

What the **Global Biodiversity Framework** says about **Indigenous peoples' rights and human rights**



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In December 2022, in Montreal (Canada), 196 States approved a Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), pledging to take urgent action to halt and reverse biodiversity loss. No doubt a historic achievement for the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, but is the framework really fit for purpose?

Here, we take a closer look at the targets in the GBF, and what they mean for the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLCs) - what's good, what's bad, what's missing, and how can movements and NGOs use it?

The good

The Framework's implementation must follow a human rights-based approach, respecting, protecting, promoting and fulfilling human rights while acknowledging the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. It must also ensure that the contributions, rights, traditional knowledge, worldviews, values and practices of IPLCs are respected. Also, their full and effective participation in decision-making is essential in the implementation ([Section C, Paragraph 7g](#)).

The rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities over their territories, being critical to the conservation of biodiversity and forests, have also finally been expressly acknowledged in Target 22 and Target 3, even though other aspects of the latter target lead to mixed feelings.

Given the continuous human rights violations of IPLCs defending their territories and ecosystems against biodiversity destruction by corporations, the full protection of environmental human rights defenders

has been a crucial win in Target 22. The same target also ensures equitable, inclusive, effective and gender-responsive representation and participation in decision-making, granting access to justice and information related to biodiversity to IPLCs and all rightsholders.

Other targets emphasise the essential links between IPLCs, their rights, land and biodiversity. Target 1 on spatial planning, for example, a practice that has historically overruled the interests of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, now includes specific mention of respecting their rights.

Women and girls

The GBF also calls for ensuring gender equality and empowerment of women and girls while reducing inequalities throughout the implementation process. Target 23 recognises their equal rights, access to land and natural resources, participation and leadership "at all levels of action, engagement, policy and decision-making related to biodiversity

Mixed feelings

Target 3 aims to convert 30% of the world into [protected areas](#). Historically, expanding conservation areas has excluded IPLC's territories and been managed by governments and corporate actors, leading to extensive human rights violations. A 30% target without IPLC inclusion would also present a direct threat to biodiversity.

Fortunately, this target recognises Indigenous and traditional territories as a form of conservation. It also recognises and respects IPLCs' rights for sustainable use of their territories. Monitoring this process will be especially important as the risk of expanding protected areas violating human rights is still significant.

The missing

Certain targets directly threaten the goals and mission of the GBF. Target 15, for example, focuses on businesses and the private sector, yet the human rights element has disappeared, pointing to [the influence](#) of corporate lobby groups. This is especially concerning given the vast amount of corporate violations of human rights and the environment.

Similarly, although the climate crisis and certain climate policy measures pose a threat to people, especially in regions more vulnerable to its effects, Target 8 on climate change lacks any specific mention of human rights.

The key targets (22 and 23) for human rights and Indigenous rights are also missing proper indicators and follow-up mechanisms.

Using the GBF to win battles at the national and local level

Human rights and the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities continue to be repeatedly violated. Including and recognising human rights in parts of the Framework is essential, but there is still work to be done. Civil society in the CBD should now propose implementation protocols, such as indicators, reporting and remedies for violations.

Ensuring the recognition of IPLC's territories as protected areas or other effective area-based conservation measures at the national level can further protect them against corporate development projects. In some countries, movements can use this target to push for specific legislation on the recognition of Indigenous-led nature areas. In other countries, Indigenous territories can be directly recognised as protected and conservation areas, granting IPLCs governance rights.

Increasing participation in decision-making is essential at all levels, everywhere. Movements and NGOs should press hard for the full implementation of their participation rights (as ensured in Target 22) - and report to the CBD where these are not granted - as this is a catalyst for fair and sound decision-making.

They will also need to remain vigilant that the repeated inclusion of women's and girls rights in the GBF is not reduced to tokenism, but instead supports them in bringing their real, gender-based, biodiversity-related concerns to the decision-making table.

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