

The image is a vertical collage of three photographs. The top photograph shows a group of people in traditional Tibetan clothing, including colorful vests and hats, standing in a line on a dirt path. They are holding white cloths or prayer flags. In the background, there are steep, rocky mountains and colorful prayer flags strung across the scene. The middle photograph shows a lush green landscape with a river or stream in the foreground. The river reflects the surrounding greenery. In the background, there are more green hills and a small wooden bridge. The bottom photograph shows a group of people walking on a sandy beach. One person is carrying a large red flag on a pole. The ocean is visible in the background, and the sky is clear.

2021 REPORT

TERRITORIES OF LIFE

Executive Summary



Dedication

Territories of Life: 2021 Report is dedicated to **Ghanimat Azhdari** (1983-2020), a young and passionate leader from the Qashqai tribal confederacy in Iran. Ghanimat was a specialist in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and community mapping, working tirelessly to support the participatory documentation of territories of life with the national federations and unions of nomadic tribes in Iran (UNINOMAD and UNICAMEL). She was contributing her deep knowledge, skills and passion to the development of this report when her life was unjustly cut short on 8 January 2020. Ghanimat played important roles in the Centre for Sustainable Development and Environment (CENESTA) in Iran and the ICCA Consortium globally and was pursuing her PhD at the University of Guelph at the time of her passing. She is dearly missed. Her legacy will continue through the work of the many people whose lives she touched during her short time on Earth.





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Disclaimer

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About this report

Territories of Life: 2021 Report is a multimedia report composed of local, national, regional and global analyses of territories and areas conserved by Indigenous peoples and local communities (sometimes abbreviated as “ICCAs” or “territories of life”). The present document summarises the key findings of all these components and sets out overall recommendations. This report is part of an ongoing process to develop the knowledge base on territories of life in support of Indigenous peoples’ and local communities’ self-determined priorities. It is produced by the ICCA Consortium with the support of several partners and is available online at: report.territoriesoflife.org.

About the ICCA Consortium

The ICCA Consortium is a global non-profit association dedicated to supporting Indigenous peoples and local communities who are governing and conserving their collective lands, waters and territories. Its organisational Members and individual Honorary members in more than 80 countries are undertaking collective actions at the local, national, regional and international levels across several thematic streams, including documenting, sustaining and defending territories of life, as well as youth and intergenerational relations.





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Prologue



“There is no Dayak community without forest.”

Saying of the Dayak Kenyah people (Indonesia)



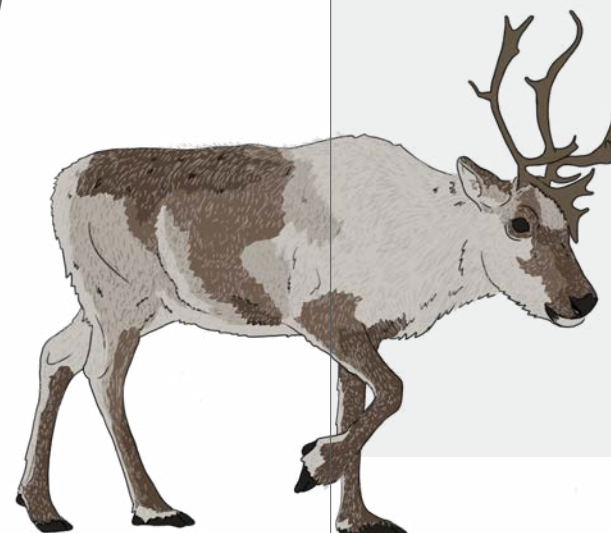
“The Adaval Oran is the driving force of our livelihoods. We are all aware that if we need anything, we take it from there. Our animals graze there. We understand that if we destroy the Oran, our lives will be compromised, and that is why we organise ... We consider it our duty to protect and conserve the Oran.”

Deenaram Meena, Adawal ki
Devbani Oran (India)



“I hunt for other people. I go out and get a caribou ... It keeps me close to the men I hunt with. I make my parents, kids, relatives and friends happy because they don’t have caribou sometimes, and we all come together and share the meat. Caribou is more important than seal to keep my family and community together ... What is a community feast without caribou?”

Pauloosie Kilabuk of Iqaluit
(Canada)



“Initiation in the sacred forest is the most exciting part of our existence, and the most vibrant element of our community. In the initiation forests, we find and strengthen our values. And the Yogbouo Pond is where we find solutions through prayers and offerings.”

Pé Gbilimy, community
member of Gampa (Guinea)



“Our living territory is, and will continue to be, free of extractive activities ... We propose a way of life based on our culture’s criteria for wealth, such as the existence of unpolluted rivers abundant with fish in our territory, life within our ayllu (family) and the strength of our organisation.”

Kawsak Sacha Declaration of the
Kichwa people of Sarayaku (Ecuador)

When you read these quotes, what stands out to you? How do they make you feel?

These are the words of Indigenous peoples and local communities who are sustaining the lands and territories that in turn sustain them. They may be from different parts of the world, and they may not speak the same language, but they share a deep connection with each other that transcends the spoken word.

The ICCA Consortium is grateful to be able to hold space for these five and 12 other Indigenous peoples and local communities to share their experiences with the world in Territories of Life: 2021 Report. During such a challenging time, these privileged glimpses into others’ lives remind us that humanity’s strength

lies in our diversity and that there is more that connects us than divides us.

The ICCA Consortium began conceptualising this report in 2019 but it builds on many preceding years of work by Indigenous peoples and local communities and supporting organisations and individuals. It evolved several times over as it was shaped by many hands, hearts and minds until its publication on 20 May 2021 at: <https://report.territoriesoflife.org>. It is intended to be the first in a new series of engaging and nuanced publications and communications materials on territories and areas conserved by Indigenous peoples and local communities, with an emphasis on supporting peoples and communities to tell their own stories.



Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought to light the close links between human and planetary health and laid bare the global crisis of inequality. At the same time, there is a groundswell of evidence that Indigenous peoples and local communities are critical to sustaining the diversity of life on Earth (e.g., IPBES, 2019; FAO and FILAC, 2021; FPP et al., 2020). As nation-states prepare for major summits of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity and Framework Convention on Climate Change in late 2021, a key question is whether they will take this opportunity to do something truly transformational to address the broader planetary crises from which the pandemic arose and to ensure a safe, healthy and sustainable planet for all.

