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BRIEF · CBD COP17

Centering Equity in Ecosystem-based Adaptation

Operationalising Section C and Targets 8 and 11 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework







Federal Ministry
for the Environment, Climate Action,
Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety

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Prepared by the **FEBA Working Group on Targets 8 and 11**

Contents

Executive summary 3

Key messages 3

Recommendations 5

Introduction 6

1 Equity as a delivery condition and risk variable for Targets 8 and 11 13

1.1 Equity as a right and a delivery condition 13
1.2 From principles to an analytical framework 14
1.3 Case study: Indigenous knowledge and inclusion in Benin's forest governance 16

2 Embedding equity considerations for EbA in national systems and decision-making 18

2.1 From project-level equity to systemic implementation 18
2.2 Operationalising equity through existing national systems 19
2.3 Case study: Mozambique's REPMAR and community-led fisheries 21

3 Accountability, monitoring and learning 22

3.1 Making equity visible in monitoring 22
3.2 Turning evidence into accountability and adaptive management 24
3.3 Case study: Indigenous leadership on Mount Marsabit, Kenya 28

4 Enabling conditions in support of the levers 30

4.1 Finance 30
4.2 Case study: Equity and adaptation in Andean Water Funds 33
4.3 Policy coherence 34
4.4 Case study: Community governance on Honduras' Caribbean coast 36

5 Implications for COP17 38

References 39

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This brief was prepared by the FEBA Working Group on Targets 8 and 11. The case studies presented are drawn directly from the work of group members.

BRIEF OVERVIEW

Executive summary

Biodiversity loss and climate change disproportionately affect communities that depend most directly upon ecosystems. At the same time, Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) and related nature-based interventions can themselves create unequal costs and benefits if rights, participation, and distribution are not adequately considered. The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) provides a basis for addressing this through the implementation of Targets 8 and 11 in line with the considerations set out in Section C.

WHO THIS BRIEF IS FOR

This brief is written primarily for national government decision-makers responsible for biodiversity, climate adaptation, planning, finance and related portfolios, but it is also relevant to donors, vertical funds and implementing agencies that shape the rules and resources within which those national systems operate. It focuses primarily on EbA. Although Nature-based Solutions (NbS) and the broader category of ecosystem-based approaches are referred to where they appear in Targets 8 and 11 or related literature, the analysis and recommendations are developed principally around EbA.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this brief is to show how selected equity-related considerations in Section C of the KMGBF, together with the operative provisions of Targets 21-23, can be operationalised through existing national planning, financing, monitoring and review systems (systems that should enable, rather than substitute, locally-led and sub-national action) so that Targets 8 and 11 are delivered more equitably and more durably through EbA.

KEY MESSAGES

Five things decision-makers need to know

01 **Equity is an essential delivery condition for Targets 8 and 11, not only a protective or social add-on.**

Recognition, meaningful participation that can influence decisions, and fair distribution of benefits and burdens strengthen the legitimacy, effectiveness and longevity of EbA while helping identify and manage risks of maladaptation, exclusion and conflict.

02 The equity considerations of Section C in the implementation of Targets 8 and 11 should be operationalised through existing national implementation systems rather than treated as a stand-alone process.

Under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) and the associated planning, monitoring, reporting and review structure (particularly Decisions 15/5, 15/6, 16/31 and 16/32) provide the principal biodiversity-policy elements for national implementation structures; while national systems, including adaptation planning, spatial planning, public investment and budgeting, can reinforce the application of equity considerations to EbA and NbS.

03 Targets 21–23 give several equity considerations an operative and reportable form.

Targets 8 and 11 contain no specific equity language of their own, and Section C itself does not provide a dedicated, stand-alone indicator/reporting framework for measuring implementation of its individual considerations.

However, Target 21 (on knowledge access and free, prior and informed consent), Target 22 (on land tenure, participation, rights and access to justice and information), and Target 23 (on gender-responsive implementation) operationalise several of the equity considerations set out in Section C into actionable content that can inform national targets and indicators.

While the global indicators for these targets are generally applied at a higher level of aggregation, they can serve as a useful basis and inspiration for national indicators that support monitoring, adaptive management and accountability at the intervention level. In this way, certain equity aspects of EbA and NbS implementation can be reported on, and measured through, Targets 21–23.

04 Monitoring and accountability are the feedback levers that make equity operational.

When a limited set of disaggregated process and outcome indicators is combined with participatory monitoring by rights-holders and civil society, and with management responses that can be triggered when concerns arise, equity commitments can be translated into evidence of progress and inputs to adaptive management, while strengthening accountability to the communities and rights-holders most directly affected by EbA interventions.

05 Finance and policy coherence determine whether these levers have the intended effect.

Equitable EbA cannot be sustained when financing systems, sectoral policies or institutional arrangements incentivise or reward contradictory outcomes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Six recommendations for national decision-makers

Primarily directed at national government decision-makers responsible for biodiversity, climate adaptation, planning, finance and related portfolios.

1

RECOMMENDATION 1

Embed equity objectives for EbA into national planning processes.

Use NBSAP and National Adaptation Plan (NAP) revision cycles, as well as relevant sectoral and spatial planning processes, to set clear equity objectives for EbA under Targets 8 and 11. Adequate time and resources for meaningful participation by Indigenous Peoples, local communities and other rights-holders should be planned and budgeted from the outset, recognising that high-quality engagement requires sustained capacity and finance.

2

RECOMMENDATION 2

Establish equity checkpoints at high-leverage entry points.

Incorporate nationally defined minimum equity and rights criteria into project screening, public investment appraisal, funding allocation and programme review of EbA interventions, so that equity shapes decisions before implementation begins.

3

RECOMMENDATION 3

Ensure equity monitoring is adequately resourced and linked to programme management.

Adopt a limited set of process and outcome indicators for EbA interventions and programmes, with dedicated resources for their collection, analysis and participatory monitoring. Link these to funding and programme-management requirements so that equity findings inform (and, where predefined thresholds or concerns arise, trigger) review and adjustment of programmes, priorities or implementation arrangements. Where relevant, align indicators and reporting with national monitoring and reporting under the KMGBF.

4

RECOMMENDATION 4

Enable, rather than substitute, locally-led EbA action.

Design national systems so they provide the authority, resources, information and institutional channels and capacity that allow Indigenous Peoples, local communities and other affected groups to influence priorities and implementation at subnational and local levels.

5

RECOMMENDATION 5

Align finance with equity requirements.

Make equity criteria part of eligibility, allocation, and results frameworks for EbA finance, and improve direct or simplified access for local and Indigenous organisations. Donors and vertical funds should support simplified access modalities and ensure equity requirements are adequately resourced rather than treated as optional add-ons.

6

RECOMMENDATION 6

Strengthen policy coherence around the equity dimensions across biodiversity, climate, disaster risk reduction, and land-related agendas, and across national, subnational and local levels.

Align NBSAP, Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC), NAP, disaster-risk and land-degradation planning processes, spatial and sectoral planning platforms, and associated monitoring and finance systems around common entry points and around the equity dimensions (recognition, procedure, distribution) for EbA. This can reduce contradictory incentives and prevent equity requirements from falling between institutional mandates or levels of government.

