



**INCLUSIVE
CONSERVATION
INITIATIVE**

A FOCUS ON **INCLUSIVE FINANCE**

Phase Two Report



**global
environment
facility**
INVESTING IN OUR PLANET

**CONSERVATION
INTERNATIONAL**





**INCLUSIVE
CONSERVATION
INITIATIVE**

A FOCUS ON INCLUSIVE FINANCE

Phase Two Report
Inclusive Finance

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ABOUT THE INCLUSIVE CONSERVATION INITIATIVE

In 2019, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) decided to pilot a new initiative for increased access of financing to Indigenous and local community organizations to conserve biodiversity, deliver multiple global environmental benefits (GEBs), and support related cultural and economic development initiatives. A part of the GEF-7 Programming Directions Strategy's Biodiversity focal area, the Inclusive Conservation Initiative (ICI) was endorsed in January 2022 and is built upon the principle that inclusive conservation requires that Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPs and LCs) are the main actors and implementers. At the same time, the project does not aim to define the concept of "inclusive conservation" and recognizes that this is also self-determined by IPs and LCs. **With over \$22.5M invested in project financing, and over \$90M of expected co-financing, ICI is designed to support the leadership of IPs and LCs in stewarding lands, waters, and natural resources.** By combining substantial investments in specific locations, with support to magnify local results through global capacity building, policy influence, demonstrating large-scale impacts, ICI will catalyze the transformational changes needed to secure and enhance support for the contributions of IPs and LCs to biodiversity and other GEBs.

Photo by FENAMAD



BUILDING INCLUSIVE CONSERVATION TOGETHER: THE ICI TEAM

GEF Project Agencies, Conservation International (CI) and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) jointly support ICI Indigenous-led Initiatives through a Project Management Unit (PMU), bringing decades of collective experience working with IPs and LCs, as well as local, regional, and global expertise on implementing multilaterally funded conservation action. Both CI and IUCN are working alongside IPs and LCs, their regional and local organizations, governments, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), civil society, and others to strengthen IPs and LCs leadership in conserving globally significant biodiversity and stewarding natural resources. Together they provide project assurance and support project implementation by maintaining oversight of all technical and financial management aspects. They also monitor project outputs and manage fiduciary compliance of GEF funds. The ICI Global Steering Committee (GSC) works closely with the PMU to ensure project deliverables align with the initiative's objectives, that the perspectives and expertise of IPs and LCs are central to all project activities, while upholding Indigenous leadership and values.

Photo by UCRT

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

| | | | |
|----------------|--|--------------------|--|
| ANAPAC | Alliance Nationale d'Appui et de Promotion des Aires et Territoires du Patrimoine Autochtone et Communautaire en RDC | IMPACT | Indigenous Movement for Peace, Advancement & Conflict Transformation |
| CBD | Convention on Biological Diversity | IPAG | Indigenous Peoples Advisory Group |
| CEDAW | Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women | IPF | Indigenous Peoples Foundation for Education and Environment |
| CI | Conservation International | IPs and LCs | Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities |
| COP | Conference of the Parties | IPLCs | Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities |
| DRC | Democratic Republic of Congo | IUCN | International Union for Conservation of Nature |
| FENAMAD | Federación Nativa del Río Madre de Dios y Afluentes | LAC | Latin America and the Caribbean |
| FPIC | Free, Prior and Informed Consent | MPAs | Marine Protected Areas |
| GAP | Gender Action Plan | M | million |
| GBF | Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework | mt | metric tons |
| GBFF | Global Biodiversity Framework Fund | NBSAPs | National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans |
| GEBs | Global Environmental Benefits | NEFIN | Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities |
| GEF | Global Environment Facility | NGO | Non-Governmental Organization |
| GSC | Global Steering Committee | NPS | National Park Service |
| ha | Hectares | PAs | Protected Areas |
| ICCAs | Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas | PMU | Project Management Unit |
| ICI | Inclusive Conservation Initiative | UCRT | Ujamaa Community Resource Team |
| IIFB | International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity | UNFCCC | United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change |

Our initiatives are diverse, focusing on critical areas such as territorial planning, legal empowerment, Indigenous and traditional knowledge preservation, and sustainable economic growth. They exemplify the effectiveness of direct and inclusive financing in empowering Indigenous Peoples and local communities to manage their territories and safeguard their rights.

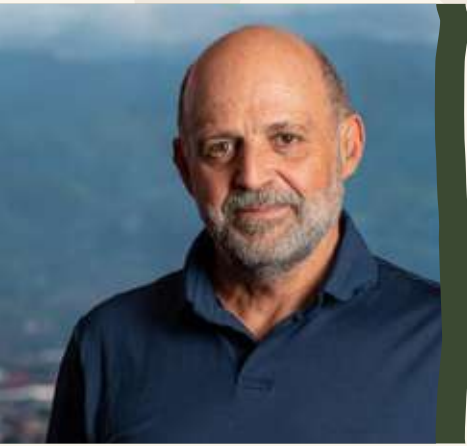
— **Beatriz (Bea) Chocori Huenullanca & Tunga B. Rai**
Futa Mawiza, Chile & Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN)
Co-Chairs, Global Steering Committee (GSC) Inclusive Conservation Initiative (ICI)

Photo by Ben Grayzel (Olam Films)



FOREWORD

by the CEO of the GEF



Carlos Manuel Rodríguez

CEO and Chairperson
Global Environment Facility (GEF)

The Phase Two report of the Inclusive Conservation Initiative (ICI) demonstrates the unwavering dedication of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and its partner agencies to supporting Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs)¹, who are the custodians of our planet's most diverse and often imperiled ecosystems. This report demonstrates how the GEF and its partners are "walking the talk" by turning commitments into concrete actions.