Indigenous peoples and local communities are estimated to hold at least 50 per cent of the world's land under customary systems, but their rights have only been formally recognised in a small fraction of the claimed lands (RRI, 2015). In Latin America and the Caribbean, Indigenous and tribal peoples manage between 330 and 380 million hectares of forest (Fa et al., 2020). Those forests store more than one-eighth of all the carbon in the world's tropical forests and house a large portion of the world's endangered animal and plant species. Almost half (45 per cent) of the large 'wilderness' areas in the Amazon Basin are in Indigenous territories and several studies have found that Indigenous peoples' territories have lower rates of deforestation and lower risk of wildfires than state protected areas (FAO and FILAC, 2021).

However, Indigenous peoples and local communities often face overlapping political and economic interests seeking to either protect nature or exploit nature within their lands and territories. Public and private conservation actors have not adequately implemented existing rights-based commitments, and genuine recognition of and tangible support for Indigenous peoples' and local communities' rights and roles in conservation is still relatively marginal (Tauli-Corpuz et al., 2020). Indigenous peoples and local communities not only face growing threats from harmful industries in their lands and territories, but also face growing threats for defending themselves against such industries. In 2019, 212 people were killed for taking a stand against environmental destruction, 40 per cent of whom were Indigenous (Global Witness,



2020). Indigenous peoples and local communities are at further risk where there is inadequate recognition of their rights and governance systems and a lack of political and legal support (IPBES, 2019).

One of the biggest opportunities to catalyse transformative changes from local to global levels is to support Indigenous peoples and local communities to secure their human rights in general and particularly their rights to self-determined governance systems, cultures and collective lands and territories¹. Although there are no panaceas, this is arguably a key "missing link" in efforts to address the biodiversity and climate crises that would also contribute to social justice and sustainable development priorities. Specifically, it would be a feasible, cost-effective and equitable way to meet nature conservation commitments, including under the forthcoming post-2020 global biodiversity framework (RRI, 2020). These issues are currently severely underfunded, with scarce funds going directly to Indigenous peoples and local communities. Over the past 10 years, less than 1 per cent of financial assistance for climate change issues supports tenure and Indigenous and local forest management; furthermore, only a small share of this is likely to reach Indigenous peoples and local communities themselves, as most of the money is channelled through multilateral development banks and as part of large projects (Rainforest Foundation Norway, 2021).

¹ Although Indigenous peoples and local communities are often considered together in the context of their close relationships between their cultures and territories and areas, there are clear differences between them under international law. Refer to Annex 3 ("The legal distinction between Indigenous peoples' rights and local communities' rights") of the global spatial analysis of this report. Available online at: <https://report.territoriesoflife.org/global-analysis/>.

Overview of Territories of Life: 2021 Report

Territories of Life: 2021 Report is a local-to-global analysis of territories and areas conserved by Indigenous peoples and local communities (sometimes abbreviated as “ICCAs” or “territories of life”). This multi-scale approach weaves together diverse perspectives, insights and new findings about the grassroots global phenomenon of territories of life while also creating space for nuance and complexity. Overall, the report adds to a growing body of literature on the incontrovertible role of Indigenous peoples and local communities in ensuring a healthy planet for all, and the urgent actions required to support them.

At the first level of analysis, this report showcases 17 territories of life from five continents, focusing on how Indigenous peoples and local communities contribute to the diversity of life on Earth through their unique governance systems and cultural practices. Many of these case studies are co-authored by Indigenous or community leaders or their organisations and reflect many years of collective work by and with the featured peoples and communities.

Next, the report scales out to five national analyses and one subregional analysis of some of the leading examples of country-wide grassroots initiatives and national policy and legal recognition of Indigenous

peoples’ rights and community conservation. They include the countries of six of the case studies of specific territories of life to build upon and connect the local and global analyses.

Finally, the report broadens its lens even further to the most up-to-date global spatial analysis of how much of the planet is likely conserved by Indigenous peoples and local communities, co-produced with the UN Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC). This spatial analysis incorporates data from several sources, which are described in more detail in that report. In effect, this analysis focuses on a ‘subset’ of the overall extent of Indigenous peoples’ and local communities’ collective lands and territories that they are likely to be actively conserving.

The present document summarises key findings from all of these components across the three levels of analysis, all of which were produced specifically for this 2021 report. It does not provide a comprehensive review of other literature and initiatives outside of the components produced for this report. This executive summary then presents overall recommendations and specific recommendations for the post-2020 global biodiversity framework being negotiated under the UN Convention on Biological Diversity.



Rice fields alongside the road to the main entry of the Manjakatempo-Ankaratra Protected Area in Madagascar. Photo: JRR

What constitutes the full report?



Overview of case studies and national and regional analyses in the report

 Case studies

 National and regional level analyses



Key Findings of Territories of Life: 2021 Report

- Indigenous peoples and local communities play an outsized role in the governance, conservation and sustainable use of the world's biodiversity and nature. They actively protect and conserve an astounding diversity of globally relevant species, habitats and ecosystems, providing the basis for clean water and air, healthy food and livelihoods for people far beyond their boundaries.
- Indigenous peoples' and local communities' extensive contributions to a healthy planet are rooted in their cultures and collective lands and territories – in essence, the deep relationships between their identities, governance systems and the other species and spiritual beings with whom they co-exist. Thus, they are also contributing significantly to the world's cultural, linguistic and tangible and intangible heritage.
- The global spatial analysis shows that Indigenous peoples and local communities are the *de facto* custodians of many state and privately governed protected and conserved areas, and they are also conserving a significant proportion of lands and nature outside of such areas. However, the mainstream conservation sector has a historical and continuing legacy of contestation for Indigenous peoples and local communities, depending on the extent to which their rights, governance systems and ways of life are recognised and respected. This poses both a challenge and an opportunity for future directions of local-to-global conservation efforts.
- Indigenous peoples and local communities are on the frontlines of resisting the main industrial drivers of global biodiversity loss and climate breakdown, and they often face retribution and violence for doing so. Along with other challenges, these multiple stressors can have cumulative and compounded effects on Indigenous peoples and local communities, which in turn pose longer-term threats to their lives, cultures and resilience. However, they continue to resist and respond to these threats in diverse ways.
- Even in the face of immense threats, Indigenous peoples and local communities have extraordinary resilience and determination to maintain their dignity and the integrity of their territories and areas.. They are adapting to rapidly changing contexts and using diverse strategies to secure their rights and collective lands and territories of life. Although not without setbacks, they have made key advances and continue to persist in pursuit of self-determination, self-governance, peace and sustainability.

