

# Tools for Developing a Biocultural Community Protocol

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# Tools for Developing a Biocultural Community Protocol

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# Acronyms

ABS	access and benefit sharing
BCP	biocultural community protocol
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CBNRM	community based natural resource management
CBO	community-based organization
FPIC	free, prior informed consent
HKH	Hindu Kush Himalayas/Himalayan
ICIMOD	International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development
IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development
ILC	indigenous and local communities
NGO	non-government organization
PIC	prior informed consent
UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme

# About this Publication

This publication was prepared to raise awareness about, and improve our understanding of, the customary rights of indigenous and local communities in relation to the use of biological resources and associated traditional knowledge. It also aims to contribute to the enhancement of the capacity of indigenous and local communities to negotiate at the time of bio-prospecting. This publication can be used as a tool to help local-level authorities and community leaders during the preparation of a biocultural community protocol. Outlining clear steps and procedures, this publication provides a guide to stakeholders on the important steps to be taken while preparing a biocultural community protocol at the field level. It is anticipated that, with the documentation of a biocultural community protocol, indigenous and local communities will become aware of their customary rights over the use of biological resources and traditional knowledge. It is envisaged that this publication will be translated into local languages.

# Acknowledgments

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# Introduction

The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) has been working in the Hindu Kush Himalayan (HKH) region for the last 30 years. Since the ratification of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in 1993, ICIMOD has supported the implementation of the CBD in its member states. ICIMOD has also been engaged in the assessment of the CBD's implementation in the HKH region ([http://books.icimod.org/uploads/tmp/icimodimplementation\\_of\\_the\\_convention\\_on\\_biological\\_diversity.pdf](http://books.icimod.org/uploads/tmp/icimodimplementation_of_the_convention_on_biological_diversity.pdf)), developing policies related to biodiversity corridor development, and assessing the management effectiveness of protected areas.

With regards to access and benefit sharing (ABS), since 2004 ICIMOD has been supporting awareness raising and capacity development for the effective implementation of the third objective of the CBD: the equitable sharing of benefits generated from the utilization of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge at the policy as well as community levels. From 2012, ICIMOD, in collaboration with its partner organizations in its regional member countries, has been involved in promoting the ABS processes stipulated in the CBD and its Nagoya Protocol in the HKH region, particularly in terms of awareness raising, capacity building, and the documentation of biodiversity resources and associated traditional knowledge in selected transboundary landscapes.

In the management and use of biological resources, indigenous and local communities (ILCs) have very intimate linkages with their surrounding environment. These close connections form the basis of their identity, culture, language, and way of life (Shrumm and Jonas 2012). Biodiversity and culture are particularly well knit



**Figure 1: Working together is the most important aspect of developing and implementing a biocultural community protocol.**

interdependent components. Cultural and spiritual values are often enshrined in the bioresources, ecosystems, and ancestral landscapes of ILCs, which can help sustain this biodiversity and related traditional knowledge; in return, their utilization helps sustain the traditional knowledge and cultural values of the ILCs (Swiderska 2012).

Local communities have developed customs to regulate and assert rights over such resources. These customs provide the foundation for many laws in most systems of jurisprudence and are grounded in principles and justice (Sinha 2006). Technically, a custom is a usage by virtue of which a class of persons belonging to a defined section in a locality is entitled to exercise specific power in relation to other persons in the same locality (Oli et al. 2012). Customary rules and procedures, also known as 'community protocols', help ILCs to regulate conduct and interactions between themselves and outsiders; manage resources in their immediate surroundings; and uphold social relationships.

Systems of self-governance and self-management have developed over the generations, underpinned by customary laws, cultural values, and beliefs. Biocultural rights are rights that are related to art and culture and to biological resources, both understood in a broad sense (Shrumm and Jonas 2012). They provide a basis for people and communities to access biocultural resources and allow them to participate in the access and use of such resources. These decision-making systems enable communities not only to sustain their own livelihoods, but also to provide for future generations within the natural limits of their territories and areas (Shrumm and Jonas 2012).

Although biocultural rights have been recognized at different levels, significant logistical issues have impeded their implementation. One of the biggest obstacles in implementing a system of biocultural rights is legal pluralism. The rights of ILCs surrounding their land, resources, and traditional knowledge have been recognized internationally through the Convention on Biological Diversity, but the implementation of this convention varies across nations (Salter and Braun 2011).

