

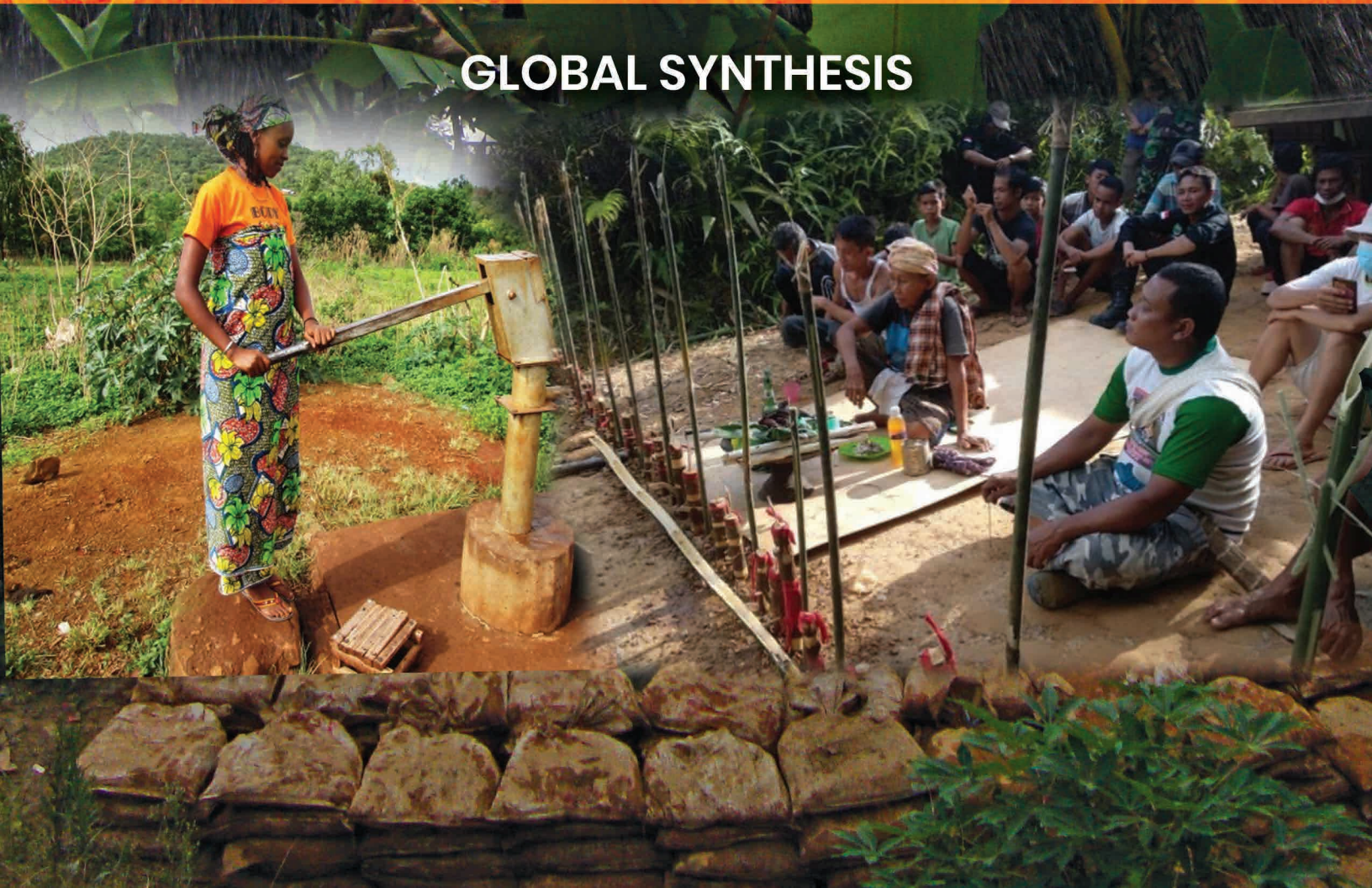


**THE CONTRIBUTIONS,
PERSPECTIVES AND
RECOMMENDATIONS OF
INDIGENOUS PEOPLES ON**



NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS

GLOBAL SYNTHESIS



Synthesis, Recommendations and Ways Forward

By Marisa Cabato, Helen Biangalen-Magata and Grace Balawag

The scoping study on Indigenous Peoples and Nature-based Solutions is meant to provide an evidence-based narrative that demonstrates how Indigenous peoples are key actors and partners in climate action through nature-based solutions. It also presents an opportunity to enrich the discussions that will strengthen NBS that advance and engage Indigenous peoples and to generate support from all stakeholders in promoting and protecting Indigenous peoples' rights.