SETTING THE SCENE

Introduction

Biodiversity is fundamental to human well-being, underpinning Nature's contributions to people that are essential for societal challenges such as food and water security, health, livelihoods, and climate resilience.[1] Biodiversity-rich ecosystems can support agricultural productivity, improve water retention, and strengthen resilience to climate shocks.[1] Forests and wetlands contribute to climate regulation,[2] and can buffer climate-related hazards, while marine and coastal ecosystems play important roles in climate regulation and resilience.[3]

Degradation and loss of biodiversity poses risks to both ecosystems and the resilience and well-being of people, particularly Indigenous Peoples and local communities whose livelihoods, cultures and well-being are closely connected to nature.[4]

Ecosystem-based approaches, including Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA), can respond to these interconnected challenges by strengthening ecosystem resilience while delivering adaptation, biodiversity, and livelihood benefits.[5]

This interconnectedness between Nature and people is reflected in the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF), adopted at the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP15) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

The KMGBF provides the global framework for halting and reversing biodiversity loss through four long-term goals and 23 action-oriented targets,[6] and its implementation depends upon Parties converting these global commitments into national targets, National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs), policies, programmes, projects, monitoring systems and reporting processes.[7]

Among its 23 targets, Targets 8 and 11 provide a concrete entry point for linking biodiversity, climate adaptation and human well-being:

TARGET 8

Minimize the Impacts of Climate Change on Biodiversity and Build Resilience

Minimize the impact of climate change and ocean acidification on biodiversity and increase its resilience through mitigation, adaptation, and disaster risk reduction actions, including through nature-based solutions and /or ecosystem-based approaches, while minimizing negative and fostering positive impacts of climate action on biodiversity.[8]

TARGET 11

Restore, Maintain and Enhance Nature's Contributions to People

Restore, maintain and enhance nature's contributions to people, including ecosystem functions and services, such as the regulation of air, water, and climate, soil health, pollination and reduction of disease risk, as well as protection from natural hazards and disasters, through nature-based solutions and/or ecosystem-based approaches for the benefit of all people and nature.[9]

The KMGBF also establishes principles concerning how its implementation should take place. **Section C of the Framework** sets out 18 Considerations for Implementation (a-r).[10] For the purpose of this brief, the principal Section C anchors for equity are:

SECTION C · PRINCIPAL EQUITY ANCHORS USED IN THIS BRIEF

a	Contribution and rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities	b	Different value systems
g	Human rights-based approach	h	Gender

l	Science and innovation (including traditional knowledge and practices)
n	Intergenerational equity
o	Formal and informal education (recognising diverse worldviews, values and knowledge systems of Indigenous Peoples and local communities)

These considerations are prioritised in this brief as they most directly shape who participates in decision-making, whose knowledge and values are recognised, how benefits and burdens are distributed, and whether EbA under Targets 8 and 11 is legitimate, effective and durable over time.

Other Section C considerations (c) Whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach, (m) Ecosystem approach, (p) Access to financial resources; and (q) Cooperation and synergies also act as important enabling considerations.

In 2024, CBD COP16 further strengthened the implementation structure relevant to this brief, including through:

COP16 decision	Focus
Decision 16/4[11] and 16/5[12]	Indigenous Peoples and local communities
Decision 16/13[13]	Mainstreaming of biodiversity within and across sectors
Decision 16/22[14]	Biodiversity and climate change
Decision 16/31[15]	KMGBF monitoring framework
Decision 16/32[16]	Planning, monitoring, reporting and review
Decision 16/34[17]	Resource mobilisation

Decisions under fellow Rio Conventions, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and United Nations Convention on Combating Desertification (UNCCD), also reinforce the importance of these considerations for integrated planning, participation, EbA, monitoring, and inclusive governance.

For example, the UNFCCC's Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA) (Decision 2/CMA.5)[18] and the First Global Stocktake (Decision 1/CMA.5)[19] have emphasized integrated adaptation planning in order to strengthen resilience and reduce vulnerability. The UNCCD has given particular attention to gender equality,[20] land tenure dealing with equitable participation and inclusive governance,[21] and Indigenous Peoples' rights.[22]

These COP/CMA decisions and related political and stakeholder instruments demonstrate increasing attention across the Rio Convention processes towards integrated planning, ecosystem-based approaches, participation, rights and inclusive governance.

The implementation gap

However, significant challenges remain. The revised draft of the *Global Report on Collective Progress in the Implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework* (CBD/SBSTTA/28/2/Add.1/Rev.1, 26 July 2026),[23] prepared following peer review of the June 2026 first draft, provides the most recent CBD Secretariat assessment.

As the document remains part of the COP17 global-review process, its findings represent the CBD Secretariat's current draft assessment rather than a final COP determination. The draft indicates that aggregate progress remains insufficient for achieving the KMGBF on current trajectories.

DRAFT GLOBAL REPORT (2026): TARGETS 8 AND 11

In the case of Targets 8 and 11 (which, like the other action-oriented targets of the Framework, are to be achieved by 2030) the Global Report finds that while national targets show generally good coverage and some positive indicator trends, overall progress remains insufficient to meet 2030 targets.

Implementation for both targets is constrained by data gaps, limited means of implementation, weak policy coherence, challenges in valuing nature's contributions to people, and the insufficient scale of approaches such as ecosystem restoration and NbS.[23]

The gap between national commitments and actual implementation points to barriers to scaling effective action of Targets 8 and 11. These barriers are not only about the quantity of EbA interventions, but also about their quality and equity, including whose knowledge counts, how benefits and burdens are distributed, and whether interventions reinforce or undermine rights and local agency.

THIS RAISES A CENTRAL QUESTION FOR TARGETS 8 AND 11

How can equity principles become embedded in the national systems that determine which EbA interventions are prioritised, how they are financed, who participates in their design and implementation, and how results are monitored and reviewed?

Accelerating implementation requires more than additional projects or technical guidance; rather, it requires attention to how these approaches are designed, financed and governed in a sustained, coordinated, and equitable manner as part of national systems.

Equitable delivery of Targets 8 and 11 needs to be operationalised through the interaction of the KMGBF's equity considerations (those concerning the rights and contributions of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, human rights, gender, traditional knowledge and intergenerational equity), the operative provisions laid out in Targets 21-23 (on knowledge access and free, prior and informed consent, rights and access to justice and information; and gender-responsive implementation) and the Framework's national planning, monitoring, reporting, finance and review architecture.

> The practical challenge is not to create a separate process for Section C, but to embed these requirements and considerations into the institutions and decisions that already shape EbA.

This brief is written primarily for national government decision-makers responsible for biodiversity, climate adaptation, planning, finance and related portfolios, but is also relevant to donors, vertical funds and implementing agencies that shape the rules and resources within which those national systems operate. It hones in primarily on EbA, though NbS and the broader category of ecosystem-based approaches are referred to where they appear in Targets 8 and 11 or in related guidance, but the analysis and recommendations are developed principally around EbA.

THE EQUITY LEVERS

In this brief, the equity levers are the concrete entry points and mechanisms through which recognition, procedure and distribution dimensions of equity are made operational:

1. Equity objectives in planning (NBSAPs, NAPs, spatial and sectoral plans)
2. Equity and rights criteria in programme design, project screening, appraisal and funding allocation
3. A limited set of equity process and outcome indicators linked to management responses
4. Arrangements that enable (rather than substitute) locally-led action
5. The monitoring and accountability mechanisms that generate feedback and consequences

Finance rules and policy coherence are treated as enabling (or hampering) conditions for these levers as they determine whether the levers have real force, but they are not themselves the primary equity levers.

The purpose of this brief is to show how selected equity-related considerations in Section C of the KMGBF, together with the operative provisions of Targets 21-23, can be operationalised through existing national planning, financing, monitoring and review systems (systems that should enable, rather than substitute, locally-led and sub-national action) so that Targets 8 and 11 are delivered more equitably and more durably through EbA.

How this brief is structured

The remainder of this brief is structured as follows:

SECTION 1

Examines equity as both a rights-based requirement and a delivery condition for Targets 8 and 11, introducing the three-dimensional framework of recognition, procedure, and distributional equity associated with CBD Decision 14/8 and linking these dimensions to relevant Section C equity considerations.

SECTION 2

Advocates for moving beyond project-level approaches toward systemic implementation, mapping strategic entry points within existing national systems, including NBSAPs, NAPs, spatial and sectoral planning, programming of interventions, project appraisal, public finance, coordination mechanisms, and monitoring, where equity considerations can be embedded as routine decision parameters.

SECTION 3

Addresses monitoring, accountability and learning, contending that a limited set of process and outcome indicators, combined with participatory approaches, is required if equity is to be supported by a genuine feedback mechanism.

SECTION 4

Turns to the enabling conditions of finance and policy coherence, examining how these can either reinforce or systematically undermine the equity levers developed in earlier sections.

The case studies in each section illustrate how equity considerations play out at local and sub-national levels, and how national legal, planning, financing and monitoring systems can either enable or constrain those efforts.

The brief **concludes** with implications for CBD COP17 and a set of practical recommendations.

