walks and mapping techniques, to map their community territories and resources, their conservation practices, taboos and forgotten sacred sites. Another important aspect was strategic planning and advocacy skills training.

There was an excellent interaction between young and old, and women and men. Some of the young people were surprised when they found out about the origin of their community's cultural practices. All the results were fed into a national validation, learning and advocacy workshop, which included further capacity building.



Community conservation meeting in the Saviefe-Gbgame community, Ghana. **Simone Lovera/GFC**



Wetu landscape. **Ken Kinney/GFC**



# Community Conservation Resilience

All three communities are part of the Ewe ethnic group of Ghana, Togo, Benin and Nigeria, with their own religion of a Supreme God, Mawuga Sogbo-Lisa (Male-Female God), and a related focus on conserving nature through sacred groves and sites, taboos, totems, observations and practices. These help to safeguard critical ecosystems and endemic species, and rivers, springs and waterfalls, helping to halt deforestation outside forest reserves. For instance, the Kpoeta community is restoring the Tsii waterfalls, using GPS (Global Positioning System) to demarcate the site of the falls, and has established a tree nursery for endemic species for boundary and enrichment planting. All the communities are engaged in Community Resource Management Areas (CREMAs) based on their traditional conservation practices.

Nevertheless they face significant external and internal threats to their community conservation efforts and resilience. These have their roots in the colonial era when most community conservation areas progressively lost their importance, value and status, and natural resources such as timber were monetised and traded by colonial companies. The colonial government also enclosed many sacred groves designating one quarter as 'protective' reserves and three quarters as 'production' reserves.

This exploitative approach continued after independence as natural resources were seen as an easy source of government revenue. Today the protection and preservation of fundamental human rights and freedoms are guaranteed [4], but rights to control and manage resources such as timber and minerals still remain vested in the Executive

President. This creates a disincentive to community nature conservation, and can be implicated in Ghana's current annual rate of deforestation of 2% per annum. [5]

Extractive industries are a major problem. For example, the Avuto community describes the opening up of its territory for the exploitation of oil and gas by multinational companies [6]; and the damming of the River Tordzie upstream, which will affect inflow into the lagoon, leading to water insecurity.

farms after herbicides have been used, and the communities report declining quantities of wild honey. Other external threats include industrial agriculture generally; stone quarrying; illegal logging and the destruction of their cocoa and coffee farms by chainsaw operators; wild bush fires; and the expansion of coffee and cocoa production into their conserved forest areas.

The community in Avuto identified the commercial use of monofilament nets as a threat to sustainable fishing, and youth unemployment. Other



Tsii Waterfall in Kpoeta. Dzifa Kumaga/GFC

Deforestation is reducing the volume of Non-Timber Forest Products that can be collected and marketed by women, including medicinal plants, sweeteners and spices, impacting their ability to provide food, medicines and a reliable income for their families.

The communities in Kpoeta and Saviefe Gborgame have noted that the use of synthetic pesticides is leading to a loss of biodiversity, including useful plants and animals. Cover crops, which improve soil fertility naturally, no longer grow on their

threats include the spread of invasive water hyacinth; industrial rice farming which generates land grabbing and pollutes the lagoon; and climate change impacts, including drought and the drying of the lagoon, and flooding.

Internal threats facing all three communities include the loss of traditional knowledge and practices that support nature conservation, migration of the youth to the cities, and poverty-driven environmental degradation such as illegal logging and poaching.



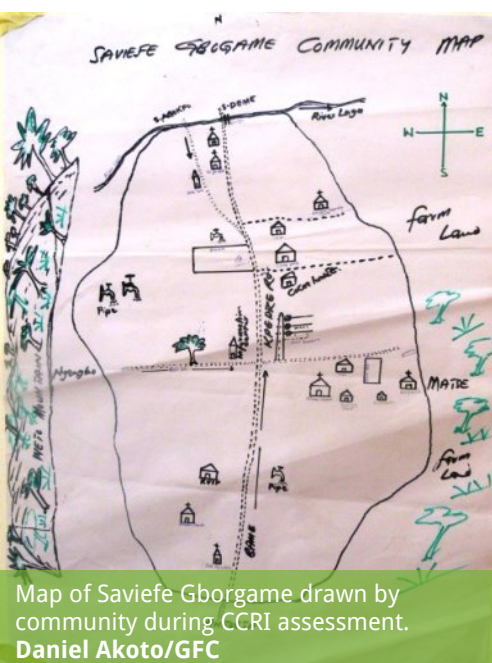
# Conclusions and Recommendations

Ghana has taken an important step forward with its 2012 Forest and Wildlife Policy, which explicitly supports traditional autonomy for the management of sacred forests and community conservation forests for biological and cultural diversity. [7] The 2016 revised NBSAP is also quite promising, since it focuses on the implementation of all the Aichi Targets. For example “ensuring that the traditional knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities and their customary use, are respected” is consistent with Aichi

habitat with support from Calgary Zoo in Canada, but they need further support for their related ecotourism efforts and want to be more closely linked to the Keta Lagoon Complex Ramsar site. [9]

All three communities are advocating for district assemblies to support management plans that facilitate their ongoing buffer zone planting projects (to protect watershed/ bodies). Climate change adaptation measures are also needed to help protect communities against flooding. These include the creation

would benefit greatly from environmentally-focused extension services. Similar support in Avuto could enable the community to grow organic vegetables, which are in high demand in Ghana, benefitting the Avu Lagoon’s sensitive ecosystem. The introduction of simple innovative technologies to use the water hyacinth for a green business could also help turn a problem into a solution, and the community could be supported to transform their sugarcane production into ethanol for household energy use, reducing reliance on fuel wood.



Target 18. [8] The next step is to implement these policies effectively.

The CREMAs approach, which is being used by the Wildlife Division of the Forestry Commission and promoted by NGOs, has encouraged the communities to revisit and strengthen their community conservation activities but there are many different ways in which the communities’ conservation resilience could be strengthened and improved. For example, the Avuto community is currently restoring the *Sitatunga*

of flood plain corridors without housing, using natural infrastructure such as green areas and tree planning, improving disaster management and functional early warning systems, and generally increasing awareness about climate change.

In Kpoeta and Saviefe Gborgame, cocoa agro-forestry and cocoa certification standards are already being introduced, including to improve agro-biodiversity and minimise pesticide use, but farmers

The communities also want to engage youth in the primary processing of agriculture products to reduce youth unemployment, and to enhance economic empowerment and promote leadership for young girls, including to reduce teenage pregnancies. Two of the communities are working to ensure their financial sustainability through Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs).



## Testimony

"We in Kpoeta have seen our aesthetic mountain ecosystem destroyed through the myopic and misguided actions of our political elites. What you can see now is the pale shadow of our community fifty years ago, and even that is due to sustained adherence to our traditional norms for nature conservation: taboo days, reverence and deifying nature such as the Tsii Waterfalls. Our vision is to restore our environment to its former state and we are already engaged in conservation agriculture practices and restoration through Analog forest techniques. CCRI is very useful, practical, complementary and reveals the wisdom hidden in our culture, which is rooted in nature conservation."

**Mr. Constantine Kosi Agbo, a retired Educationist**



Mr. Constantine Kosi Agbo.  
The Development  
Institute/GFC

Other important recommendations include:

- Empowering communities and CSOs so that they can advocate effectively with respect to the development of the Wildlife Bill, including on ownership of territorial resources they have actively conserved, tree tenure and access to timber, and Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC).
- Supporting CSOs and communities living in sensitive ecosystems to demand the implementation of spatial and land use planning and strategic environmental assessments (SEA) that recognise community conserved territories as permanent community conservation areas.
- Promoting and supporting communities to develop eco-cultural tourism, to help retain the wisdom and practices of communities while reducing poverty.
- Building capacity in and instituting the certification of community conserved territories as areas from which sustainable commodities can be sourced.
- Developing communities' capacity to engage in climate-resilient agriculture based on their current traditional practices, and promoting conservation agriculture.

**This summary is based on a full CCRI report about the communities' conservation resilience assessment in Ghana, which can be found here: <http://globalforestcoalition.org/community-conservation-resilience-initiative-ccri-full-country-report/>**

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# India

## Introduction

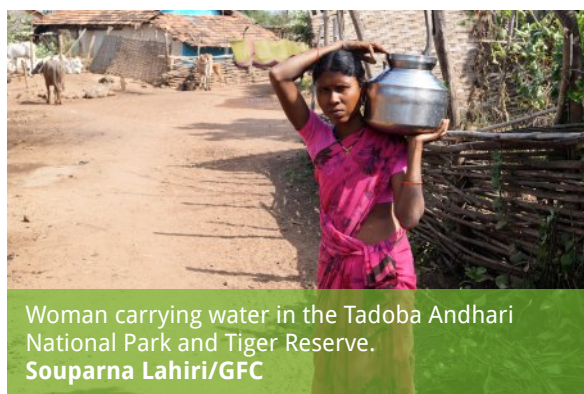
The CCRI assessment was conducted in three diverse biological-cultural landscapes in India: Buxa-Chilapata forest area (BTR-CPT) in the state of Bengal, Eastern India, the Tadoba Andhari National Park and Tiger Reserve (TATR) in the state of Maharashtra, Central India, and the Banni Grasslands in the state of Gujarat, in Western India.

Traditionally, these communities enjoyed customary rights to practice their livelihoods, including grazing, small scale agriculture and the collection of non-timber forest products (NTFPs). However erosion of these rights, first by the colonial state and then by the independent Indian state has resulted in loss of livelihood and acute poverty in these areas.

The Buxa-Chilapata site contains Taungya forest villages inhabited by Rabha and Jharkhandi tribes and other local communities, and is surrounded by the Buxa Tiger Reserve and Jaldhapa National Park. These forest villages were formed by the colonial forest administration during the last decade of the nineteenth century ensuring a captive bonded labour force for forestry operations. The communities inhabiting these villages traditionally practiced swidden agriculture and the controlled use of fire to preserve the biodiversity on the land and in the

forests. It was this knowledge that was desired and utilised by the colonial foresters, forming the basis for what was to become known as 'scientific forest management'. The communities grew fruits trees, cultivated vegetables, and practiced intercropping in between the lines of saplings in plantations.

The TATR is inhabited by Gonds, a central Indian tribe with a strong connection to nature worship. Ever since the area was declared under



Woman carrying water in the Tadoba Andhari National Park and Tiger Reserve.  
Souparna Lahiri/GFC

successive expanding regimes of Protected Areas, Gonds have been facing the threat of eviction and displacement and pressurised to relocate outside the Protected Area. Since 1968, grazing has been limited to the sanctuary area, and the collection of NTFPs and minor forest produce, including Tendu leaves, is completely banned in the National Park and Tiger Reserve. Today, villagers are struggling for their

existence and the right to live with dignity, to conserve and protect their forests, biodiversity and livelihoods.

The assessment in the Banni Grasslands was facilitated by a local NGO, Sahjeevan with a long history of work with the communities. The assessment involved three communities known as Sindhi Maldharis. Traditionally they have been livestock breeders and herders. Their livestock move across each other's territories freely. The Forest

Department staked its claim over the grasslands in 2009 when it announced a Working Plan to manage this Protected Area. The plan aims to restrict grazing and fragment the grasslands into working circles.

The CCRI began in all three areas with detailed consultations with the communities and other relevant stakeholders. Once

Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) was granted by the communities, assessment teams were established and they participated in a capacity building and training workshop. The assessments followed the methodology of resource mapping, focussed group discussions including with women, and collecting oral testimonies, especially from the community elders.



# Community conservation initiative and biological impact

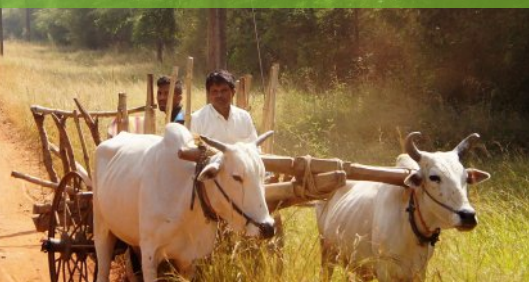
Communities participating in the CCRI assessment are invoking the Scheduled Tribes & Other Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act (FRA), 2006 to assert their rights over natural resources. Previously, since colonial times, the forest communities in India had lost their forest rights and were not allowed to follow their traditional conservation practices. This historic and unique legislation restored their traditional rights, and further empowered the communities to govern their forests through Gram Sabhas, which are traditional village councils consisting of every adult member of a settlement. These rights

are closely linked to ideas of livelihoods and cultural identity and had allowed the communities and their environments to flourish.

The Chilapata-Buxa communities and the Gonds inhabiting TATR used the opportunities given by the Forest Rights Act to claim forest rights near their village territories. They formed a Gram Sabha, initiated community patrolling of the forests, and planted saplings of indigenous varieties in patches where natural forests had been felled. They have rejected the the Forest Department's attempts to relocate them.