The presentation focuses on two areas.

First are the summary highlights that provide understanding of the research context by looking at current situations of Indigenous peoples in the three regions as research areas. This intends to provide answers to the following inquiries: What are the perspectives of Indigenous peoples on nature or the natural environment and nature-based solutions? What and how are NBS practiced by them through their traditional knowledge systems and practices? What are the Indigenous peoples' proposed elements for effective NBS?

The second area integrates the recommendations and ways forward to be undertaken as a result of the research study. Most importantly, it emphasizes the key principles and perspectives drawn from evidence-based documentation.





UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT: INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' SITUATIONS

Six country case studies across three regions are highlighted in this research endeavor: Nepal and Indonesia in Asia, Bolivia and Nicaragua in Latin America, and Kenya and Cameroon in Africa.

It is good to locate the Indigenous peoples and know their concerns and challenges as reported in these country studies. Areas occupied by indigenous peoples are usually carefully managed by them. Most ecosystems studied include forests, dry lands, and marine and coastal environments. Indigenous peoples are culturally diverse, speaking diverse languages and practicing unique and diverse traditions and heritage, which were shaped by their history, their story and natural environment.

Indigenous peoples' territories overlap with biodiversity areas, which results in conflict in land use policies such as conservation and protected areas. They are evicted from their territories because of these state conservation policies, implementation of development projects and non-recognition of their land rights. While they occupy resource-rich areas, they remain marginalized, poor and most vulnerable, especially women, the climate challenges, the global COVID-19 pandemic and other socio-cultural and political factors.

Indigenous peoples are also excluded from mainstream and development processes, including planning to implementation and monitoring and evaluation. Further, their indigenous and traditional knowledge and customary governance, which have been proven effective and sustainable, are not recognized. Moreover, they are confronted with land and resource use change. We see conversion of land use, fragmentation of land areas through sale and fencing programs that limit the mobility of peoples and animals, as in Africa. This shifting land and resource use advances market or profit-oriented development paradigms, which are unsustainable and detrimental to Indigenous peoples and the natural environment. In terms of land ownership, we see a shift from communal or collective to private ownership, as in the case of Kenya and the other countries

studied. With all these shifts, we are now experiencing the shrinking resource base, degradation, overuse, deforestation among the brown, blue and green natural environment.

Further, we are looking at identity loss with the threat to Indigenous peoples' existence and weakening of their social institutions. Regarding the access to finance institutions and resources from the government, they get minimal to no support at all in financing their own climate change solutions. Finally, legislative and policy frameworks on Indigenous peoples, climate change and nature-based solutions are not strong enough or aggravate the non-recognition of Indigenous peoples' rights. This legal support varies from country to country like in the case of the Pygmies in Cameroon where the government does not recognize their identity as Indigenous peoples and their land tenure rights, customary governance, indigenous knowledge and traditional knowledge. These policies and frameworks are also not coherent, weakly enforced and implemented, and gaps remain in understanding policy contexts among policy makers, among others.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' PERSPECTIVES ON NATURE AND NBS

To Indigenous peoples, nature or the physical or natural environment provides a complex interdependence of all life forms. It is home; it is referred to as the foundation of life, cradle of life, focal point of life, or spaces for life, which is the basis of identity and ensures survival.

On nature-based solutions, it is a contention between NBS as old versus new climate change solutions. However, Indigenous peoples look at it as an old one, a practice and a system since time immemorial, handed down from the past to the present generation. In terms of focus and purpose, are people and nature separate or one? Indigenous peoples look at people and nature as co-existing, in harmony and unity with each other that results in sustainable resource uses and promotes good living. It emphasizes interdependence of cultural and biological diversity.

Finally, despite varied and opposing views on nature-based solutions, it is an opportunity for Indigenous peoples' engagement in advancing their rights and advocacies, in climate action in particular.



INDIGENOUS, TRADITIONAL AND LOCAL KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS AND PRACTICES AND NBS

In Asia, these indigenous knowledge systems and practices are demonstrated through indigenous leadership and customary institutions for forest and biodiversity conservation and through local wisdoms, such as the “Seven Fortunes of the Dayak” in Indonesia, that are rooted in a harmonious relationship between humans and nature.

