

Biocultural Community Protocols



Articulating
Stewardship



Asserting
Rights



Affirming
Responsibilities

What Are Biocultural Community Protocols?

Biocultural community protocols (BCPs) articulate community-determined values, procedures, and priorities. They set out rights and responsibilities under customary, state, and international law as the basis for engaging with external actors such as governments, companies, academics, and NGOs. They can be used as catalysts for constructive and proactive responses to threats and opportunities posed by land and resource development, conservation, research, and other legal and policy frameworks.

Global Initiative on BCPs

The Initiative supports networks of Indigenous peoples' and community-based organisations with the following:

- Participatory documentation and development of BCPs;
- Using BCPs as the basis for constructive engagement with external actors;
- Building legal capacity of in-country lawyers and advocates;
- Peer learning, analysis, and exchange of experiences; and
- Development and dissemination of good practice guidance and lessons.

Institutional Partners

- COMPAS Network
- CIKOD
- League for Pastoral Peoples and the LIFE Network
- Institute of Ayurveda and Integrative Medicine
- UNU – Institute for Advanced Studies
- Union for Ethical BioTrade
- IUCN Mesoamerica
- GEF Small Grants Programme

Financial Partners

- Shuttleworth Foundation
- The Christensen Fund
- Heinrich Böll Foundation
- GIZ
- ABS Initiative
- CDT Foundation
- OSI Southern Africa
- IUCN Environmental Law Centre

Local Partners

- Kukula Traditional Health Practitioners Association (South Africa)
- Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation (Namibia)
- Kyaramacan Association (Namibia)
- Nyae Nyae Development Foundation (Namibia)
- Legal Assistance Center (Namibia)
- Save Lamu (Kenya)
- Samburu and Maa pastoralists (Kenya)
- Kivulini Trust (Kenya)
- MPIDO (Kenya)
- MELCA (Ethiopia)
- CIKOD (Ghana)
- SAVES (Pakistan)
- Lokhit Pashu-Palak Sansthan (India)
- Jaisalmer Camel Breeders' Association (India)
- Sahjeevan (India)
- Kachchh Camel Breeders' Association (India)
- Jagran Jan Vikas Samiti (India)
- Centre for Indian Knowledge Systems (India)
- Future in Our Hands (Sri Lanka)
- GDF-Southeast Asia (Malaysia)
- IIAP and ASOCASAN (Colombia)
- Moskitia Asla Takanka (Honduras)

How are Biocultural Community Protocols Developed and Used?