GLOSSARY

Key terms used in this brief

Term	Definition used in this brief
Equity	"Refers to fairness in the consequences, outcomes, costs and benefits of actions or policies (IPCC, 2022a; McDermott et al. 2013). In contrast to equality, equity recognises different backgrounds and starting points of individuals and/or groups of people." (IPBES, n.d.).[24]
Equity considerations	The subgroup of Section C considerations that most directly address equity: (a), (b), (g), (h), (l), (n) and (o).
Recognition/ Procedural/ Distributional equity	The three interconnected dimensions of equity used as the analytical framework (associated with CBD Decision 14/8 guidance).[25]
Equity levers	The concrete entry points and mechanisms through which the three dimensions of equity are made operational.
Enabling conditions	Finance rules and policy coherence, factors that determine whether the equity levers have real force.
Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA)	"Uses biodiversity and ecosystem services in an overall adaptation strategy, including the sustainable management, conservation and restoration of ecosystems to provide services that help people adapt to the adverse effects of climate change." (CBD 2009)[26] The primary focus of this brief.
Nature-based Solutions (NbS)	"Actions to protect, conserve, restore, and sustainably use and manage natural or modified terrestrial, freshwater, coastal, and marine ecosystems which address social, economic, and environmental challenges effectively and adaptively, while simultaneously providing human well-being, ecosystem services, resilience, and biodiversity benefits." (UNEP/EA.5/Res.5).[27] Used in this brief where it appears in Targets 8 and 11 or relevant literature.
Process indicators	Indicators that track whether equity-related processes are functioning.
Outcome indicators	Indicators that track the distribution of benefits, costs, risks and changes in ecological/social conditions.

SECTION 1

Equity as a delivery condition and risk variable for Targets 8 and 11

1.1 Equity as a right and a delivery condition

Climate change and biodiversity loss disproportionately affect communities that depend directly upon ecosystems for their livelihoods and well-being.[4] At the same time, biodiversity conservation and climate adaptation interventions can generate unequal costs and benefits, and these inequalities often reflect structural gaps in gender and social inclusion, as well as differences in who participates in decision-making, whose knowledge informs implementation, how resources are allocated, and who receives benefits.[28]

Evidence indicates that rights-based, participatory and inclusive governance approaches can contribute to legitimacy, local ownership and conditions associated with more durable conservation and adaptation outcomes.[1]

These approaches are also independently important as a matter of rights and procedural justice; their value should, therefore, not be reduced solely to instrumental effectiveness. At the same time, the benefits of such approaches are not automatic, and depend upon how interventions are designed and governed.

For Targets 8 and 11, implementation frequently involves decisions over ecosystems, land, water, and adaptation priorities which can often create trade-offs. If these are not recognised and addressed, interventions can reinforce inequalities, exclude people who depend upon ecosystems, or contribute to unintended maladaptation.[29]

Evidence from NbS has shown that weakly institutionalised governance arrangements and the exclusion of Indigenous Peoples and local communities from benefit sharing can undermine legitimacy and equity.[30] Documented risks within EbA include insufficient participation, inadequate attention to local rights and knowledge, and project processes that fail to address existing inequalities.[31]

Indigenous Peoples and local communities are often knowledge holders and environmental stewards who can be particularly well placed to lead or co-lead EbA-related planning and implementation. As such, their role is not

only a matter of equity and rights; it is also best practice that can improve effectiveness, resource allocation, local ownership and the delivery of wider co-benefits.

> Equity is thus both a rights-based requirement and a delivery condition for Targets 8 and 11.

It is first a normative requirement grounded in the equity considerations set out in Section C ((a) Contributions and rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities; (b) Different value systems; (g) Human rights-based approach (respecting, protecting, promoting and fulfilling human rights, as well as acknowledging the human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment);[32] (h) Gender, (I) Science and innovation (including traditional knowledge and practices); (n) Intergenerational equity; and (o) Formal and informal education.)

At the same time, evidence shows that fair recognition, meaningful participation, and equitable distribution strengthen legitimacy, local ownership, and sustained engagement are conditions that improve the durability and scalability of EbA outcomes.[33]

As such, these two rationales act complementarily, not alternatively, and equity should not be reduced to an instrumental tool for improving project performance, but nor should its practical implications for delivery be overlooked.

1.2 From principles to an analytical framework

A useful analytical framework is the three-dimensional concept of equity as interconnected dimensions of recognition, procedure and distribution, used in the CBD Decision 14/8[25] on protected and conserved areas and widely developed in the conservation literature.

Although Decision 14/8 does not establish a general KMGBF-wide definition of equity, its Voluntary Guidance provides a useful analytical lens for ecosystem-based approaches under Targets 8 and 11.

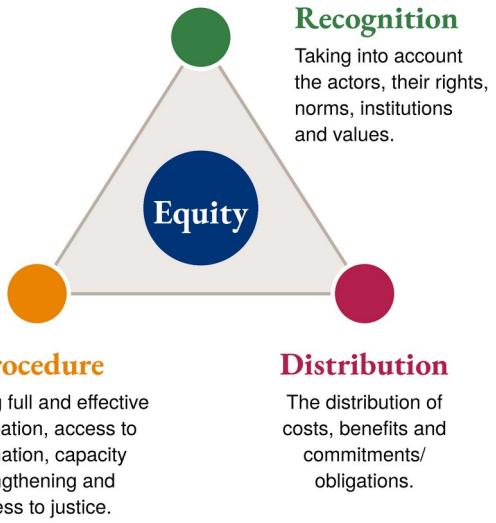


FIGURE 1 The three dimensions of equity. *Source:* Adapted from McDermott et al. (2013). Examining equity: A multidimensional framework for assessing equity in payments for ecosystem services. *Environmental Science and Policy* 33:416-427; Pascual et al. (2014). Social equity matters in payments for ecosystem services. *BioScience* 64(11):1027-1036; CBD/COP/DEC/14/8; Franks, P. Podvin, K., Quesada- Aguilar, A., Sandoval, M. (2017). *Equidad y REDD+ en Perú*. Quito: IUCN Regional Office for South America https://doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.CH.2017.07.es

Recognition

Recognition concerns the acknowledgment of and respect for the rights, identities, values, knowledge systems and institutions of rights-holders and stakeholders.[34] In practice, this includes recognising the rights and knowledge of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, taking account of gender and other social inclusion dimensions, and ensuring interventions reflect diverse relationships with ecosystems. When these are overlooked, interventions can fail to reflect local realities and priorities, weakening their appropriateness and legitimacy.

Relevant Section C considerations are (a) Contributions and rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities; (b) Different value systems; (l) Science and innovation; and (n) Intergenerational equity.

Procedure

Procedure concerns who participates in decisions and whether that participation can influence outcomes.[34] For Targets 8 and 11 this means ensuring affected groups can shape priorities, design and implementation rather than being consulted after key decisions have been made.

It also requires timely access to relevant information, the capacity to engage, and access to justice or remedy when rights or interests are affected.

Where information on current (including informal) land and resources uses, likely ecosystem-service trade-offs, or the level of uncertainty around proposed measures is incomplete or unavailable, even well-intentioned participation processes can produce inequitable outcomes.

Relevant Section C considerations are (a) Contribution and rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities; (g) Human rights-based approach; (h) Gender; and (n) Intergenerational equity.

Distribution

Distribution concerns how costs and benefits are shared. EbA and other nature-based approaches can generate significant benefits, but these may not accrue equally across groups.[34]

Costs can arise both from changing land or resource practices and from the design, implementation and ongoing management of the interventions themselves; these costs often fall disproportionately on particular groups depending upon their rights, responsibilities, access to finance and institutional position. Distributional analysis, therefore, requires the explicit identification of costs, benefits, risks and trade-offs, and how these are distributed among different actors.

This dimension is also a channel through which many climate-justice concerns (who bears climate impacts, who pays for responses, and who benefits) are addressed in the context of Targets 8 and 11.

Relevant Section C considerations are (a) Contributions and rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities; (g) Human rights-based approach; (h) Gender; (n) Intergenerational equity; and the enabling condition (p) Access to financial resources.

These three dimensions of equity, grounded in the relevant Section C considerations, establish that equity is an independent principle of implementation and not merely a means to other ends. Fair recognition, meaningful participation that can influence decisions, and equitable distribution can strengthen legitimacy, ownership and sustained engagement, improving the longevity of EbA outcomes.

As implementation of Targets 8 and 11 moves beyond individual projects towards programmes, portfolios and national strategies, risks associated with weak equity become systemic.

Although individual EbA interventions often operate locally, their enabling conditions are established at higher levels as national policies determine priorities; public financial systems influence eligibility; planning systems reconcile competing land uses; and monitoring systems determine what is measured and what triggers a response; while subnational institutions, Indigenous Peoples and local communities, as well as other local actors then operate within these conditions.