At the end of COP-15, I welcomed the historic agreement of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) with its enhanced commitment to human rights and the involvement of IPLCs. The establishment of the Global Biodiversity Framework Fund (GBFF) also included a greater focus supporting the protection of biodiversity led by IPLCs both in the programming strategy and targets for programming resources.

This year, ICI achieved a remarkable milestone by securing \$14.5 million in direct access agreements with 10 Indigenous-led initiatives across 12 countries. These agreements, with funding ranging from \$1 million to \$2 million per project, demonstrate the effectiveness of direct financing in enabling IPLCs to manage their territories sustainably and uphold their collective rights. The adaptable, learning-by-doing approach of these initiatives illustrates the potential of what financial resources can do to promote sustainable and scalable conservation models.

The collaboration between IPLCs and the GEF was celebrated at the GEF Assembly in Vancouver in August 2023, including the launch of the GBFF. This new fund will move us closer to fulfilling the KMGBF's vision, which directly focuses on support to IPLCs. Building on the long record of the the GEF Trust Fund, the GBFF will also ensure the active participation of women, girls, and youth.

¹ The term IPLCs is used for consistency with the CBD and GEF current policies

Achieving the goals and targets of the KMGBF will only be possible by integrating and elevating the role of IPLCs. The experience of ICI is a model for the GEF and other large funders seeking to provide more direct access finance, laying the ground work for a more inclusive and effective approaches to global biodiversity conservation led by IPLCs.

This report highlights how ICI is supporting IPLC-led initiatives for the protection of the global environment, mobilizing resources and enhancing capacities within IPLC organizations, and ensuring their meaningful participation in global conservation initiatives. With the support of ICI, IPLCs can continue their role in not only protecting biodiversity but also addressing climate change and promoting sustainable development.

I invite you to explore this report and learn from the leadership of IPLCs and the ongoing commitment to supporting them. By recognizing and backing the transformative work of IPLCs, we can build a sustainable future together.

Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities are the stewards of much of our global environment, creating benefits for all of humanity. Their traditional knowledge and sustainable practices are essential in our fight against climate change and biodiversity loss. However, their leadership in protecting our planet is not matched by support from the international community. The Global Environment Facility is committed to growing the financial resources and support to Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities so they can continue this vital work."

— Carlos Manuel Rodríguez
CEO and Chairperson
Global Environment Facility

FOREWORD

by the Co-Chairs of the ICI Global Steering Committee

The Phase Two Report of the ICI reflects a journey that began in 2019. Initially an ambitious vision with the Global GEF, the ICI now stands as a dynamic reality, empowering Indigenous Peoples and local communities to lead in biodiversity conservation, cultural preservation, and sustainable development. This progress presents a model for the GBFF and other public funding entities to adopt, demonstrating how funding can be mobilized by recognizing the contributions and rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in biodiversity conservation, further strengthening their leadership and prominence.

This past year has been about moving from planning to action. The commitment to direct financial support has translated into progress, with substantial investments and co-financing commitments totaling \$90M. A key milestone was the approval of \$14.5M in direct access agreements for 10 Indigenous-led initiatives across 12 countries. Our initiatives are diverse, focusing on critical areas such as territorial planning, legal empowerment, Indigenous and traditional knowledge preservation, and sustainable economic growth. They exemplify the effectiveness of direct and inclusive financing in empowering Indigenous Peoples and local communities to manage their territories and safeguard their rights.

Central to this progress has been the governance structure of ICI, which has been in place for its first year. The GSC exemplifies inclusive governance by ensuring that the leadership and perspectives of Indigenous Peoples and local communities are at the forefront of decision-making. This structure not only enhances project outcomes but also reinforces the principle that Indigenous Peoples and their knowledge systems, embedded with nature, are essential to global conservation efforts.

Our collaboration with CI and IUCN has been instrumental. By integrating the extensive experience of these organizations with the deep-rooted wisdom and innovation of our Indigenous Peoples, and our collective practices of learning by doing, we have created a robust framework for inclusive conservation. One that emphasizes self-determination, mutual respect, and reciprocity, where IPs and LCs leaders are at the center of decision-making.

The progress detailed in this report highlights the transformative power of direct financial access, enabling the advancement of our rights to define and manage development priorities. It demonstrates how such support enables Indigenous Peoples and local communities to lead and effectively manage their conservation initiatives. These achievements reflect the dedication, resilience, and collaborative spirit of all involved.

We value the space provided by the ICI that is making it possible to highlight and connect the practices and experiences of Indigenous Peoples and local communities related to conservation and safeguarding of territories where we have coexisted with nature for thousands of years. Today, in the context of the climate crisis, it is essential to recognize and support efforts that allow us to continue coexisting with all forms of life.

Beatriz (Bea) Chocori Huenullanca

Futa Mawiza, Chile

Tunga B. Rai

Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN)

**Co-Chairs, Global Steering Committee (GSC)
Inclusive Conservation Initiative (ICI)**



Photo by Futa Mawiza Chile



Photo by the Green Climate Fund (GCF)

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This annual report provides a comprehensive overview of the activities, achievements, and progress of the ICI from July 2023–June 2024.