In the following pages, each of these key findings is backed up with relevant evidence from: (a) the case studies of specific territories of life; (b) the national and regional analyses; and (c) the global spatial analysis co-produced with UNEP-WCMC.

Key Finding 1

Indigenous peoples and local communities play an outsized role in the governance, conservation and sustainable use of the world's biodiversity and nature. They actively protect and conserve an astounding diversity of globally relevant species, habitats and ecosystems, providing the basis for clean water and air, healthy food and livelihoods for people far beyond their boundaries.

Select evidence from the case studies: Indigenous peoples' and local communities' collective lands and territories of life in the 17 case studies are strongholds of endemic, vulnerable, threatened and endangered species. For example, Tsum Valley in Nepal is home to the elusive snow leopard, the Qunan community in China is coaxing the white-headed langur back from the brink of extinction in their Fengshui forest, and Lake Natron in Tanzania is the world's most critical breeding site for lesser flamingos. Some of the territories and areas have been recognised internationally for their contributions to conservation, including as Important Bird Areas (Pangasananan, Philippines) and Zero Extinction Alliance Sites (Fokonolona of Tsiafajavona, Madagascar) and recipients of the prestigious Equator Prize (Kawawana, Senegal, and the Salween Peace Park, Myanmar).

The case studies give a snapshot of how Indigenous peoples and local communities contribute to ecological integrity, connectivity and restoration in diverse contexts around the world, ranging from small sacred groves in Guinea and community commons in Romania to hundreds of thousands of hectares of tropical rainforest and watersheds in the Amazon, Congo Basin and Southeast Asia.

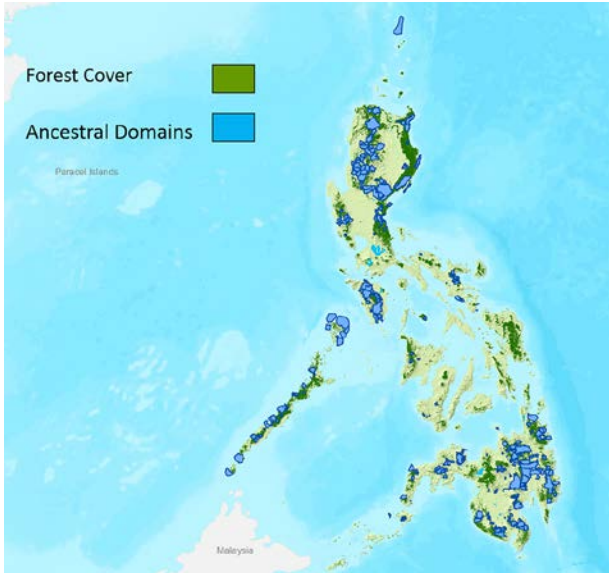
Together, these 17 territories and areas are conserving and sustaining an estimated 21,034,743 hectares, ranging from a 50-hectare sacred grove in Rajasthan, India, to the estimated 18 million hectares that Inuit have proposed for protection in their customary territory of Qikiqtaaluk (Baffin Island), Canada.

Select evidence from the national and regional analyses: In Iran, Indigenous nomadic peoples' territories cover nearly 60 per cent of the country's land, including 34 million hectares of rangelands and 660,000 hectares of agricultural land.

In the Philippines, an estimated 75 per cent of remaining forests overlap with Indigenous peoples' territories and 29 per cent of Key Biodiversity Areas are within Indigenous peoples' legally recognised territories.



Oldonyo Lengai watching over giraffes in the lowlands of Engaresero village, Tanzania. Photo: Lodrick Mika, 2020

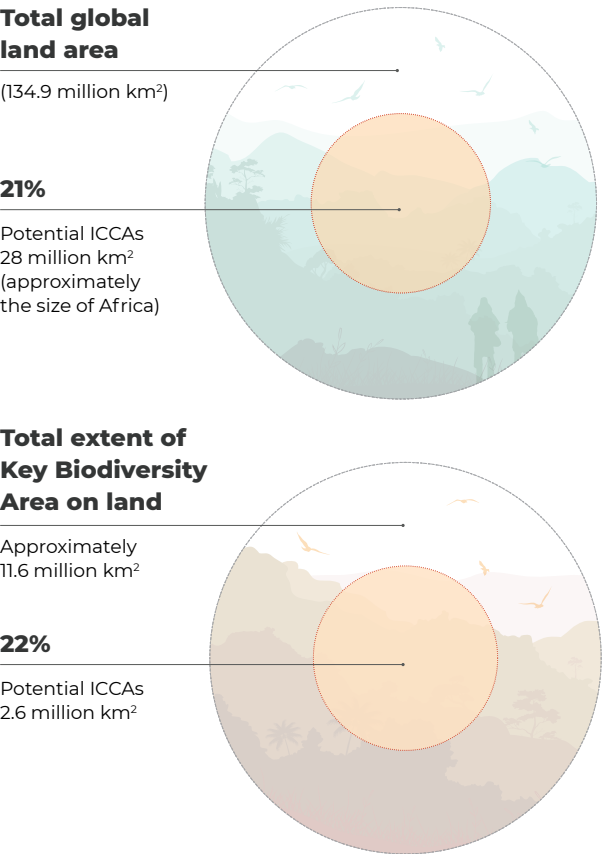


Overlap of ancestral domains and the remaining forest cover in the Philippines. Map: Philippine Association for Inter-Cultural Development

In Indonesia, over 11 million hectares of Indigenous territories have been mapped across the country. So far, 102 territories and areas conserved by Indigenous peoples and local communities amounting to over 460,000 hectares have been registered and uploaded to a national land rights portal. At least an additional 2.9 million hectares of the country are estimated to be conserved by Indigenous peoples and local communities.

In Ecuador, it is estimated that territories of Indigenous, Afro-Ecuadorian and Montubio peoples and nationalities cover at least 40 per cent of the country (more than 104 million hectares). An estimated 73 per cent of their territories are in the Ecuadorian Amazon. Just five Indigenous territories registered in the global ICCA Registry (hosted by UNEP-WCMC) cover more than 1.79 million hectares of tropical rainforest, dry forest and shrub vegetation, all under Indigenous peoples' governance systems.