The Nagoya Protocol addresses traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources with provisions for ABS and compliance. It also addresses genetic resources, where ILCs have established the right to grant access to them. Article 12 (1) of the Nagoya Protocol stipulates that domestic laws must take into account the customary laws, community protocols, and procedures of ILCs, as applicable. Article 12 (3) (a) emphasizes the importance of community protocols in relation to access to traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilization of such knowledge (CBD 2011). Contracting parties to the CBD are required to take measures to ensure the prior informed consent (PIC) of communities and fair and equitable benefit sharing, keeping in mind community laws and procedures, as well as customary use and exchange.

In this context, a community protocol becomes essential to ensure that the benefits of local bioresources and traditional knowledge accrue to local right holders when access is granted to external actors (such as bio-prospectors, companies, government agencies, researchers, and conservation organizations) and that benefits are shared in an equitable manner. This will be even more important in the future, as communities become increasingly engaged with external actors for PIC and mutually agreed terms in relation to the use of biocultural resources and traditional knowledge. In this regard, a community protocol works as a defence mechanism against threats of bio- and knowledge piracy and appropriation. During negotiations, a community protocol can be a valuable tool for identifying the right holders of the bioresources and knowledge. With this realization, there is growing recognition of the potential usefulness of articulating community protocols in forms that can be understood by others. Such articulation could help to put external actors on notice about a community's identity and ways of life, customary values and laws, and procedures for engagement. Articulation of a community protocol can also facilitate constructive dialogue and collaboration to support community plans and priorities in appropriate ways that fit with local conditions. These new forms of protocols, referred as 'biocultural community protocols (BCPs)', require adequate and effective documentation. Such documentation could also help planning across a larger landscape where several ecosystems interface with each other as well as with local human systems. This is also useful in the context of resilience- building as such bioresources are under different intensities of use and often in different stages of degradation.

# Important Concepts for Biocultural Community Protocols

## Customary laws

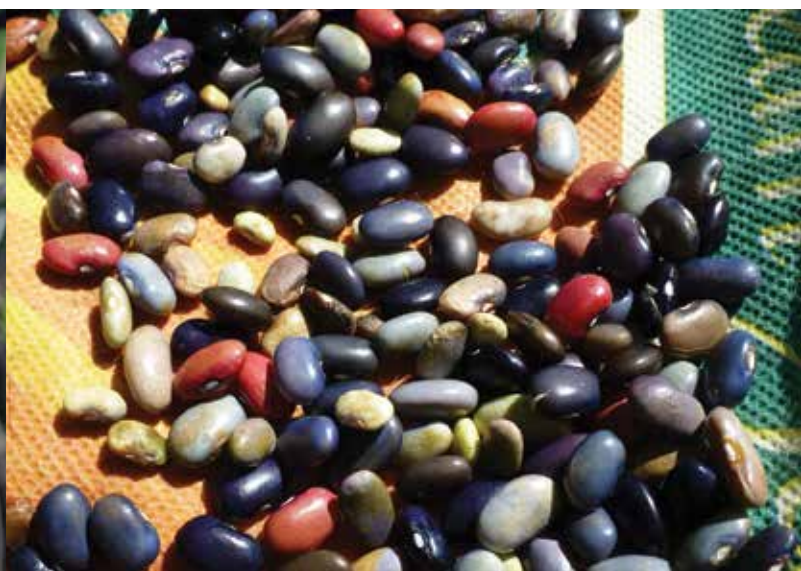
Customary laws are locally recognized principles, norms, and rules that are written or orally held and used by the community to internally govern or guide all aspects of their social life. They include rules and norms to control access to natural resources and ensure their sustainable use, and codes of conducts for the proper use of natural resources and associated traditional knowledge. Some customary laws are restrictive and can be even more stringent than statutory laws. While, in principle, customary laws usually promote equity, their use varies in practice. In the Hindu Kush Himalayan region many customary laws are exclusionary, particularly of women and those belonging to lower social strata, who are often excluded from decision-making processes.

## Community protocol

Many indigenous and local communities have their own orally held or written rules and procedures, also known as protocols. These protocols regulate conduct and interactions within their community, with outsiders, and within the territories and areas on which they depend. Community protocols are often rooted in customary laws and rights that have sustained biodiversity and cultural heritage for generations. Community protocols are charters of rules and responsibilities that are locally recognized and in which communities set out their customary rights to natural resources and land, as recognized in customary, national and international laws (Swiderska 2012).

