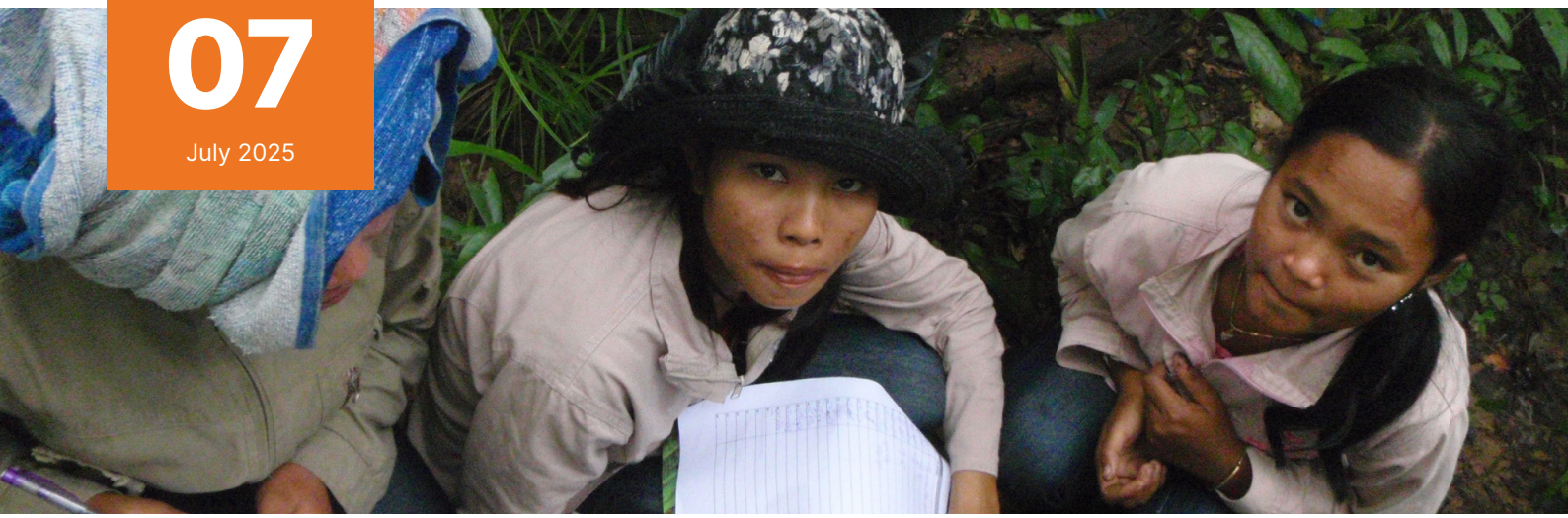

Key points

01

Existing monitoring frameworks, both led by international organizations and emerging through the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), largely overlook the social components of the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), particularly those related to equitable governance, Free Prior Informed Consent (FPIC), participation, traditional knowledge, and land tenure security. Monitoring efforts led or co-led by Indigenous Peoples and local communities are crucial for addressing existing gaps in monitoring of the social implications of conservation, both to guide methodologies and contribute grounded, applicable data.

02

Extensive, detailed and robust local-level monitoring of the social dimensions of conservation already occurs, with data and information being collected at large scales and widely distributed across regions, geographies and types of conservation: these initiatives demonstrate the feasibility and benefits of community-based or locally-led monitoring and could provide considerable complementary data for evaluating governance and social outcomes.

03

There is a lack of secure funding for such grounded monitoring which impacts on continuity: more direct funding to Indigenous Peoples, local communities and representative organizations is required to scale up, share lessons, enhance consistency, and provide the structures and capacities to collate information at relevant national, international or regional scales. Funding such community-led monitoring should be integral to more conservation initiatives, so the scope of funded projects extends beyond the implementation of conservation actions.

Building from the ground up: Opportunities to scale locally-led monitoring of the social impacts of conservation

Conservation actions affect not only ecosystems and biodiversity but are inherently social and political. All conservation initiatives, whether state, private or community-led, draw on certain types of values and kinds of knowledge to design governance and set out management strategies. These initiatives affect people profoundly in various material and non-material ways, meaning these socio-political dimensions of conservation must be monitored to be understood and responded to. Relative to ecological monitoring, these social and political aspects are widely neglected, particularly in global datasets.