It represents the work executed from planning grants through the signing of implementation agreements and marks Phase Two of ICI's efforts. It underscores the critical role of IPs and LCs leadership and the integration of traditional and local knowledge in conservation strategies. This report focuses on the key milestones, financial agreements, governance structures, and strategic partnerships that have been instrumental in advancing the initiative's mission. By highlighting the collective efforts and achievements of the ICI, this document aims to provide stakeholders and other interested parties with a clear understanding of the initiative's impact and future directions.



Photo by NEFIN

HOW THIS REPORT IS ORGANIZED: A Foundation of Indigenous Values

As Indigenous values form the foundation of ICI, this report is organized around the key values and principles of IPs and LCs, as recommended by initiative leaders during ICI's formation. This includes how ICI should advance and exemplify each principle in its activities. The following themes emerged as areas of consensus:

- Self-determined initiative and programming governance is the foundation of a rights-based approach to inclusive conservation. This can be achieved by strengthening self-determination, building a collaborative family across IPs and LCs organizations throughout the ICI geographies/ regions – based on mutual respect and reciprocity – and driving IPs and LCs-led project governance. Governance that emphasizes a dialogue that is based on the right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), full and effective consultation, and decision-making by consensus builds unity within cultural diversity.
- Respect for nature is the basis for everything. This includes support for IPs and LCs to dismantle the barriers they face in its protection which should form the core of ICI's contribution. By increasing access to finance, supporting Indigenous stewardship of territories they inhabit and administer, and strengthening support for IPs and LCs relationships with governments and civil society, we can build harmony between human beings, Mother Earth, and the cosmos.
- Traditional and local knowledge must be recognized, supported, and scaled globally as cultural conservation tools. Though there is consensus that IPs and LCs are effective stewards and protectors of nature, their knowledge is frequently undervalued. Driving a paradigm shift will require the upscaling of effective local practices at global levels in a way that not only respects Indigenous timeframes, models, and worldview systems – that consider nature beyond its economic value – but also the intellectual property of Indigenous science and ensures its transmission to future generations.
- The creation of a global community that respects FPIC, recognizes the complementarity between Indigenous lifestyles and conservation goals, and supports IPs and LCs leadership requires policy change at all levels – local, national, regional, and global.

Each section of this annual report is organized around these principles, demonstrating the achievements, adaptations, lessons learned, and challenges in achieving inclusive conservation. Reciprocity, a fundamental principle in the lives of IPs, is of vital importance to the ICI and essential to its mission. Governments and conservation funders have much to learn from IPs and LCs in order to understand the need to change their business-as-usual practices. This will enable our joint pursuit of collective and rights-based approaches to safeguard nature for all peoples.

BUILDING INCLUSIVE FINANCE

Inclusive finance is a cornerstone of the ICI. Central to its mission is a deep respect for nature and a commitment to dismantling the barriers that IPs and LCs face in protecting it. This year, ICI signed \$14.5M in direct access agreements with 10 Indigenous-led initiatives across 12 countries, with funding ranging from \$1-\$2M per project. These agreements demonstrate the viability of direct financing in enabling IPs and LCs to manage their territories sustainably and strengthen their collective rights. By ensuring direct access to funding, they can implement self-determined initiatives through their customary governance structures, fostering a rights-based approach to conservation. Effective governance and leadership from IPs and LCs are essential for the success of conservation initiatives.

The adaptability and learning-by-doing approach of these initiatives highlight the potential for sustainable and scalable conservation models. This approach streamlines funding processes for IPs and LCs to access conservation and climate finance. IPs and LCs-led initiatives under ICI go beyond conventional measurements of results, such as hectares conserved or carbon sequestered, by incorporating Indigenous values, beliefs, language, and cultural indicators. These initiatives transform how donors view impacts and results, recognizing the holistic and transformative potential of community-led solutions. Continuous rethinking and adapting processes ensure they fit the scope, size, and priorities of these self-determined initiatives. Strengthening the administrative and operational capacities of ICI partners involves support in fiscal management and sustainable resource utilization, ensuring effective stewardship and long-term benefits. As part of this process CI and IUCN, as GEF Agencies, have adapted institutional policies and procedures to meet these challenges.

Biodiversity loss and climate change are interconnected challenges. IPs and LCs-led solutions provide a holistic approach to address both issues simultaneously, requiring significant funding to effectively address. Even though overall donor funding support is increasing, current levels are still inadequate given the extent of unrecognized community claims to land and forests, existing law and policy, and the estimated costs to secure them.² Moreover, despite donor commitments to prioritize direct funding to rightsholder organizations, funding modalities largely remain the same and little funding is reaching local organizations directly.³ In contrast, almost **80% of all ICI project funding is placed with IPs and LCs to effectively resource and lead their implementation.**

ICI is providing a roadmap for these efforts and for more inclusive and direct financing for IPs and LCs from multilateral agencies, while demonstrating how significant funding can empower them to lead their own conservation and climate efforts.