CASE STUDY · BENIN

1.3 Strengthening Indigenous Knowledge and Gender and Social Inclusion in Benin's Forest Governance

61

forest management committees with provisions for women, youth and persons with disabilities

6

municipalities integrating Indigenous knowledge into management plans

19 / 19

traditional leaders consulted supported gradual inclusion of marginalised groups in forest governance

In Central Benin, sacred forests have long served as important reservoirs of biodiversity and cultural heritage, protected through Indigenous beliefs, customary law and traditional governance, but deforestation, climate change and the marginalisation of these systems have placed them under pressure. Survie de la Mère et de l'Enfant, working with traditional authorities, spiritual leaders, municipal governments and communities, is supporting



the restoration of degraded sacred forests while revitalising Indigenous knowledge and making governance more inclusive.

Multi-stakeholder dialogue platforms bring spiritual leaders, women, youth, researchers and officials together to identify challenges and co-develop solutions; Indigenous knowledge is being integrated into the management plans of six municipalities; and a national roadmap has been developed that promotes the complementary use of traditional and scientific knowledge.

All 61 forest management committees have been established with provisions for the inclusion of women, youth and, where possible, persons with disabilities. A gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) assessment found that all 19 traditional leaders consulted supported the gradual inclusion of marginalised groups in forest governance.

The case illustrates the three dimensions of equity in practice: recognition of Indigenous knowledge holders as legitimate actors; procedural inclusion through efforts to strengthen the participation and voice of women and youth; and attention to the ways forest governance affected communities' access to ecological, cultural and livelihood benefits.

It shows how rights-based and locally grounded governance can bolster the social foundations of ecosystem restoration and climate resilience, while supporting the equity considerations reflected in KMGBF Section C and the outcomes associated with Targets 8 and 11.

Photo credit: Survie de la Mère et de l'Enfant

Main organisations / actors involved: Survie de la Mère et de l'Enfant, Climate and Development Knowledge Network (CDKN), traditional authorities, spiritual leaders, local communities, women and youth groups, municipal governments, forestry departments, researchers, forest management committees.

KEY MESSAGE

Equity is both a rights-based requirement and a delivery condition for Targets 8 and 11. The recognition, procedure, and distribution dimensions of equity should be addressed at both project and system levels. Treating them only as project-level add-ons is insufficient as they need to be embedded into the national systems that shape priorities, resources, implementation and accountability so that equity is considered before interventions are designed, throughout implementation, and when results inform future decisions.

→ **Supports Recommendations 1, 2 and 4**

SECTION 2

Embedding equity considerations for EbA in national systems and decision-making

2.1 From project-level equity to systemic implementation

If equity affects the likelihood that EbA will deliver durable outcomes, applying equity principles only to individual projects and/or interventions is necessary, but not sufficient.[35]

Many of the decisions that determine which projects are developed, where they are located, who participates, how they are financed and how results are assessed are made through wider national systems, including biodiversity and climate planning, public investment and budgeting, sectoral policies, coordination mechanisms and monitoring frameworks.

EbA requires a systems approach as it is not delivered through a single policy or institutional process, but instead intersects with biodiversity strategies, NAPs, climate commitments, disaster-risk management, development planning and public investment systems.

Different parts of government have influence on different aspects of implementation, while subnational authorities, Indigenous Peoples and local communities, civil society and other actors contribute knowledge, priorities and implementation capacity.[36] These systems and actors are interdependent, meaning that the effectiveness of an individual intervention is partly determined by the wider institutional environment in which it operates.[35]

Governance challenges are frequently identified as significant barriers to implementation and scaling, including fragmented institutional responsibilities, siloed administrations, insufficient stakeholder engagement, weak coordination across levels of government, unclear institutional arrangements, and limited integration of EbA into national policies, budgets and adaptation plans.[37]

At the policy level, fragmented governance arrangements and weak coherence among policies can impede collaboration, create conflicting requirements and constrain synergies as well as joint financing across different agendas.[38]

Lack of equity and stakeholder engagement is a frequently cited barrier in NbS implementation;[39] while adaptive governance (multi-level institutional coordination combined with inclusive ownership that fosters trust, effective

participation and long-term sustainability) has been identified as an important enabler of successful EbA scaling.[40]

These challenges matter as national policies and strategies are critical to shaping the framework within which lower levels of government operate and influence the allocation of technical and financial resources. As such, strengthening coherence and coordination across these systems is an important condition for equitable implementation.

> Scaling cannot be achieved simply by producing more projects.

Recent experience shows that scaling EbA follows diverse and non-linear trajectories that combine horizontal processes (replication of practices in new locations or with new actors) and vertical processes (integration into policies, plans, financing mechanisms and institutional frameworks).[41]

↔ Horizontal scaling

Replication of practices in new locations or with new actors.

↕ Vertical scaling

Integration into policies, plans, financing mechanisms and institutional frameworks.

Replicating individual EbA interventions can expand geographic coverage, but replication alone does not institutionalise the governance relationships, knowledge systems and decision-making practices required for sustained and equitable implementation.

Sustainable scaling thus depends upon adaptive governance, multi-level coordination, inclusive ownership, long-term financing, and the embedding of EbA into existing planning and management systems.

2.2 Operationalising equity through existing national systems

A practical starting point is to identify high-leverage entry points where incorporating equity considerations into an existing process can influence subsequent interventions:

Existing national process / entry point	Relevant Section C & enabling considerations	Potential actions
NBSAPs, NAPs, and other national strategies/ plans	(a) Contribution and rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities; (b) Different value systems; (c) Whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach; (g) Human rights-based approach; (h) Gender; (l) Science and innovation; (n) Intergenerational equity.	Build meaningful participation, including that which is locally-led, into priority-setting for EbA; recognise diverse knowledge systems; include equity-related objectives and indicators for Targets 8 and 11 of the KMGBF, Target 9(d) of the GGA, etc.

Existing national process / entry point	Relevant Section C & enabling considerations	Potential actions
Sectoral and spatial/land-use planning	(a) Contribution and rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities; (b) Different value systems; (c) Whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach; (g) Human rights-based approach; (l) Science and innovation; (m) Ecosystem approach; (n) Intergenerational equity.	Systematically assess rights, gender and intersecting social inclusion gaps, vulnerability and risks, local priorities and opportunities, and knowledge systems when identifying areas and interventions for EbA. Require distributional analysis of who gains and who bears costs, and define the ecological, social and socio-economic information that must be generated and considered before decisions are taken.
Public finance and funding mechanisms	(p) Access to financial resources, supplemented by Target 19 and Decision 16/34, with (a) Contribution and rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities; (g) Human rights-based approach; (h) Gender (including intersecting social categories).	Embed equity criteria into funding calls, eligibility rules, allocation processes and results frameworks for EbA, and improve access to finance for local and Indigenous actors.
Project screening and public investment appraisal	(a) Contribution and rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities; (g) Human rights-based approach; (h) Gender (including intersecting social categories); supplemented by Targets 14, 22 and 23 where relevant.	Require equity, rights and distributional-risk analysis as part of standard appraisal and project-selection processes for EbA interventions, and specify the information that must be available before decisions are taken.
Whole-of-government coordination	Principally (c) Whole-of-government and whole-of society approach and (q) Cooperation and synergies.	Establish coordination across biodiversity, climate, disaster-risk reduction (DRR), land degradation neutrality (LDN), sectoral planning and finance institutions to support coherent EbA implementation and connect national and subnational processes.
Monitoring and review	Decisions 15/5, 15/6, 16/31 and 16/32, with (a) Contribution and rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities; and (l) Science and innovation.	Select a limited set of equity-related process and outcome indicators for EbA/NbS under Targets 8 and 11 of the KMGBF and other relevant frameworks, and track them within existing monitoring systems, and pre-define the management responses (e.g review of programme design, reallocation of resources, or additional safeguards) that will be triggered when exclusion, unequal benefits or rights risks appear.

The purpose of this mapping is to demonstrate how existing systems can operationalise Section C in the implementation of EbA.

> Importantly, national systems should not substitute, but should enable, locally-led and equitable action by

establishing requirements, resources, accountability mechanisms and channels through which local knowledge and priorities can influence decisions, without centralising decision-making authority.

Locally-led approaches, in turn, cannot by themselves overcome financing rules, planning frameworks or monitoring systems that systematically exclude particular actors or fail to recognise their rights and knowledge.