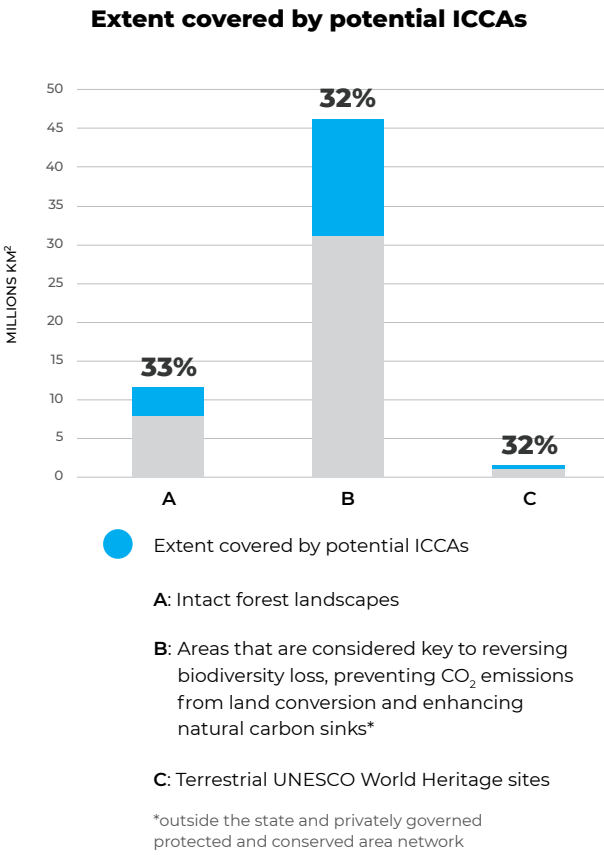
In Madagascar, a national network of nearly 600 communities (TAFO MIHAOVO) supports the customary governance of around 3 million hectares of forests across all 22 of the country's regions. More than 200 Locally Managed Marine Areas have been self-identified or established since 1998, covering approximately 17 per cent (1.75 million hectares) of the country's coastal and marine areas.



Select evidence from the global spatial analysis:
It is estimated that Indigenous peoples and local communities are actively conserving at least 22 per cent of the extent of the world's Key Biodiversity Areas and at least 21 per cent of the world's lands (approximately the size of Africa). This exceeds the extent of terrestrial protected areas governed by states, which cover less than 14 per cent of the world's land. They overlap to some extent with at least 113 countries and territories, and all of the world's 14 biomes.

Indigenous peoples' and local communities' collective lands and territories of life also cover at least one-third (33 per cent) of intact forest landscapes globally and nearly one-third (32 per cent) of areas that are considered key to reversing biodiversity loss, preventing CO₂ emissions from land conversion and enhancing natural carbon sinks.

In terms of ecological representation, territories and areas conserved by Indigenous peoples and local communities are estimated to overlap to some extent with two-thirds (66 per cent) of the 847 existing global terrestrial ecoregions. Ten per cent of these ecoregions are only found within territories and areas conserved by Indigenous peoples and local communities and not in any other protected or conserved area.



Key Finding 2

Indigenous peoples' and local communities' extensive contributions to a healthy planet are rooted in their cultures and collective lands and territories – in essence, the deep relationships between their identities, governance systems and the other species and spiritual beings with whom they co-exist. Thus, they are also contributing significantly to the world's cultural, linguistic and tangible and intangible heritage.

Select evidence from the case studies: Across all 17 case studies, the Indigenous peoples' and local communities' ways of life and cultural practices are as diverse as the nature they sustain, from pastoralists in the drylands of India and Iran, to fishers in the coasts of East and West Africa to Inuit hunters in the Canadian Arctic. Their very identities are tied to their territories and areas and often intertwined with spirituality and belief systems, underscoring how culture and nature are mutually dependent and inseparable.

Indigenous peoples' territories and local communities' areas are under complex systems of customary or

communal laws, governance and collective tenure. In many cases, they have adapted their governance systems to contemporary contexts. They also have extensive place-based knowledge systems and sophisticated forms of monitoring, management and adaptation that are interdependent with the species, habitats and ecosystems. For example, the Indigenous knowledge system of Inuit Qaujimajungit in Canada teaches that the caribou's life cycle lasts that of an elder, and they can predict phases of the population's abundance through on-going monitoring by Inuit hunters. Several of the case studies detail some form of self-determined zoning system whereby specific parts of the territories or areas are designated for different purposes to meet their social, cultural, spiritual and livelihood needs; many include areas specifically for conservation or strict protection.

As just a few examples of the diversity of cultural practices across these case studies, festivals of the Tsumba people in Nepal and Szekler community in Romania strengthen social cohesion, pass on knowledge to younger generations and reinforce values and norms such as respect, reciprocity and



The Wampis Nation's statutes define their territory as "integral and unified", comprised of intimate relationships between people and the different beings that inhabit the interconnected levels of Nayaim, Nunka, Nunka Init, and Entsa (i.e., aquatic, earth, subsoil and space). Only this integral vision is capable of securing their people's good living, or Tarimat Pujut. These ancestral relationships, intricately regulated between all beings, both visible and invisible to human eyes, are the foundation for their present-day autonomous governance.
Photo: Candy Lopez

responsibility. The Manon and Karen peoples use taboos to protect totem animals in Guinea and Myanmar. Sacred water sources are at the heart of centuries-old traditions of the Maya K'iché in Guatemala and of the Bambuti-Babuluko in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Kichwa people of Sarayaku and Wampis Nation in the Amazon sustain their multidimensional territories in accordance with their cosmovisions. Powerful forms of collective care and mutual support ensure equitable sharing of resources among many Indigenous peoples and communities, including the Dayak Kenyah of Bahau Hulu and Pujungan in Indonesia and the Inuit of Qikiqtaaluk (Baffin Island), Canada.

Select evidence from the global spatial analysis:

Cultural and linguistic diversity are intertwined with the diversity of nature, even in areas recognised primarily for their natural features. The global spatial analysis finds that almost one-third (32 per cent) of the extent of UNESCO's Natural and Mixed World Heritage sites (on land) overlaps to some extent with the estimated extent of territories and areas conserved by Indigenous peoples and local communities. Other studies have found that 80 per cent of all Natural and Mixed UNESCO World Heritage sites (designated for their natural features) intersect with at least one Indigenous language (Romaine and Gorenflo, 2020); in Africa alone, 147 Indigenous languages share at least part of their geographic extent with Natural and Mixed UNESCO World Heritage sites (Gorenflo and Romaine, 2021).