² Rights and Resources Initiative and The Tenure Facility. 2021. *Scaling-Up the Recognition of Indigenous and Community Land Rights: Opportunities, Costs and Climate Implications*. Washington, DC: Rights and Resources Initiative. <https://doi.org/10.53892/QMUD8864>

³ Rights and Resources Initiative and Rainforest Foundation Norway. 2024. *State Of Funding for Tenure Rights and Forest Guardianship: Donor Funding for Indigenous Peoples, Local Communities, and Afro-Descendant Peoples in Tropical Forested Countries (2011-2023)*. Washington, DC: Rights and Resources Initiative. <https://doi.org/10.53892/OTPN1413>

Key ICI Metrics at a Glance

10

Implementation Grants signed

10

Planning Grants completed

10

Impact Strategies under implementation

10

IPs-led Project Grievance Mechanisms

17,123

Partners & Beneficiaries engaged in Projects from inception to date

7.6M

ha of Landscape and Seascapes combined under improved management

100%

ICI Projects engaging in NBSAP updates at National Level

1

Global Grievance Mechanism

1

Global Steering Committee

10

IPs-led Project Governance Committees

10

IPs-led Project Gender Action Plans

GENDER-SENSITIVE MONITORING & EVALUATION SYSTEM ESTABLISHED

51%

Women engaged in Project from inception to date

10

IPs-led GEF Projects integrating Cultural Indicators

5

Indigenous International Environmental Policy Fellows

10

IPs-led Projects reporting & contributing to GEF Goals

10

Events organized during UNFCCC

\$14.5M

in Direct Access Financing

YEAR IN REVIEW

Major Milestones and Achievements (Timeline) & Significant Events and Activities



Photo by ANAPAC

Launch of Policy Brief
ICI projects engaging NBSAPs updates at National level
IPFAF training on Project Management in LAC

Virtual GSC & Co-Chairs Meetings

Launch of ICI Management Hub for Partners

\$1M Implementation Grant signed with Futa Mawiza, Argentina

\$2M Implementation Grant signed with IMPACT, Kenya



JULY 2023

AUGUST 2023

OCTOBER 2023

DECEMBER 2023

JANUARY 2024

FEBRUARY 2024

MARCH 2024

APRIL 2024

MAY 2024

JUNE 2024

\$1M Implementation Grant signed with Futa Mawiza, Chile
1st In-Person GSC Meeting, Global Exchange, GEF Assembly

ICI launches the first Fellows' Cohort

Gender Learning Module validation process completed



Photo by Futa Mawiza

\$1.5M Implementation Grant signed with FENAMAD, Peru
\$2M Implementation Grant signed with Bose Vanua o Lau and House of Ariki, Fiji & Cook Islands
\$1.48M Implementation Grant signed with ANAPAC, DRC
\$1.48M Implementation Grant signed with IPF, Thailand
\$1.48M Implementation Grant signed with NEFIN, Nepal
\$1.48M Implementation Grant signed with UCRT, Tanzania
\$1.48M Implementation Grant signed with Sotz'il, Guatemala & Panama
UNFCCC COP28 Dubai

ICI completes Planning Grants phase and achieves the approval of full project portfolio summing \$14.5M of GEF funding in the form of Implementation Grants to 10 IPs-led initiatives across 12 countries.

This milestone marks the completion of 10 Impact Strategies that followed an IPs-led approach to inclusive conservation and enables the achievement of GEBs.

Full project implementation on the ground across 12 countries.



Phase 2 Report - A Focus on Inclusive Finance

GOVERNANCE

The GSC exemplifies the leadership of IPs and LCs within the ICI. Comprising one IP representative from each of the ICI initiatives, its members serve for a two-year term. The GSC promotes gender equity with 5 of its 11 members being women. It is the coordinating body for ICI's global activities. Central to this governance structure are two co-chairs, one man and one woman, who facilitate meetings and foster a collaborative environment that promotes consensus decision-making. The GSC plays a crucial role in ICI's decision-making processes and is pivotal in maintaining the integrity and effectiveness of ICI, guiding the initiative's direction and implementation. This governance model not only enhances project outcomes but also reinforces the principle that IPs and LCs are essential leaders in global conservation efforts.

Governance in Action

To prepare for the 7th Assembly of the GEF, held in Vancouver, Canada from August 22-26, 2023, Indigenous leaders from the ten initiatives of the ICI gathered just prior. This event took place August 18-21, 2023, on the unceded territory of Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation near Tofino, British Columbia, hosted by the Iisaak Olam Foundation. This gathering began with a formal welcome at the traditional entrance of Tla-o-qui-aht territory and included a sacred fire Maya invocation. Leaders offered candles to Mother Earth and participated in a sweetgrass ceremony, fostering spiritual and energetic connections.

This marked the first global learning exchange of the project and the **inaugural meeting of the ICI GSC**. During this meeting, each initiative provided updates on their impact strategies and inclusive processes involving target communities. The GSC adopted 19 decisions by consensus, including incorporating a GEF Indigenous Peoples Advisory Group (IPAG) representative into the GSC, scheduling regional and global learning exchanges, and advancing an Indigenous Fellows program alongside capacity building, knowledge management, and communications efforts. The global learning exchange facilitated the exchange of experiences and learning among ICI Indigenous leaders and members of the GEF IPAG. It was also key in facilitating these leaders' preparations for the GEF Assembly. They used this meeting to develop and agree on high-level messages to consider at the GEF events they were planning to participate in.

Indigenous Peoples are conservationists by nature. We have seen so many instances where Indigenous Peoples are not involved. When you involve Indigenous Peoples - when you involve those who know nature - you will have a sustainable environment and community management."