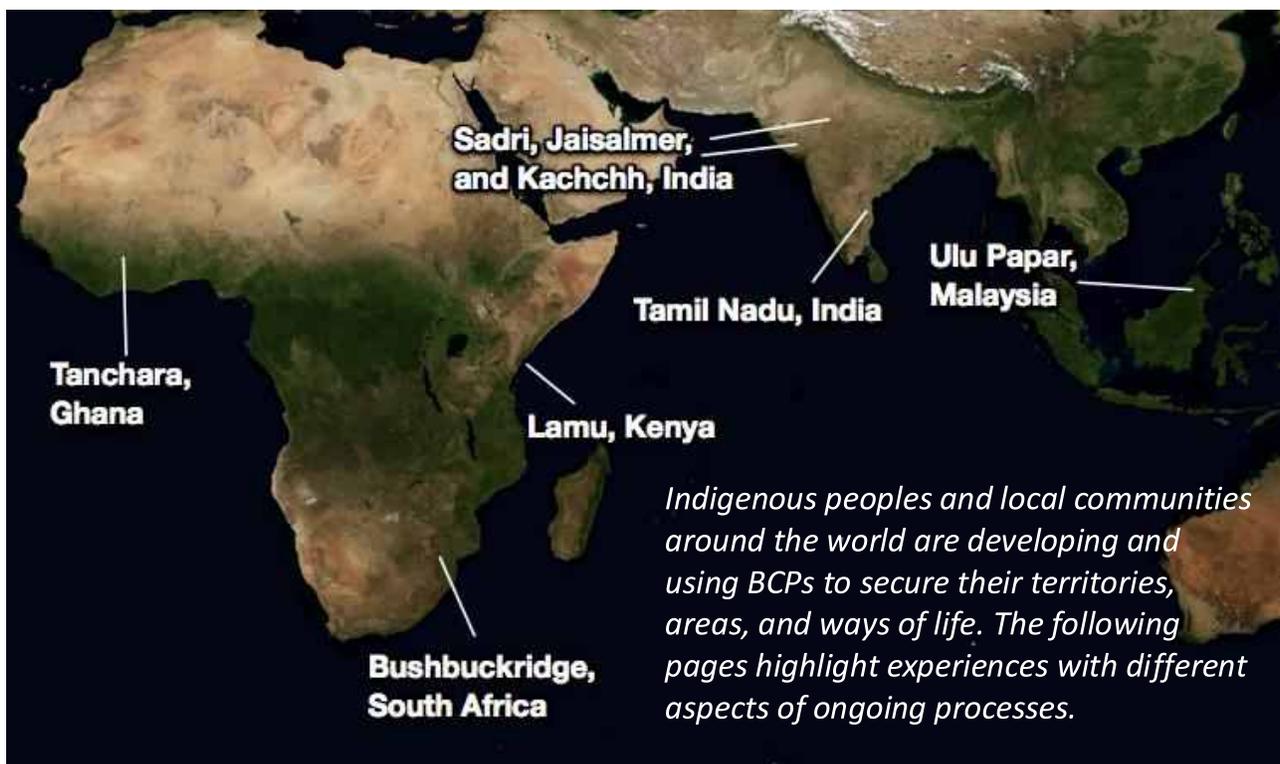
Guiding Principles

The process of developing and using a BCP should be *endogenous, inclusive, empowering*, and based primarily on the community's *own resources* and *diversity* of knowledge, skills, and experiences. It should promote intra- and inter-community *dialogue* and intergenerational *sharing*. It should increase the community's *agency* and *capacity* to ensure that engagements with external actors take place with *honesty, transparency, respect*, social and cultural *sensitivity*, and *integrity*.

Every process of developing and using a BCP is as unique and diverse as the communities who undertake them. Whilst there is no template or way to “do” a BCP, there are lessons learned and guidance on good practices and core principles, particularly concerning facilitation of the process according to the community's objectives, priorities, timelines, and approaches. There are also several locally adaptable methods and tools that can assist with different aspects of a BCP process, including self-determination, endogenous development, documentation and communication, social mobilization, legal empowerment, strategic advocacy, and reflective monitoring and evaluation.

Toolkit for Community Facilitators: www.community-protocols.org/toolkit

Community Experiences with BCPs in Ghana, Malaysia, Kenya, India, and South Africa



Strengthening Customary Institutions and Community Organisations in Ghana

Since 2003, the Tanchara and Daffiama communities in northern Ghana have worked with CIKOD to develop a series of community organisational development tools, including institutional and resource mapping, visioning and action planning, organisational and well-being self-assessments, and institutional strengthening, to increase their capacity to 'develop from within'. The tools have enabled customary leaders and community organisations to respond in culturally appropriate ways to an illegal gold mine and other threats to their territories, sacred groves, and important natural resources.

Article on Tanchara BCP process:
www.tinyurl.com/8htgy28



Credit: CIKOD

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Community Mapping and Documentation of Customary Ways of Life in Malaysia



Credit: Natural Justice

Nine villages have relied on the Ulu Papar valley in Sabah, Malaysia, for generations for their identity, culture, food, shelter, and medicine. In order to establish a Community Use Zone within a state park that overlaps with their customary lands, they undertook 8 years of participatory action research, including creating 3-D models, conducting livelihood assessments, recording oral histories, and producing videos and photo exhibitions. This process provided the foundations for consolidating a BCP and engaging with government agencies to secure their customary rights and livelihoods.

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Article on Ulu Papar BCP process:
www.tinyurl.com/c2cey7h

Mobilising Diverse Communities in Response to a Common Threat in Kenya

When the Government of Kenya announced plans for a multi-billion dollar mega-infrastructure project in Lamu, Indigenous peoples, local fishing communities, religious leaders, concerned residents, and civil society organisations joined together in solidarity. They embarked on a process of meetings, consultations, and visioning sessions before deciding not to oppose the project outright, but to call for their existing rights under international, regional and national law to be upheld in practice. Their emphasis on procedural issues such as rights to information, participation in decisions that affect them, and unbiased impact assessments illustrates the growing critical mass of civil society in Kenya.

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Support Save Lamu:
www.savelamu.org



Credit: Save Lamu

Legal Empowerment of Small-scale Organic Farmers in India

Small and marginal farmers cultivate dozens of indigenous varieties of rice in the coastal districts of Tamil Nadu, India. However, the introduction of mono-crops and high yielding varieties threaten to erode the agro-biodiversity and traditional knowledge systems that sustain it. With the support of the Centre for Indian Knowledge Systems, organic farmers' associations have been engaging in a process of legal empowerment around relevant international laws such as the Convention on Biological Diversity and



Credit: CIKS

national laws such as the 2002 Biological Diversity Act, the 2001 Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Act, and the 2011 Food Security Bill. They have also learned about procedural rights such as the right to information, legal aid, and consumer protection for farmers.

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Advocating for Livestock Keepers' Rights in India

Raika and Maldhari pastoralists in Rajasthan and Gujarat (resp.) are claiming rights to customary grazing lands under India's 2006 Forest Rights Act. Both communities developed BCPs as tools to convey the importance of their breeds and ways of life to biodiversity conservation and to advocate for recognition of livestock keepers' rights. With the support of local organisations LPPS and Sahjeevan as well as the League for Pastoral Peoples, the Raika and Maldhari are engaging with state government officials, national committees, and international fora to promote fair agricultural and biodiversity policies for the *in situ* conservation of local livestock breeds and livelihoods.



