

Aims of advocacy activities

1. Seeking social recognition and *de facto* support for specific territories of life

Social recognition can be understood as appropriate public attention, acknowledgement and praise. It can take the form of official mentions and inscriptions, honours and awards, and media exposure for desired visibility. Social recognition can provide a community with a variety of platforms to make their custodianship publicly known, if desired, and better respected. But social recognition can also be damaging, as when it engenders unwanted exposure or generates or exacerbates tensions; for instance, when some communities, or certain individuals within a particular community, are highlighted over others.

A particularly valuable form of social, *de facto* recognition is the backing of the surveillance of territories of life to ensure the **respect of the rules** agreed by the custodian communities. For this, it is usually necessary to weave collaborations with government authorities at various levels. This may include:

- Ensuring that the community can **stop and apprehend violators** with the support of the relevant technical agents, police and judiciary system.
- Ensuring that the **police** and the **judicial system** back-up and do not contradict the communities in their **surveillance and enforcement** operations and in providing fair and coherent judgement and sanctions for violators.
- Establishing, honouring and diffusing **information** about local agreements and mechanisms that recognise specific territories of life and their custodian communities, making sure that **official land use plans and development plans** integrate and foresee such territories and do not contradict them and their rules.

2. Seeking legal recognition and support for territories of life under international law and policy

The recognition of ICCAs in international biodiversity law and conservation policy, notably by the IUCN and under the CBD, has been steadily growing since the turn of the millennium. While a review of the specific international law and policy elements that sustain ICCAs is beyond the scope of this guidance, it is recommended that any custodian community become aware of the **increasingly important role of ICCAs—territories of life in the international arena**, and of the fact that they are recognized as a source of global benefits for, among others, the conservation of bio-cultural diversity, the maintenance of sustainable livelihoods and climate, and the satisfaction of collective human rights and indigenous peoples' rights. Such **awareness and specific knowledge can strengthen custodians' arguments and advocacy** for the forms of recognition and support they desire and deserve.

Indigenous peoples' and local communities' rights to self-determination, recognized under international law and policy, are a crucial issue in the recognition and support of ICCAs. Advocating for collective territorial rights directly is indeed possible, for instance, by stressing respect for the important connections between human rights and the environment, and respect for the rights of indigenous peoples. These entry points may become stronger and more reliable in coming years if human rights and indigenous peoples' rights standards and accountability mechanisms are effectively developed and used.

Strategically, it *also* appears effective to **argue for local collective territorial rights based on the local, national and global conservation benefits they engender**. So far, international ICCA recognition has been achieved by taking that route, arguing that greater diversity of conservation

governance is beneficial for both people and nature. Advocacy that actually *begins with* such arguments may have better chances of success in the short term. It may well be the option of choice in situations where there is scarce political traction for human and indigenous peoples' rights and/or impending threats. It is also true, however, that advocacy based *only* on conservation benefits puts tenure rights and other rights in a precarious position and may constrain communities to 'deliver' conservation performance that is outside of their control or not aligned with their visions.

To find entry points into international fora that can support or advance the appropriate recognition of ICCAs—territories of life, it may be helpful to reach out to relevant civil society organizations (CSOs) in the country. Are there CSOs that have already been participating in relevant international fora and conventions? Could they provide advice and connection with relevant UN agencies or government officials, such as those designated by the government as Focal Points for international conventions such as CBD or those dealing with human rights and progressive food policies? The UNDP offices in charge of implementing GEF SGP programs and GSI project support in particular are other excellent examples of agencies and individuals to contact, including for information on forms of social recognition for exemplary community initiatives, such as the Equator Prize. Last but not least, the custodian communities may wish to contact the [ICCA Consortium](#), whose Members, Honorary members and semi-volunteer staff are present today in more than 70 countries. In making such connections, the Local Team may find it useful to have the support of the facilitator, who may be well informed about the country's situation regarding international policies and opportunities and possess personal contacts with relevant officials.

The goal here is not that every ICCA custodian community becomes active in international conventions. Rather, all interested communities can and should become fully aware that international environmental agreements have highlighted the multiple local and global values of ICCAs, and that their formal recognition and support by national governments are in line with due respect for the international law and policies those governments have subscribed to.

3. [Seeking legal recognition and support for territories of life under national law and policies](#)

Legal and other forms of recognition of territories of life should include a formal acknowledgment of the collective rights, responsibilities, capacities and contributions of custodian communities. Many such forms of 'recognition' are desired by the custodians as they include protection from existing or impending threats (e.g., recognising territories of life as part of the country's protected area estate may be the only option to fully impede concessions for extractive industries).

Diverse forms of legal and policy recognition of ICCAs—territories of life are possible at the national level (see the specific Resource dedicated to this). Many governments offer legal recognition for community land or territories held under communal title, and some more specifically for ICCAs. For example, countries such as Colombia, The Philippines, India, Ecuador and Brazil can legally recognize the collective land rights of their indigenous or tribal peoples and the related use rights over their bio-cultural diversity. Also, countries such as Australia, Mexico, Italy, Fiji and Senegal have specific ways of recognizing communities as governing bodies for areas of conservation value, at times included in their official protected area systems. Related mechanisms and practices are backed by specific legislation and/or policy.

Today, several countries are also discussing ways to recognize community territories more specifically *as ICCAs—territories of life* in order to highlight and preserve their conservation value. This is crucially important *even where communities possess collective land rights*, as ICCA recognition

adds to the security of tenure and use rights of the relevant communities. Recognizing ICCAs for their conservation value can strengthen the custodian communities' demands for FPIC and the eventual opposition to the underground extractive concessions that could be assigned by governments independently of land rights.

A first step in seeking national legal **recognition of territories of life *as such*** is to develop an understanding of the **options available** under the relevant country's legislation and policy. This enables communities to assess the pros and cons of various options and their appropriateness in light of their specific context and concerns. For the ICCA Consortium, an important starting point for this research is a [national ICCA policy and legal review](#), which is best carried out at the national level and commissioned by many communities as it would be relevant for them all. Here, again, the collaboration between a community and several outside allies is important, as the latter may provide funds to commission such a national review. The review itself, however, is far from sufficient. After the review is completed, it should be properly understood by the national ICCA network, which ideally discusses it at length, selects one or more of the possible legal options identified and starts advocating about them with the relevant authorities.

4. [Seeking other forms of national policy support](#)

Besides 'recognition', joint advocacy may aim at other forms of national policy support, such as:

- **Bi-cultural educational curricula and classes** made available to custodian communities, with flexible schedules to make sure that the cultural values that sustain the territories of life are maintained among the youth
 - **Community funds and support for collective investments and sustainable productive activities in the natural commons**, making sure that the relevant financial flows are transparent and aligned with local priorities
 - **Community funds and support** for measures to keep learning and enhancing the quality of governance and management for territories of life, e.g., via exchange visits, formal training, technical advice, on-going monitoring and communication, etc.
 - **Funds for networking and communication** at sub-national and national level, so that custodian communities can organise and sustain their advocacy activities with appropriate strength and in the long term.
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