— **Fred Parmelo**
Manager, **Ujamaa Community Resource Team** (UCRT)

IP-LED INITIATIVES IN ACTION

IP-Led Initiatives in Action Map



The ICI's portfolio includes 10 diverse initiatives in 12 countries led by IPs and LCs, each distinct in its geographical and cultural context yet interconnected through self-determined leadership and common thematic threads. These initiatives prioritize the enhancement of rights and governance over natural and cultural resources, with the necessary training and support to independently and effectively manage their territories. They emphasize sustainable management, aligning conservation efforts with traditional practices to uphold the ecological and cultural integrity of their territories. Additionally, they confront environmental degradation by developing strong strategies against the adverse effects of climate change and biodiversity loss. Economic and financial sustainability form the backbone of these projects, striving to ensure long-term viability and improve community livelihoods through sustainable practices. Together, these elements illustrate a comprehensive approach to IPs and LCs-led conservation, with each initiative now demonstrating progress in implementing their strategies and contributing to GEBs. The following pages provide an overview of implementation activities within each geography.

Photo by IMPACT Kenya



IP and LC-led Impact Strategies



Futa Mawiza, Argentina

Empowering the Mapuche Community for Sustainable Land Management

In the Futa Mawiza Puelmapu region of Argentina, this project empowers the Mapuche community by leveraging traditional knowledge and practices to foster collective rights, including territorial, cultural, and development rights. Advocacy efforts, including advancing FPIC, cultural mapping to protect sacred sites, and uplifting cultural and spiritual activities, reinforcing the spiritual and cultural heritage of the Mapuche people also form part of this project. It should be noted that progress has been made despite a highly complex political context with a change in government which may impact the realization of their objectives. The project aims to improve management of 454,410 ha, engaging 2,500 direct project stakeholders.



Futa Mawiza, Chile

Strengthening Biocultural Territory Governance and Knowledge Preservation

In the Futa Mawiza Gulumapu region of Chile, this project focuses on territorial planning and governance, reclaiming Mapuche knowledge, and the promotion and exercise of rights to define development priorities. The establishment of co-governance regulations for Villarrica National Park, community engagement in participatory mapping, developing educational programs and cultural activities to preserve Mapuche heritage, as well as employing effective communication strategies also form part of this project. A significant achievement has been the organization of a pre-congress in preparation for the 1st Congress on Indigenous Conservation Territories in Latin America. This pre-congress facilitated the exchange of information on international standards and national regulatory frameworks, thereby strengthening the conservation and governance of Indigenous territories in Chile and contributing to political advocacy in this area. Overall, the project aims to improve the management of 214,396 ha, with the direct participation of 2,500 stakeholders.



Alliance Nationale d'Appui et de Promotion des Aires et Territoires du Patrimoine Autochtone et Communautaire (ANAPAC), Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

Scaling Indigenous-led Conservation in the Congo Basin

In the DRC, ANAPAC's project focusses on IPs in Indigenous and Community Heritage Areas and Territories emphasizing their belief and value systems, natural resource management knowledge and skills, and peacekeeping and community stability systems to strengthen, enhance, and secure the areas and territories that they conserve. Some activities will include identifying and mapping Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas (ICCAs), also known as territories of life, promoting their legal recognition, and strengthening traditional governance and management systems. This project aims to improve management of 120,000 ha, engaging 20,000 direct project stakeholders.



Bose Vanua o Lau, Fiji and House of Ariki, Cook Islands

Strengthening Traditional Governance to manage Natural Resources and increase Resilience to Climate Change

In Fiji and the Cook Islands, the Bose Vanua o Lau and the House of Ariki projects work to advance IPs' goals for sustainable resource use and management, including strengthening the management of coastal and offshore Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), the restoration of degraded and terrestrial protected areas, strengthening their resilience to climate change through revitalization of traditional farming skills and knowledge. The Bose Vanua o Lau is focusing on enabling IPs-led seascape management and the House of Ariki on incorporating Indigenous cultural considerations into their marine park design. The House of Ariki also established the Ui Ariki Ngateitei o te Kuki Airani (UANKA) Trust, designed as their vehicle for receiving outside funding. This project aims to improve the management of 330,379 ha, engaging 10,912 direct project stakeholders.



Ru K'ux Abya Yala, Guatemala & Panama

Strengthening Capacity and Promoting Indigenous Economies



Photo by Ru K'ux Abya Yala

In both Guatemala and Panama, Sotz'il's Ru K'ux Abya Yala project focuses on capacity building, sustainable resource management, and promoting Indigenous green economies via workshops held in both countries, fostering community involvement. These workshops focus on how traditional knowledge can contribute to strategies such as seed adaptation and effectively adjusting activities to irregular weather conditions caused by climate change. Engaging a successful FPIC process, ensuring alignment with community needs and priorities, and employing communication strategies also form part of this project. It also seeks to enhance leadership, technical capacities, and collective management systems among Maya and Guna communities. It aims to bring 202,195 ha under improved management, engaging 9,860 direct project stakeholders.



Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN), Nepal

Strengthening Indigenous Leadership in the Annapurna Region



Photo by NEFIN

In the Annapurna Area of Nepal, NEFIN aims to strengthen IPs and LCs governance structures, preserve cultural sites, and raise awareness on the importance of their contributions to conservation and for generating GEBs. Key activities include rights-based advocacy, capacity building, supporting knowledge-based enterprises, and documenting Indigenous knowledge and practices. The project also focuses on enhancing policy engagement, governance systems, and access to environmentally friendly technology to promote sustainable development and the recognition of IPs roles in climate action and biodiversity conservation. Its project aims to improve the management of 381,450 ha, engaging 25,000 direct project stakeholders.