In the Banni Grasslands, the three communities involved in the CCRI have now registered formally as the Banni Breeder's Association (BBA) and staked formal communal right to these land resources, also under the Forest Rights Act. In 2011 they launched a programme in ten villages to regenerate the grasslands around each village. This is part of the broader struggle to assert community rights over their lands and the management of the grasslands. This exercise helped to demonstrate the efficacy of grassland regeneration by the pastoral communities themselves.

Bullock cart on the road to the core zone, Tadoba Andhari. **Souparna Lahiri/GFC**



Village elders, Tadoba Andhari. **Souparna Lahiri/GFC**



Prayer of gratitude by Rabha women before the feast, Buxa-Chilapata. **Souparna Lahiri/GFC**

## External and internal threats

The forest departments and the State are creating hurdles to the implementation of the Forest Rights Act. For instance, the CCRI communities assessed should be able to enjoy their customary rights over their forests and to practice their traditional livelihoods, but in practice they are threatened by expanding Protected Areas, potential forced relocation, and the loss of access to natural resources.

At the same time the forest departments are channelling various government schemes, benefits and funds through the local Panchayats, which certain village representatives are elected to, and the Joint Forest Management Committees (JFMCs), rather than the traditional Gram Sabhas. This is leading to nepotism and creating division between and within the communities. The lack of support for community rights over their forests and grasslands is impacting communities' own

initiatives and eroding their knowledge about how to manage and govern their forests.

Intervention in the landscape creates problems. In general there is very strong opposition to monoculture tree plantations that are ruining the communities' livelihoods and health, and the ecology and economic value of the forests they rely on. In the Banni Grasslands intervention has included the propagation of the highly invasive *Prosopis juliflora*

which has displaced different varieties of grasses, herbs and shrubs that are vital to the health and well-being of the Banni livestock.

Most of the internal threats identified by the communities are a result of misguided state intervention, the intrusion of commercial interests and the influence of 'mainstream' cultural practices. The traditional relationships and cultural bonds that the communities have with their environments are under threat. Traditional livelihoods are no longer seen as a viable option by the younger generation, who seek employment and livelihood outside the realm of their traditional habitat,

forests and territories. The ethos of judicious management of natural resources is at stake in all three areas. With greater interaction with the modern 'mainstream', the traditional role of women is also changing. Even in case of the matrilineal Rabha community (Buxa-Chilapati site), men are increasingly taking decisions and women reduced to household responsibilities and child rearing.

Pastoralism as a way of life and livelihoods is in a state of flux all over the world and Banni is no different. Development policies have incentivised milk production in a way

that is undermining the pastoral practices. With restrictions on the movement of pastoralists with their animals, the male animals have been left with little economic value. This has affected the pastoral livelihoods and led to increasing dependence on the milk economy: Maldharis have become milkmen instead of breeders. This has led to a greater dependence on external markets for water and fodder for their animals. Simultaneously, there is an increase in the number of animals in the grasslands that threatens to exceed its carrying capacity.

Protest March, Chilapata Buxa. NESPON/GFC



Women's meeting in Banni Grasslands. Sahjeevan/GFC



Livestock in the Banni Grasslands. Sahjeevan/GFC

## Conclusions and recommendations

Recognition of community rights on forest lands is essential to the survival of the communities and their environments. These communities have traditionally been custodians of their landscapes and their ecological knowledge and cultural norms have played a significant role in conserving the natural resources. Policies that restrict their access to these lands will be harmful to both the community and the ecological resources.

The livelihood crisis that the communities are undergoing at present could to a large extent be

addressed by the recording of their tenurial rights over land and community forest resources. While all three communities have already taken the initiative to take control of their forests, formal recording of rights and allowing the Gram Sabhas to function will have a multiplier effect on the community conservation initiatives and facilitate the process of community control over and governance of forests.

The communities, in collaboration with local NGOs, also assert that the Government of India should recognise the UN Declaration on the

Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and in that spirit, implement the related provisions of the FRA 2006 and PESA (Panchayats Extension to Scheduled Areas Act, 1996) to recognise their autonomy and the power of the Gram Sabha. Governments' and related agencies' support through funds and development schemes should be channeled through related and responsible committees formed under Gram Sabhas only.

There is a need to reinvigorate traditional common land management norms, and support the



## Testimony

Mr Salimbhai Node, was a resident of Sargu village in Banni. Lovingly called Salim Mama (maternal uncle), he was respected as a *Bhagiya*, one who possesses expertise of ethno-veterinary practices and indigenous knowledge.

Salimbhai realised the importance of traditional livelihoods and customary rights to the ecology of the Banni. He worked to reestablish the way the grassland had been utilised, conserved and managed by the Banni pastoralists, and was one of the key members of the BBA. His wisdom was equally matched by his oratory and humour. Unfortunately, Salimbhai succumbed to ill health in April 2017. However his legacy lives on through the various campaigns and programmes he helped launch, and in the Maldharis' determination to gain customary rights to their traditional lands.



Mr Salimbhai Node.  
Sahjeevan/GFC

formation of new norms and their institutionalisation wherever necessary. The Indian State should facilitate the restoration of landscapes according to communities' traditional wisdom and knowledge, requirements and local needs, benefitting both the communities and wildlife and protecting forests and biodiversity. In the pastoral areas, it is critical to re-establish traditional trade and non-trade relationships between farmers and pastoralists.

Women from the communities strongly feel that their traditional rights and security should be ensured while accessing the forests to collect fuel wood, NTFPs or minor forest produce.

Women have also voiced their opinion that the formation and strengthening of the Gram Sabhas will help to strengthen their participation and role in decision-making processes regarding the well-being of the community and conservation initiatives.

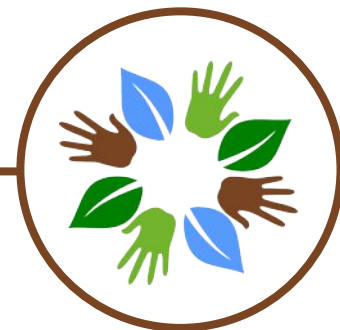
Finally, the communities would benefit from assistance accessing their rights with respect to forests, and instituting norms, and education about related issues. For example, in the Banni grasslands, the community has asked a group of ecologists and social scientists (RAMBLE- Research and Monitoring in the Banni Landscape) to study how the pastoralists have changed in response to changes in their immediate political, social, economic spheres.



Sundarsing Rabha.  
Souparna Lahiri/GFC

It was a late winter night in January 2010 when forest officials and police entered the forest village of Kurmai in Chilapata-Buxa area and knocked at the door of Sundarsing Rabha, a 21-year-old Rabha community leader. The police came to arrest him on charges filed by the Forest Department for actively participating in and facilitating the proclamation of community forests under the Kodalbasti Gram Sabha. The sleepy village soon woke up and the women of the village rushed to his house and formed a cordon between Sundar and the police to prevent his arrest, refusing to budge until the police and the forest officials left. Sundar was subsequently slapped with various warrants, and now faces 13 cases. But, police harassment and flak from the forest officials is not new for this young Rabha leader who is committed to the struggle for the well-being of his community and the rights of forest villagers in the Chilapata-Buxa area. He is currently the co-convenor of the North Bengal Forum of Forest People and Forest Workers and a member of the Central Coordination Committee of the All India Forum of Forest Movements (AIFFM).

**This summary is based on a full CCRI report about the communities' conservation resilience assessment in India, which can be found here: <http://globalforestcoalition.org/community-conservation-resilience-initiative-ccri-full-country-report/>**



# Kenya

## Introduction

The Community Conservation Resilience Initiative (CCRI) in Kenya was carried out with two indigenous communities, the Maasai from Trans-Mara, Narok County, and the Rendille from Kargi, Kamboye, Korr and Logologo of Marsabit County. The CCRI assessments employed a participatory approach that included focus group discussions, sketch mapping and storytelling, all with a view to assessing the biodiversity and threats to conservation within the Nyekweri Kimintet Forest and Marsabit communities. The assessment revealed that in the past the Nyekweri Kimintet Forest and Marsabit were abundant with flora and fauna but the communities have observed that this has now decreased in some areas.

Nyekweri Kimintet in Trans-Mara borders the Maasai Mara National Park and is a significant breeding area for elephants from the reserve. Inhabitants of the forest practice pastoralism as their main livelihood. In 2005, community members formed the Nyekweri Forest Kimintet Trust to strengthen their ability to conserve biodiversity. Approximately 80% of the land within the area has been allocated to individuals with the remaining land under communal ownership. The trust covers 6,000 acres, and helps to secure and ensure the continued protection of

land dedicated to the conservation of biodiversity, preventing its conversion to other land uses.

Community members from Kimintet participated in a workshop, mapping exercise and focus group discussions, in which they assessed the resilience of the community conservation around the forest and the roles of community members. Few women attended the initial workshop due to cultural barriers, so a separate meeting was subsequently organised for the women. This was later followed by a joint meeting for all community members with more women present and men committing to involving them in decision-making processes.

Community members asserted that their area is an important biodiversity hotspot with some of the only remaining indigenous forests hosting sacred sites, sheltering wildlife and providing wild fruits and medicinal plants. Approximately 80% of Kenya's wildlife lives

outside Protected Areas because most of them are not fully fenced. The wildlife moves in and out of these areas in search of pasture and water especially during the dry season, and interacts with people on private and community land. [1]

The second CCRI took place in Logologo and involved the Rendille



Kimintet Community members' sketchmapping activity. Edna Kaptoyo/GFC



Rendille women from Korr in mapping exercise, while an indigenous girl watches keenly. Edna Kaptoyo/GFC



peoples from the Logologo, Korr, Kamboye and Kargi communities of Marsabit county. The community members are pastoralists and utilise nearby forests for materials for constructing houses ('manyattas'), herbs and fuel. They live in lands that are 20% privately owned and 80% under communal ownership or held in trust by the county government.

Indigenous women made up 99% of the participants (in contrast to the CCRI assessment in Trans-Mara) with the local chief also participating. This was because the men had migrated in search of pasture due to the dry season, aggravated by the impacts of climate change—and the women are left to manage the households. Nevertheless patriarchy is an issue in both communities, with women being perceived as inferior and decisions being made solely by the men. However, the indigenous women from both areas highlighted that they have been playing key roles in

conserving biodiversity and holding traditional knowledge relevant for conservation. They ensure inter-generational learning, the transmission of vital knowledge and values. In addition the women in Marsabit are generally the sole breadwinners in their households, raising income through the sale of beadwork and irrigated farming. This helps families to cope with the absence of the men, making them less vulnerable.

The Kenyan government is well advanced in matters of policy and legal instruments. The Environment Management and Coordination Act asserts various environmental rights and responsibilities, with its general principles founded on Article 42 of the 2010 Constitution. This gives every citizen the right to a clean and healthy environment, including the right to have the environment protected for the benefit of present and future generations. The

Constitution also recognises Indigenous Peoples (in article 260); defines forests as natural resources; and classifies community forests that are vested in the communities as community land (Article 63). However the Constitution does not specifically provide for the conservation and preservation of forests. In addition, the new Community Land Act, passed in 2016, is geared towards ensuring gender equality and tenure security. However, women are not aware of their rights. [2]

## Community Conservation Resilience in Nyekweri Kimintet Forest

The Maasai around Nyekweri Kimintet have lived in harmony with wildlife and conserved the forests through customary laws and values.

During the assessments community members from Nyekweri Kimintet Forest identified key external threats including a lack of legal protection of community forest by the county and by national laws or institutions tasked with providing protection. The legal framework recognises the community forests' role in biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services, but does not support communities to strengthen their conservation; and national and local forest and wildlife authorities do

not work in community forest conservation areas. The increasing impact of drought has also resulted in a loss of biodiversity as well as water, leading to wildlife-human conflict.

The main internal threats mentioned were the erosion of cultural values governing conservation, due to the privatisation of lands and a loss of

traditional ecological knowledge as the youth leave the community to find employment in towns; and deforestation due to charcoal burning and overgrazing.



Livestock and people are impacted by open pits such as this one, which has been left by the extractive industry after taking materials for road construction. **Edna Kaptoyo/GFC**

Rendille indigenous women during the CCRI meeting. **Edna Kaptoyo/GFC**



# Community Conservation Resilience in Marsabit

The Rendille peoples have a similarly strong connection with the environment and have values related to conservation rooted in their culture. For example, traditionally they will only cut down tree branches when needed for constructing houses, and medicine and herbs are extracted sustainably. As pastoralists, the community has planned migration routes for their livestock which allow for the regeneration of vegetation.