Global monitoring of protected and conserved areas increasingly evaluates 'management effectiveness' (for instance through the widely used Protected Area Management Effectiveness methodology [PAME]), though such approaches often focus heavily on use of funds and the quality of internal systems and reporting, rather than governance, rights, and justice or equity. Tools such as SAGE (Site Assessment of Governance and Equity) are emerging to address the gap, but progress is slow and there is often a lack of support from UN CBD signatories for more explicit reference to (and monitoring of) rights and equity. Despite the inclusion in the GBF of targets to respect rights and conserve through equitable governance, meaningful commitments to elevate the perspectives of Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and key social groups have been limited.

This monitoring gap threatens to constrain the advancement of conservation practice towards equitable governance and rights-based approaches. It impedes accountability and makes inclusive approaches towards realizing the GBF targets more difficult. From another perspective, evidence of positive social and economic impacts related to conservation actions may be necessary to gain political and financial support for recognizing, continuing, and expanding those efforts, or for reducing support for those associated with social harms and poor governance. Failure to systematically collect and assess such impacts constitutes a blind spot.

About this briefing series: In 2003, at the 5th World Parks Congress in Durban, the conservation world made commitments to return lands to indigenous peoples that had been turned into protected areas without their consent, and to only establish new protected areas with their full consent and involvement. Those commitments have not been realised. This paper is one in a series of briefing papers that offers case studies, testimony, research, and analysis from FPP and from our partners that examine the current state of play of the relationship between conservation and indigenous peoples, and local communities with collective ties to their lands. It will expose challenges and injustices linked to conservation operations, showcase practical, positive ways forward for the care of lands and ecosystems, led by indigenous peoples and local communities themselves, and reflect on pathways to just and equitable conservation more broadly.

Forest Peoples Programme
IUCN
CEESP

With support from
ARCADIA

Front cover image:
Indigenous Kuy Youth Survey Biodiversity in the Prey Lang, Credit: Suzana Sorinchan USAID/Cambodia via Flickr

Objectives of this scoping exercise and report

This report presents the results of a global scoping exercise to identify and characterize monitoring initiatives led by or partnered with Indigenous Peoples and local communities to capture social dimensions of conservation. Information was received from 87 relevant monitoring initiatives. The work was commissioned by the Forest Peoples Programme, in support of the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity (IIFB). The methods for the scoping exercise are detailed in Annex 1.

The purpose of the scoping exercise was to assess the extent to which Indigenous Peoples and local communities have engaged in establishing monitoring to track social dimensions of conservation, why they were set up, and what format they take. We define social dimensions of conservation broadly, including social, cultural and economic impacts, rights, governance, equity, justice, wellbeing, livelihoods, and all of their subcomponents.

By characterizing the initiatives identified, we sought to assess the potential for collating locally-collected data to monitoring at regional, national or international scales. This includes assessing their potential to provide useful complementary data (known as 'alternative data sources') for the GBF monitoring framework and to help track progress towards various targets and indicators with social components.

Additionally, we sought to build a catalog of individuals and organizations working to monitor social dimensions of conservation from the perspective of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, with the potential to establish a network to share experiences, technology, methodological lessons, funding knowledge, lessons to support longevity, and who might seek to scale up, collaborate, and collectively advocate, as well as collate data.

We are very grateful to all those who made recommendations or responded directly to our survey and aim to maintain those connections to advance this work.

It is important to note that not all of the 87 monitoring initiatives were strictly initiated and led by Indigenous Peoples and local communities. However, responses were provided by people directly involved in the monitoring initiatives — a criteria for inclusion in the analysis below. In general, all are bottom-up initiatives focused on reporting the perspectives of Indigenous Peoples and local communities. They involve a wide variety of collaborations pertaining to who initiated the monitoring, who designs and has responsibility over the initiative, who collects, holds, analyses, and uses the data. In addition to those contributed by Indigenous Peoples and local community members, representatives and civil society organizations, survey responses came from staff of international conservation NGOs, one from a state official overseeing community conservation networks, and several from academics running relevant projects. Yet, all responses indicated that if they are not strictly led by Indigenous Peoples and local communities, they involve partnership at a minimum, and their clear purpose is to support and represent the perspectives, rights, knowledge, and voices of Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

Distribution of the 87 initiatives

The initiatives identified are widely distributed (Figure 1), with those at national or smaller geographic scales spanning 46 different countries, predominantly from Africa (n=14 countries), Asia (n=14), Latin America (n=10), and Oceania (n=4, Table 1).