CASE STUDY · MOZAMBIQUE

2.3 Building Climate Resilience from the Shoreline: Mozambique's REPMAR and the Rise of Community-Led Fisheries

2020
Fisheries Maritime Regulation (REPMAR) revised

3 nm
nearshore zone that coastal communities can now formally manage

CCPs
Community Fishing Councils patrol, monitor catches and keep no-take reserves



In 2020, Mozambique revised its Fisheries Maritime Regulation (REPMAR), creating a formal legal pathway for coastal communities to manage fishing areas within three nautical miles of shore. The reform recognised that those living closest to the sea are best placed to build its resilience against overfishing and a warming ocean.

Community Fishing Councils (CCPs) in provinces such as Nampula now enforce management rules with their own resources, patrolling waters, monitoring catches and maintaining no-take reserves that function as climate refugia, and local governments as well as non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have also aligned in support of community-led fisheries management.

REPMAR is an example of a national legal framework enabling (but not substituting) locally-led action through national policy, and shows how national legal and institutional entry points can create enabling conditions for equitable, adaptive management of marine ecosystems under Targets 8 and 11, while strengthening the links between community-level governance and national policy.

Muaija Gonçalve (gray top) fishing with her friend, Jamal, along Ilha de Moçambique, Mozambique. Muaija is the first woman to be elected President of the General Assembly of the Community Fishing Council (CCP) of Sanculo. Photo credit: Esther Mbabazi for Rare.

Main organisations / actors involved: Rare.

KEY MESSAGE

For implementation of Targets 8 and 11, the primary entry points for equity are NBSAPs, national targets and the planning, monitoring, reporting and review system established through CBD Decisions 15/6, 16/31 and 16/32. Parties can reinforce these through national adaptation planning, public investment appraisal, spatial planning, finance, and cross-sectoral coordination.

→ **Supports Recommendations 1, 2 and 4**

SECTION 3

Accountability, monitoring and learning

3.1 Making equity visible in monitoring

If Section C is to function as a set of systemic levers inside national decision-making, equity must be made visible within the systems used to assess whether interventions are working.

Monitoring and accountability themselves become systemic levers as they can provide the evidence needed to identify unequal participation, distributional effects, emerging rights risks and gaps between intended and actual outcomes.

It is useful to distinguish two related, but distinct, purposes:

AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

Monitoring provides a broad overview of progress on equity in natural resource management and supports reporting and accountability under the KMGBF.

AT THE INTERVENTION OR PROGRAMME LEVEL

Monitoring supports adaptive management and learning.

Thus, depending upon national choices, these two levels may or may not be tightly linked. For the purposes of this brief, the priority is the national arrangements that enable coherent equity monitoring at the intervention level, through the entry points already identified in Section 2.

Monitoring for Targets 8 and 11 should move beyond questions of whether activities have been completed and, where ecological outcome monitoring remains underdeveloped, also strengthen attention to ecological results.

At the same time, monitoring should start to ask who is participating; who is benefiting and how; whose knowledge is being used and enhanced; and whether implementation is creating or reinforcing risks.

This is particularly important as equity concerns are not necessarily visible in ecological or activity-based monitoring: an intervention can achieve (or appear to achieve) its ecological objectives while distributing costs and benefits unevenly, excluding affected groups from decision-making, or failing to recognise relevant knowledge and rights.

This is where Targets 21-23 become particularly salient as these targets establish the reporting lines for knowledge availability and accessibility (Target 21);[42] the full, equitable, inclusive, effective and gender-responsive representation and participation in decision-making, and access to justice and information related to biodiversity by Indigenous Peoples and local communities, women, youth and other rights-holders; (Target 22);[43] and gender-responsive approaches (Target 23).[44]

TARGET

21

Ensure That Knowledge Is Available and Accessible To Guide Biodiversity Action

TARGET

22

Ensure Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice and Information Related to Biodiversity for all

TARGET

23

Ensure Gender Equality and a Gender-Responsive Approach for Biodiversity Action

When Targets 8 and 11 are implemented and reported on through EbA, the equity dimensions of that implementation can, and should, be tracked against the obligations of Targets 21-23.

Their respective indicators are designed primarily for national-level progress and may not always be suited, in their current form, to tracking equity outcomes of specific interventions or programmes. They can, however, serve as a useful starting point and inspiration for developing more context-specific process and outcomes indicators for Targets 8 and 11, which, if well designed and aligned with national monitoring frameworks, may also be aggregated to assess progress at a higher level. In this way, equity is a measurable component of collective progress under the KMGBF.

> Equity considerations need to be built into monitoring from the outset rather than added later as a parallel reporting exercise.

When equity-related indicators are prioritised as strategic, they can guide objectives, track progress and serve as guardrails for adaptive management instead of merely documenting outcomes after the fact.[45]

This calls for a small set of equity-related process and outcome indicators that can sit within existing NBSAP and NAP monitoring frameworks (and, where relevant, within programme- or portfolio- level monitoring linked to public finance and appraisal systems; see Table 1).

PROCESS INDICATORS

Track whether inclusive decision-making structures function, whether rights-holders are participating, and whether relevant capacities and rights-related commitments are being addressed.

OUTCOME INDICATORS

Examine whether adaptation benefits are reaching rights-holders and whether conditions relevant to distributional justice are improving.[45]

Wherever possible, indicators should be aligned with higher-level monitoring and reporting, so that the same information supports both project-level adaptive management and national reporting under the KMGBF.[46]

There is a practical opportunity to connect biodiversity and adaptation monitoring, and the updated KMGBF monitoring framework includes optional disaggregation of headline indicators and voluntary component and complementary indicators that can support more differentiated assessment, subject to national circumstances and priorities.[52] These opportunities can be combined with participatory and Indigenous monitoring approaches, where appropriate and consistent with rights, knowledge governance and data-sovereignty requirements.

3.2 Turning evidence into accountability and adaptive management

Indicators function as accountability and adaptive-management tools only when findings lead to concrete action.

Evidence of unequal participation, skewed benefit distribution or emerging rights risks should not simply be recorded, but should trigger review and adjustment of programmes, funding priorities or implementation arrangements.[31]

For learning to really inform, certain institutional conditions are required, such as:

1

Authority

Clear authority to reallocate resources or revise programme design

2

Transparency

Transparent reporting of equity findings

3

Incentives

Incentives (or consequences) for programme managers to act on the evidence

Without these, monitoring risks becoming largely performative.

TABLE 1

Illustrative proposed equity process and outcome indicators for EbA interventions and programmes

These can be adapted or standardised at national level and used alongside, or as complementary indicators to, the global KMGBF monitoring framework.

Type	Proposed illustrative equity indicator	Relevant safeguards / standards (compliance tracking)	Related existing indicators (thematic alignment)
PROCESS	Percentage of EbA concept notes, proposals and projects that satisfy applicable equity and rights-screening requirements before funding approval or contracting, including, where applicable, documentation of free, prior and informed consent (or equivalent approval and involvement) in accordance with relevant national legislation and international obligations, gender-responsive analysis, and appropriate benefit-sharing arrangements.	**GEF Policy on Environmental and Social Safeguards**[47] Minimum Standard 1 *Environmental and Social Assessment, Management and Monitoring (pp.15-17)* which requires identification and management of environmental and social risks throughout the project cycle; Minimum Standard 5 *Indigenous Peoples (pp.23-25)* which requires FPIC in specified circumstances and assessment, avoidance/mitigation of impacts, meaningful consultation, participation and benefit sharing. **GEF Principles and Guidelines for Engagement with Indigenous Peoples**[48] *p.20* which recognises FPIC for GEF- financed activities that occur on or significantly affect Indigenous Peoples' traditional lands, territories, and resources, consistent with UNDRIP. **WWF ESSF**[49] *Standards Category One and Two (pp.12-13)* requires risk-screening, meaningful and informed stakeholder engagement in design and implementation, and consideration of FPIC where appropriate. **IUCN Global Standard for NbS**[50] Criterion 5, especially Indicator 5.2 Participation, equality, and FPIC, 5.3 Identification and involvement of directly and indirectly affected stakeholders and 5.4 Decision-making processes document and respond to rights and interest; Criterion 6, particularly 6.2 on rights to land and resources are acknowledged and respected. **CBD Voluntary Guidelines**[51] *Principle 4 (p.44):* Inclusivity and equity in planning & implementation *Safeguards p.45*: 7. Fair and equitable access to benefits; 8. Transparent governance and access to information; 9. Respecting rights of women and men from Indigenous Peoples and local communities.	**KMGBF Targets 22 & 23**: *Component Indicator*: Proportion of total adult population with secure tenure rights to land, (a) with legally recognised documentation, and (b) who perceive their rights to land as secure, by sex and type of tenure; Complementary indicator Number of protected areas that have completed a site-level assessment of governance and equity (SAGE); Target 22: Trends in degree to which traditional knowledge and practices are respected, through the participation of Indigenous Peoples and local communities and safeguards in national implementation of the Strategic Plan.
PROCESS	Share of national or sub-national planning and review meetings for	**KMGBF Target 22 & 23 (**indicators identified above.) **IUCN NbS** Criterion 5, indicators 5.2- 5.4	See indicators identified above.