During the assessments, the Rendille women identified four key internal

threats. Firstly deforestation which is being driven by demand for wood and charcoal and the overgrazing of livestock, resulting in the loss of key tree species and wild animals. Secondly there is an erosion of traditional knowledge and values, which has led to uncontrolled use of resources. Population increase and the impacts of extractive industries like sand harvesting were also raised.

The external threats identified included outsiders illegally settling on their land during the drought seasons, particularly in Logologo

community. Another problem is the spread of an invasive tree species,

*prosopis juliflora* or 'mathenge', which was introduced by the government and is now widespread in Marsabit. It has been considered a menace for a long time by the residents, due to its negative impacts on livestock and indigenous species in the area. The Environmental Management Coordination Act requires that any introduction of alien species for whatever purpose requires an environmental impact assessment (EIA) license to be considered legal. In this case, an EIA was done but there has been no social impact assessment. [3] Climate change has led to diminished fresh water sources and extreme drought in Marsabit. [4]

Donkeys ferrying fuel wood from Nyekweri forest to nearby urban centres. Edna Kaptoyo/GFC



Indigenous women gathering during the community meeting in Kimintet, Lolgorian Trans-Mara. Edna Kaptoyo/GFC



## Conclusions and Recommendations: Nyekweri Kimintet

Community proposed solutions for internal and external threats include support for the community, including for exchange visits to other wildlife conservation areas, for practical learning and adaptation of best practices, and strengthening linkages with county and national government environmental authorities like the

Kenya Forest Service (KFS) and the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS). Other solutions include financial support for management of the conservation area, to carry out reforestation

initiatives to restore degraded areas and to pay volunteer game scouts to monitor the conservation area; and the development of community protocols to complement national laws and regulate community interaction with the land and implement pasture and land management systems. Awareness raising among community members and information sharing about existing national legislation that relates to the environment would support engagement with policy makers and help to ensure law enforcement.

They recommended strengthening Nyekweri Kimintet Forest Trust as an institution and setting up ecotourism, in order to enhance community participation in sustainable conservation and facilitate the conservation of wildlife resources.

The vision of Nyekweri Kimintet Forest community members is to sustain the forests for future generations.



## Testimonies

Sankau Ole Ntokoyuan is a Maasai elder who practices pastoralism. Together with other members of the Kimintet area he has given up private land to contribute to the conservation of the Kimintet forest, to continue building the resilience of their conservation efforts. He is vocal in community forest protection and advises the community trust on conservation issues. He says: "As a community that is keen on conservation, the CCRI has helped us understand issues we couldn't understand on our own. It's reminded us of the past, the challenges of the present and that we can now plan to restore our conservation practices and strengthen our resilience more effectively. We are committed to continue our traditional conservation practice."



Sankau Ole Ntokoyuan.  
Edna Kaptoyo/  
GFC

**Sankau Ole Ntokoyuan, Kimintete Village**

Alice Howo Lesepe is a Rendille indigenous woman from Logologo in Marsabit County, Kenya. She is secretary and a member of the Merigo Women's group, which seeks to empower indigenous women in understanding their economic rights and to raise awareness about environmental conservation and advocacy in relation to extractive industries. She has been an active advocate at the local level and is a member of the environment committee in her community. Alice says "I'm happy about the CCRI because it's helpful to us. We indigenous women have been playing a crucial role in conservation and how traditional knowledge is relevant for present day challenges and future generations."



Alice Hawo Lesepe.  
Edna Kaptoyo/  
GFC

**Alice Hawo Lesepe, Logologo, Marsabit**

## Conclusions and Recommendations: Marsabit

The Rendille communities recommend halting deforestation through raising awareness about the importance of conservation, sharing information about sustainable use, and advocating for widespread behaviour change to improve environmental health and wellbeing.

The community-proposed solutions include strengthening engagement with local leadership and county leadership in developing new by-laws addressing the issue of extractive industries; partnering with civil

society organisations for advocacy and trainings on existing conservation and environmental laws; and the development of community laws to govern the use of resources. They also called for the formation of community environmental committees to strengthen their role in conservation, conducting capacity building workshops, utilising local 'barazas' [5] to mobilise the whole community, and strengthening their ownership of the process. Utilising women's groups to advocate for

environmental issues and climate change was also highlighted.

Their recommendations were to undertake advocacy targeting local leadership and the environment authorities of the County Government, and to strengthen the role of women in conservation by creating women's networks for conservation and advocacy for environmental issues at local and county level, with links to national level advocacy networks.

**This summary is based on a full CCRI report about the communities' conservation resilience assessment in Kenya, which can be found here: <http://globalforestcoalition.org/community-conservation-resilience-initiative-ccri-full-country-report/>**

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[2] Constitution of Kenya 2010

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[5] 'Baraza' is a formal gathering of community members and local leaders to share information and address community issues.



# Kyrgyzstan

## Introduction

Three local communities participated in the CCRI initiative in Kyrgyzstan. All are located in close proximity to, or within the territory of, protected nature reserves. They live close to forested areas and have experience in conservation.

Shabdan village, Chuy Oblast is near the 500 ha National Park Chon-Kemin, established in 1993. The valley's extensive wildlife includes six species of plants and 21 species of animals listed in the Red Book, including snow leopards, ibex and golden eagles, and there are coniferous and mixed forests [1]. Villagers are obliged to get permits from the Forestry Department to use wood and non-wood forest products, such as mushrooms, berries and medicinal plants. Grazing cattle is similarly regulated with special 'pasture tickets'.

Zhyrgalan village is near Yssyk-Kol Oblast, a State Nature Reserve and on the border of the UN Biosphere Reserve with both lake and terrestrial ecosystems. The villagers were mostly engaged in coalmining until the Soviet Union collapsed, after which they switched to livestock farming, hunting and wood processing. There are few pastures in the village and the main pastures are rented from the State Forest Fund. Industrial-scale felling is prohibited,

and special permits are required for hunting.

The village of Kashka-Suu in Dzhahal-Abad Oblast is located next to Padish-Ata, which is another State Nature Reserve and was included in the UNESCO World Heritage list in 2016. The 30,560 ha reserve was established in 2003 to preserve natural juniper forests and the country's endemic Semenov firs. It is home to seven species of plants, three species of mammals and four species of birds listed in the Red Book. The sacred Muslim shrine Mazar Padish-Ata is situated here, and according to legend, Said Khamid ibn Salmani Farsi lived in this territory in VI-VII centuries, preaching Islam as a representative of the Arab Padishah [2]. In 2007 cave drawings (petroglyphs) were discovered, indicating hunting scenes, signs of the sun, biodiversity and objects of daily use. There are also some 25 burial mounds in the territory. Cattle grazing, tree felling and hunting are prohibited, so residents organise tours to cultural and religious sites, and produce vegetables and fruit preserves.



Mapping of the threats to Kashka-Suu village by local activists. **BIOM/GFC**



Mapping exercise in Shabdan village by local women. **BIOM/GFC**

The CCRI assessments showed that men and women have different experiences and practices in relation to the use of and conservation of natural resources. However in Kyrgyzstan the law dictates that there should not be more than 70% of citizens of the same gender involved in the use of natural resources [3]. Solutions should integrate approaches that work well for both women and men.



# Community Conservation Resilience Initiative

Although villagers are constrained by the protected area regulations, they are actively conserving their local environments. In Shabdan, for example, the community has established a wild apple nursery. The central Tian-Shan area is a zone where wild apple trees are indigenous and a number of them are included in the Red Book of Kyrgyzstan. Protecting them is important for the community because of their high levels of resistance to diseases and unfavourable weather conditions. Students from the village school have transferred fully grown apple trees to village households and planted others in the wild, and an ethnobotanical garden is being created at the village school, helping students to learn about the biodiversity in their area and how to protect and conserve it.

In Kalmak Ashu, near to Shabdan village, the local residents, mostly young people, have also set up some environmental initiatives, including an initiative to combat illegal tree felling, poaching and grazing. They cooperate with local authorities, forestry workers and the administration of the national park, and have prevented more than 100 violations. Violations of environmental regulations by local people are now quite rare.

After the failure of the coalmine in Zhyrgalan local residents often resorted to illegal logging, poaching and cattle grazing, but several families came up with the idea of developing winter tourism, and more families are becoming involved as the initiative grows. This complements summer ecotours with a particular focus on watching birds such as the cranes that nest on Lake Turnaly in

the summer time. The illegal use of natural resources has become rarer, and the population is actively conserving the forest and wildlife. Local activists are also actively discouraging poachers and the last three years have seen growing numbers of partridges, pheasants, roe deer and other species that were previously growing increasingly rare. Together with Ecological Movement BIOM, young people are learning how to conduct ecosystem assessments and evaluate the local plant and animal species (particularly birds), so that they can assess the health of and protect their local ecosystem. Villagers in and around Kashka-Suu have worked hard to improve routes to the Mazar sacred sites for pilgrims and tourists. Women are well represented in the local council and women's committees have created environmentally-oriented business initiatives. In the village and surrounding territories raspberries, alycha (wild plum) and barberries are collected and made into preserves of vegetables, berries, dried fruits and syrups to sell to local residents and tourists and for school meals. The villagers have also arranged for special protection and ecosystem restoration for a territory where a family of Indian porcupines (*Hystrix indica*) lives. This species is listed in the Red Book of Kyrgyzstan, and considered to be on the verge of extinction. [4]

However, these efforts are all threatened by falling economic well-being and increasing competition for natural resources among the local population, leading to conflict. For example, livestock overgrazing degrades community pastures and plant life, and the ecological impacts of increasing organised and non-organised tourism (such as back-

Participants of the CCRI in Zhyrgalan village. BIOM/GFC



Residents of Shabdan village welcome tourist visitors. BIOM/GFC

country skiing in winter time and trekking in summer time in Zhyrgalan) are not being properly

researched. Recently there has been growing interest among tourists in visiting wild and pristine nature, which can have a strong negative

impact on delicate natural ecosystems.

Poaching was identified as a key risk for all three villages, along with other potential risks including the intensive extraction and processing of natural resources. Local authorities also tend to ignore the interests of local residents. For example, in Shabdan

village the authorities are converting part of the flood-plain forest into fish farms, causing great damage to natural flood-plain ecosystems and the biodiversity of Chon-Kemin Natural Park in general. Endemic fish species are becoming increasingly rare and profits from the fish farm are unequally distributed, with those living in Shabdan seeing little benefit.

Experienced guides in Zhyrgalan village know many local legends. BIOM/GFC



## Conclusions and Recommendations

A key finding of the CCRI assessment is the need to support local communities' involvement and participation in the state monitoring of Kyrgyzstan's spectacular biodiversity and ecosystems, its forests, pastures and wild animals. They are interested and motivated, but constrained by the threats outlined above.

The communities also want education to stress the negative effects of the over-use of natural resources and promote traditional conservation practices, including through traditional folk tales and epics that relate to nature conservation (such as Kyrgyz epics Kozhoshash and Manas). Local schools should also teach about local ecosystems, how they function and can be protected.

The local communities want more efficient legal instruments and better decision-making and monitoring systems based on bio-indication methods, to help them conserve their ecosystems in a way that benefits their own local development strategies (although

The conservation of biodiversity and ecosystems should also be a fundamental component of socio-economic development plans at the local, district (rayon) and regional (oblast) levels. The use of bio-indication monitoring should become a decision-making tool in the field of natural resources management.

The communities want state level commitments to:

- Preserve no less than 60% of wild land ecosystems, especially forests, support the preservation of nature by communities, and implement poaching prevention programmes.
- Identify ways of increasing tourism without damaging natural ecosystems (including through smart infrastructure).
- Develop scientific regulations and environmental management

regulations and laws are being developed to ensure local communities may organise and maintain specially protected areas themselves, through their local councils [5,6]). Community-based nature management systems, such as community-based forest management and pasture management, can also be effective ways of promoting the sustainable use of natural resources.



Meeting of local activists in Shabdan village. BIOM/GFC



## Testimony

I was born and grew up in Shabdan. I have a big family – my husband and six children. I worked as a shepherd in my village for more than forty years. My father worked as a shepherd and I learned from him and my forefathers how to use pastures properly without harming ecosystems. Traditionally there were high-altitude nomadic camps in Kyrgyzstan. Pastures are divided into four types: winter, spring, summer and autumn. When has the grass done its work? Is it time to move to other pastures? Is it time to go up high to the mountains? When is it time to start grazing and when must we stop? This is knowledge that has been passed from generation to generation. All my life I have been using this knowledge, it became my profession, the work of my life. I grazed cattle and took care of pastures. Now I pass this knowledge on to the younger generation. But we see that in many places knowledge about how to use pastures carefully is disappearing. It is being replaced by unsustainable use, when people do not care about the destruction of meadows. Instead they care only for short-term profit. It is very important that the knowledge of our forefathers is preserved so we might be able to use it. Pastures are our God-given gifts and we have to live our long lives in harmony with nature and the knowledge of our forefathers.