Photo by IMPACT

The Indigenous Movement for Peace Advancement and Conflict Transformation (IMPACT), Kenya

Biocultural Mapping and Legal Empowerment for Sustainable Land Management



In Kenya, IMPACT's project focuses on supporting IPs and LCs journey for strengthening their own knowledge systems to deliver GEBs. It builds understanding for inclusive conservation that recognizes and prioritizes their active contributions. This includes first establishing a solid foundation of knowledge, and conducting community-wide barazas (public meetings) for consent and capacity building. Collaborative stakeholder workshops address boundary issues, and advocacy efforts aim to secure legal recognition of Indigenous rights and territories, ensuring that communities have control over their lands and resources by guiding interested communities in pursuing official recognition of their land as ICCAs, known as territories of life. To date, biocultural mapping has been completed in 22 out of 24 community lands, and three research publications are currently in progress. Ultimately, the project aims to improve the total land management of 826,184 ha, engaging 105,000 direct project stakeholders.



Photo by FENAMAD

Federación Nativa del Río Madre de Dios y Afluentes (FENAMAD), Peru

Consolidating Territories of Life and Addressing Environmental Threats



In Peru, FENAMAD'S project focuses on territorial protection, governance, and environmental mitigation. Their approach includes planning workshops and stakeholder meetings, creating proposals for climate adaptation and mercury pollution mitigation in order to address environmental threats to protect Indigenous territories and promote sustainable development. The project also involves developing governance instruments, mapping ancestral territories, strengthening community monitoring systems, and enhancing socio-economic benefits through initiatives like tourism and reforestation. Under implementation, the project aims to improve management of 3,748,961 ha, engaging 5,505 direct project stakeholders.



Ujamaa Community Resource Team (UCRT), Tanzania

Securing Communal Lands and Enhancing Economic Benefits



Photo by UCRT

In Tanzania, UCRT's project focuses on securing communal village lands, promoting sustainable resource management, and generating economic benefits from natural resources. The engagement of significant community participation, the development of smart indicators and tracking tools for impact measurement, support for communal land protection, management of land use planning, and the focus on sustainable land management and economic development through eco-tourism and other resource-based activities form part of this project. It builds on 20 previously established village land use plans, incorporates 12 new ones, and registers 12 communal lands to create an interconnected landscape. This approach supports wildlife and livestock migration while combining scientific and indigenous land management practices in 270,000 ha under holistic rangeland management. Under implementation, the project aims to improve the management of 850,000 ha under the land use plan, engaging 39,655 direct project stakeholders from the 41 villages.



Photo by PASD

Indigenous Peoples Foundation for Education and Environment (IPF), Thailand

Enhancing Indigenous Stewardship and Climate Change Mitigation



In Thailand, IPF's project strengthens Indigenous knowledge, traditional livelihood practices, advocates for recognition of ecological knowledge and customary land rights, and fosters collaboration for climate change mitigation. Establishing a GIS center, training partner organizations, holding workshops on climate change impacts and fire protection, building community capacity for sustainable resource management and adaptation, and employing effective communication strategies also form part of this project. Under implementation the project aims to improve the management of 187,436 ha, engaging 25,363 direct project stakeholders.

GEF ICI Core Indicators

Terrestrial Protected Areas (PAs) created or under improved management for conservation and sustainable use

4,551,701 ha

Area of Land restored

14,314 ha

Area of Landscapes under improved practices (excluding PAs)

2,883,851 ha

Greenhouse Gas Emissions mitigated (metric tons of CO₂e)

20,862,368 mt

Area of Marine Habitats under improved practices (excluding PAs)

165,200 ha

Number of direct Beneficiaries disaggregated by Gender as co-benefit of GEF Investment

166,295

50% men, 50% women



Photo by IMPACT Kenya

CHAMPIONING GENDER EQUITY WITH ICI

ICI places a strong emphasis on gender mainstreaming across all projects. Each project is actively developing a Gender Action Plan (GAP) to support gender integration. All the initiatives have established dedicated gender focal point staff in the team and funds to ensure that these plans are effectively implemented.

In Argentina, significant strides have been made by the Mapuche women's technical gender team of Futa Mawiza, who worked diligently to consolidate agreements and plan activities that advance gender equality. Among their activities, a pivotal request was made to hold a workshop on gender responsibilities and Resolution No. 39 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the latter pertains specifically to the rights of Indigenous women and girls. The workshop, held in February 2024 in the territory of Lof Kinxikew, focused on the

political strengthening of Mapuche women within the Mapuche Confederation of Neuquén. This process has launched a series of gender dialogues with the subsecretary for Women in Argentina.

In Kenya, IMPACT held community mapping workshops to sketch biocultural maps and develop biocultural calendars guided by training and discussions to support legal empowerment. Recognizing gender dynamics, including that both genders may have specific and differing attachments and value over biocultural resources and heritage, they had each gender group work separately to produce these, ensuring that both representations would be equally captured.

In the governance of the ICI the leadership of women is pivotal. Graciela Coy, President of Ak' Tenamit in Guatemala, and an active participant in the Ru K'ux Abya Yala implemented by Sotz'il,

exemplifies this commitment. Her role on the GSC champions the inclusion of Indigenous women in environmental and cultural leadership. Alongside other women leaders, Graciela ensures that the experiences and insights of Indigenous women inform and shape conservation strategies at local, national, and international levels, highlighting the ICI dedication to integrating both Indigenous leadership and gender perspectives throughout its implementation.