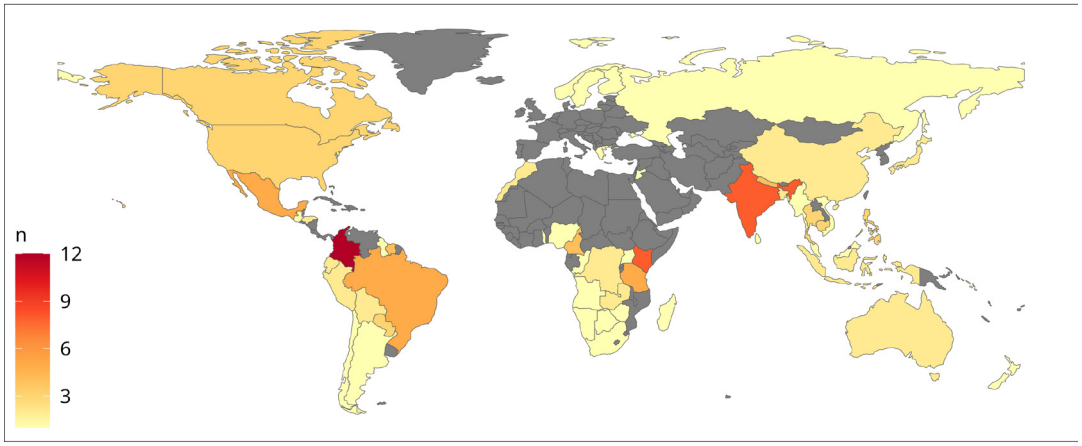

Figure 1. *The distribution of monitoring initiatives by country (n = number of survey responses received per country, gray indicates no responses).*

There was a clear bias in responses towards specific countries which the core team are most familiar with (in particular eight initiatives in India, ten in Colombia, and six in Kenya). It is difficult to ascertain whether gaps in the geographic distribution of these initiatives are caused by the research team's approach and network (including language representation) or represent true gaps in the existence of social monitoring initiatives. Certain gaps are apparent, for example in the Middle East, large parts of North Africa, and Europe. In future exercises, support from organizations such as the Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact and the ICCA Consortium would be of great help to broaden participation to more widely distributed community-led monitoring initiatives.

Table 1. *The distribution of the social monitoring initiatives by continent*

Continent	Responses	Number of countries
Africa	21	14
Asia	21	14
Europe	1	1
Latin America*	25	10
North America & Caribbean	4	3
Oceania	5	4
Global Platforms and international initiatives	10	-
	87	**46**

*Mexico is considered part of Latin America for this exercise

Type of conservation initiative being monitored

The conservation initiatives monitored cover a variety of protected and conserved area governance categories — NGO-led (43%), led by Indigenous peoples and local communities (38%), shared governance with Indigenous Peoples and local communities (33%), and government initiatives (30%). Private initiatives (12%) were the least common.

Ecosystems covered

The initiatives cover diverse ecosystems— 61% forest and woodland, 30% marine and coastal, 38% wetlands and rivers, and 28% mountains (Figure 2). Almost 40% covered mixed ecosystems.