Batma Inarbekova, Shabdan village,  
Kyrgyzstan. BIOM/  
GFC

### Batma Inarbekova, Shabdan village, Kyrgyzstan

practices relating to the use of natural resources such as medicinal herbs and wild-growing fruits and berries.

- Ensure that international funds are used effectively and achieve real environmental impacts.

Other recommendations include:

- Ensuring that the right to use natural resources goes hand in

hand with responsibility and remediation, including the restoration of traditional seasonal and zonal cattle grazing systems.

- Developing local leaders' community-based management and organisational capacity relating to natural resources management.
- Assessing and monitoring tourist load capacity in local territories.

- International efforts and pressure to ensure that the Chinese 'One Belt One Road' initiative includes ecological indicators and goals for biological diversity, and is not based on the transfer of dirty technologies and the destruction of natural ecosystems.

**This summary is based on a full CCRI report about the communities' conservation resilience assessment in Kyrgyzstan, which can be found here: <http://globalforestcoalition.org/community-conservation-resilience-initiative-ccri-full-country-report/>**

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# Sabah, Malaysia

## Introduction

The Community Conservation Resilience Initiative (CCRI) was undertaken with five villages in Sabah. These emblematic sites were chosen as they reflect diverse land use practices that are commonly observed by their respective communities.

Sg. Eloi is in the Pitas district, specifically in the mangrove areas at the mouth of the Pitas River, and community members are working to protect, restore and apply sustainable use of their community mangrove forest. Alutok is in the Tenom district, parts of which are located within a commercial forest reserve, the Sipitang Forest Reserve, and the community is working to secure and highlight their traditional practices of forest management. Kiau is located at the foot of Mount

Kinabalu in the district of Kota Belud and community members are now actively seeking formal recognition for their lands from the government, and the revival of their traditional practices. Mengkawago is in the district of Tongod, the whole of it within a commercial forest reserve, the Mangkuwagu Forest Reserve, and community members are trying to secure the community forest for the continuity of their traditional practices. Terian is in the district of Penampang, on the mountains along the Crocker Range. The core village settlement is located right next to the boundary of the Crocker Range Park but parts of the broader territory are overlapped by the Park. They are working to strengthen their community watershed management system.

With independent funding from the Commonwealth Foundation, this three-year project (2015-2017) aims to increase the resilience of the Indigenous Peoples' customary institutions and natural resource stewardship systems through constructive engagement with decision-making processes. The project involves documentation of customary institutions and natural resource stewardship systems, strengthening of local and international networks, and engagements with policy- and decision-makers to improve implementation of supportive laws and to promote legal and institutional reform.



Mapping community resources. PACOS Trust



Alutok village, Sabah. PACOS Trust



# Community Conservation Initiatives and Ecological Impact

People in the Tombonuo ethnic group from Sungai Elo, Pitas, depend on their mangrove forests for protein, fuelwood and medicinal plants. In addition, the mangrove area is a place for spiritual purposes. The community identifies and manages their conservation areas based on traditional customary uses and practices.

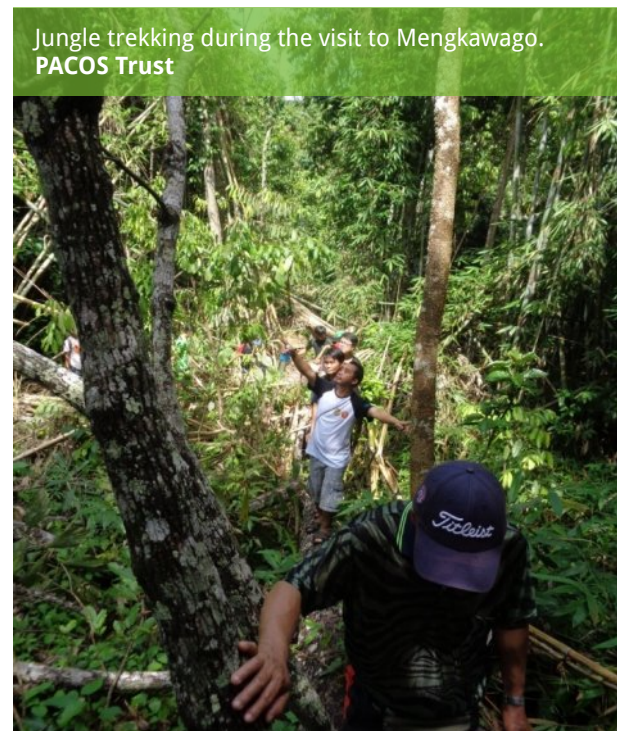
The Murut Tahol of Alutok, Ulu Tomani, is a community of forest-dependent hunter-gatherers, and they take special care of their forest. For example, they practice *tavol* in preparation for large and important occasions such as weddings. *Tavol* prohibits hunting and resource gathering in specific areas in the forest for specific time periods, ensuring resources are not depleted and preventing conflict and competition in the community.

Located at the foothills of Mt. Kinabalu, the Kiau community forest conservation area is a 1,024-acre forest area set aside by the community as a heritage area. The Dusun community is focused on revitalising traditional forest practices such as the use of Dusun forest terms (*boros puru*) and giving respect to the forest spirits (*mamatang/mamason*). To conserve this forest, they have also formulated a protocol to govern its use.

In Mengkawago, the forest-dependent Sungai Rumanau community is one of the few communities that still maintains knowledge of harvesting wild honey from bees that establish their hives in a particular tree species (*Menggaris*). The community has been documenting their traditional knowledge of wild honey collection within their community forest area,

which they have also been attempting to protect. By harvesting honey sustainably, the community also protects the surrounding forest area, providing broader environmental benefits.

The Dusun community in Terian lives on the hillside and are mainly farmers who grow paddy (rice) and cash crops such as rubber. They depend on the Terian River for their livelihood and have a micro-hydro turbine to generate electricity and a gravity-fed water system to provide clean water. They are actively managing and maintaining the condition of the river and watershed in their village.





# Internal and External Threats

A large-scale shrimp farming project in Sungai Eloi is clearing mangroves vital to the community's livelihoods and the surrounding environment. More than 2,000 acres have already been cleared since 2012. The Environment Protection Department approved the environmental impact assessment and the company plans to clear another 1,000 acres despite protests from the communities and certain NGOs. The community leaders are also facing threats—part of a growing global trend of threats towards indigenous leaders and environmental defenders.

Part of Alutok and its community forest are located in a Class II Forest Reserve and are now held by a company concessionaire (Sabah Forest Industry), making the community's land tenure insecure. They face threats of encroachment, as they have no rights to the forests, and the prospect of losing their community forest through deforestation and monoculture planting of *Acacia mangium*. The wild flora and fauna in the forest area would also be depleted.

Initially, the communities of Kiau used the forests in their customary territory as hunting grounds

where they could forage and hunt. After the state government designated most of these forests as a state park in 1964, the communities lost ownership and, subsequently, their traditional practices of hunting and gathering were prohibited. Although the forests were excised from the park in the 1980s, legally they are still State land and the community thus still faces insecure land tenure. There are also concerns about proposed tourism development with the area being open to land title applications by interested companies.

Mengkawago has been included within a Class II Forest Reserve since 1984. Like in Alutok, the community has no governing power over the forest area and it can be logged by the concessionaire. Other human activities (such as hunting) within the

Forest Reserve are prohibited without a licence, which affects the community's access to forest resources and their traditional forest-dependent practices.

While Terian is fairly isolated and has poor access to gravel roads, it is among the nine villages in danger of being submerged or relocated by development of the proposed Kaiduan Dam (12 km<sup>2</sup> would be submerged and 350 km<sup>2</sup> gazetted as water catchment reserve). Even before the proposed dam, Terian struggled to get recognition of the parts of their territory, including hunting grounds, which overlapped with a state park (Crocker Range Park).

Efforts have been made by the community to replant affected areas with mangrove trees. PACOS Trust





# Potential Solution-Oriented Approaches, Strategies and Policies

## Sungai Eloi, Pitas

The community is promoting the environmental, social and cultural importance of the mangroves and their management and protection, and is appealing to the company, state government and related agencies to stop the clearing of the mangroves and assist with restoration. Community members are also raising awareness about their struggles at regional and international meetings related to human rights and biodiversity conservation.

## Alutok, Ulu Tomani

In Alutok, they will organise workshops and community meetings to form a *tavol* committee to raise awareness amongst the community and youth on the importance of *tavol*, and increase exposure and understanding of laws relating to the preservation and conservation of *tavol*. There are also plans to organise trainings and exposures for the *tavol* committee's capacity in documentation and to consolidate all of their training and skills. They also hope that by promoting *tavol* as a good practice for forest stewardship, it can be recognised and supported by the government and key decision-

makers, leading to their community forest being excised from the Forest Reserve—or at the very least to have governance and management of the community forest devolved to them within the Forest Reserve.

## Kiau, Kota Belud

The community is currently trying to gain recognition for their conservation area by working together with Sabah Parks and Ecolinc (an existing project aiming to increase connectivity between Crocker Range Park and Kinabalu Park, including through recognition of ICCAs) and applying for a Native Reserve title in the hopes of protecting the forest in accordance

with their traditional practices. They want the government to recognise the community forest reserve, and to do so, they plan to further document

Mengkawago community members harvesting honey. PACOS Trust



Stakes made from bamboo are used to make ladders for climbing trees. PACOS Trust





their practices, update their community protocol and have meetings with relevant government agencies.

To get to the bee hives at the top of a tree, community members use ladders made out of bamboo.  
Tony Allison/PACOS Trust



## Mengkawago, Tongod

The community of Mengkawago hopes to show the importance and multiple values of the forest area and secure legal recognition and protection of their customary lands, practices and livelihoods. To date, the community has successfully completed their community map and community profile and has documented their historical sites. They are also in the process of documenting their traditional practice of honey collection as an example of community forest stewardship. The community is hopeful that by documenting this

traditional activity, they could reach a formal agreement with the Forestry Department as a form of mutually beneficial conservation of the forest area. This agreement could also pave the way to addressing existing tensions between the Forestry Department and the community over agroforestry activities (Lasimbang, 2016).

## Terian, Ulu Papar

Terian will appoint a working committee, organise awareness campaigns and have dialogues with relevant stakeholders to show that they are stewards of the watersheds and surrounding forests—which are also part of the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. The community hopes that plans for the Kaiduan Dam will be reconsidered if not halted altogether and their traditional protocols recognised. Efforts to establish a Community Use Zone with Sabah Parks have yet to come to fruition, though this area is now recognised as

a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. There could be an opportunity to engage with UNESCO over the concerns with the dam, though more pervasive challenges remain with government funding and approval processes.

View of Mount Kinabalu. PACOS Trust





# Preliminary Conclusions and Recommendations

The communities involved have demonstrated their resilience and ability to be stewards of their customary territories, but significant challenges remain that threaten their territories and practices in both the short- and long-term. Consolidating their community protocols will provide a clear basis for targeted dialogues and negotiation with government agencies and other stakeholders. Currently there are existing provisions in policy and legal frameworks that can be implemented by the government. However, challenges must be overcome to ensure the objectives can be achieved, including the elimination of possible conflicts of interest, appropriate recognition for various forms of communities' customary laws and stewardship systems, ensuring equitable governance and effective management of natural resources in areas overlapping with communities' territories, overcoming challenges with coordination and jurisdiction between government agencies, and promoting culturally appropriate research and education (Lasimbang, 2016).

A common recommendation across all of the communities is to seek recognition of their community protocols from the Native Court, especially where the state legal system has fallen short in its recognition of customary law and traditional knowledge and practices.

## Sg. Eloi, Pitas

Any further development of the shrimp farm should be halted to prevent further damage to the mangroves and the project developers should pay for restoration of the mangroves destroyed. The Environment Protection Department should retract the environmental impact assessment clearance for the aquaculture project and undertake a public review, with full and effective participation of the villages in that area. An independent review should be undertaken of the impacts of the federal and state governments' 'poverty eradication' programmes (such as the shrimp farming project). The community should be allowed to determine what form of development is appropriate to their way of life. Another legal option being considered is to work with the Drainage and Irrigation Department to recognise Water Conservation Areas in the community's mangrove areas.

## Alutok, Ulu Tomani

The Sabah Forestry Department should excise the community forest from the Class II Forest Reserve or reclassify it as a domestic forest reserve (Class III) and devolve governance and management responsibilities to the community, based on indigenous knowledge and practices. This arrangement should not impose any requirements to clear the forest under the guise of 'poverty eradication'. At the very least, a co-management agreement should be established with the community for the community forest.