These efforts underscore ICI's commitment to empowering Indigenous women, enhancing their political participation, and ensuring their rights are recognized and upheld. For example, on International Women's Day, women leaders of ICI's subprojects were interviewed about their work. Their impactful stories are posted on the [ICI website](#). To Indigenous women, ICI means that they are no longer left out of any decision-making processes related to natural resources management, governance, and conservation. They can be on the frontlines on matters related to conservation planning, resources management and governance. It means they can have access to information and decision-making platforms, and equally benefit from conservation efforts. By promoting and strengthening the leadership of Indigenous women, valuing their differentiated traditional knowledge, and fostering gender-inclusive environments, ICI contributes to more equitable and effective conservation outcomes fostering gender-inclusive environments.



Photo by Futa Mawiza

As Vivian Silole, Gender and Natural Resource Manager of IMPACT, Kenya states:

I like to refer to Indigenous women as the 'hidden minds and hands' in conservation."

By embracing this perspective, ICI underscores its dedication to supporting the leadership of Indigenous women, ensuring their contributions are recognized and valued, and incorporating their insights into all aspects of conservation.

THE NEXT GENERATION OF INDIGENOUS ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERS

ICI's Inaugural International Environmental Policy Fellow Program

This year marked the inauguration of the ICI International Environmental Policy Fellow Program. It will recruit 15 IPs and LCs representatives to build the next generation of leaders in IPs and LCs policy advocacy. This program will include participation in ICI's Makanisi Learning Platform⁴ training and relevant global networks, with fellows reporting on community projects and policy engagement, as well as contributing to advocacy efforts.

Since its inception, ICI has influenced global environmental policy by elevating the actions of IPs, women, and youth to decision-making spaces. This program, specifically designed

for Indigenous leaders actively involved in national ICI projects, aims to enhance their leadership and negotiation skills in international environmental policy. It commenced in February 2024, focusing on knowledge sharing, application, and participation in international environmental policy arenas. The first cohort, consisting of five fellows from Tanzania, Panama, Chile, DRC, and Kenya, demonstrated exceptional leadership and negotiation skills.

ICI will continue to support five fellows each year throughout the initiative's duration.

Currently, each of the ICI International Environmental Policy Fellows is undertaking various activities as part of their case studies within their territories. These activities are focused on addressing the region's specific problems or needs, linking biodiversity, climate change, desertification goals, and impact strategies of each project they are involved in. Here is a description of the actions they are taking:



Catherine Losurutia, Pastoralist, Tanzania:

Catherine is facilitating the learning of mitigation measures and facilitating the exchange of ideas to support communities in northern Tanzania on coping with the impacts of climate change. Mitigation strategies are to be generated through learning sessions focusing on the importance of land use planning and the development of ordinances.



Francisco Colipe Loncopan,

Mapuche Winculche Pehuenche, Chile

Francisco is reconnecting the community with biodiverse spaces and addressing the loss of connection to areas with high ecological value. His work focuses on strengthening IPs management and governance of their biocultural territory, with the main goal of IPs fully exercising their collective rights and actively contributing to defining their own development priorities.



Esther Ngalula

Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

Esther is implementing techniques that allow IPs and LCs living in the Kisimbosa community forest in the eastern DRC to participate in biodiversity conservation. These techniques are based on knowledge transmission through meetings and exchanges in workshops and focus groups, enabling these communities to develop a series of conservation recommendations.



William Naimado

Maasai, Kenya

William is working on a case study which draws focus to what has been overlooked as essential aspects of caring for biological diversity, including the special relationship and protection of different flora and fauna in pastoral communities in the Mid-Ewaso Ng'iro River Basin. These communities' totemic systems have guided them in preserving these vital species. His work will highlight the traditional knowledge and systems that aid in biodiversity and wildlife conservation.



Onel Iguairquipiler

Guna, Panama

Onel is carrying out field actions aimed at awareness raising and promoting the participation of young people, children, and women of the Guna people in biodiversity conservation and Indigenous knowledge, thereby strengthening the links between culture and science in these communities. The transfer and loss of traditional knowledge is at risk due to the current low community participation, especially among the youth.

⁴ Named "Makanisi" by the GEF-7 ICI Global Steering Committee, in Lingala voice, which means thought, idea, opinion, remembrance intelligence, spirit, belief, concern.



Photo by Simón Loncopán

INDIGENOUS LEADERSHIP IN COLLABORATIVE MANAGEMENT

Futa Mawiza, Chile exchange knowledge with Indigenous Leaders in California and Alaska

In September 2023, leaders from ICI's Futa Mawiza, Chile participated in the U.S. Department of State's International Visitor Leadership Program focusing on "Indigenous Leadership in the Collaborative Management of Coastal and Marine Protected Areas." Conducted with Chilean government agencies, this program included emerging Indigenous leaders from various Chilean regions. They expanded their knowledge and exchanged experiences on organizational, professional, and cultural topics.

Participants learned about managing Wildlife Protected Areas from the U.S. National Park Service's (NPS) in collaboration with Indigenous communities in California and Alaska. They explored how these communities regained their rights to use and manage their ancestral territories, now designated as NPS Protected Areas (PAs). Participants observed the NPS's collaborative approach with Indigenous authorities, blending scientific and traditional knowledge for fair territory management. They demonstrated the potential for effective partnerships which can improve territorial management, benefiting ecosystems and communities.