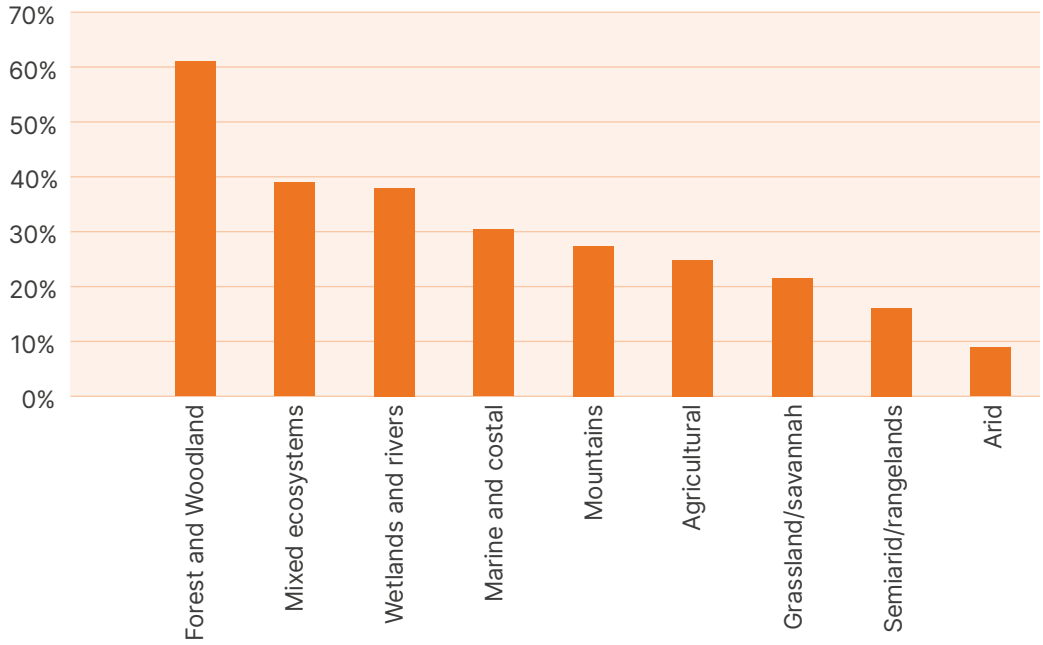

Figure 2. *Percentage of social monitoring initiatives (n=87) that were reported in various types of ecosystems (they do not add up to 100% as some initiatives covered multiple ecosystems).*

Scale of the monitoring initiatives

- Six of the initiatives represent global platforms which have Indigenous Peoples' organizations and representatives in the governing bodies.
- Nine are international, regional or transboundary monitoring programs.
- Eleven operate at the national-level.
- The remaining 61 (70%) focus on subnational-levels (25% of those at large subnational scales equal to one or more states or districts, and the remaining 75% at more local scales).

The global scale platforms comprised The ICCA Registry, The Indigenous Navigator, Mapeo, Terrastories, SOCMON (Socioeconomic Monitoring Initiative for Coastal Management) and Nia Tero's Guardian Connector (biocultural monitoring platform for Indigenous communities). Even these global platforms vary widely in their history, aims, content and coverage — from presenting qualitative case studies for tracking socio-economic change to cataloging local territorial governance. These global platforms tend to have broader purposes related to rights, marginalization, and the politics of environment and development than being specifically tailored to conservation. None entirely fulfill the role of monitoring progress towards rights-based conservation, equitable governance, just distribution of social and economic benefits, or other socio-political targets in conservation policy. However all could contribute through the social dimensions

they do capture, their experiences of network building, methods, ethical approaches, inclusion of multiple languages and technology, and their application to advocacy and policy processes.

Of the 87 initiatives, the majority (54%) are connected to wider monitoring networks, feeding in their data to amplify their use - e.g. a national network for community forestry or a network of communities living within the same ecosystem. Only a minority of the initiatives are standalone, solely for the use of the local community gathering the data (note: this may represent a bias in our data collection as contact was often made through international networks and people working for international organizations).

Some of these initiatives have existed and gained experience over many years, with 15% reported to be over 20 years old and 35% over 10 years old.

Categories of social monitoring data collected

The categories of data collected are relatively consistent, suggesting these are data sources that have comparability, relevance, and potential to be collated over large scales. Figure 3 illustrates the most common categories of data collected.