## Kiau, Kota Belud

Sabah Parks should continue to assist with efforts to recognise the community's conservation practices but should do so in ways that are tailored to each community in the Ecolinc (corridor) area, including by considering the pros and cons of Native Reserves and other forms of legal recognition more fully with the community before proceeding with gazettelement. Sabah Parks and



Community ritual to ask for help from the forest spirits to protect the mangroves from encroachment and destruction. **Sudin Ipung/G6**



companies interested in tourism operations in the area should also assist the community in setting up eco-tourism initiatives in accordance with the community's protocol and development plans. Another option being considered is to work with the Sabah Forestry Department to demarcate and gazette their community forest reserve in accordance with the community's protocol.

### Mengkawago, Tongod

Similar to Alutok, the Sabah Forestry Department should excise the community's traditional territory from the Forest Reserve or at least reclassify it into a Class III Forest Reserve and devolve governance and management responsibilities to the community, based on indigenous knowledge and practices. At the very least, the Forestry Department, concessionaire and community should establish a co-management agreement to allow the community secure access to forest products for their subsistence use and to protect

the trees on which the honeybees depend. The community should also be compensated with land agreed by the community that is of relatively equal size, quality and fertility as what as that cleared by the concessionaire. An additional option being considered to support their livelihoods is to work with the Forestry Department's Social Forestry Unit to assist the community to establish a local enterprise for the harvested honey.



Group photo in the Mengkawago community forest. PACOS Trust



## Testimony

"The mangrove is our home. It was devastated by the shrimp farm. We have no support from the leaders to defend our land. In 2012, we were threatened when we tried to hunt for food in our traditional hunting grounds. We are severely affected without our traditional foods. There are fewer *lukan* (shells), fish, and crabs. Some days, there are none. Land applications in Kampung Kuyu were cancelled in favour of the farm. We want our ICCA to continue in our community. We are restoring our mangroves on our own, and we want them untouched. We will die defending our land."

**Olon Somoi, 46 years old, Kampung Sungai Elo, Pitas**



Olon Somoi.  
Beverly Joeman/GFC

### Terian, Ulu Papar

The state government should immediately halt plans to build the Kaiduan Dam and identify alternatives for addressing the city's water supply needs, including by retrofitting pipes to stop leakages. Sabah Parks and the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Environment should play a more active role in

supporting the communities in Ulu Papar to resist the dam and should leverage the designation of the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve to recognise the communities' contributions to water catchment stewardship and biodiversity conservation more broadly, and the need for sustainable economic activities in the area. This could include legally recognising Water

Conservation Areas and Community Use Zones. The community's watershed management protocols should be formally recognised and supported by all relevant government agencies.

**This summary is based on a full CCRI report about the communities' conservation resilience assessment in Malaysia, which can be found here: <http://globalforestcoalition.org/community-conservation-resilience-initiative-ccri-full-country-report/>**

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# Nepal

## Introduction

The Federation of Community Forestry Users in Nepal (FECOFUN) conducted the CCRI assessment with communities in the Barandabhar corridor, the Basanta corridor and the Panchase landscape in Nepal. Community forests in these areas, covering about 12,000 ha (DoF, 2016), are managed by 215 legally recognised Community Forest User Groups. The user groups have played a critical role in conserving the

generation and livelihoods (MoFSC, 2014). The social mix is heterogeneous with more than 45 ethnic groups, but in general the majority are Indigenous Peoples who have rich traditional knowledge and customary sustainable use practices relating to the management of community forests (MoFSC, 2015).

The Community Forest User Groups' rights of tenure over the forestlands

Forests, but in practice Indigenous Peoples are struggling to have their informal practices and other customary rights related to forest use—such as collecting non-timber forest products, shifting cultivation and grazing—recognised in the forestry legislation and forest management plans (NEFIN, 2016).

The CCRI assessment process and tools included interviews, plenary

A community forest managed by community forest user groups in Dolakha district. **Dil Raj Khanal/FECOFUN**



Members of a community forest user group are managing their community forest in Nawalparasi district. **Nawalparasi FECOFUN**

biodiversity and ecosystems in these areas.

These corridors and landscapes are socioculturally diverse and represent diverse ecosystems that Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs) depend on for their income

and resources are recognised by the Forest Act 1993 and Forest Regulation 1995 in the form of community forests. Some of the IPLCs' customary practices relating to forest resources have been integrated into the formally approved Forest Management Plans of the Community

workshops, focus group discussions, individual story-telling and a literature review. Some of the participatory practices were adapted during the assessment based on the recommendations of the user group members, agencies and stakeholders.



# Community conservation initiatives and impacts

According to Nepal's forest legislation (Forest Act 1993 and Forest Regulation 1995), the national forest can be managed in five different ways (community forest, leasehold forest, religious forest, government-managed forest and protected forest). Community forestry is supposed to be a nationally prioritised forest management regime, but in practice government agencies are reluctant to recognise this. The local communities, through the user groups, have a legal right to claim their adjoining national forests to manage as additional community forest based on this legislation. However, the Nepalese government has been reluctant to hand the national forests in these areas over to local communities as community forests, because they are a main

source of revenue for central government, which auctions timber and non-timber forest products (FECOFUN, 2015).

However, after various advocacy campaigns by the local communities, including in these corridors and landscapes, the government's District Forest Offices eventually handed over the majority of the national forest to Community Forest User Groups as community forests.

The user groups have made significant contributions to reducing deforestation and forest degradation through natural regeneration processes that promote ecosystem regeneration and are resulting in an increase in wildlife species in Nepal (MoFSC, 2016). They are conserving

biodiversity and eco-systems, including in the new areas of national forest that have been handed over. For example, the communities' efforts in the Panchase landscape have reduced soil erosion, landslides and floods and contributed to conserving the Phewa Lake of Pokhara valley, which is highly important for the promotion of eco-tourism in Nepal (UNDP, 2015). Likewise, the community forests have contributed to controlling the encroachment of forests for other purposes. However, local communities have been negatively impacted by the expansion of protected forest areas by central government in different parts of Nepal, including in the Barandabhar and Basanta corridors.

## External and internal threats

The main external threat has been the Nepalese government's already mentioned reluctance to hand national forest over to the Community Forest User Groups. The local Community Forest User Groups have been putting pressure on the government to hand them over and have largely been successful in this.

Furthermore, the above-mentioned CCRI corridors and landscape were declared as protected forests in 2012, despite strong protest from local communities against this centralised decision from the government, which prioritised the protection of the forests over securing communities' tenure rights over them. The more protection-oriented provisions in the forest management plans for the community forests in these particular

areas mean that the local communities are unable to exercise their rights even though they are legally held.

Internal weaknesses include gaps with respect to gender equity and social exclusion in the executive committees of the Community Forest User Groups. This is despite the fact that some strong and beneficial policy provisions intended to ensure gender equity and social inclusion are included in the Community Forestry Development Programme Guideline (Revised 2015). This is because of many people's limited awareness about their legal rights with respect to community forestry, which results in socially marginalised groups benefiting less from community forests.

It is also the case that even though 35% of the income from a community forest needs to be allocated for pro-poor forest dependent households in order to help them conduct income-generating activities, some user groups are allocating lower amounts in practice. The forest management plans of the community forests need to be reviewed to secure the rights of poor households over forest resources, and equitable sharing of the benefits generated from community forestry.

# Solution-oriented approaches and strategies

The Community Forest User Groups and their federation, FECOFUN, have been advocating for measures to address these threats and major issues, with a campaign to protect community rights over community forests at community level. The CCRI assessment has added value and supported these campaigns in an organised and effective way, including through its parallel legal review, and a strategic planning meeting of the central FECOFUN at the national level. The following strategic approaches have been designed to address the above-mentioned and other associated threats:

**Local campaign for community forestry:** The Forest Act 1993 recognises and gives top priority to community forest, and local communities have developed a long-term advocacy campaign to demand community forest in those areas where the remaining national forest has not been handed over as a community forest.

**Legal capacity building for securing tenure rights:** FECOFUN has developed a plan for legal capacity building for Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities to help secure the community rights which are guaranteed under Nepal's

preferential rights to local communities.

**Revision of forest management plans:** The government expects each Community Forest User Group to review their forest management plan five years after approval, (although they should be able to review whenever they wish under the Forest Act 1993). The local FECOFUNs associated with each of the 753 Community Forest User Groups in Nepal have developed a short- to long-term strategy to mobilise resources from local governments, government agencies and the user groups to facilitate the revision of forest management plans in such a way that they recognise, support and promote the customary rights of IPLCs in community forest as well as other forest management regimes.

**Integration of gender equity and social inclusion in community forestry:** During the 'national level workshop on gender equity and social inclusion in community forest' FECOFUN and the user groups developed a strategic plan to revise their bylaws and forest management plans for the integration of gender equity and social inclusion in community forestry.

**Equitable sharing of benefits generated from community forestry:** This is one of the critical issues when it comes to securing benefits from the community forests for poor households. As a result of the campaigns, government agencies, local governments and stakeholders including FECOFUN are giving a high priority to maintaining the equitable sharing of benefits generated from community forestry.

forest legislation, because the local communities still have limited legal knowledge about community forest law and other legal provisions which give priority and

Community members are assessing the threats to community conservation during a community assessment.  
Dil Raj Khanal/FECOFUN



Women members of a community forest user group are collecting fern shoots in Morang district. FECOFUN Morang





## Testimony

"We have spent a great deal of our time over the last twenty years conserving the seventeen community forests in this Barandabhara corridor, but the government is still hesitating about handing over the core areas of this forest to us as a community forest. Political leaders have often tried to obstruct us by going to the leadership of Community Forest Users Groups, but we have established a practice of equal leadership of women in community forest based on policy guidance and our bylaw."

**Asha Lopchan, member of the auditing committee of Chaturmukhi Community Forest User Group and Barandabhar protected Forest Council, Chitwan district**



## Preliminary recommendations

On the basis of the findings from the CCRI assessment in Nepal, fulfilling the following preliminary recommendations will strengthen community conservation:

- The remaining national forest in these three areas needs to be handed over to the local communities as community forests, so that they can control their further encroachment and restore degraded forest.
- The central government should respect the forest tenure rights of local communities as recognised in the forest legislation. Previous decisions that contradict the forest legislation should be cancelled.
- Government agencies, local governments and stakeholders including development partners should be required to provide technical and other needed support services to local communities to facilitate the revision of their forest management plan.
- The Community Forest User Groups need to revise their forest management plans and other annual plans and programmes to integrate gender equity and social inclusion into community forestry and secure the equitable sharing of benefits generated from community forests for poor households.
- FECOFUN needs to strengthen its local FECOFUN branches to sustain advocacy campaigns at the community level and secure community rights over forest resources.
- The legal capacity of the user groups needs to be strengthened through a legal awareness programme at the community level to empower communities to advocate for the expansion of community forests.
- There are many success stories showing how the Community Forest User Groups' work at the community level is instrumental to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, and local communities' ambition to share their success stories in international policy spaces should be supported and facilitated.

**This summary is based on a full CCRI report about the communities' conservation resilience assessment in Nepal, which can be found here: <http://globalforestcoalition.org/community-conservation-resilience-initiative-ccri-full-country-report/>**

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# Sri Lanka

## Introduction

The three communities involved in the CCRI assessment were a community of traditional snake-bite healers and a traditional rice farming community living in Kegalle district of the Sabaragamuwa province, and a community of traditional 'Kitul' tappers from Central province.

All the communities live in the great Mahaweli and Maoya river basins and are associated with ecologically-friendly and sustainable traditional production in the Kandyan Forest Gardens, which stem from the Kandyan kings' era (before 1454 A.D.). The communities are descended from sun and nature-worshipping pre-historic tribes, living in the lands they inherited from their ancestors. They follow Theravada Buddhist traditions now, although traces of sun and nature worshipping rituals are still found. One legend behind their origin is that all four tribes *Yakka*, *Naga*, *Asura/Deva* and *Raksha* embraced Lord Buddha's doctrine and formed the Sinhalese nation. [1,2] The three communities consider themselves to be descendants from these indigenous tribes.

These inhabited lands and the whole ecosystem are critical for the communities, conserving a vast diversity of medicinal plants, Kitul trees, traditional rice varieties and

Kitul tapping. Nirmanee Development Foundation/GFC



Mr. Tikiri Banda, a leader of traditional snake bite healers, with a group of visitors. Nimal Hewanila/GFC



other raw materials for their traditional occupations. The communities have a great repository of traditional knowledge that is associated with their customary occupations and conserved mainly through oral tradition.

Although their homesteads are scattered and mostly privately owned, families are traditionally integrated within their respective communities. They have customary sharing practices related to the reciprocal sharing of land-associated resources, labour, draught animal power etc, but these are being

rapidly eroded. They follow a traditional solar and lunar calendar for decision-making.

The status, threats and trends of the communities' conservation resilience were assessed through visits and meetings, and by participating in their social activities. Nirmanee Development Foundation and IPLCs (Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities) guided the assessments together.