Type	Proposed illustrative equity indicator	Relevant safeguards / standards (compliance tracking)	Related existing indicators (thematic alignment)
	Targets 8 and 11 where Indigenous Peoples, local communities, youth and women's groups formally, and meaningfully, participate and whose inputs are recorded and whose consideration is reflected in decisions or their justification.	**WWF ESSF** *(p.12)* requires meaningful, effective and informed engagement in project design and implementation **GEF Policy** *(p.9)* defines stakeholder engagement as including identification and analysis, planning, disclosure, consultation and participation, monitoring, evaluation and learning throughout the project cycle, with ongoing reporting. **CBD Voluntary Guidelines** *Principle 4*; *Safeguard 6*: Promotion of full, effective and inclusive participation.	
PROCESS	Existence and active use of functioning grievance or redress mechanisms linked to EbA programmes, with publicly reported cases, response times and outcomes.	**GEF Minimum Standard** 2 Accountability, Grievance and Conflict Resolution (*p.18 onwards)* The GEF requires Agency-level accountability, grievance and conflict-resolution systems. Its safeguards framework provides mechanisms for people and communities, including Indigenous Peoples and local communities, to raise concerns and seek responsive action. GEF reporting guidance requires Agencies to report each grievance case. **WWF ESSF** Grievance Mechanisms is an explicit WWF safeguard; WWF offices are required to establish mechanisms for stakeholders to raise concerns and seek satisfactory resolution (*pp.11-12)*, with an Ombudsperson providing independent monitoring/review. **IUCN NbS** Criterion 5, Indicator 5.1 A defined and fully agreed upon feedback and grievance resolution mechanism is available to all stakeholders before an NbS intervention can be initiated. **CBD Voluntary Guidelines** Safeguard 9.	**KMGBF Target 22** includes access to justice and information and calls for transparency, accountability and protection of environmental human rights defenders.
OUTCOME	Anticipated or documented changes in adaptation or ecosystem-service benefits (e.g. reduced flood risk, improved water availability, income from restoration) and any associated trade-offs or reductions in access, accruing to different groups, disaggregated by gender, age,	**IUCN NbS** Criterion 6, Indicator 6.1 requires the potential costs and benefits associated with trade-offs to be explicitly acknowledged and to inform safeguards and corrective actions; 6.2, 6.3 requires safeguards to be periodically reviewed; Criterion 1, indicator 1.3 human-wellbeing outcomes arising from NbS are identified, benchmarked and periodically assessed. **GEF safeguards** Minimum Standard 5 **WWF ESSF** *(p.5)*	See indicators identified above.

Type	Proposed illustrative equity indicator	Relevant safeguards / standards (compliance tracking)	Related existing indicators (thematic alignment)
	Indigenous/local community status and other relevant social categories.	**CBD Voluntary Guidelines** Principles 1-3: Building resilience and enhancing adaptive capacity through EbA and Eco-DRR. Safeguards: 2. Prevention of transfer of risks and impacts; 3-4 Prevention of harm to biodiversity, ecosystems and ecosystem services.	
OUTCOME	Change in secure access to, or control over, land, water or other resources for women, Indigenous Peoples and local communities as applicable in intervention areas (using existing tenure or rights indicators where available.)	**IUCN NbS** Criterion 6, Indicator 6.2 **GEF Minimum standards** 5 **WWF ESSF** **CBD Voluntary Guidelines** Safeguard 9.	**KMGBF** Target 22 headline indicator 22.1 Land-use change and land tenure in the traditional territories of Indigenous Peoples and local communities; Targets 22 & 23 Component indicator identified above; Complementary indicator number of countries with systems to track and make public allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment.
OUTCOME	Percentage of EbA interventions in which the integration of Indigenous and local knowledge resulted in documented changes to intervention design, implementation or adaptive management that reflect locally identified priorities, knowledge or practices, and are consistent with data-sovereignty protocols and free, prior and informed consent where applicable.	**IUCN NbS Criterion** 7: Indicators 7.1-7.3 establish monitoring and evaluation, participatory monitoring & evaluation (M&E) and iterative learning/adaptive management through the intervention lifecycle.; Criterion 5, indicators 5.3-5.4 **CBD Voluntary Guidelines** Principle 7. Ensure that EbA and Eco-DRR interventions are evidence-based, integrate Indigenous and traditional knowledge, where available, and are supported by the best available science, research, data, practical experience, and diverse knowledge systems. 8. Incorporate mechanisms that facilitate adaptive management and active learning into EbA and Eco-DRR	**KMGBF** Target 22 indicator on trends in the degree to which traditional knowledge and practices are respected, through participation of Indigenous Peoples and local communities and safeguards in national implementation; trends in linguistic diversity, and number of speakers of Indigenous languages; trends in the practice of traditional occupations **KMGBF** Target 21 requires the best available data, information and knowledge to be accessible to decision-makers and states that many Indigenous Peoples and local communities are holders of unique traditional biodiversity knowledge and that this knowledge should only be accessed with FPIC.

N.B. This brief distinguishes rights-holders – including Indigenous Peoples and, as applicable, local communities – from stakeholder groups. Where vulnerability or marginalisation is relevant, the term refers to context-specific exposure, exclusion or disadvantage and should not replace recognition of distinct collective rights.

Accountability also requires scrutiny beyond routine reporting. Safeguard and project-review processes, complaints and redress mechanisms, and independent or multi-stakeholder review arrangements provide routes for response when equity problems surface.[31]

These mechanisms strengthen the accountability lever by creating consequences that routine self-reporting alone rarely supplies, and the quality of accountability also depends upon who produces and interprets the evidence.

Involving target groups, particularly disadvantaged actors, throughout M&E helps ensure that local perspectives and knowledge shape both design and implementation.[44]

Community-based and Indigenous monitoring can bolster participation, self-determination and resource-management outcomes,[53] but it should not become a means of transferring government monitoring responsibilities and costs to communities. It requires dedicated financial resources, technical capacity and collaboration between governments and communities, while monitoring that draws on Indigenous and local knowledge also needs attention to asymmetric power, intellectual property, data sovereignty, customary law and data-management requirements.[53]

CASE STUDY · KENYA

3.3 Restoring Ecosystems through Indigenous Leadership and Inclusive Governance in Mount Marsabit, Kenya

4

pastoralist communities: Borana, Rendille, Gabra and Burji

2024–29

Participatory Forest Management Plan, formalised through an MoU

Technology

Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool technology using icons rather than text, open to all literacy levels

On Mount Marsabit, pastoralist communities face climate change, land degradation, invasive species, human-wildlife conflict and the erosion of Indigenous governance. The youth-led organisation Nature and People as One (NaPO) works with Borana, Rendille, Gabra and Burji communities to restore rangelands and forests through an EbA approach grounded in Indigenous knowledge.



Central to the work is the Herder Conservation Network (HCN), through which Indigenous herders use the

Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool and phone-based data collection, with icons rather than text, designed to enable participation in tracking wildlife and environmental change regardless of literacy levels. Combined with their extensive landscape knowledge, this information has informed rangeland and forest mapping, the development of a seasonal grazing plan, and strengthened information-sharing with the Kenya Wildlife Service.

In addition, a Participatory Forest Management Plan (2024-2029) has been co-developed (with the SAKU Community Forest Association, the Kenya Forest Service and the Kenya Wildlife Service) and operationalised through a formal Memorandum of Understanding.

This is a case that involves equity-relevant monitoring that extends beyond ecological outputs by involving Indigenous and local community members in gathering locally relevant evidence and connecting that evidence to management processes.