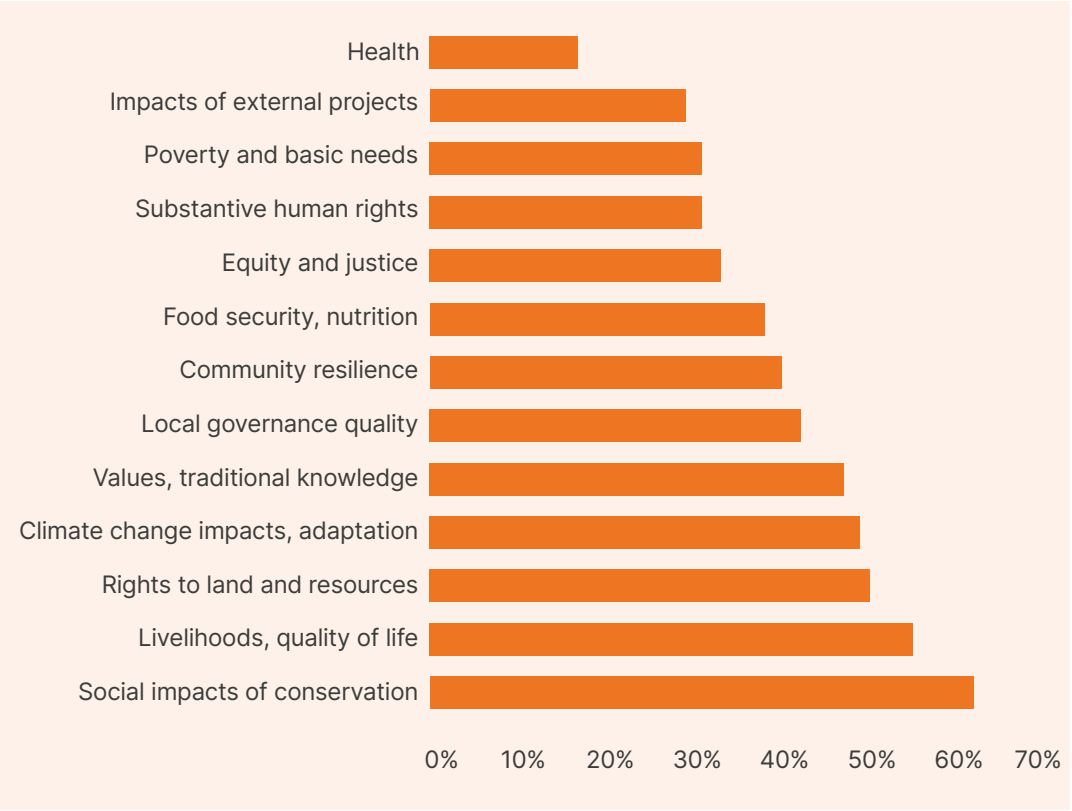

Figure 3. *Percentage of monitoring initiatives (n=87) that collected social monitoring data in various categories (they do not add up to 100% as some initiatives covered multiple categories)*

Purposes of the social monitoring initiatives and uses of data collected

The specific stated purposes of the initiatives vary from internal use such as informing local adaptation and sustainable management, to broader influence such as sensitizing governments, NGOs and donors to impacts and rights, to inform decisions and negotiations involving external actors to mediate social, ecological, economic and development goals, and for advocacy and use in local to national political or legal processes. Some initiatives focus on a single purpose, although many focus on several scales of use and impact. This is also reflected in the uses to which the collected data had been put (Figure 4). While some initiatives prioritized the improvement of local management, many social monitoring initiatives aimed to document and address the pressures imposed on their peoples and communities by external actors.