In the Christmas Village in Romania, community members planted a sweet chestnut grove at the beginning of the 20th century. It is a beloved communal space and used by the community school to teach lessons about biology and ecology. The community organises the Chestnut Festival using the commons' budget and reunites members to celebrate their commons on the first Saturday of every October. This festival represents a true expression of community values. Photo: Orbán Csaba



Bactrian Camel (two-humped) in Shahsevan territories (Northwest of Iran). Photo: Fatma Zolfaghari

Key Finding 3

The global spatial analysis shows that Indigenous peoples and local communities are the *de facto* custodians of many state and privately governed protected and conserved areas, and they are also conserving a significant proportion of lands and nature outside of such areas. However, the mainstream conservation sector has a historical and continuing legacy of contestation for Indigenous peoples and local communities, depending on the extent to which their rights, governance systems and ways of life are respected and upheld. This poses both a challenge and an opportunity for future directions of local-to-global conservation efforts.

Select evidence from the case studies: Indigenous peoples' and local communities' collective lands and territories are often deemed desirable or well-suited for protection or conservation by others precisely because they have protected and conserved them for generations. In most of the case studies, Indigenous peoples and local communities have complicated and contested relationships with 'official' protected and conserved area systems. Particularly in the case studies from the Philippines, India, Nepal, Madagascar, Tanzania, Guatemala and Peru, nation-state governments have established or are proposing

protected areas that overlap with significant portions of Indigenous peoples' territories and community lands without their free, prior and informed consent. These overlapping and conflicting jurisdictions have excluded Indigenous peoples and local communities from decision-making and undermined customary and local governance systems and livelihoods and sometimes their capacities to continue conserving their lands and territories. In some cases, protected area laws have criminalised the very cultural practices that sustained the conservation values of the areas they seek to protect. In other cases, supportive provisions exist in some capacity, but insufficient access to information and legal literacy mean that Indigenous peoples and local communities are often not aware of them. Peoples and communities are responding to these situations in different ways, for example, by opposing state interference in stewardship of their territory (Wampis Nation, Peru), finding ways to coordinate to some extent with the protected area authority (Maya K'iché people of Totonicapán, Guatemala) and seeking to have a state protected area recognised instead as a Community Protected Area (Fokonolona of Tsiafajavona, Madagascar).

In other contexts, Indigenous peoples are seeking to use protected area and conservation laws as a strategic opportunity to secure rights and legal protection

The Board for Natural Goods and Resources of 48 Cantons of Totonicapán, Guatemala. Photo: German García





Official handover of the legal title to secure the Kisimbosa forest. Photo: Joseph Itongwa

against other threats. For example, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Bambuti-Babuluko Indigenous peoples have sought and secured the status of a 'forest concession' for their customary territory of Kisimbosa, but they are seeking even stronger legal status to protect themselves against mining. In this case, recognition as a protected area – if done in a certain way – could potentially be a beneficial layering of legal protection for the community. In Qikiqtaaluk (Baffin Island), Canada, Inuit organisations are actively seeking legal protection of an estimated 18 million hectares of their territory for their cultural and food sovereignty, including to protect caribou habitat and calving grounds against several mining interests.

The case studies also include positive examples of collaboration between Indigenous peoples and local communities, non-governmental organisations and governmental agencies, including in the context of protecting the habitat of a critically endangered species in the Fengshui forests of Qunan, China, and supporting the Dayak Kenyah of Bahau Hulu (Indonesia) to secure formal recognition of their territory.

Select evidence from the national and regional analyses:

State protected areas overlapping with Indigenous peoples' territories is a significant issue to be addressed in Ecuador, Indonesia and the Philippines. In Ecuador, more than 16 per cent of the national protected areas system overlaps with the territories of Indigenous peoples and nationalities, several of whom are demanding recognition of their own governance and

conservation systems. In Indonesia, of the more than 460,000 hectares that have been registered nationally as territories and areas conserved by Indigenous peoples and local communities, 60 per cent are overlapped by state-recognised protected areas.

In the Philippines, 1.44 million hectares of legally recognised protected areas overlap with Indigenous peoples' ancestral domains. Indigenous peoples' sacred sanctuaries and forests are often overlapped by 'core zones' or 'strict protection zones' of state protected areas, where all activities are prohibited. Implementation rules of the 2018 national protected areas law are likely to exacerbate these conflicts between customary laws and nation-state laws and further criminalise Indigenous peoples' access to and use of these parts of their territories that are overlapped by state protected areas. However, a new bill currently being considered in the Philippines' Congress at the time of publication aims to clarify provisions in the key national laws on Indigenous peoples' rights and protected areas and recognise and support Indigenous peoples' and community conserved territories and areas as on par with protected areas.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the legacy of colonialism and post-colonial state development has led to highly centralised ownership and control over land, forests, wildlife and other natural resources and there are notable examples of human rights issues in protected areas (e.g., Pyhälä et al., 2016). At the same time, there have been some important advances in recognising