Rather than treating local knowledge solely as an input to be consulted separately from monitoring, the NaPO's experience links community knowledge and ecological data with adaptive management, and together with the formalisation of the Participatory Forest Management Plan through the MoU, creates a feedback mechanism between local observation, management decisions and locally led stewardship, shining light on how inclusive knowledge systems can support more equitable and adaptive ecosystem governance.

Photo credit: Arash Ghoddousi and NaPO

Main organisations / actors involved: Nature and People as One (NaPO), Climate and Development Knowledge Network (CDKN), pastoralist communities (Borana, Rendille, Gabra and Burji), SAKU Community Forest Association (CFA), Kenya Forest Service (KFS), Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), youth groups, elders, women community champions.

KEY MESSAGE

Monitoring and accountability are the feedback levers that make the systemic changes durable, including accountability to the rights-holders and communities most directly affected by EbA interventions. A manageable set of disaggregated process and outcome indicators, which countries can develop as complementary national indicators alongside the global KMGBF monitoring framework, combined with participatory and Indigenous monitoring with appropriate safeguards, and independent or multi-stakeholder review, can help ensure that equity findings inform and trigger changes in future decisions. This would connect the relevant Section C considerations and the CBD planning, monitoring, reporting and review architecture directly with the delivery of Targets 8 and 11, so that national systems assess not only whether interventions occurred, but whether they delivered benefits fairly and whether lessons improved subsequent action.

→ **Supports Recommendation 3**

SECTION 4

Enabling conditions in support of the levers

National systems can embed equity considerations into planning, appraisal, monitoring and spatial decisions, but those changes will have limited effect if financial rules and policy frameworks continue to reward different behaviour.

Finance and policy coherence function as enabling, or constraining, conditions for the equity levers already identified.

FINANCE

Finance determines which actors and activities can access resources, which equity measures can be resourced, and how risks and benefits are distributed.

POLICY COHERENCE

Policy coherence determines whether equity requirements apply consistently across the decisions that shape land and water use, investment, implementation and monitoring.

4.1 Finance

Finance determines whether equity requirements can be implemented in practice. The equity measures identified above (meaningful participation, FPIC where applicable, distributional analysis, grievance mechanisms etc.) are not cost-free, and all require staff time, local engagement, resources, and, in many government-funded programmes, investment in the capacity of public officials to design and facilitate genuine participation processes.

When financing arrangements treat these requirements as optional add-ons and neither design nor resource them properly, equity considerations are systematically under-implemented. In this sense, the architecture of finance itself becomes a condition that enables, or hinders, the equitable delivery of Targets 8 and 11 through EbA and NbS.

For Targets 8 and 11, financing arrangements need to be considered in terms of who can access resources, what conditions are attached to funding, whose priorities shape allocation, and whether the processes and safeguards required for equitable implementation are adequately resourced.

Eligibility rules are particularly pertinent as they determine which organisations can receive funds and whether rights-holders, including Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women and youth, are recognised as legitimate decision-makers and implementing partners in the first place.

Direct-access modalities and territorial funds provide important models, aligned with locally-led approaches, as they can move financial decision-making closer to the organisations and territories where interventions are implemented.

The Adaptation Fund's Direct Access modality enables accredited National Implementation Entities to access finance directly and manages projects from design through implementation and monitoring, strengthening country ownership.[54]

However, for many smaller or locally based organisations, the institutional, fiduciary and legal requirements associated with accreditation can create barriers to accessing finance directly, meaning that funding may need to be channelled through accredited entities, with local organisations participating as implementing or executing partners.

CBD DECISION 16/34 REINFORCES SIMPLIFIED ACCESS

The decision calls, *inter alia*, for:

- Simplified access modalities, particularly for Indigenous Peoples and local communities, women and youth.
- Increased transparency and accountability in biodiversity-related financing.
- Stronger biodiversity-climate finance synergies.
- More rapidly accessible resources for key implementation partners at regional, national, and local levels.

Territorial funds such as the Nusantara Fund in Indonesia and the Mesoamerican Territorial Fund seek to channel resources directly towards Indigenous and local organisations and strengthen territorial governance.[55] However, significant barriers remain with such funds: rigid donor frameworks, cumbersome procedures and conditions that are not aligned with local priorities, and even under high-profile pledges, only a small fraction of funds have reached Indigenous and local organisations directly,[56] illustrating how financing architecture can strengthen, or weaken, recognition and agency.

These access and recognition questions are positioned within a wider finance landscape that shapes which activities and actors are considered investable in the first place. Biodiversity finance operates through both "financing green"(directing capital towards conservation and restoration) and "greening finance" (redirecting financial flows away from activities that harm nature).[57]

~US$7 tn
estimated nature-negative public and private financial flows each year

US$500 bn
per year: harmful subsidies to be reduced by 2030 (Target 18)

US$200 bn
per year: biodiversity finance to be mobilised by 2030 (Target 19)

Estimates of nature-negative public and private financial flows run into the trillions of US dollars annually (~$7 trillion),[58] illustrating that the equitable delivery of Targets 8 and 11 through EbA requires attention not only to additional biodiversity finance, but also to the alignment of wider financial flows.

This complements Target 18's objective of eliminating, phasing out or reforming of harmful subsidies, harmful to biodiversity, reducing them by at least US$500 billion per year by 2030[59] and Target 19's objective of mobilising at least US$200 billion annually for biodiversity by 2030.[60]

Financial risk allocation is also an equity question. Private finance is constrained by commercial risk-return considerations, meaning that projects with high biodiversity or social value are not necessarily those with the most predictable revenue streams.[61] Blended finance can use public or philanthropic capital to reduce risks borne by private investors, making otherwise marginal investments more commercially attractive.[61]

However, the distributional effects of an intervention may extend well beyond the financial returns captured by investors.[62] Evidence from EbA and NbS shows that positive impacts on jobs, incomes or other aggregate outcomes can mask trade-offs between social groups, with costs and opportunity costs varying according to livelihoods, resource dependencies and sociocultural and governance contexts.[63]

THE PERTINENT QUESTIONS

? Which projects are made investable and whose risks are reduced?

? How are costs, benefits and risks distributed across the different financing models?

? Who participates in decisions about them?

Rights assessment, participation and distributional analysis should ultimately be embedded across EbA financing systems.

The same applies to the "monetisation" of biodiversity. Carbon and biodiversity credits, enhanced agricultural productivity, ecotourism, certified products,[64] payments for ecosystem services, and other market-based approaches generally depend upon defining, measuring and attributing outcomes in ways that support transactions or payments.[65]

Yet, this can privilege benefits that are readily measurable and monetisable over diffuse, collective or culturally embedded values, including some cultural values and values held by Indigenous Peoples and local communities.[66] In contexts where Indigenous and local knowledge and customary relations with land are central to conservation and adaptation, monetisation can reproduce recognition gaps, and these values are precisely the ones that Section C(b) Different value systems and (l) Science and innovation aim to protect.

TARGET 19: EXPLICIT HOOKS FOR EQUITABLE EBA FINANCE

- Innovative finance schemes are to incorporate environmental and social safeguards.
- Biodiversity and climate finance co-benefits and synergies are to be optimised.
- Collective actions by Indigenous Peoples and local communities and non-market approaches are recognised.
- The effectiveness, efficiency and transparency of resource provision and use are to be enhanced.

As such, Target 19's requirement for environmental and social safeguards in innovative financing schemes as well as Section C(b) and (l) provide an existing basis for addressing these risks.

> Finance should consequently be assessed by how much capital is mobilised, but also where it flows, who can access and govern it, and what outcomes and safeguards are attached to it.

For Targets 8 and 11, questions remain about whether financing systems determine who can access resources, which interventions are prioritised, what conditions are attached to funding, and whether equity considerations influence allocation and implementation.

When funding decisions prioritise technical and financial criteria while treating nationally selected equity-related process and outcome measures as optional or secondary, these safeguards may have little practical effect.

CASE STUDY · COLOMBIA · ECUADOR · PERU

4.2 Embedding Equity and Adaptation in Andean Water Funds

137+ ha	**1,443**	**18.1 M**	**43**
conserved or restored	people with improved water access, food security and livelihoods	people benefiting from bolstered watershed governance	Amazonian chakras restored with native species



Across Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, six water funds supported by the Andean Water Funds Platform have shifted beyond traditional conservation approaches toward models that deliberately integrate EbA and GESI.