## Collective biocultural heritage

Collective biocultural heritage refers to the knowledge, innovations, and practices of indigenous peoples and local and mobile communities that are collectively held and inextricably linked to traditional resources and territories, local economies, the diversity of genes, varieties, species and ecosystems, cultural and spiritual values, and customary laws shaped within the socio-ecological context of communities (Swiderska 2006).





## Customary rights

Customary rights are rights acquired by custom and that belong to all of the inhabitants of a particular place. Indigenous and local community customary rights often emphasize collective rather than individual rights and stewardship rather than outright ownership (Swiderska 2012). Customary laws and customary rights form the bedrock of biocultural community protocols.

## Biocultural community protocol

A biocultural community protocol is a term that covers a broad array of documents generated by communities to set out how they expect stakeholders to engage with them. These documents may refer to customary as well as national or international laws and affirm their right to be approached according to a certain set of standards. Articulating information, relevant factors, customary laws, and traditional authorities helps external stakeholders to better understand the community's values and customary laws (UNEP nd).



# Value of a Biocultural Community Protocol

BCPs provide communities with an opportunity to focus on their development aspirations vis-a-vis their rights and to articulate for themselves, and for users, their understanding of their biocultural heritage and, therefore, on what basis they will engage with a variety of stakeholders in dealing with their biocultural heritage. By considering the interconnections between their land rights, current socioeconomic situation, environmental concerns, customary laws, and traditional knowledge, communities are better placed to determine for themselves how to negotiate with a variety of actors (UNEP nd; see Figure 2). The value of biocultural community protocols is summarized in Box 1.

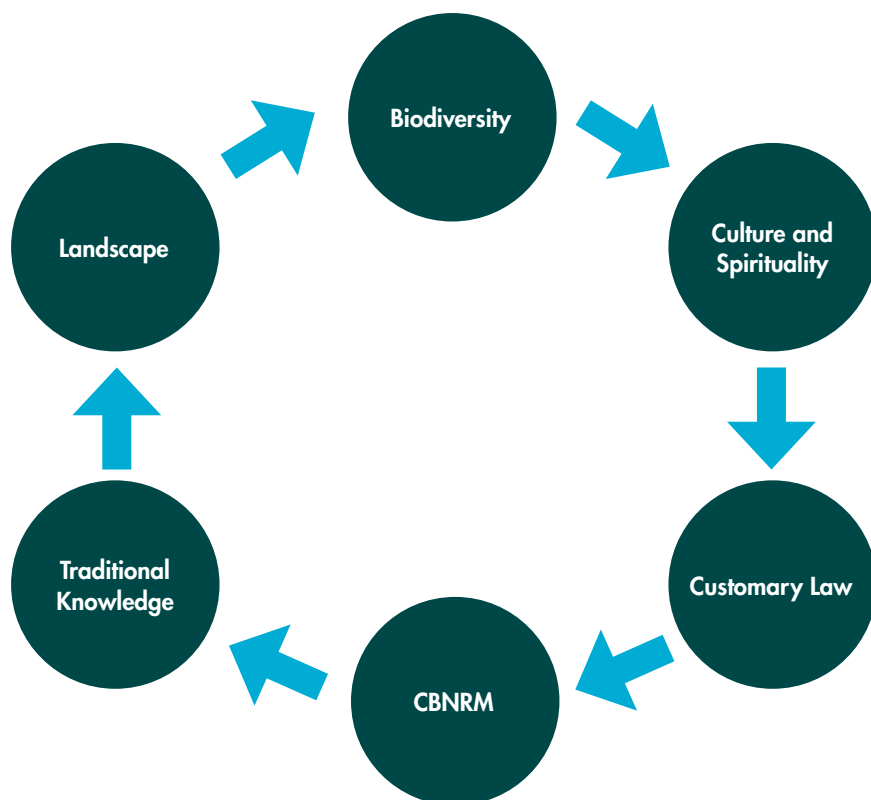
## Box 1: Value of biocultural community protocols

Biocultural community protocols can help communities to:

- Assert and defend their customary rights in the face of external threats (e.g., to negotiate access to customary resources and gain recognition from policy makers)
- Promote constructive dialogue and equitable partnerships with others that support the community's plans and priorities
- Improve organization, representation, and cohesion between communities
- Establish local systems and institutions in relation to ABS arrangements provided for under the CBD, in accordance with their customary laws, livelihood needs, and worldviews

Source: Shrumm and Jonas 2012

Figure 2: Relationship between indigenous and local communities and ecosystems and the links between biodiversity and a community's culture and spirituality, customary laws, community based natural resource management (CBNRM), traditional knowledge, and the formation of landscapes



Source: Adapted from Bavikatte and Jonas (eds) 2009

By drawing on international and national laws that call for free, prior informed consent to carry out development activities on communities' land or to use their traditional knowledge, communities can ensure that any interventions are undertaken according to their customary laws and cultural norms. A BCP serves two key functions as a legal empowerment tool: First, the process of developing a BCP capacitates the community with respect to their rights regarding land, resources, and knowledge. Second, it is a guide for outside parties to begin working with the indigenous and local communities, whether it is a government attempting to further environmental goals through green investment schemes, a company trying to use a community's traditional knowledge to develop a new product, or a research institution that wants to conduct experiments with their genetic resources (Salter and Braun 2011).

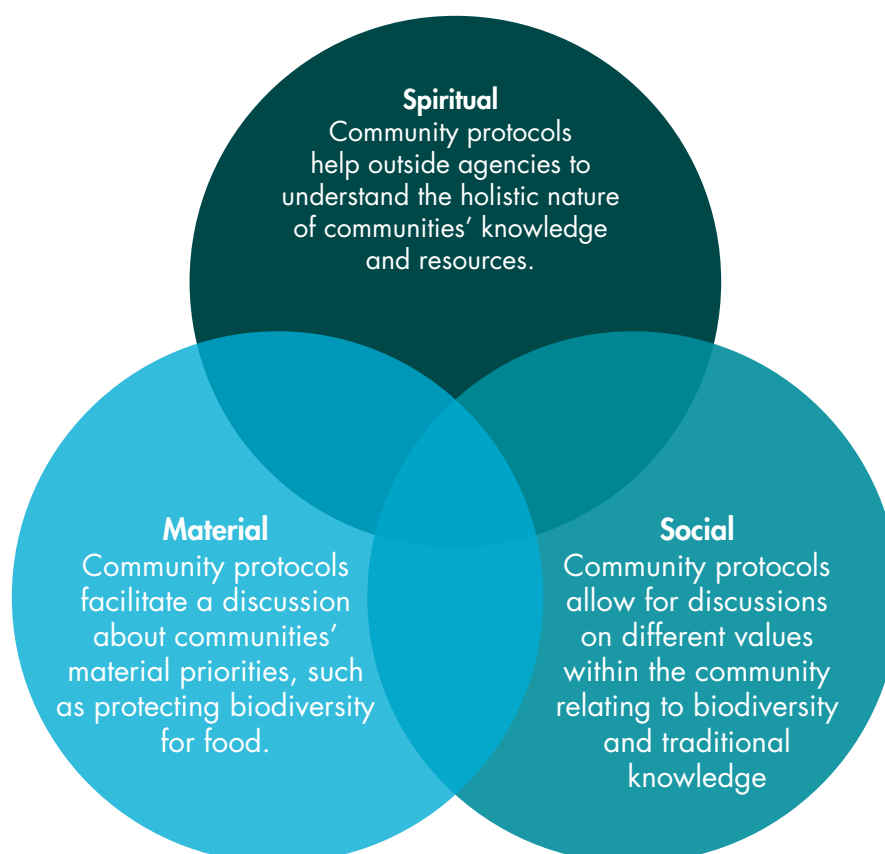
Community protocols can address any number of community issues including spiritual, social and material (Figure 3). Some concerns of importance to communities are shown in Box 2.