In Africa, the Indigenous peoples’ practices on mobile herd grazing, land use zoning and biocultural seasonal calendar prove to sustain the land and biodiversity. Their community-based monitoring systems are adaptable and demonstrate practical knowledge in sharing systems. These also include traditional occupations and maintained health and well-being and basic survival. More so, their culture and religion play an important role in conservation practices, reforestation and domestication, and agroforestry practices.

In Latin America, nature-based solutions are demonstrated in their sustainable ecotourism management regulations based on customs, traditions and governance systems—as in the case of Bolivia—and conservation, knowledge preservation, territorial and community governance—as in Nicaragua.

It is reiterated in these studies that nature-based solutions through indigenous knowledge systems and practices are dynamic and promote intergenerational sharing. These are shared, collectively practiced, promote reciprocity, and sustain growth and development.

PROPOSED NBS ELEMENTS BY AND FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

The research studies reiterate the following:

- Nature-based solutions should be anchored on the recognition, respect and promotion of human rights and Indigenous peoples’ rights and Indigenous peoples as active partners in NBS and climate action.
- A rights-based approach that puts the recognition of the rights of Indigenous peoples, their identity, land and territories, self-determined development, customary governance systems and institutions such as the council or community of elders and leaders, and the protection of their rights through free prior and informed consent as the foundations of nature-based solutions.
- A NBS framework that recognizes the inseparable relationship of people, nature and culture.
- A NBS that recognizes the indigenous knowledge systems and practices, culture, traditions, spirituality, belief systems and value systems of Indigenous peoples.
- A NBS that promotes social justice through equitable resource and benefit sharing and access to social services.

- An effective NBS framework that is supported by enabling laws and policies and relevant institutional arrangement for strong governance systems and institutions and fiscal support.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND WAYS FORWARD

Key recommendations and ways forward were drawn as a result of integrating the findings from the six country case studies.

1. For States/governments, non-state actors and multilateral bodies

- Recognize, respect and promote Indigenous peoples' rights to their identity, culture, land and territories, self-governance, self-determined development, social justice and benefit-sharing. Respect and promotion of indigenous rights should be consistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), integrating robust and effective safeguards to address challenges. Support land tenure transitions towards securing customary land tenure for Indigenous peoples. Integrate indigenous knowledge systems and practices within their nationally determined contributions (NDCs), national climate action plans and national climate response strategies.
- Strengthen representation, full and effective engagement, consultation protocols of Indigenous peoples in decision making and development processes, from planning to implementation to monitoring and evaluation. Development should be inclusive, participatory, and respect self-determination. Enhance direct access of Indigenous peoples to finance resources that are upscaled, accessible, equitable, and long-term. Provide support that empower Indigenous peoples through capacity-building programs that will enrich their knowledge and skills.
- Recognize and promote human rights-based development and policy approaches that support Indigenous peoples' ways of life. Improve and promote disaggregated data on national and global statistics relevant to Indigenous peoples, such as national product accounts and measurement of valuation of resource metrics, among others. Pro-actively support documentation of indigenous and traditional practices, and sustain and enhance reporting and knowledge sharing efforts on various documentation and reports on Indigenous peoples' initiatives and actions at various platforms such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).
- Develop and expand partnerships in generating knowledge, especially identifying relevant indicators on traditional knowledge and well-being of Indigenous peoples. Recognize and promote human rights-based approach in nature-based solutions, with emphasis on people, culture and nature as one. Promote and support exchanges in knowledge platforms at various levels (UNFCCC-Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform, regional and national knowledge platforms). Develop policy frame-

work for sustainable production and consumption, which enables immediate upscaling of sustainable economies and revitalizing indigenous food systems.

- Strengthen and provide relevant institutional spaces for Indigenous peoples' effective engagement at local and national levels, as in the case of Cameroon, where indigenous peoples are engaged with the Ministry of Social Affairs for Environment, Protection of Nature and Sustainable Development. Also, recognize and strengthen customary governance systems and the role of community elders and leaders.