Credit: Sahjeevan

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Maldhari BCP photo story:
www.tinyurl.com/ccj8d2v

Engaging with Responsible Companies to Support Local Livelihoods in South Africa

Traditional health practitioners from two different ethnic groups in Bushbuckridge, South Africa, established an Association in 2009. They developed a BCP to address unauthorized use of traditional knowledge and overharvesting of medicinal plants by outsiders as well as lack of access to plants now confined within a state protected area. Empowered by new rights under South Africa's 2004 Biodiversity Act and Bioprospecting, Access and Benefit Sharing Regulations and with the support of the Kruger to Canyons Biosphere (K2C) Committee, the health practitioners used their BCP to engage proactively with a local cosmetic company interested in their traditional

knowledge and to establish a medicinal plants nursery.



Credit: Natural Justice

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Article on Bushbuckridge BCP process:
www.tinyurl.com/dx694s5

Resources and Publications

Biocultural Community Protocols: A Toolkit for Community Facilitators

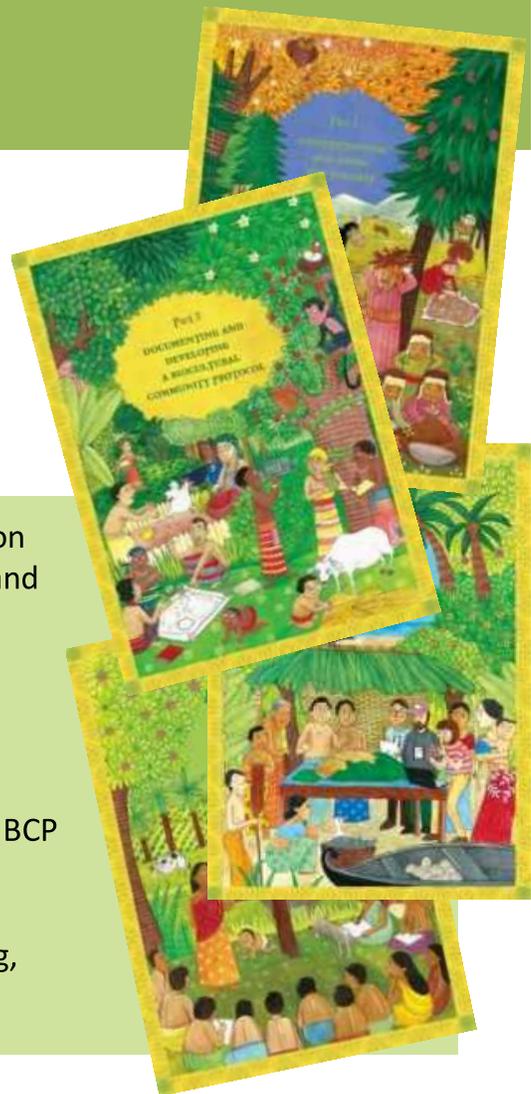
The four-part Toolkit is available at:
www.community-protocols.org/toolkit

Part I provides guidance to community facilitators on using the Toolkit and an overview of key methods and tools that can be adapted to local contexts.

Part II provides guidance on the internal process of documenting and developing a BCP.

Part III provides guidance on the process of using a BCP to engage with external actors.

Part IV provides guidance on processes of reflecting, reporting, and revising.



Community Protocols Website and Multimedia Resources

This dedicated website hosts legal reviews and e-learning modules, films, case studies, links to Facebook pages, and more:
www.community-protocols.org

Key Publications

Also available on the website are dozens of articles, workshop reports, books, and other publications that provide in-depth documentation and analysis of experiences and lessons learned in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.



This briefing note provides an introduction to Indigenous peoples' and local communities' experiences and lessons learned with developing and using biocultural community protocols as part of ongoing initiatives to secure their territories and areas.

Please contact Holly Shrumm (holly@naturaljustice.org) with any feedback on content, ideas for further development of the theory and practice, or specific inputs on community experiences and participatory tools. We also welcome opportunities for future collaboration.

NATURAL JUSTICE: LAWYERS FOR COMMUNITIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

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Core Partners & Supporters

The image displays a collection of logos for various organizations and partners. At the top left is the 'NATURAL JUSTICE' logo. Below it are logos for COMPAS (Endogenous Development), Center for Indigenous Knowledge and Organizational Development, giz (Programme implementing the Biodiversity Convention), THE CHRISTENSEN FUND, SHUTTLEWORTH FUNDED, and CDT Foundation Inc. In the center, there are logos for the League for Pastoral Peoples and Endogenous Livestock Development, LIFL Network, Lokhit Pashu Palak Sansthan, OSISA (Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa), SAVES, HEINRICH BÖLL STIFTUNG SOUTHERN AFRICA, CIKS, sahjeevan, and SAVE LAMU. On the right side, logos include MARIKA, Kivulini Trust, IRDNC, MELCA-Ethiopia, IAP, INSTITUTO DE INVESTIGACIONES AMBIENTALES DEL PACIFICO, UNIP, UNITED NATIONS UNIVERSITY, UNU-IAS (Institute of Advanced Studies), and IUCN. At the bottom right, there is a logo for The GEF Small Grants Programme.