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY AND ADVOCACY

The leadership of IPs and LCs in international policy is vital for integrating rights-based approaches into environmental governance, influencing biodiversity and climate discussions, and financial flows. Their engagement ensures that these frameworks are inclusive and respectful of Indigenous rights, enhancing the effectiveness of conservation and climate action initiatives globally. In December 2023, during the 28th Conference of the Parties (COP) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), ICI supported its members' active participation, hosting 10 side events that highlighted Indigenous-led initiatives and inclusive finance. These events showcased the critical role of Indigenous men and women in addressing climate change and initiated broader discussions on improving resource distribution to IPs and LCs.

In the context of the CBD, ICI engaged in and supported an international "Rights and Equity Workshop" in collaboration with the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity (IIFB), IUCN, its commissions and donors. Hosted by IMPACT Kenya, this workshop responded to the 2022 GBF, which placed human and Indigenous rights at the center of biodiversity policy. The workshop culminated in the publication of a new global [Roadmap for Advancing Rights and Equity](#), outlining 11 priority areas and 32 action items. Additionally, ICI contributed to and supported the development of a policy brief titled "[Achieving the Global Biodiversity Framework through Guaranteeing the Roles, Rights, and Contributions of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities](#)." This brief offers recommendations for governments to revise NBSAPs and align them with the updated GBF targets, emphasizing a rights-based approach to biodiversity conservation.



Photo by Luis Barquin

The ICI Team and IPs and LCs-led initiatives leveraged planning grants to navigate challenges and build greater resilience in developing impact strategies. These included complying with GEF requirements, setting up new financial systems, and changing leadership within Indigenous communities. ICI sought to support IPs and LCs in the preparation and implementation of multilateral funding from the GEF.

To facilitate the development of impact strategies, ICI worked collaboratively with IPs and LCs-led initiatives through planning grants. These grants were instrumental in engaging stakeholders in the post-COVID landscape, addressing organizational capacity gaps, and crafting strategies that align with each initiative's cultural practices and priorities to enhance global biodiversity outcomes.

The process, however, encountered several challenges. Some initiatives needed substantial fiscal management support, others grappled with changes in governmental structures affecting financial backing, and several faced leadership changes that required pausing the development of strategies to accommodate governance transitions. For example, in the Cook Islands, the House of Ariki formed the UANKA Trust to facilitate funding and implementation. In Nepal, NEFIN secured the necessary approvals from the Social Welfare Council, enhancing its legal standing. Meanwhile, in the DRC, ANAPAC devoted efforts to broaden its financial and administrative systems through enhanced training and system improvements. Across these efforts, ICI focused on boosting administrative and financial management capacities, enhancing transparency in reporting, and strengthening environmental and social safeguards across all IPs-led Initiatives.

These challenges illustrate that, while ICI serves as a pilot project to help the GEF explore ways to enhance IPs and LCs access to inclusive conservation finance, further efforts towards compromise and adaptation are necessary to achieve large-scale direct financing for IPs and LCs. Key lessons learned include the importance of adaptability in addressing diverse needs, respecting traditional processes and governance structures, and openly discussing financial matters to ensure transparency and trust. Additionally, working to decolonize data and data collection practices is crucial for empowering IPs and LCs. Collaborative efforts to streamline processes, clarify language, and promote learning across projects are essential. These efforts aim to balance support for IPs- and LCs-led initiatives with the GEF's core objective of delivering GEBs.

Several new initiatives and partnerships are emerging that scale ICI through co-design, development, and Indigenous leadership. For example, the coordination between CI and the Tenure Facility has increased investment in FENAMAD and improved alignment of policy and procedures amongst partners. IUCN has worked with their Indigenous Peoples organizational members and the IIFB to co-design and lead the ***Podong Initiative***, which will bring additional support to three ICI partners. The US Department of State, CI, and Indigenous leadership have collaborated on the ***Indigenous Peoples Finance Access Facility (IPFAF)*** with a focus on Indigenous Peoples' ability to access funding for the conservation, restoration, and improved management of their territories. They had prioritized training for IPFAF and ICI partners. Finally, CI and Indigenous leadership are co-designing a broader Inclusive Conservation Partnership to support ICI at scale. Collectively, these efforts will help leverage ICI and support broader scalability.

Key lessons learned include the importance of adaptability in addressing diverse needs, respecting traditional processes and governance structures, and openly discussing financial matters to ensure transparency and trust.

Photo by FENAMAD





Photo by Ru K'ux Abya Yala

LOOKING AHEAD: IMPLEMENTATION TO IMPACT

With many achievements for IPs and LCs in 2023, the next phase of ICI will focus on the impacts of implementation. Lessons learned, such as the importance of adaptability, respecting tradition while continuing efforts to decolonize processes will guide these efforts. The ICI team will share experiences to date and advocate for increased inclusive and direct IPs and LCs financing. Indigenous leaders of ICI will continue to amplify traditional knowledge and IPs and LCs territorial rights. They will share their experiences at both the upcoming 16th COP to the CBD in Cali, Colombia through a Global Exchange and GSC meeting, as well as the attendance at the 29th COP of the UNFCCC in Baku, Azerbaijan. ICI's first cohort of fellows will engage in these policy meetings, learning from peers and advocating with governments.

ICI projects have commenced with a strong emphasis on applying key lessons learned to ensure impactful outcomes. Collaborative efforts to streamline processes, clarify language, and promote learning across projects will continue, balancing support for IPs- and LCs-led initiatives with the GEF's core objective of delivering GEBs.



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Photo by Futa Mawiza