## Box 2. Some concerns that are important to communities

Local and indigenous communities generally seek to:

- Conserve biodiversity
- Sustainably use plants and animal genetic resources
- Manage and benefit from local biodiversity
- Use, protect, and benefit from traditional knowledge
- Have external actors obtain their free, prior and informed consent to access lands, natural resources, and traditional knowledge including for commercial and non-commercial research and by the media
- Ensure that environmental and other laws are implemented according to customary laws
- Oppose the unsustainable harvest of resources and development on their lands
- Engage with governmental or other support

Figure 3: **Interacting worldviews of biocultural community protocols**



Source: Endogenous Development Magazine 2010

# Developing a Biocultural Protocol

## General considerations

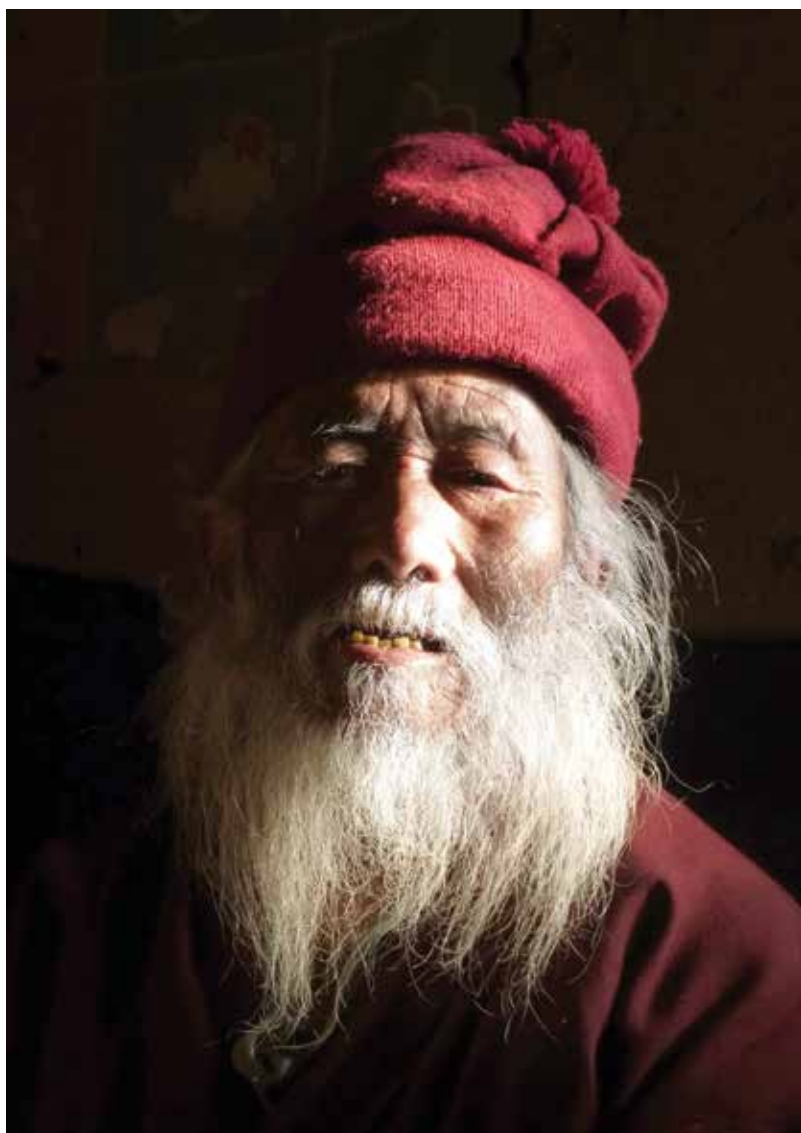
The preparation of a community protocol is a participatory process that brings together indigenous and local people to discuss and determine their rights over traditionally used resources and knowledge. In recent years, new concepts and commodities have emerged that were not considered important in the past, such as carbon trade, payment for ecosystem services, the participatory management of protected areas, and ABS from genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge. The documentation of a community protocol accommodates and establishes rights over, and mechanisms for, multiple resource use and benefit sharing within the community. It also helps support national and local government to make practical policies and promulgate practical laws, thereby empowering indigenous and local communities.

The advantage of a biocultural community protocol is that it reflects community norms and is location specific and flexible. It may contain folk tales, written documents, and even cultural performances reflecting biocultural heritage and traditional knowledge. For example, the HKH region is a treasure trove of culture, designs, patterns, and languages. Many of these pertain to biodiversity resources and can be documented and ownership established to benefit indigenous and local communities.