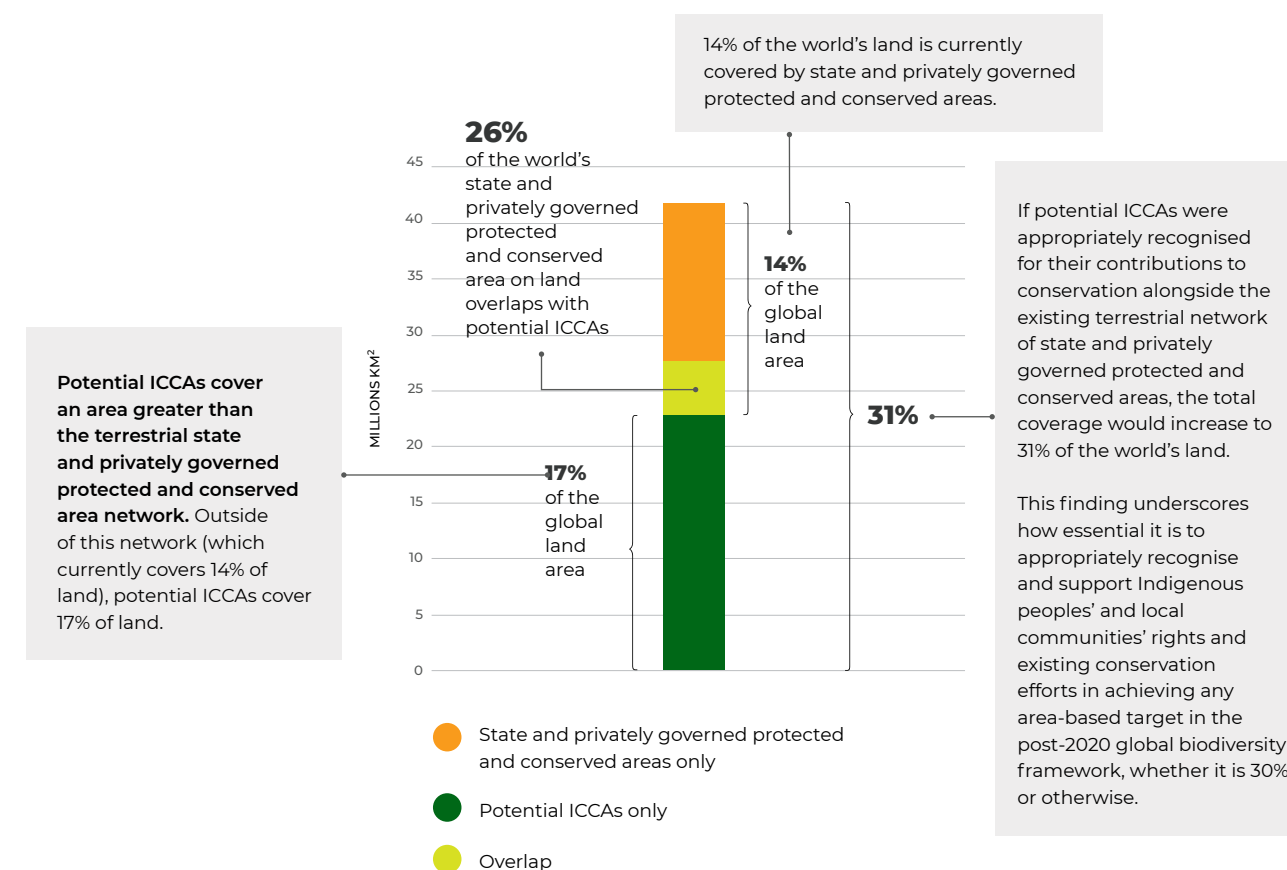
community management and use rights in national conservation frameworks. For example, Namibia and Kenya are often considered leaders in developing policy and legal approaches for community conservancies. In Namibia, community conservancies cover over 16 million hectares (roughly 20 per cent of the country's land area). This exceeds the extent of the country's national parks, and wildlife numbers have widely recovered across the conservancies. These experiences highlight the importance of enabling national policy and legislation (among other factors), while also acknowledging the need to continue strengthening recognition and realisation of community governance (not just management) and communal and customary rights to land, forests and marine resources more broadly.

Select evidence from the global spatial analysis: At least one-fourth (26 per cent) of the world's state and privately governed protected and conserved area (on land) overlaps with territories and areas conserved by Indigenous peoples and local communities. This spatial estimate raises questions about how these areas were established and how they are governed, managed and financed. Better understanding of situations of overlap could create opportunities for Indigenous peoples and local communities to seek redress for past or ongoing

issues and to advocate for recognition of their rights, governance systems and collective lands and territories.

As stated in Key Finding 1, the global spatial analysis estimates that territories and areas conserved by Indigenous peoples and local communities cover at least one-fifth of the world's land surface (at least 28 million km²). Of this area, 83 per cent (23 million km²) lies outside of protected and conserved areas that are governed by nation-states or private actors. This means that at least 17 per cent of the world's land is conserved uniquely by Indigenous peoples and local communities (i.e., outside of state and privately governed protected and conserved areas).

Furthermore, the global spatial analysis estimates that over half (52 per cent) of the extent of terrestrial Key Biodiversity Areas lies outside of state and privately governed protected and conserved areas. Of this area, an estimated one-fifth (20 per cent) is within territories and areas conserved by Indigenous peoples and local communities. These findings underscore the global significance of Indigenous peoples' and local communities' contributions to conserving the world's lands and Key Biodiversity Areas outside of the existing network of state and privately governed protected and conserved areas.



Key Finding 4

Indigenous peoples and local communities are on the frontlines of resisting the main industrial drivers of global biodiversity loss and climate breakdown, and they often face retribution and violence for doing so. Along with other challenges, these multiple stressors can have cumulative and compounded effects on Indigenous peoples and local communities, which in turn pose longer-term threats to their lives, cultures and resilience. However, they continue to resist and respond to these threats in diverse ways.

Select evidence from the case studies: In all but one of the case studies, Indigenous peoples and local communities are facing direct threats from harmful industries such as mining, oil and gas, logging, monoculture plantations, illegal and unregulated fisheries, road infrastructure and dams, and sometimes multiple overlapping claims.

In seeking to defend their lands and territories against these industries and other illegal activities they often beget (such as poaching), Indigenous peoples and local communities in several countries (the Philippines, Myanmar, Guatemala, Ecuador and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, among others) have faced violent threats to their lives and wellbeing, including harassment, physical attacks, criminalisation and even murder.

Together with exclusionary conservation measures (as considered in Key Finding 3), these industrial threats do not exist in a vacuum: they are rooted in complex histories and current realities of how Indigenous peoples and local communities interact with dominant political, legal and economic systems. In all of the case studies concerning Indigenous peoples, they face structural violence from nation-state policies, laws and institutions and prevailing societal attitudes (such as racial, ethnic or religious supremacy) that undermine their rights and cultures over time. Armed conflict and militarisation of Indigenous territories are major concerns in Myanmar, the Philippines, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guatemala and Ecuador.

In many of the case studies, the pervasiveness of the market economy is enticing youth to urban areas,



“The community and the company have diametrically opposed objectives: we seek to protect our resources through our customary rules, they are the opposite. What interests them is the extension of palm tree plantations. Ultimately, this would mean for us to lose our farmland, our sacred sites and our cultural identity.”