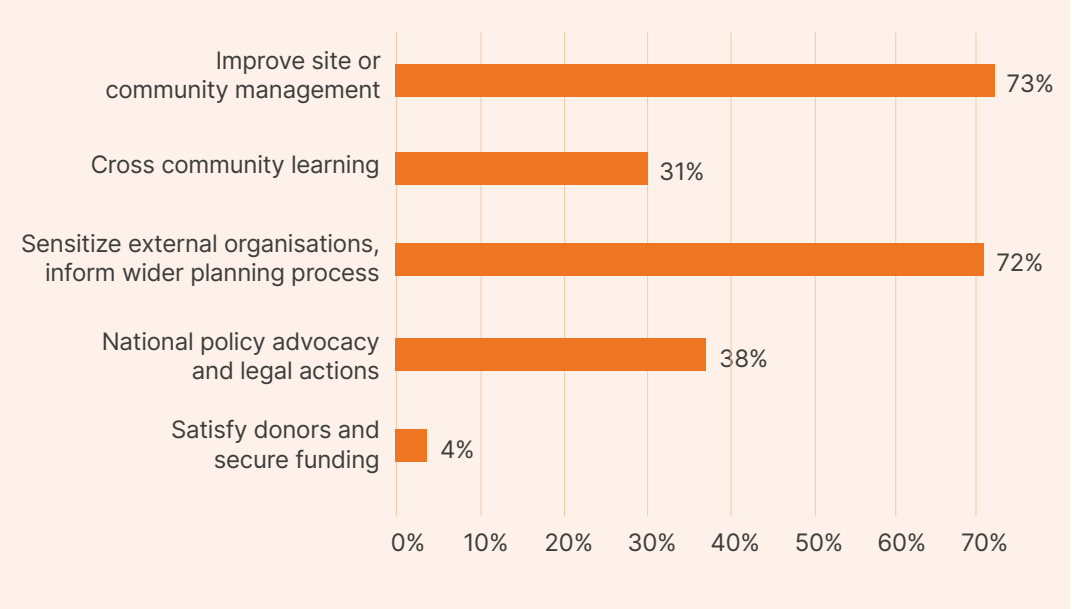

Figure 4. *Percentage of monitoring initiatives (n=87) that reported uses of the social monitoring data collected (they do not add up to 100% as some initiatives covered multiple uses)*

Challenges faced in the social monitoring initiative

Numerous challenges were faced by the managers of these initiatives, including political barriers imposed by government, levels of trust with the communities providing data, and the difficulties of bridging Indigenous and Western scientific knowledge systems. However, securing continued funding was most commonly cited as the key challenge faced (Figure 5). Only 5% of initiatives reportedly faced no challenges.

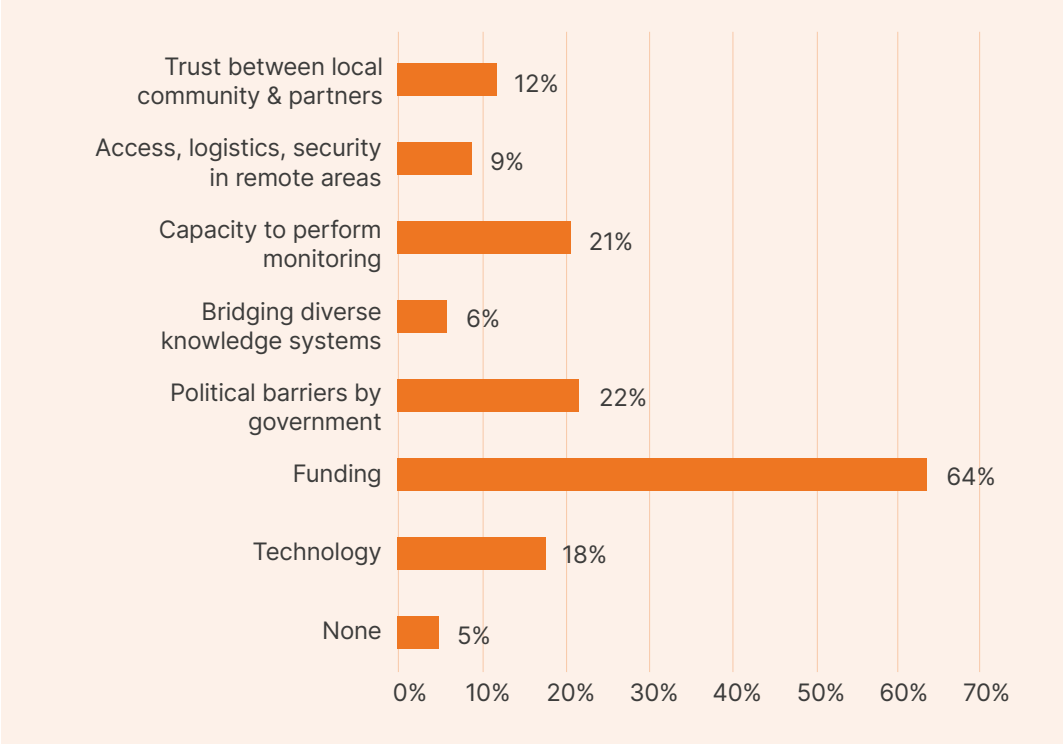

Figure 5. *Percentage of monitoring initiatives (n=87) that reported challenges facing social monitoring initiatives (they do not add up to 100% as some initiatives reported multiple challenges)*