## Five initial questions to ask

The process of developing BCPs varies across communities. However, the process must address the five following broad questions related to ABS and affiliated international and domestic legal frameworks (Bavikatte and Jonas 2009):

- What are the community's spiritual, cultural, and ecological norms, as well as traditional knowledge, that ensure the conservation of biological diversity?
- How is knowledge shared among and between members of the community?
- What are the local challenges?
- How can the International Regime on Access and Benefit Sharing (IRABS) and concomitant national laws be used by ILCs to ensure the protection and promotion of their biocultural way of life?
- Assuming ABS is only a partial answer to the above questions, what other laws and policies are available to the community to realize the promise of Article 8(j) of the CBD on traditional knowledge, innovations and practices?



## Outline of a biocultural community protocol

Despite the variation in community needs and, therefore, protocols, due to the biological and cultural diversity of the communities, the following outline of a biocultural community protocols can be useful:

- A self-definition of the group or community and its leadership and decision-making processes
- A description of how they promote the in situ conservation of either indigenous plants or indigenous breeds of livestock, wildlife, and water resources, with details of those natural resources
- The links between their customary laws and biocultural ways of life
- Their spiritual understanding of nature
- Their ways and means of knowledge sharing
- Their decision-making process in accessing resources and knowledge
- What constitutes free, prior informed consent to access their lands/resources or traditional knowledge
- Their local challenges
- Their rights according to national and international law
- A call to various stakeholders to respect their customary laws, their community protocol, and a statement of the various types of assistance needed by the community

## Steps in preparing a biocultural community protocol

The first step in the documentation of a BCP is to understand the community. In the HKH region, development workers generally consider a community as a group of people living in a settlement within a defined political boundary such as a gram panchayat in India, village development committee in Nepal, or a county or township in China. The most important aspect to consider under such political demarcation of a community is the homogeneity or heterogeneity of the people, their cultural expression, way of doing things, and way of governing their social life. A community is not just a group of people bounded by geographical linkages, such as a village, settlement or district, but includes those brought together by lifestyle, religion, cultural expression, interest, traditions, and resource use patterns. Therefore, within given political boundaries there can be many distinct communities with their own customs, which need to be carefully examined for the documentation of a BCP.

### The steps in preparing a BCP include:

1. Selecting a pilot site for preparing a BCP
2. Conducting a literature review on the existing customs and customary usage, if such information is already available, and validating this with the community
3. Holding a meeting at the site
4. Generating on site awareness among the community of BCPs and their value
5. Conducting a participatory rural appraisal at the site, including obtaining more information from key informants, knowledgeable individuals, household heads, key actors in local-level institutions, and non-government organizations (NGOs) and direct contact between the facilitator and community members
6. Identifying a local community-based organization (CBO) and community facilitator trusted by the community to facilitate the process (existence of a community representative organization will make the protocol process easier); if such an institution is non-existent, one will have to be established in consultation with the specific community within the area
7. Obtaining the free, prior informed consent (FPIC) of the community to take part in the process
8. Conducting research to understand the community, its bioresources, customary laws, and institutions including customs on the use of forests, pastures, water, non-timber forest products, and knowledge generation and sharing mechanisms (this can be a time-consuming process, particularly if such studies have not been conducted before, and should ideally be conducted and facilitated by the community itself)





**Figure 4: The collective documentation of knowledge on traditional uses of plants, animals, and other resources is vital in maintaining this heritage for the future.**

9. Holding internal discussions and consultations among the community to develop the content of the protocol on cultural values, the roles and responsibilities of communities, customary laws, and resource rights (this step can also include a broader reflection processes on community priority needs and the actions required to address them)
10. Conducting legal research to identify national and international laws and bylaws that support the customary rights and community priorities identified (this requires legal experts and can also take time if such research has not yet been done; input from external resource person may be required to simplify the legal language to make it accessible to communities)
11. Analysing and validating information in consultation with experts at the local level and others
12. Preparing a draft protocol and making it available in local language(s) (the support of local schoolteachers, local arbitrators or district-based lawyers from the community may be required to draft the protocol)
13. Review and finalization of the draft by the community
14. The digitalization and handing over of the BCP document to the community for their custodianship

Note: Community members need to be involved in all the steps to ensure ownership of the protocol.

Once the BCP is developed and agreed upon in a participatory way it can be used for negotiation with others, either individually or in multistakeholder platforms where community representatives (ideally a broad range of communities together) engage with formal and state-level stakeholders or external parties.

## Technical support group

A technical support group needs to be formed by the government to guide the CBO in the preparation of the BCP. This group can be formed by the nomination of competent technical group members present at the district level. The technical support group will also guide the CBO in the preparation of a local action plan.

