



INDIGENOUS PEOPLES and CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL: PRINCIPLES FOR PARTNERSHIPSⁱ

Conservation International's mission is to conserve the Earth's living heritage, our global biodiversity, and to demonstrate that human societies are able to live harmoniously with nature. Conservation International (CI) works in biodiversity hotspots and tropical wilderness areas in close to 40 countries. Since its inception, CI has believed that conservation must benefit people and that protecting and maintaining basic ecological processes and ecosystem services are the foundation for sustainable livelihoods and economic development.

Many of the places with significant biodiversity remaining are the traditional areas of indigenous peoplesⁱⁱ. Indigenous peoples living within hotspots and wilderness areas often directly depend on the products of healthy ecosystems, harvesting wild plants and animals for their food, fuel, clothing, medicine and shelter. The economies, identities, spiritual and cultural values, and forms of social organization of indigenous peoples are often closely tied to maintaining the biodiversity and ecosystems that contain them, intact. However, multiple pressures exerted on indigenous and other rural communities have made this a challenging proposition in many settings. CI's mission and the goals and actions of many indigenous organizations to maintain biodiversity and intact ecosystems are therefore often compatible.

CI recognizes that the national context and the rights conferred with the term indigenous vary significantly among countries. Indigenous people often are ethnically different from the dominant national culture, and frequently their traditional territories, whether terrestrial or marine, are not recognized by national governments. While indigenous people have similar characteristics with other disadvantaged or marginalized rural population groups, they share a unique sets of rights that are increasingly part of the national constitutional and other legislation. Furthermore, many of the causes of their poverty differ greatly from other marginalized sectors, and are often related to their loss of traditional lands and resources, disintegration of their traditional economies, and from discrimination and marginalization that result from their unique language, culture and social organization. Because of this, issues related to indigenous peoples and development are complex and require special measures to ensure that indigenous peoples, like other local communities, are not disadvantaged and that they are included in and can benefit from activities supporting biodiversity conservation.

CI has engaged in partnerships with indigenous peoples worldwide in a range of different capacities, working together to support biodiversity conservation and ecologically sustainable livelihoods. Our actions have varied from community-based work to support the sustainable and traditional uses of medicinal plants and animals to working with indigenous groups to gain recognition of their ancestral lands to assistance in managing traditional lands to support biodiversity conservation and ecological processes that maintain their lives and livelihoods.

Principles and Practices

CI adheres to a set of principles about how we work and what actions we support with indigenous communities. We believe that these principles of conduct for ourselves as an organization are vital for building long-term partnerships. Our partnerships with indigenous communities reflect the following.

1. We recognize that although there are many words that reflect what is meant by indigenous, national definitions vary from country to country, and may not fully coincide with self-identification

of indigenous peoples. CI's work is largely tied to spatial settings. Therefore, we identify indigenous peoples in specific geographic areas by the presence, in varying degrees, of:

- a. Close attachment to ancestral and traditional or customary territories and the natural resources in them;
 - b. Customary social and political institutions;
 - c. Economic systems oriented to subsistence production;
 - d. An indigenous language, often different from the predominant language; and
 - e. Self-identification and identification by others as members of a distinct cultural group.
2. We support engagement with indigenous communities in a transparent, honest way. We believe in directly informing others of CI's mission and our primary emphasis on biodiversity conservation, so that there is no misunderstanding about our motives. We work with indigenous groups on a range of projects where there are common interests.
 3. We believe in the full participation of indigenous groups, from consultation to action, inclusive of gender and generations, and in culturally appropriate ways. We will openly inform, consult and obtain the informed consent of formal representatives of indigenous groups prior to undertaking any actions that are directly tied to indigenous peoples, their territories or natural resources.
 4. We recognize the role that indigenous peoples have played in maintaining biodiversity and that indigenous control over traditional lands and resources is a precondition for the maintenance of biodiversity, and we support efforts by indigenous groups to gain legal designation and management authority over ancestral lands and their resources, while respecting issues of national sovereignty.
 5. We recognize and support the rights of indigenous peoples to retain their own cultural identity and traditional systems of land, forest, and marine resource tenure within a framework of equity and sustainability.
 6. We recognize the traditional indigenous knowledge and practices that form the cultural heritage and intellectual property of indigenous groups and that are often closely intertwined with their biophysical environment.
 7. Our actions and activities with indigenous peoples should, through a consultative process, take the following into account:
 - a. the cultural and spiritual values that these groups attribute to their lands and ecological resources;
 - b. their individual and communal or collective rights to use and develop the lands they occupy and to be protected against encroachment;
 - c. their customary uses of the natural resources vital to their cultures and ways of life and the institutions and mechanisms that exist to manage resource uses;
 - d. their natural resources management practices and the long-term sustainability of these practices from both ecological and social perspectives, given internal and external opportunities and pressures;
 - e. traditional and customary decision-making, authorities, and governance, as well as formalized representatives and authorities; and,
 - f. both knowledge of and vulnerability to inappropriate uses of indigenous ethnopharmacology, ethnobotanical, and faunistic knowledge, products and technology;
 - g. the legislative, legal, and administrative framework that form the framework for indigenous peoples, their territories, resources, and rights within a national context and the right to self determination of indigenous peoples within the full meaning of international law.
 8. We support capacity-building of individuals and institutions to manage biodiversity and ecological systems sustainably, recognizing that indigenous peoples may have ultimate authority over how their territories and resources are used and managed. Our support includes enhancing the

capacity of indigenous people's organizations and communities to prepare, implement, monitor and evaluate conservation activities or activities that are likely to have an impact upon conservation.

9. We recognize that there are often overlaps between lands set aside for legally designated parks and protected areas and lands customarily owned or used by indigenous peoples. CI recognizes both the significance of these customary rights and the need for long-term sustainable management of critical ecosystems. In legally designated parks and protected areas, CI will work with protected area and indigenous authorities to support collaborative management initiatives that recognize customary uses while ensuring that natural resources are not depleted and that actively involve indigenous communities in planning, zoning, and monitoring.

ⁱ These principles have directly used and adapted portions of Indigenous Peoples: Draft Operational Policies (OP 4.10) Draft Bank Procedures (BP 4.10) March 23, 2001 and a review of WWF's Indigenous Peoples and Conservation: WWF Statement of Principles.

ⁱⁱ The terms "indigenous peoples", "indigenous ethnic minorities", "tribal groups", and "traditional peoples" are among the terms used to describe social groups with an identity that is distinct from the dominant groups in society. CI places a particular emphasis on working with those groups tied to ancestral lands.