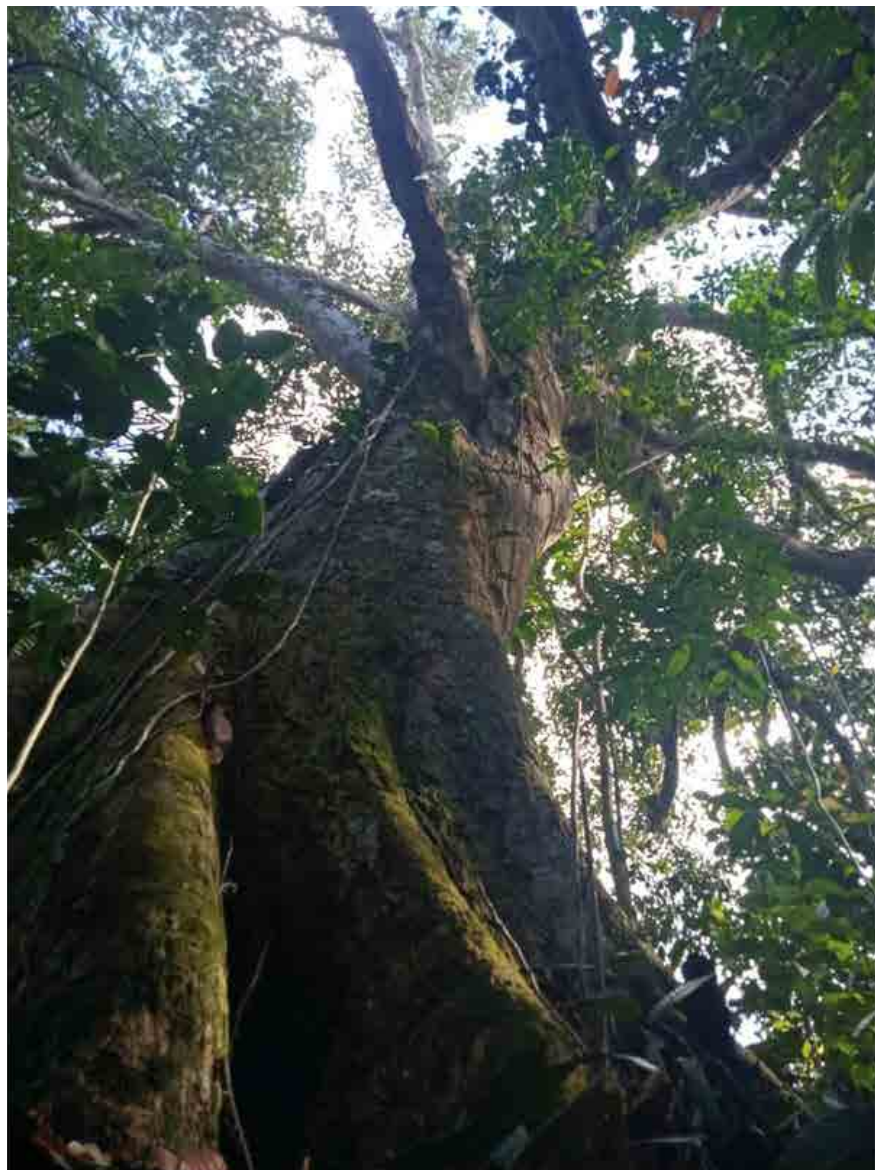
2. For Indigenous Peoples

- Strategize and sustain lobbying and advocacy efforts on their rights at various levels. Sustain engagements on NBS and climate action, among others, and expand partnerships and collaboration with other stakeholders who are committed to the advocacies of Indigenous peoples, such as artists, filmmakers and others. Continue building capacities, knowledge and skills on documentation, development process, monitoring, organizational development, and leadership, among others.

3. For Civil Society Organizations

- Conduct sensitization, education, and consultation in designing related projects and programs in Indigenous peoples' communities or close to their communities. This was specifically recommended by the country case study of Cameroon. In the immediate present, Tebtebba and partners should furnish copies of the research report to stakeholder country governments and other multilateral bodies as basis for policy inputs, academe, CSOs, Indigenous peoples' communities for information, reference and adaption. It is worth mentioning that Cameroon is undergoing revision of the Wildlife Law of 1994. The result of this research study is very relevant as an input to the Cameroon endeavor of revising this particular law.

In conclusion, Tebtebba and Elatia Partners note these recommendations and insights from the discussions. It has been a very fruitful exchange and learning. Tebtebba with the Elatia Partners will pursue the plan to popularize all these efforts and initiatives of Indigenous peoples not only among governments but also using other platforms to gain wider support among civil societies and other stakeholders who are pushing for and elaborating on the centrality of rights in nature-based solutions to make this genuinely responsive to the issues and concerns of Indigenous peoples.



Tengkawang tree estimated to be more than 100 years behind Kampong Tae.



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