## Local action plan

Each community shall prepare a local action plan, drawing on the information and issues identified in the people's biodiversity register. The action plan will address issues of concern to the community including, for example, the conservation of the bioresources, training needs identified for the personnel in the community, and a list of potential items for consideration for registration, such as geographical indicators of the areas, areas in need of eco-restoration, and biological corridors. As part of this plan, a micro plan can be developed for the sustainable use of local biodiversity including medicinal plants, rare breeds of animals, local landraces, habitat protection of wildlife, birds, and flora, and associated traditional knowledge.

## Custodianship of the BCP document

After the BCP has been handed over to the community, the CBO (or other individual or organization nominated by the community) shall ensure the protection of the knowledge recorded in the protocol for regulating access to companies, institutions, agencies, and individuals outside the community's area of jurisdiction. Requests for access to information on resources and related traditional knowledge covered by the protocol need to be in writing and records maintained in consultation with the technical support group.

# Key Challenges and Issues

Biocultural community protocols are not a panacea. They should be considered one of many different instruments that communities may use to secure their rights, responsibilities, territories, and areas. The major limitations of this approach are as follows (Shrumm and Jonas 2012):

- The process of developing and using a protocol could be overly influenced by certain parties, both within and outside the community.
- Focusing on customary laws may further entrench existing power asymmetries, such as the exclusion of women, youth and marginalized groups in community decision-making processes.
- Biocultural protocols are voluntary and require a regulatory framework to ensure their implementation (Hiemstra 2010b). Hence, laws and policies need to be in place.
- Unrealistic expectations may be raised within the community (e.g., in relation to the benefits that may accrue), particularly if the idea is introduced by an external agency or if the community does not have adequate agency or institutional capacity.
- If the process is rushed or not sufficiently inclusive, the BCP could cause internal conflict and mistrust.
- If not developed in a participatory way, BCPs can become just another top-down imposition by governments or consultants.
- BCPs may be used by external actors in unintended ways, such as to coerce communities into agreements.
- The documentation of sensitive information could increase external interest in the location of potentially lucrative resources or knowledge.
- Rich oral histories and traditional knowledge can be diluted by written and digital documentation.
- Actively raising issues of rights may cause conflict with external and internal actors, particularly in politically sensitive or repressive countries.
- It may be difficult to ensure the community-based monitoring and evaluation of the process and outcomes of BCPs.
- Complexity of institutions at the ground level, often with overlapping or conflicting mandates (for example, in India the gram panchayats [GP] and the van panchayats [VP], or the biodiversity management committees [BMCs] and the gram panchayatse).

# Usefulness of Biocultural Protocols for Communities

When developed with regulatory support, BCPs provide a platform for communities to safeguard their resources and associated knowledge from being pirated. BCPs can protect communities from exploitation, channel benefits to the local level to incentivize conservation, and enhance legal certainty and clarity for both users and providers of genetic resources. They can also help create equitable partnerships between communities and other groups, such as scientific organisations or companies that seek to develop new products based on natural resources (Swiderska 2012). For example, BCPs developed by farmers in Peru's Potato Park have helped to conserve traditional crops and share the benefits from their use equitably among six communities. Healers in Bushbuckridge, South Africa, have used BCPs to conserve medicinal plants, gain access to plants in a protected area, and negotiate more effectively with a cosmetics company. Similarly, in northern Ghana, a community protocol resulted in mining being postponed to protect sacred groves and in India, Kenya, and Pakistan, pastoralists are using protocols to help secure their assets and obtain more recognition for their role in biodiversity conservation (Swiderska 2012). A workshop report on 'Using Biocultural Community Protocols to Implement Millennium Ecosystem Assessments and UNDRIP at the Local Level for Sustainable Development', highlights the benefits of BCP with examples (IIED 2011). More examples of the usefulness of BCPs are given in Box 3. Wherever geographical indicators are dominant, these should be focussed on in BCPs, for example, the chiuri tree in the Indian and Nepali parts of the Kailash Sacred Landscape.