Funding of the monitoring initiatives

Funding for such initiatives can be provided by a wide range of sources. Only 6% of the 87 in our sample are self-funded. Many initiatives in our sample are funded through international donors, organizations, networks or through national civil society organizations. Funding is clearly precarious, as 38% reported that their funding had already ended, threatening the continuity of the monitoring initiative. Approximately 30% of other responses stated that they are required to renew funding every one to three years. The other quarter had more secure, longer term or even indefinite funding for their monitoring initiatives.

Frequency of reporting

For most, data is collected regularly (70% at least annually) enabling change to be detected relatively quickly. Only 16% were one-off exercises (Table 2).

Table 2. *Frequency with which data is collected*

More than once a year	48%
Once a year	22%
Every 2 years	8%
Less than every 2 years	6%
1 time only	16%

Type of data collected

Data collected from individuals and disaggregated for analysis can help address concerns about exclusion of disadvantaged groups, such as women in governance and just distribution of social and economic benefits from the conservation actions. The community is the primary level of interest (86% of initiatives) but there was also data disaggregation for groups of relevance to GBF targets, providing fine scale social understanding related to: gender (72%), youth (59%), ethnicity (46%), elderly people (42%), people identified as vulnerable (35%), socioeconomic groups (30%) and people with disabilities (16%).

Seventy percent of the 87 initiatives collect both qualitative and quantitative data, while 15% collect only quantitative data and 15% only qualitative data.

Credit: *The Alexander von Humboldt Biological Resources Research Institute, Colombia*

Conclusions and recommendations

This overview of the characteristics of 87 social monitoring initiatives led or partnered by Indigenous Peoples and local communities underscores that extensive, detailed, and robust social data is currently collected at large scales and widely distributed. These initiatives generate information that is required to monitor the quality of conservation governance and management practices, and produce the data required to track conservation policy targets relating to equity, governance, rights, knowledge and participation, something that has been absent from or poorly represented in the official monitoring frameworks led by the CBD or by governments and international NGOs (including the World Database on Protected Areas – protectedplanet.net). These more grassroots-level social and governance monitoring efforts are highly relevant to the GBF targets. They carry the potential to provide considerable complementary data as 'alternative data sources' for measuring social outcomes, and more generally as a needed means to enhance inclusion and accountability in conservation globally. This scoping exercise provides valuable initial insights to build upon for improving monitoring of the social dimensions of conservation, (such as governance and equity) and towards their inclusion in global conservation monitoring platforms, through real-world experiences and examples of how to do so.

Monitoring led by or reflecting the perspectives of Indigenous Peoples and local communities is proliferating with improving networking and technology. This monitoring effort operates at a variety of scales and has been set up to address particular different situations, requirements to strengthen governance and management, and to address the threats that Indigenous Peoples and local communities face. There is a high degree of networking among initiatives, and many exhibit considerable experience, with over a third having existed for over 10 years. They also show consistency in their methodologies, with similar types of data collected and applied to various purposes.

The different global and international platforms (compiling data from sites around the world or for specific groups of countries) show the potential for scaling up and each brings particular experience relating to ethics, data sovereignty and surveillance concerns, technology, and the collation of data across languages and contexts. However, those platforms do not yet represent a living monitoring effort that can easily be collated or applied to conservation at a global scale, for example to track status and progress towards multiple GBF targets. Each monitoring initiative has its own intended purpose and these bottom-up individual approaches should remain to reflect the perspectives and needs of that group. This brings significant challenges regarding data comparability and integration. Nonetheless, there is a valuable role for these data sources to play in complementing and enriching the knowledge gathered about the impacts and results of conservation action at multiple scales and from multiple ground-level perspectives.

Secure funding remains the greatest issue for the continuity of community and indigenous-led monitoring, with many initiatives needing to renew funding every two to three years. More direct funding to communities and representative organizations is required to scale up, share lessons, enhance consistency, and provide the structures and capacities to collate information at relevant national, international or regional scales. Funding such community-led monitoring should be integral to more conservation actions, so the scope of funded projects extends beyond implementation of the conservation actions.