# Community Conservation Resilience Initiative

In Sri Lanka, traditional and customary practices benefit both biodiversity and human health, but the communities face many threats. For example, the traditional snakebite healers in Kegalle district maintain biologically diverse home gardens as repositories of the medicinal plants needed for their treatments. Freshly harvested plants

produce sweet syrup from the sap of its flowers, and use its stem as a source of timber and edible flour (which is made from the pith). The first flower is not tapped, but given to the gods in a ritual of thanks.

The rice growing community prefers growing Traditional Rice Varieties (TRVs) over modern high yielding

another, their livelihoods are imperiled. In general the open market economy has made people more individualistic, more likely to live alone, and less likely to trust each other. All this has had a significant negative impact on the communities' customary sharing practices. For example the erosion of seed sharing in rice farming and the



Kitul tapping. Nirmanee Development Foundation/GFC

are preferred for their recipes, with rituals often governing the extraction of the medicine and conservation of the plants. They also acknowledge snakes' right to live. As healers, they do not kill animals and abstain from eating meat and eggs as a taboo to sustain their healing power. Kandyan forest gardens are resilient ecosystems, and the presence of the snakes, which are often top predators, indicates the gardens' richness and diversity.

The Kitul palm tree (*Caryota urens*) is also an indicator of a healthy ecosystem. It grows naturally, with its seeds being disseminated by tree-dependent fauna such as civets and the Green Imperial Pigeon. Local communities tap the Kitul tree to

varieties of this staple grain, for a number of reasons. TRVs are taller, produce more biomass, are rich in trace minerals, and need no agrochemicals to be applied. They also add more organic matter to the soil and boost soil microbes. There are more than 100 different TRVs conserved. [3] The women labour in the fields to assure a bountiful harvest, but modernisation threatens their activities. However, because the heavy use of agrochemicals on modern rice strains has created a serious environmental and health problem, Sri Lanka has set a trend of gradually returning to traditional rice farming.

All the communities are similarly threatened because, in one way or

disappearance of mutual help were identified as key internal threats. Elders observed that people are not following traditional rituals and that this is affecting the communities badly: without blessings there can be no bountiful returns.

Loss of traditional knowledge was identified as a key threat as well. For example, snakebite healers are finding it difficult to pass on their traditional knowledge, as poverty and lower living standards push people towards urban areas.

The changes to the communities' lifestyles are dramatic, and this is especially so for the women. Rural women who used to have safe jobs earning a substantial living are now

Green Imperial Pigeon feeding on Kitul fruits. Buddika Mawella



A civet, which also disperses Kitul seed. Buddika Mawella



more likely to be providing unskilled labour to Middle Eastern businesses to provide a basic living for their family. It was also observed that the communities are traditionally not business-oriented and their lack of ambition puts them at a disadvantage in the market economy.

Legal and regulatory barriers were also identified as key external

threats, especially policies that are not designed with the communities' occupations in mind and which often give priority to western knowledge over and above traditional knowledge.

For instance, Kitul syrup is often regarded as a healthier alternative to cane sugar, [4] but it is gradually being replaced by sugar in people's

diets. The Kitul tappers face several challenges, including police harassment and allegations of toddy (alcohol) production, inadequate support and protection for their traditional knowledge, and the absence of a system to regulate the quality of Kitul syrup so that adulterated versions are not sold by others.

The traditional snakebite healers also complain of inadequate support especially compared with the governmental support enjoyed by their allopathic medicine counterparts. Allopathic treatments are costly and have severe side effects on the kidneys and liver. Yet the traditional healers face a cumbersome registration procedure, and there are no supporting validation procedures for the healers' bio-cultural healing products. As a result the healers do not trust the authorities.

Women's labour is critical to assure a bountiful rice harvest.  
Nimal Hewanila/GFC



## Conclusions and recommendations

The above analysis shows that a holistic solution-oriented approach to support biodiversity conservation needs to prioritise communities' concerns, securing recognition and encouraging appreciation of the communities' customary use practices and traditional knowledge. For example, the biodiversity-friendly behaviour of Traditional Rice Variety-growing farmers needs to be recognised and further encouraged and supported, including through the revival of non-market reciprocal seed and knowledge sharing networks. A rural lifestyle museum and community-level seed banks could help to maintain on-farm traditional

rice diversity and associated biocultural diversity.

Strong, well-focused government policies are critical. For example, although the snake bite healers are wary and distrustful of government authorities and the currently cumbersome registration procedures they face, they seek official recognition and affordable validation and certification procedures in relation to their traditions and biocultural healing products—such as '*sarpa viasa gala*' (snake venom-removing medicinal stones)—to help increase their incomes. The Kitul tappers want to be similarly recognised for their contribution to

biodiversity conservation, and the fact that their products are healthier for consumers than sugar. This would involve removing legal and regulatory barriers, and establishing regulatory tools, such as affordable validation and certification procedures including fines to address adulteration issues. To create an enabling environment a Task Force should be established to address policy gaps together with the active involvement of communities, identifying time bound targets and outcomes.

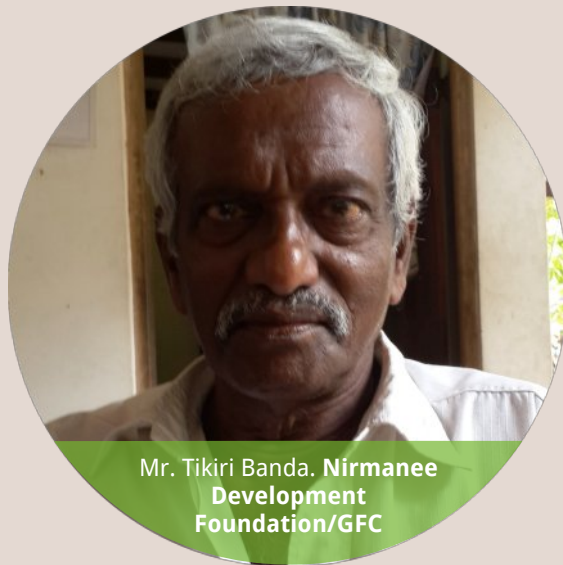
One important area to consider is the role of related traditional knowledge and livelihoods in the context of



## Testimony

"Our healing techniques and worldview are different. I inherited sacred healing knowledge from my father, which was taught to him by his father. This knowledge has been shared down through the generations, and enables me to fulfill my spiritual goal as a Buddhist. I have healed thousands of patients, some of whom were even unconscious. We need to save humans and the snakes as well. All the medicinal plants I need are grown in my home garden, and some of them are very rare. We are self-reliant and not a burden to government. I would like to hand over our treasure to future generations but finding a good student is a challenge."

**Traditional snake bite healer Mr. Tikiri Banda from Mabopitiya, Kegalle**



Mr. Tikiri Banda. **Nirmanee Development Foundation/GFC**

novel issues and challenges such as climate change. There is also a need to launch programmes that couple external actors' conservation priorities and health concerns with community aspirations. Funding agencies should prioritise community conservation resilience activities, and related collective social and cultural actions.

Empowering people with tools like Biocultural Community Protocols (BCPs), and synergising the communities' needs with global and national priorities can result in win-win outcomes. Mapping of collective biocultural heritage by communities can help arrest the erosion of traditional knowledge and mobilise resources. As the Sri Lanka National Focal Point for the Convention on Biological Diversity is currently preparing to sign the Nagoya Protocol on sharing the benefits from

biodiversity these protocols are likely to be particularly useful. The CBD's Rutzolijirisaxik Guidelines for the Repatriation of Traditional Knowledge are important as well in this respect. [5]

It is similarly important to engage communities in global rights-based knowledge sharing platforms. For example there are vibrant global discourses about community level climate change and disaster resilience underway. With the advancement of information and communication technologies more such opportunities are likely to develop.

In general an enabling environment to encourage the development of and investment in community conservation within a revitalised rural economy would be beneficial. For example it would be desirable to

encourage the use of technologies that reduce the risks associated with climbing Kitul trees for tapping, as well as protecting and promoting the tappers' rituals and customary practices under Article 10(c) of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Facilitating gender equity is also key, including reviving traditional occupations in which the social roles of women and men were more valued and respected.

Finally, innovative tools like Facebook pages could be used to attract and engage younger generations in community conservation initiatives; and the concept of positive reciprocity could be reawakened including by applying best practices from elsewhere, such as Local Exchange Trading Systems (LETS).

**This summary is based on a full CCRI report about the communities' conservation resilience assessment in Sri Lanka, which can be found here: <http://globalforestcoalition.org/community-conservation-resilience-initiative-ccri-full-country-report/>**

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# Tajikistan

## Introduction

The Community Conservation Resilience Initiative assessment in Tajikistan is based on discussions and debates with six rural communities, who face various challenges. The six participating communities—Jonbakht, Sarikhosor, Dektur, Mulokoni, Dashtijum and Obigarm—are all located in a region with unique mountain and forest ecosystems, which are mainly rich in wild fruits (such as apples and plums) and nuts,

replaced by pastures, although local communities are striving to preserve their traditional livelihood techniques.

Tajikistan has relatively effective and comprehensive legal frameworks relating to biodiversity conservation, access to land, and agricultural land use. However, lack of legal knowledge and cases of corruption have resulted in biased implementation of the

For reasons like these a series of conflicts related to the management of lands, forests, grasslands and water has been escalating over the last few decades. The resilience of local communities is being undermined, resulting in poverty, labour migration, and even increased dependence on forest resources and ecosystems in general.

The assessment included detailed studies, field visits, polling and consultations with each community, a capacity building workshop for community leaders in the city of Kulob, and a national workshop in



New apple variety inoculation with wild relatives.  
Noosfera/GFC



Harvesting fruit from wild mulberry trees in the mountains.  
Noosfera/GFC



Local varieties yield a good harvest.  
Noosfera/GFC

and where the local communities are preserving their traditional livelihood techniques. It is a strategically important area, which is characterised by a dense population, high rates of population growth and high dependence of local communities on natural resources and ecosystems for food and income. Most of the natural vegetation has been altered, much of it being

existing laws and regulations. There are also issues relating to access to resources. For example there is a protected area dedicated to tourism and recreation, which is located close to two of the local communities (Sarikhosor and Dashtijum), where the Forestry Agency harvests dried fruits and nuts. However, the local population has no access to these resources.

Dushanbe in May 2016. Various social groups (young people, women, men and elderly people) were covered by the assessment, so that it could take the different groups' opinions into account. For example, the CCRI found that women are often unable to access and benefit from forests to collect non-timber forest products such as nuts, fruits and herbs.



# Community Conservation Resilience in Tajikistan

The CCRI underlined that local communities are usually highly motivated to keep wild nature in a good state, so long as the local situation is not jeopardised by external economic and social factors. Traditional knowledge and practices are tailored to local ecosystems, and include respect for wild animals and bans on hunting or collecting medicinal plants in cases of their depletion. This helps the local wildlife to re-generate.

In Sarikhosor and Dashtijum some 20 local varieties of mulberry are carefully preserved, and mulberry products are very popular. The berries serve as food for humans and domestic animals, the leaves for producing domestic silk, and the wood for carving utensils and musical instruments.

The Obigarm community maintains a practice of preserving local healing and thermal waters, which involves keeping local water sources clean, including by prohibiting cattle from drinking from or trampling them, and protecting them from erosion by planting trees. Specific threats identified include unregulated

grazing from other areas, especially in local forests, demographic growth and excessive collection of non-timber forest products.

The Mulokoni community is rather remote and only accessible by road in the non-rainy season. Rich biodiversity, good soils and numerous local water springs support a large diversity of local economic activity. Local varieties of cereals and fruit trees are preserved, and grown in long-established and legend-endowed areas. However the planned construction of a year-round road may lead to a massive inflow of tourists, forest users and even hunters. The local community want to have a say in plans relating to the road construction and the use of nature.

Jonbakht is located in a rich mountain forest ecosystem in a favourable climatic zone. In the Soviet period a huge but never completed agro-industrial complex was built and local communities were resettled in the valleys. Now they are returning to their ancestral lands up in the mountains, planting gardens and orchards. They have been custodians of their landscapes, and their

ecological knowledge and cultural norms have played a significant role in conserving natural resources. They value communal work and help each other when the need arises, for example, in cultivating food and building houses. However population growth is increasing pressure on the local environment.

Collectively, the participants emphasised that the political stresses of the last decades have resulted in the loss of traditional nature management systems by local communities and that they, in turn, have become ever poorer, depressed and uncertain about the future.

Representatives of the communities informed us about significant social and biological effects, which threaten their sustainability and their ability to continue living in a way that allows for respect and conservation of their local ecosystems and biodiversity. On the whole, innovative methods from other continents do not work in the unique mountainous areas of Tajikistan.