Gnan Sanko, youth of Gampa, Guinea

undermining Indigenous economies and subsistence livelihoods and disrupting intergenerational knowledge systems. Indigenous peoples and local communities are also drawing on their deep knowledge systems to cope with the effects of ecological and climate breakdown, including sandstorms (Iran), droughts (Tanzania), floods (Ecuador), melting glaciers and invasive species (Nepal) and receding bodies of water (Guinea). However, they may not be able to continue to adapt if global tipping points are passed due to ever-rising emissions and over-consumption.

Select evidence from the national and regional analyses:

In Ecuador, approximately 37.5 per cent of its continental territory and more than 60 per cent of the territories of Indigenous peoples and nationalities are slated for mining and oil activities. Extractive industries are concentrated in areas of high biodiversity, in the headwaters of river basins and in areas that will have transboundary impacts. In addition, protected areas are treated as ‘reserve zones for future extractivism’ and the state government modifies the boundaries of national parks to allow for oil exploitation in the name of ‘national interest’ (for example, in the Yasuní National Park, which overlaps with the territories of the Waorani, Tagaeri and Taromenane peoples). Furthermore, there is a clear contradiction between government policies that favour environmental issues and those that favour industrial exploitation of natural resources, with the latter trumping the former. Some of the same areas that the national government compensates for conservation under the Socio Bosque incentive programme (which reached 1.616 million hectares by 2018) are also subject to industrial oil and mining concessions (for example, in the territory of the Shuar Arutam people).

In the Philippines, conflicts between governmental agencies responsible for environmental matters and those responsible for economic growth and extractive industries such as mining generally fall in favour of the latter as well. Human rights violations are all too common in industrial projects such as large-scale mining and dams, with a culture of impunity in the current administration. Indigenous peoples face criminalisation of their rights and dozens have been killed extrajudicially; systematic weaponisation of the law (e.g., in the form of red-tagging) is a threat to Indigenous peoples and broader civil society as well as democracy itself.

Select evidence from the global spatial analysis:

Based on a cumulative index, at least 16 per cent of the estimated extent of territories and areas conserved by

Indigenous peoples and local communities faces high exposure to potential future ‘development’ pressure from industrial, commodity and extractive-based sectors (the other 84 per cent of the extent should not be considered free from such pressure). As a minimum protection against these pressures, it is important to proactively and urgently support Indigenous peoples and local communities to secure their rights to their collective lands and territories and governance systems.



“Over the last 40 years, dealing with change has become an inevitable part of our life; however, the rich biodiversity of our territory of life has strengthened our resilience to cope with critical situations on our own.”

Sardar Ali Reza of Shahiki tribe, Iran



An Uba (smallest social unit in Shahsavan tribal structure) in their summering ground in Iran. Photo: CENESTA

Key Finding 5

Even in the face of immense threats, Indigenous peoples and local communities have extraordinary resilience and determination to maintain their dignity and the integrity of their territories and areas. They are adapting to rapidly changing contexts and using diverse strategies to secure their rights and collective lands and territories of life. Although not without setbacks, they have made key advances and continue to persist in pursuit of self-determination, self-governance, peace and sustainability.

Select evidence from the case studies: Indigenous peoples and local communities have been affected by and adapted to the COVID-19 pandemic in very different ways. In some of the case studies, communities that had strong food sovereignty systems before the pandemic and cultural protocols to manage infectious diseases were able to cope relatively well; harsh lockdown measures imposed by nation-state governments had more impact on their lives and livelihoods than the virus itself. For example, lockdown measures affected income-generating activities and compromised peoples' safety in many parts of the Philippines. The Manobo's customary territory (Pangasananan) provided a safe space away from the virus and enabled people to have healthy food from their farms and forest and clean water from the creeks.



Photo: Kim Reina Toyongan

Several case studies shine a spotlight on how Indigenous peoples are asserting their rights to self-determination and self-governance in powerful and inspiring ways. In 2015, the Wampis Nation self-declared their autonomous territorial government with the aim of governing and protecting their ancestral territory of more than 1.3 million hectares in the northern Peruvian Amazon. As the first autonomous Indigenous government in Peru, the Wampis set a remarkable precedent for the region, as they place the defense of their well-conserved territory firmly within global efforts for biodiversity conservation and the fight against climate breakdown.



“This is what we gain from protecting our territory and its forests. All the difficulties paid off – the virus cannot harm us here. We survived the Japanese [during World War II], the logging company and armed rebels. We will surely survive this pandemic.”

Hawudon Sungkuan Nemesio Domogoy,
Pangasananan, Philippines



“The Kawsak Sacha provides us with energy and gives us the air that we breathe; it is fundamental to our worldview. The Living Forest is a being with whom the Yachakkuna (Shamans) communicate in order to receive and transmit knowledge. This learning directs and guides us towards Sumak Kawsay (life in harmony). Kawsak Sacha is the primary source of Sumak Kawsay: it provides a space for living and for emotional, psychological, physical and spiritual revitalisation. The land, or Allpa mama, is our mother, the origin of life and of existence. Breaking any element of this holistic structure would mean cutting the vital links between the protective beings and human beings.” Excerpt from the case study of the Kichwa people of Sarayaku. Photo: Wachachik

In 2018, the Kichwa people of Sarayaku (Ecuador) exercised their autonomy and self-determination by declaring their 135,000-hectare territory as Kawsak Sacha (Living Forest), a living and conscious being and subject of rights.

The Indigenous Karen people of Mutraw District, Kawthoolei (Burma/Myanmar) formally declared the 548,500-hectare Salween Peace Park (Hkolo Tamutaku K'rer in the Karen language) in December 2018. The Peace Park is a result of grassroots efforts by the 348 Karen villages within it to practice democracy and self-determination, protect themselves and the environment from destructive investment and develop their own vision for a just, peaceful and sustainable future. They founded it to protect and bring peace to this bastion of biodiversity and Karen culture after over 70 years of conflict - one of the world's longest running civil wars. (After the military junta illegally seized power on 1 February 2021, they began bombing Karen villages in the Park on 27 March 2021, showing how tenuous peace can be.)

Select evidence from the national and regional

analyses: Indigenous peoples in the Philippines, Indonesia, Iran and Ecuador and local communities in Madagascar have self-organised powerful networks and alliances to advocate for legal recognition of their rights overall or in specific sectors such as land, forests and fisheries through nation-state policies and laws. However, even where they have secured positive advances in legislation and precedent-setting court rulings, they continue to face many challenges with practical implementation, including insufficient access to information and to remedy and justice for rights violations. This underscores the continuous nature of long-term struggles for rights and justice in nation-state systems, where Indigenous peoples and local communities are already at a significant disadvantage; sometimes a significant leap forward creates opportunities for other advances, and at other times, progress might stall altogether or even move backwards.