Some recommended next steps to carry this work forward include:

- Sharing, networking and learning — develop opportunities to enable communities and organizations to share the social monitoring they are doing and exchange lessons. Details of the organizations who took part in this scoping and consented to receive further information are available on request.

- Assess the potential for scaling up existing monitoring efforts across various levels — landscape, subnational, national, and regional — and develop suitable funding applications. Activities could take the form of workshops and exchanges covering issues of capacity, methodology, logistics, technology, funding, and network building.

- If exchanges identify potential cooperation between monitoring initiatives, there is scope to coordinate and collate data in joint reporting, and to use data and insights for purposes such as advocacy, seeking support and funding, reporting, and to influence targeted political and legal processes. For example, network building at a national-level could help to ensure diverse monitoring and results are included in national planning such as National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAP) processes — the main instrument for implementing the CBD at the national level.

- Use this scoping report and any follow up projects to support advocacy in CBD processes, to give appropriate attention to bottom-up monitoring initiatives and the numerous data sources and platforms of relevance to tracking various GBF targets. This should include calls for more direct funding for monitoring to go to Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and their representative organizations.

Annex 1: Methods

From June 2023 to April 2024, an international team sought to identify individuals, organizations or communities directly involved in monitoring initiatives related to conservation impacts and governance. The team initially comprised members of the IUCN Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy Theme on Human Wellbeing and Sustainable Livelihoods (HWSL), although this grew as new people were brought in based on their regional expertise, language representation and network. The full team comprised: Neil Dawson, Thomas Worsdell, Aditi Bhardwaj, Kate Massarella, Yannick Ndoinyo, Malena Oliva (Chairs of HWSL), Sindy Jineth Martinez Callejas, Lea Scherl, Jocelyne Sze, Holly Dublin, Juan Morea, Sue Stolton, Claudia Múnera, Nathan Bennett, Helen Suich, Warren Lavey, Salam Rajesh, Fabiola Monty, Brendan Coolsaet, Paul Cawsey, Yoko Lu, Galeo Saintz, Catherine Clarke, Noelia Zafra-Calvo, Karen Mustin, Mathilde Gingembre, and Kamaljit Sangha.

Our approach was to use snowball sampling and a short online survey. We created a database of relevant contacts and separated them into those with indirect involvement in social monitoring who could help us to identify those directly involved in a relevant monitoring initiative, who we then asked to complete the online survey. This led us to contact by email (or in a small number of online meetings) 227 indirect contacts: 43 working at the global level, 75 in Latin America, 45 in Asia, 30 in Africa, 15 in Oceania, and 19 in North America. This resulted in 142 direct contacts: 20 working on global scale monitoring, 46 in Latin America, 24 in Asia, 24 in Africa, 10 in Oceania, and 18 in North America. No contacts were suggested who worked specifically on a monitoring initiative led by or partnered by Indigenous Peoples or local communities in Europe (one was received from the Asian side of Russia).

We prepared a short online survey (in English, French, Spanish, and Portuguese), designed to take 10–15 minutes to complete, to characterize the distribution, purposes, scope and scale, funding, key methods and design features of initiatives, use of information, and challenges faced. We sought sufficient detail to understand key characteristics and differences between initiatives, with the explicit purpose of sharing information with respondents and providing initial insights for policy, and to begin conversations and enable advocacy. We did not expect to obtain detailed case study descriptions and experiences or to perform in-depth analyses.

This was a very targeted pilot survey, and the need for direct contact with potential respondents meant large numbers of responses were not expected. Efforts to share via social media and large listservs yielded very few survey responses. Some potential respondents wanted a deeper level of engagement, provision of funds or a memorandum of understanding before they would agree to participate. This indicates a degree of trust that is important to secure participation, and our team often invested time responding to questions or holding online meetings to build relationships.

The English language survey was shared first, yielding 63 responses, with fewer responses received from the Spanish (19), French (5) and Portuguese (1) versions. 87 responses were received in total.

Contact

Forest Peoples Programme (FPP), 1c Fosseway Business Centre, Stratford Road, Moreton-in-Marsh, GL56 9NQ

www.forestpeoples.org

info@forestpeoples.org