Threats to sustainability were identified in all the communities' assessments. In general, mountain



In the spring girls collect edible herbs in the mountains. Noosfera/GFC



Deforestation leads to the destruction of slopes. Noosfera/GFC

ecosystems experience heavy stresses nowadays, from both anthropogenic activities and natural disasters. Existing systems of administrative regulation and management result in the development of lands and the destruction of sacred forests in violation of the laws of nature. Government programmes also contradict each other. For example, the Forest Programme aims to plant and maintain forests, but the Agricultural Program aims to exploit territories.

In the Obigarm community specific threats identified included an

unregulated grazing system, including grazing by cattle from other districts in local communities' forest areas. Demographic growth and the excessive collection of non-timber forest resources are also major problems. Thus, the areas traditionally managed by local communities and their sacred places are being lost. Pastures are also being inefficiently managed. All this induces negative impacts on the economic, cultural and spiritual life of the local population.

A further threat concerns the relocation of communities, which was raised by the local communities of

Jonbakht and Sarikhosor. During the Soviet period communities were resettled to the valleys. Now they are returning back to their ancestral lands, up in the mountainous areas as described above. As a result, overpopulation and the increased degradation of lands are being observed. Forests are being cut down and the lands where they stood are being used to grow cereals, create gardens or as pastures. Local communities are losing their habitats, the culture of their ancestors and their rights to sustainable livelihoods.

## Preliminary Findings and Recommendations

Based on the results of participatory meetings, a draft summary of identified conflicts, needs, resources and solutions was prepared. A key conclusion is that the communities' resilience and their ability to continue managing and conserving their local environment could be significantly enhanced. In general, ecosystem recovery, forest regeneration and sustainable agriculture are the key priorities. Local energy generation

projects should be developed in collaboration with communities, supporting them with financial resources, trainings and institutions.

The CCRI included a dialogue with women and young people. They are also key actors in the recovery of communities' knowledge, practices, conservation capacities and resilience. Women from all of the communities said that they want to

be able to prevent further encroachment into their lands. They would like to incorporate systems of nonconventional renewable energy (NCRE) at the community level including solar, wind and bio-digestion technologies. They also focused on the importance of agroecology and agricultural advice from specialists, and trainings for women.



The healthy mountain ecosystems of Baldjuan. **Noosfera/GFC**



Traditional household. **Tatiana Novikova/GFC**



## Testimony

Our rich mountains provide resources for our livelihoods and for the market. We use nuts, herbs, and shrub fruits from our forests. In order to have a good harvest from our gardens we graft our apple, pear, cherry and plum trees with wild trees from the forest. This also gives different properties and tastes to our fruits.

I am glad to keep my father's covenant and return to the land of our forefathers. In the middle of the last century, our community was resettled against its will to the Vakhsh valley to plant cotton. Now we are back. To prevent this from happening again, today we want to enjoy the right for land and natural resources. But at the moment we can only rent these, and, for this reason, our young people often leave the country as labour migrants. Our forests, located close to the road, are cut down by casual travelers. As a result, rainwater streams and mudflows often wash off the paths and we lose fertile soil from our plots of land, which are located on steep mountain slopes. Our goal is to restore forests and ecosystems around our community and ensure our sustainable livelihoods. We want to transmit all these values to our children to ensure that the cycle of community life continues.



Mr. Khoja Saidov and his son Mirzo  
from the community of  
Jonbakht. Noosfera/  
GFC

### Mr. Khoja Saidov, community of Jonbakht

All communities want to access their territories, rivers and forests freely, to practice diverse peasant agriculture and traditional practices, and to promote education about sustainability values and practices. Traditional knowledge and customary practices need to be promoted or revitalised and there needs to be support for economic livelihoods, as particularly noted by the women. The youths are also eager to document traditional knowledge.

Since natural pastures are severely degraded due to overgrazing, the

communities of Obigarm and Jonbakht are also studying the issues of managing pasture resources and regulating farm livestock numbers. The communities of Dashtijum, Sarikhosor and Mulokoni want to be engaged in horticulture growing local varieties of plants. They also need support to organise a mini-workshop about processing organic products made from local fruits, and gaining access to the market to sell their products.

In general the capacity and influence of local community leaders needs to

be improved, and consultations and legal advisory services for local authorities are needed to mediate conflicts and disputes over natural resources, especially around access to pastures and forests.

Support for all of these initiatives could help to revive resilient communities and ensure community conservation.

**This summary is based on a full CCRI report about the communities' conservation resilience assessment in Tajikistan, which can be found here: <http://globalforestcoalition.org/community-conservation-resilience-initiative-ccri-full-country-report/>**



# Tanzania

## Introduction

The Community Conservation Resilience Initiative in Tanzania began in 2017, and was undertaken with support from Envirocare Tanzania.

The Wiri, Sanya and Lawate communities in Siha District, and the Ngasini community in Kahe, in Moshi Rural District, all of whom are in the Kilimanjaro Region, conducted community assessments looking at the resilience of their conservation traditions and initiatives, especially with respect to lands, forests, water sources and other natural resources.

The communities depend on agriculture and they are therefore highly dependent on land for food security,

livelihoods and the preservation of their culture. Women are major food producers and therefore particularly vulnerable in terms of threats to their role, as well as to food security. The Lawate river is used for irrigation and domestic purposes. The forests and vegetation provide habitat for a wide

range of indigenous animals, including mammals, insects and birds.

Indigenous people in Tanzania include the Maasai, the Barbaig, Akie, Taturu and Hadzabe. Indigenous pastoralist and hunter/gatherer communities constitute the most vulnerable segments of Tanzanian

such as Wiri, around Lake Magadi, and Chagga people live in Lawate. There are people from the Maasai, Chagga and Pare peoples in Ngasini.

Tanzania has a dual land tenure system, in which both statutory and customary land tenure are recognised. They are protected by Village Land Act No.5 of 1999 (Cap

114). Similarly Land Act No. 4 of 1999 (Cap 113) governs access to, ownership of and the utilisation of land in Tanzania. Customary land rights are thus still followed in the villages. However, this form of tenure still discriminates against women.

All registered villages have a democratically elected Village

Council which has committees that are responsible for developing village plans and making decisions on environment, health, community development, education, land, water and community forests.



Members of the Kahe community planting trees in their forest. Simone Lovera/GFC

society. Their economies and traditional ways of life rely heavily on cattle herding, as well as hunting and gathering. They have been migrating to new areas where there are resources for their livestock and livelihood activities. For example, Maasai people have settled in villages



# Community Conservation Resilience in Tanzania

Community members shared information about traditional community conservation practices relating to their lands and forests, and the ways in which environmental conservation and culture are part of their traditions and customs generally.

They talked about food stuffs used, and related benefits and taboos, soil fertility, seed security and land and water use. They discussed wild animals found locally—including antelopes, buffalo, elephants, zebra, wildebeest, giraffes, lions, leopards, ostriches, flamingoes, water ducks, hyenas and baboons—and domestic animals, such as cows, goats, chickens and dogs. Some of these animals are used for rituals predicting weather, harvests and wealth, and traditional medicines are made from animal parts and byproducts such as elephant faeces, python faeces, elephant oil, ostrich oil, lion oil, and Mhanga (anteater) byproducts.

Many traditional laws and customs also concern water and related resources, helping to protect those

resources. For example women, children and youths are not allowed to go to water sources. If they do so, the water will not flow. At Lake Magadi, in Wiri village, no-one is allowed to dig a spring, witches are not allowed to go the lake for fear that the sodium bicarbonate taken will turn into water, and women are not allowed to collect it during their menstrual cycle either. It is also considered that the sodium bicarbonate will turn into blood if the government demands a tax from the people who go to collect it.

Also discussed were the types of indigenous trees they have (such as Misesewe, Mninga, Mkuyu, and Mruka, which they use for their livelihoods, bee keeping, health problems, construction and agroforestry), medicinal plants and their uses, rainfall patterns, minerals and human health. The way they trade commodities, in order to acquire other commodities they don't have, was also described. For example, Maasai people exchange milk for meat, and maize for beans. Cows are exchanged for land.

Community members identified four major causes of biodiversity damage in their areas: conventional farming using intensive agrochemicals that kill beneficial organisms; agricultural expansion by farmers; illegal deforestation for commerce, charcoal-making and brick-building; and climate change.

The natural forests, land and rivers/lakes are prone to external threats, especially where agricultural investors and large-scale farmers are cultivating adjacent land, which diverts water flows away from the communities leaving them with inadequate water for their agricultural production and domestic use. The water pumps placed near rivers also spill oil into fresh water sources that are being used for domestic purposes, damaging the environment and human health. Pollution from the agrochemicals used in conventional agriculture is exacerbating the problem.

Climate change is impacting their water resources. It has caused Lake Magadi in Wiri village and the River

Lawate in Lawate village to dry because of a change in the pattern of rainfall, and because deforestation is leading to water shortages, impacting both irrigation and domestic use.

Lack of awareness about biodiversity conservation and the consequences of biodiversity loss also exaggerate the problems. Another important concern is the fact that women's lack of land ownership limits their involvement in environmental conservation and the



The river Dehu in Kahe community is used for irrigation and domestic needs. **Salome Kisenge/GFC**

CCRI participants from Wiri village, Siha District, mapping community biodiversity resources. **Salome Kisenge/GFC**



Planting trees in Kahe community forest. **Simone Lovera/GFC**

protection of natural resources. Tanzania's cultural diversity is also experiencing a substantial reduction in quality. The main threats are the introduction of external technologies disrupting livelihood systems in indigenous localities and communities, especially amongst the younger generation. This is impacting the local values, practices and culture.

In spite of these constraints the communities in Wiri, Sanya, Lawate and Ngasini villages have taken steps to conserve biodiversity in their areas. They have established tree nurseries to plant trees around water sources, around farms and adjacent to forests. They have developed conservation groups to work on establishing the tree nurseries as part of their long-

term afforestation and conservation plans. In Kahe, in Moshi Rural district, the local council has now given the communities local tree seedlings to grow. In Siha District, community members plant their own local trees. The trees will help to create rainfall and clean the air, as well as providing building materials, fuel, medicines and animal fodder. They will also contribute to cooling during this period of climate change and global warming. They have also returned to traditional organic farming for agricultural production, income generation, soil regeneration, environmental conservation and human health. Bees are also kept.

The communities, through their environmental groups, have shared responsibilities to protect water sources, land resources and the forests, by ensuring that the village bylaws are adhered to and reporting to the local government offices about any environmental destruction act performed by anyone. This includes burning forests, illegally cutting down trees, and putting water pumping machines in rivers leading to pollution. They have started consultations with the local government to control water utilisation by large-scale farmers adjacent to rivers, such as the River Dehu in Kahe. Offenders may be taken to court and are obliged to pay fines.

## Preliminary Conclusions and Recommendations

Ways that external actors—variously including NGOs, local government officials, donors and the media—can increase and support these communities' resilience and capacity to conserve their environment and natural resources include:

- Helping to raise community awareness about environmental conservation and the effects of climate change.
- Supporting intergenerational learning sessions to transfer traditional knowledge and skills about effective biodiversity management from the elders to the youth.
- Advocating for women to be able to own land and participate in decision-making.
- Fostering the spread of knowledge about gender roles in conservation and resilience, which is known to promote conservation.
- Providing financial support for community conservation efforts.
- Conveying information through the media to promote public awareness about environmental destruction and the need for conservation efforts to be sustained.



## Testimony

"I've been farming organically for many years, irrigating my farm with water from the River Lawate. Siha District Council gave us fast-growing exotic trees to plant, they were supposed to conserve the environment and water resources. But they are doing the opposite! Their roots can spread 50-70 metres from the tree and suck up all the water, and they are contributing to the drying up of the river. And we've found that if we try to grow our crops underneath them, the crops don't grow well. The soil seems to have lost its fertility. The difference is, when the indigenous trees dropped their leaves, the leaves fertilised the soil and the crops were growing well. But now the leaves of the new trees and the roots are damaging the surroundings and the crops' growth.



Mr. Marselian Temba.  
Salome Kisenge/GFC

They're not indigenous trees. We call them Dakika Tatu (which means 'three minutes' in Swahili), because they grow very fast! We didn't know this would happen so we cut down the local trees and planted these along the river and around our farms. We have now cut down the Dakika Tatu trees, and we're replacing them with indigenous seedlings."

**Mr. Marselian Temba is an organic farmer from Lawate Siha District, Kilimanjaro Region**



Bananas growing at Marselian Temba's organic farm. Salome Kisenge/GFC



Cutting down Dakika Tatu trees. Salome Kisenge/GFC

**This summary is based on a full CCRI report about the communities' conservation resilience assessment in Tanzania, which can be found here: <http://globalforestcoalition.org/community-conservation-resilience-initiative-ccri-full-country-report/>**

# Conclusions and Recommendations

The results of the CCRI assessment, conducted in 22 countries across the world, collectively form a powerful argument for protecting and supporting Indigenous Peoples' and local communities' traditional conservation and biodiversity stewardship practices, and their additional efforts to regenerate forest and other degraded ecosystems.