For example, Tanzania has been a leader within Africa in community-based forest management since the early 1990s. The country's village-based local governance system, combined with land and forest law reforms in the late 1990s and early 2000s, led to the creation of over

2.5 million hectares of Village Land Forest Reserves and new economic opportunities for communities. However, the spread of these areas has stalled in recent years and government support for community-based approaches seems to have retrenched, but could pick up again with the new President.

In Indonesia, the landmark Constitutional Court ruling (no. 35) in 2013 declared that forests traditionally conserved by Indigenous peoples and local communities have a different status and are distinct from state forests. This led to the documentation and registration of 10 million hectares of hutan adat (customary forests) by 2020. This ruling has been complemented by an important growth in district-level legislation that recognises and protects Indigenous peoples' rights as well as village level regulations prepared by communities themselves. However, the national law on Indigenous peoples is still pending in Parliament at the time of publication.

In the Philippines, the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (1997) expressly guarantees the rights of Indigenous peoples to their ancestral domains (customary territories), cultural integrity, self-governance and empowerment, and social justice and human rights.

Although this Act is one of the strongest laws in the world in support of Indigenous peoples' rights, implementation has been patchy and the process to legally secure an ancestral domain (Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title) has become so complicated and bureaucratic that it actually counters the original intention of the law. Even with these challenges, the 221 Certificates of Ancestral Domain Titles currently issued cover 16 per cent of the country's total land area. If combined with all areas that are seeking such Certificates and under Native Title claims, they would cover an estimated 25 per cent of the Philippines' territory. Given the significant overlap between ancestral domains and the Philippines' remaining forests as well as Key Biodiversity Areas outside state protected areas, supporting Indigenous peoples to secure their legal titles to their ancestral domains should be a priority for Indigenous and environmental advocates together.



“We, the Indigenous Karen people of Mutraw... in order to create and sustain a lasting peace in our lands, protect and maintain the environmental integrity of the Salween River basin, preserve our unique cultural heritage, and further the self-determination of our people; do enact and establish the Salween Peace Park.”

Declaration of the establishment of the Salween Peace Park

Photo: KESAN



Conclusions and Recommendations

As negotiations intensify ahead of the UN biodiversity and climate conferences in late 2021, the time is now to recognise Indigenous peoples and local communities as the true agents of transformative change. They are so central to sustaining the diversity of life on Earth that it would be impossible to address the biodiversity and climate crises without them. Supporting Indigenous peoples and local communities to secure their collective lands and territories of life and a minimum bundle of rights is arguably a key ‘missing link’ in global commitments and national-level implementation. Of particular importance are the rights to self-determination, governance systems, cultures and ways of life, and rights to access

information, access justice and participate in relevant decision-making processes.

In practical terms, pursuing this agenda requires a massive increase in social, political, legal, institutional and financial support for Indigenous peoples and local communities, primarily from nation-state governments, but also from public and private financial institutions. It is time for social movements and civil society organisations working on human rights, conservation, climate justice and land issues to come together in this collective effort. Lawyers and legal advocates, researchers, journalists, communicators and others with specialised skill sets also have critical roles to play.

The **overall recommendations of *Territories of Life: 2021 Report*** are to:

- 1** Recognise and respect the central role of Indigenous peoples and local communities in sustaining a healthy planet, and the deep cultural and spiritual relationships and governance systems through which they do so.
- 2** Support Indigenous peoples and local communities to secure their collective lands and territories, strengthen their self-determined governance systems, and sustain their cultures and ways of life on their own terms. This requires significant reforms in national political and legal systems as well as international financial and economic systems.
- 3** Embed and uphold human rights (including Indigenous peoples' rights and other group-specific rights, where relevant) in all policies, laws, institutions, programmes and decision-making processes that affect Indigenous peoples and local communities, both internationally and domestically.
- 4** Halt the drivers of biodiversity loss and climate breakdown, and halt threats and violence against the peoples and communities who are defending our planet.
- 5** Develop human rights-based financing as a key lever for equitable and effective implementation of global commitments, including on biodiversity, climate and sustainable development.

In the short-term, there are several **opportunities for dialogue, leadership and convergence** in the negotiation and early-stage implementation of the **post-2020 global biodiversity framework**. The updated zero draft of the post-2020 framework states that it must “galvanise urgent and transformative action”. However, the early draft falls far short of this. Much higher ambition and stronger commitments are needed, in four areas in particular:

- 1 Explicitly recognise Indigenous peoples and local communities for their outsized roles in protecting and conserving nature. There is not yet agreement as to whether this should be the focus of a completely new target, or incorporated into an existing target (such as Targets 1, 2 and/or 20).
- 2 Place human rights at the heart of the post-2020 framework, including by:
 - Recognising and protecting human rights in general;
 - Recognising and protecting the specific rights of particular groups such as Indigenous peoples, peasants, women, youth, and people who are defending human rights and the environment;
 - Integrating minimum safeguards to prevent human rights violations and ensure accountability in certain targets of particular concern to Indigenous peoples and local communities (including Target 2);
 - Including human rights-related indicators in the monitoring framework, with disaggregated data for Indigenous peoples, local communities and women; and
 - Using a human rights-based approach to develop and implement National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans and related laws, policies and programmes at the national and sub-national levels.
- 3 Increase ambition in the targets intended to halt drivers of biodiversity loss, for example, by explicitly identifying the industries that are most harmful for biodiversity and committing to divesting from these industries as soon as possible, including by eliminating 100 per cent of perverse incentives by 2025 (Target 17). These issues are an opportunity for mobilisation of several interlinked movements, including for Indigenous peoples, human rights, a healthy planet, climate justice and alternative economies.
- 4 Increase political and financial support for Indigenous-led philanthropy and appropriate funding mechanisms that go directly to Indigenous peoples and local communities and their organisations. Require human rights safeguards and accountability mechanisms in funding for conservation initiatives implemented by governmental and non-governmental entities.

References

*The executive summary refers extensively to the case studies and national, regional and global analyses that comprise **Territories of Life: 2021 Report**, all of which are hosted at: <https://report.territoriesoflife.org>. Additional references outside of the report components are listed below.*

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