Small grants, capacity development, technical assistance and a regional Community of Practice have enabled participating water funds to broaden their strategies so that equity and adaptive capacity sit alongside water-security objectives, with results including more than 137 hectares conserved or restored; improved water access, food security and livelihoods for 1,443 people; and bolstered watershed governance benefiting approximately 18.1 million people.

Indigenous producer associations restored 43 Amazonian chakras (a traditional agroforestry system managed by Indigenous communities in Ecuador),[67] using native species; while two additional associations secured Sello Chakra certification. In Colombia, women livestock farmers adopted silvopastoral systems and watershed conservation practices while strengthening collective leadership.

The funds also leveraged an additional USD460,000 from the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation to scale integrated EbA and GESI initiatives.

The case illustrates how the design of conservation finance and associated capacity support can create enabling conditions for more equitable, locally-led implementation. By integrating equity and adaptation into water-fund strategies, and pairing financial support with technical assistance and peer learning, the initiative helped participating funds strengthen attention to participation, local knowledge and the needs of diverse groups alongside ecosystem and water-security objectives.

In this sense, the case shows how finance can support the practical implementation of equity considerations in EbA and ecosystem-service governance under Targets 8 and 11.

Photo credit: Dayana Lema, FFLA / Visita de campo en la comunidad El Pedregal en el marco del Encuentro de Fondos de Agua de Colombia, Ecuador y Perú / El Pedregal, Machachi, Ecuador.

Main organisations / actors involved: Fundación Futuro Latinoamericano (FFLA), CDKN, Andean Water Funds Platform, Cuenca Verde, Vivo Cuenca, FONAG, FODESNA, Aquafondo, FORASAN, Indigenous Kichwa and Kiju communities, women livestock farmers, youth groups, producer associations, local communities and municipalities.

4.3 Policy coherence

Even well-designed equity levers are blunted when biodiversity, climate, land-use, agricultural, energy and development policies pull in opposite directions.

Policy incoherence does not only create technical friction, but weakens the very entry points through which Section C is meant to operate and can systematically disadvantage the rights-holders whose participation, tenure, and knowledge are central to equitable EbA.

Sectoral policies can create contradictory land-use incentives: agricultural expansion objectives undermine biodiversity and ecosystem restoration goals in the same landscapes, while carbon-focused reforestation or hydropower development can prioritise sequestration or energy production over ecological integrity and local rights.

Where biodiversity and climate policies develop in parallel rather than in coordination, sectoral fragmentation and competing land-use and energy priorities can create contradictions that hinder effective integration.[68] Such failures are not only technical, but might actually reflect political-economy realities with competing ministerial mandates and budgets, short political cycles, and the influence of sectoral interests that benefit from existing incentive structures.[69]

> Policy coherence alone is not equity-enhancing as governments can coordinate policies that remain exclusionary, but it becomes an equity condition when policies, appraisal criteria, monitoring systems and finance rules are aligned around the recognition, procedural and distributional dimensions of equity.

This alignment needs to operate both across sectors and across levels of governance. Three gaps stand out:

Differing processes

Opportunities for closer alignment between NBSAP, NDC and NAP processes are frequently constrained by differing timelines, institutional mandates, data systems, and planning cycles.

Levels of governance

National equity objectives may not translate into the subnational planning and community-level decision-making through which land, water and ecosystem resources are managed in practice.

Siloed monitoring

When monitoring systems are siloed, biodiversity, climate adaptation and land-degradation monitoring often remain institutionally and technically separate.

As a result, equity process and outcome indicators are prevented from travelling across ministries or informing joint adaptive management, which can allow distributional harms to fall between institutional mandates.

Moreover, it is not enough for only one ministry or one level of government to have adequate equity indicators; these need to be applied consistently in planning, appraisal, financing and approval processes and across decision-making bodies. Otherwise, fragmentation can allow projects to move through the weaker entry point. Misaligned appraisal criteria between finance and environment ministries can similarly allow projects to pass technical and financial screens while failing equity screens.

Decisions and technical work across the Rio Convention processes are increasingly encouraging coherence and synergies among EbA, eco-DRR, NbS and sustainable land management, even if the terminology and mandates differ across the conventions.[70]

The KMGBF monitoring framework, as updated by Decision 16/31, offers optional disaggregation of headline indicators and voluntary component and complementary indicators that Parties may use, as appropriate and subject to national circumstances and priorities. These can support more equity-sensitive national monitoring when combined with appropriate participatory approaches. These provisions can be used to embed equity indicators inside existing NBSAP reporting without creating parallel or duplicative systems.

Aligning NBSAP, NDC and NAP processes and linking them to both the Global Goal on Adaptation and GBF monitoring approaches offers a concrete route to shared spatial planning, joint appraisal criteria and a more coherent results framework, consistent with the monitoring and accountability arrangements discussed in Section 3.

> When policy frameworks are brought into alignment with the equity levers, national systems become more capable of delivering Targets 8 and 11 in ways that are both effective and durable.

CASE STUDY · HONDURAS

4.4 Whose Sea Is It? Community Governance for Climate Resilience on Honduras' Caribbean Coast

5	14,248 km²	324 km²	13
officially recognised community-led marine protected areas	of nearshore ocean under sustainable community-led management	of no-take reserves	local governments embedding equitable coastal governance

Along Honduras's Caribbean coast, warming seas and industrial fishing pressure are adding to the challenges facing small-scale fishers. However, coastal municipalities have responded by formally establishing community-led nearshore management areas, locally known as *exclusion zones,* that reserve critical waters for artisanal fishing and function as part of a broader climate-resilience approach.



Five officially recognised sustainable, community-led marine areas now cover 14,248 km^2 of nearshore ocean, including 324 km^2 of no-take reserves, and 13 local governments are embedding equitable coastal governance principles into municipal development plans. Communities, municipalities and national institutions jointly set rules, monitor compliance and invest in livelihood alternatives.

The case illustrates multi-level governance in practice: local rights and knowledge are recognised, and community, municipal and national actors have complementary roles in governing coastal resources. By connecting these levels of decision-making around equitable governance and climate resilience, the approach illustrates how greater coherence across governance levels can help align conservation, adaptation and livelihood objectives.

In this sense, Honduras provides an example of how governance arrangements can help give practical effect to equity considerations in EbA under Target 8, while also supporting the nature-to-people outcomes relevant to Target 11.

Net fishing off the beach. The Canoe Ladies are a self-organised group of 50 local women who fish daily to provide food and economic security to their families in Cocalito, a small fishing village in the Garifuna municipality of Iriona. Photo credit: Rare

Main organisations / actors involved: Rare, Center for Marine Studies (CEM).

KEY MESSAGE

Finance and policy coherence determine whether the equity levers developed in earlier sections have real force. When funding rules treat equity criteria as optional, or when sectoral policies and levels of governance pull in opposite directions, the levers are systematically undermined. Aligning finance rules and reducing policy incoherence (both across sectors and levels of government) are necessary enabling conditions for the systemic operationalisation of Section C.

→ **Supports Recommendations 5 and 6**

SECTION 5

Implications for COP17

COP17 provides an opportunity to move beyond commitments to addressing the systems, decisions and practices that shape implementation on the ground.

The Voluntary Guidelines on Ecosystem-based Adaptation and Ecosystem-based Disaster Risk Reduction and their Supplement, as well as the planning, monitoring, reporting and review architecture already established under the KMGBF, offer a practical basis for advancing rights-based EbA at greater scale and with greater attention to quality, effectiveness and equity.

Relevant opportunities at COP17 in Yerevan include advancing the operationalisation of equity levers and strengthening the enabling conditions for equitable delivery of Targets 8 and 11 under the following agenda items:

COP17 agenda item	Topic
8	Resource mobilisation and financial mechanism
9	Planning, monitoring, reporting and review
10	Article 8(j)
13	Cooperation with other conventions
14	Mainstreaming biodiversity and engagement with subnational governments
18(a)	Biodiversity and climate change

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The six key recommendations are set out in full in the Executive Summary.

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FEBA
Friends of Ecosystem-based Adaptation

About us

Hosted by IUCN, Friends of Ecosystem-based Adaptation (FEBA) is a global collaborative network of more than 140 agencies and organisations working on EbA, working jointly to share experiences and knowledge to improve the implementation of EbA-related activities on the ground, and to raise awareness and understanding of nature-based solutions in adaptation planning processes and multilateral policy frameworks. The CBD COP recognizes FEBA as a key partner “to support Parties in their efforts to promote ecosystem-based approaches to climate change adaptation” (Decision 14/5).

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