### Box 3. Examples of the usefulness of BCPs

- **Defending biocultural rights:** In Ghana, the Tanchara BCP postponed mining until 2013 to protect sacred groves.
- **Negotiating access to biocultural resources:** In Bushbuckridge, South Africa, BCPs helped traditional Kukula health practitioners to gain access to medicinal plants in a protected area from which they had been previously excluded.
- **Strengthening community capacity for negotiating ABS:** The BCPs of the Potato Park (Peru) and Bushbuckridge (South Africa) have established inter-community representative structures.
- **Improving the management and conservation of biocultural resources:** BCPs have improved the management and conservation of traditional crops in Ghana and Peru and medicinal plants in Bushbuckridge, South Africa.
- **Creating partnerships:** BCPs have helped establish partnerships between communities and companies for ethical biotrade and with NGOs to monitor illegal logging, for example, in Cameroon.
- **Recognizing the importance of the way of life of livestock keepers:** In Pakistan, India, and Kenya, BCPs have improved recognition of the importance of livestock keepers' way of life.
- **Counteracting formal laws:** In Mexico, BCPs could be used to develop an alternative to the recently adopted national seed law, which threatens farmer seed systems.
- **Facilitating biotrade:** BCPs are not only useful to communities, companies involved in biotrade and ABS also want to use BCPs as the basis for engaging with indigenous and local communities.
- **Bridging local and international systems:** BCPs could help to bridge the gap between local ABS concepts and international ABS systems, e.g., between different concepts of ownership, such as collective ownership and exclusive ownership.
- **Defusing tensions:** BCPs could help to address tensions between how the law defines communities and how communities define themselves.
- There is still a strong divide between indigenous peoples and scientists, e.g., many scientists with a PhD in ethnobiology don't see the merit in providing benefits to local people. The International Society of Ethnobiology (ISE) Code of Ethics could be used to guide the development of community research protocols. The CBD Code of Ethical Conduct is also useful to guide BCPs for research.
- Communities in Bolivia have asked a PhD researcher for help to develop BCPs because they need a policy to regulate the many things that are happening around them, including research. But this is not considered academic enough to be the subject of a PhD.
- **Giving communities a voice:** BCPs can give communities a voice.
- **Linking customary and formal laws:** BCPs can act as a link between customary laws and formal laws, but should not replace customary laws.
- **Ensuring ABS:** A BCP can be useful in ensuring ABS if recognized in national law. If not recognized, the BCP will only ensure ABS in a cohesive community; however, if some people in the community contest the BCP, it will not work. The more extensive and participatory the process to develop the BCP, the more binding the BCP will be on the community.
- **Strengthening control over territory:** For nomadic people in Iran, BCPs have been useful in strengthening community efforts to take control of their territory.



# Conclusion

In the HKH region, the uncontrolled use of local bioresources has led to the loss of biological and cultural diversity, which is, in turn, threatening the livelihoods and bicultural heritage of indigenous and local communities. Community customs and procedures are being increasingly replaced by state-made statutory legal arrangements in which many ILCs are deprived of their traditional and ancestral rights. On the other hand, a large amount of knowledge is getting lost as a result of outmigration, and local interest in preserving such knowledge is decreasing as life systems and life styles undergo modernization. Local champions and other knowledge could be present such that BCPs could also lead to ecosystem management plans that foster sustainable resource management. Reviving and documenting community protocols with free, prior informed consent will help ILCs to defend their heritage and assert their rights over resources and traditional knowledge. However, this requires a community-level participatory process in the development of the BCPs with FPIC, which is a complex process and needs a careful approach to prevent the protocol from being applied in a top-down, mechanistic way. The development of a BCP will empower ILCs and have positive impacts in the management of resources, as well as in term of the benefits derived by ILCs.



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# About ICIMOD

The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development, ICIMOD, is a regional knowledge development and learning centre serving the eight regional member countries of the Hindu Kush-Himalayas – Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan – and based in Kathmandu, Nepal. Globalisation and climate change have an increasing influence on the stability of fragile mountain ecosystems and the livelihoods of mountain people. ICIMOD aims to assist mountain people to understand these changes, adapt to them, and make the most of new opportunities, while addressing upstream-downstream issues. We support regional transboundary programmes through partnership with regional partner institutions, facilitate the exchange of experience, and serve as a regional knowledge hub. We strengthen networking among regional and global centres of excellence. Overall, we are working to develop an economically and environmentally sound mountain ecosystem to improve the living standards of mountain populations and to sustain vital ecosystem services for the billions of people living downstream – now, and for the future.



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