The communities in this report have collectively contributed the following recommendations, which are mainly directed at national and international governments and policy-makers, but also include suggestions for actions that they and other communities can take themselves.

## (1) Protecting traditional community conservation practices and promoting natural ecosystem/habitat regeneration

Community-proposed solutions focus on protecting and supporting Indigenous Peoples' and local communities' traditional conservation and biodiversity management practices and other initiatives through which they regenerate their forest and other ecosystems. Enabling communities to access their traditional territories, rivers and forests, and allowing them to continue to practice diverse forms of small-scale sustainable peasant agriculture are prerequisites for the successful conservation of biodiversity. Biodiversity-related traditional knowledge and the customary sustainable use of biodiversity need to be mainstreamed, and the associated

intergenerational transfer of traditional knowledge revitalised.

At present communities' ability to continue governing, managing and conserving their local biodiversity is threatened in many different ways. There is an urgent need for policies that reverse unsustainable projects that appropriate land, damage biodiversity, and destroy local livelihoods, such as monoculture tree plantations. Policies that improve communities' general security and stability, and provide better access to culturally appropriate public services such as schools, roads, hospitals and socio-cultural centres, are also very important.

Any external 'solutions' to biodiversity loss should be tailored to the varying approaches, rights, needs and aspirations of the Indigenous Peoples, local communities and women already engaged in using and governing the ecosystems in question, ensuring that projects or proposals are always created by or with them, and agreed by them, rather than being devised and imposed from outside the territory.

Priority should be given to projects promoting conservation and the sustainable use of biodiversity, ecosystem restoration, forest regeneration, sustainable agriculture and local



energy generation, in accordance with the frameworks of agroecology and community forest governance. It is also important that these processes are not detached from wider contexts, and that there are spaces for dialogue, reflection and debate both within civil society, and between the people and the state.

The communities would benefit from practical support as well, including finance to help manage and rehabilitate conservation areas, and to enable them to advocate for their community conservation initiatives and other interests with local and national government environmental authorities.

Policies and procedures that support communities living in sensitive ecosystems, such as spatial and land use planning and strategic environmental

assessments that recognise community conserved territories and areas in perpetuity, would be beneficial. Local communities can participate in the state monitoring of biodiversity and ecosystems, including forests, pasture lands and wild animals, and support monitoring systems based on bio-indicators.

Governments and others need to ensure that economic developments are never based on the transfer of dirty technologies or the destruction of natural ecosystems, but always include ecological indicators and goals for biological diversity.

Measures to help build the resilience of communities facing the impacts of climate change, such as flooding and drought, are also important. These include flood plain corridors, natural infrastructure, improved disaster

management and functional early warning systems, and support to revitalise communities' traditional knowledge and strengthen their ecosystem-based resilience in relation to the escalating challenges presented by climate change.

Community conservation initiatives are effective and legitimate and benefit both ecosystems and human populations, meaning they have a greater probability of permanence. Strategies and policies to support these initiatives should make the processes and initiatives of community conservation, sovereignty and productive autonomy more visible to other communities, which will help to encourage the participation of an ever greater number of families in them.



CCRI assessment in Sabah, Malaysia. PACOS Trust



## (2) Respecting and implementing Indigenous Peoples', local communities' and women's human rights, including the rights to govern their land and resources

Respecting and implementing Indigenous Peoples', local communities' and women's human rights, including the rights to govern their land and resources, and ensuring that those rights can be enjoyed, is essential to their customary sustainable use of biodiversity and fundamental to their capacity to continue conserving biodiversity. The prospect of permanent land and resource tenure and governance, without interference or landgrabbing, creates positive incentives for community conservation.

It is critical that governments recognise collective and individual territorial, land and resource rights and support the revival and strengthening of traditional knowledge and practices, in

recognition of Indigenous Peoples' rights under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). This should involve the appropriate recognition and integration of customary systems of sustainable use and traditional indigenous stewardship of territories into national policies and laws, ensuring respect for those practices at both the national and local levels. Communities themselves should proactively invoke their rights to land and/or natural resources under existing and future laws (such as India's 2006 Scheduled Tribes & Other Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act).

It is important to review and address gaps in existing and 'pending' legislation and other

state obligations relating to the rights and claims of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, strengthen and defend policies and laws that support those rights, and amend or repeal laws from other areas of government that contradict the supportive ones. There is a need to develop and effectively implement forest and wildlife policies and laws that explicitly support communities' autonomy with respect to the governance and management of sacred forests and community conserved forests.

There should be full and equitable compensation and redress for lands and resources that have been taken from Indigenous Peoples, local communities and women without consent or payment, or the restoration of



Preparing Rabha community feast, Chilapata-Buxa. Souparna Lahiri/GFC





CCRI assessment in Colombia. Fundaexpresión and Censat Agua Viva/GFC

ecosystems according to traditional wisdom and knowledge. Governments need to excise community forests from state forest reserves and devolve governance and management to the relevant communities. Additional complementary policies include measures to protect communities' resources by preventing poaching, and to ensure tourism does not damage natural ecosystems.

Overall, community conservation initiatives could be enhanced by formalising community governance of nature and biodiversity through the appropriate recognition of territories and areas conserved by

Indigenous Peoples and local communities, with the Free, Prior and Informed Consent of the concerned Peoples and communities, including outside of the formal protected area estate. This could be within local bylaws, sub-national or national policies and legislation, or organisational policies and procedures. Within protected area systems, public, private and civil society conservation actors have legal obligations to refrain from establishing or expanding protected areas that negatively affect Indigenous Peoples and local communities, including through displacement; they have also committed to supporting a diversity of protected area

governance types, including governance by Indigenous Peoples and local communities. Communities themselves can facilitate these changes by developing community protocols that illustrate how their cultures are intricately linked to their territories and areas and that assert their rights, responsibilities and self-determined plans and priorities.

### (3) Amplifying the roles of women in decision-making processes

Amplifying the roles of women in decision-making processes is essential to protecting and recovering traditional knowledge, practices, capacities and resilience. The CCRI specifically focused on ensuring dialogue with women, and young people and other marginalised groups who are key to the recovery of communities' knowledge, practices and conservation capacities.

The participatory community conservation resilience assessments found that roles, responsibilities and knowledge about how to use and conserve local biodiversity are often highly differentiated on the basis of gender. In many communities women have extensive knowledge about the use and conservation of biodiversity, and women's traditional rights and security can be particularly impacted when they are prohibited from

collecting traditional resources such as fuel wood and non-timber forest products.

In some countries women are involved in community decision-making and leadership about biodiversity, although this is not a uniform finding across the case studies—in other examples women's potential involvement is negated by gender-based roles and restrictions. It is critical that these constraints are addressed.



CCRI assessment in Colombia. Jeanne Lieberman and Censat Agua Viva/GFC

For example, in Nepal, Community Forest Users Groups have developed a strategic plan to revise their bylaws and forest management plans to integrate gender equity and social inclusion in community forestry.

The communities, and especially the women within the communities, are calling for

governments and others to respect their rights and facilitate gender equity, including by ensuring access for women to training, land, natural resources, microcredit and other forms of support, and enabling women to participate in decision-making. Additionally fostering the spread of knowledge about gender roles in conservation and resilience,

and strengthening the role of women in conservation by creating women's networks for conservation and advocacy on environmental issues and climate change was considered to be beneficial.

## (4) Supporting livelihood strategies that promote traditional community livelihoods and wellbeing

Livelihood strategies that enable community governance and management of nature are critical to communities' wellbeing and their capacity to conserve biodiversity. This is especially the case in relation to their ability to continue to produce or secure the food they need, and should be encouraged.

Support for policies that promote community livelihoods and conservation should be based on community- and biodiversity-friendly alternative frameworks, such as community forest governance, agroecology and 'Buen y Bien Vivir' (Good Living and Well Living). These alternative frames of reference take ecological, territorial and organisational dimensions into account, along with communities'

wellbeing. They are likely to reduce outward migration.

Governments and others should recognise, enable and/or help to re-establish livelihood options for rural communities, working with rather than against communities' socio-economic needs (as particularly noted by the women who participated in the CCRI). For example, governments should strengthen socioeconomic and cultural initiatives to improve communities' economic capacity to engage in community forestry, and support education about the proper processing and transportation of collected non-timber forest resources.

Producing food is a major concern for all the communities, and the CCRI assessments produced

numerous recommendations about positive measures that governments could take. One such is promoting and supporting community production of organic vegetables and fruits, and associated skills in processing and marketing, with a view to minimising pesticide and herbicide use and pollution. The communities are calling for the protection of traditional foods, such as traditional rice varieties, which are rich in trace minerals, need no agrochemicals and boost soil microbes and organic matter, and reviving reciprocal seed and knowledge-sharing networks, and community level seed banks. Support for community beekeeping is recommended as a particularly productive activity that is good for both biodiversity and community cohesion.



Another critical recommendation concerns reviving and improving knowledge about sustainable grazing, managing pasture resources and regulating livestock numbers, including by reducing industrial forms of agriculture and livestock production and the overall (global) demand for meat. Governments should also develop communities' capacity to engage in climate-resilient agriculture based on their current traditional practices, and promote conservation agriculture.

Additional livelihood-related recommendations include promoting and supporting communities to develop sustainable community ecotourism, as a means of helping

to retain the traditional customs and practices of communities while reducing poverty; and introducing simple innovative technologies to use existing invasive plants for green businesses, helping to turn problems into solutions.

A further related recommendation focuses on the need to promote alternative sustainable energy sources at the community level including solar, wind and biodigestion technologies, to reduce energy poverty and reliance on fuel wood.

Engaging young people in community conservation is felt to be particularly important. Suggestions include generating

employment in the primary processing of agriculture products, and enhancing economic empowerment and promoting leadership for young girls.

In general, combining communities' long-term forest and biodiversity-related activities, such as sustainable timber production, with other shorter-term livelihood activities, was highlighted (again by women participants in particular) as an important way of awakening and maintaining interest in the long-term aspects of biodiversity conservation while still responding to the pressing needs of families.



CCRI assessment in the Banni Grasslands, India. Sahjeevan/GFC

## (5) Supporting education for communities and others about rights, drivers of change, and the environment

Communities' capacity to continue to conserve biodiversity can be significantly enhanced by support for educational opportunities relating to their legal rights and other relevant national and international laws; the external economic context and drivers of change; and the environment and climate change.

In particular governments should provide opportunities for communities to learn more about and effectively access and use relevant national and international laws regarding the rights of Indigenous Peoples, local communities and women, including Indigenous Peoples' rights to Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), and rights to

lands, territories and resources, including tree tenure and community forests.

Strengthening Indigenous Peoples', local communities' and women's understanding of their various rights, including under international instruments such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), UNDRIP, and the

Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), as well as under national laws, would help them to identify what has been or is being imposed on them, and to resist that imposition and/or recover part of the land and resources they have lost. Access to information about international, national and local laws can also support engagement with policy makers and help to ensure rule of law.

It would also be helpful to promote education, including through the media, which improves understanding amongst the wider population about the negative effects of the over-use of natural resources and

Measures that support intergenerational learning sessions to transfer traditional knowledge and skills about effective biodiversity stewardship and customary sustainable use from the elders to the youth, including through local schools, would be useful. So would linking communities to global rights-based knowledge sharing platforms, including discourses on community-level climate change and disaster resilience.

There is a pressing need to educate others about the cultures, ways of life and capacity to conserve and restore the biodiversity of Indigenous Peoples, local communities and women. For example, the

autonomous basis are critical. These can include developing local leaders' community-based governance, management and organisational capacity and influence in relation to natural resources, and forming community groups such as environmental committees where they do not already exist. Practical learning opportunities such as capacity-building workshops and exchange visits to other Indigenous Peoples' territories and community conserved areas, encouraging the sharing of information and adaption and adoption of best practices, are also recommended.

Finally, improving education and capacity-building for local

Weto Landscape, site of a CCRI assessment in Ghana. Ken Kinney/GFC



overconsumption in general, and promotes traditional conservation practices and sustainable use. Educational opportunities can also strengthen understanding that community conservation is not about preservation, but about promoting opportunities for more families to benefit from, foster and enjoy nature. Through education the peasant way of life can also be reclaimed as a reason for pride and an option for a dignified life.

communities in DRC underlined the importance of maintaining the intergenerational transmission of traditional knowledge, expressing their desire to offer an environmental education not only to their children but to those of their neighbouring communities, in the hope that others will better understand their way of life.

Opportunities to strengthen communities' capacity to self-organise and advocate on an

government authorities would facilitate their support for community conservation and the involvement of communities in local decision-making, and improve their capacity to mediate conflicts and disputes over natural resources, for example around access to land and forests.





Community  
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