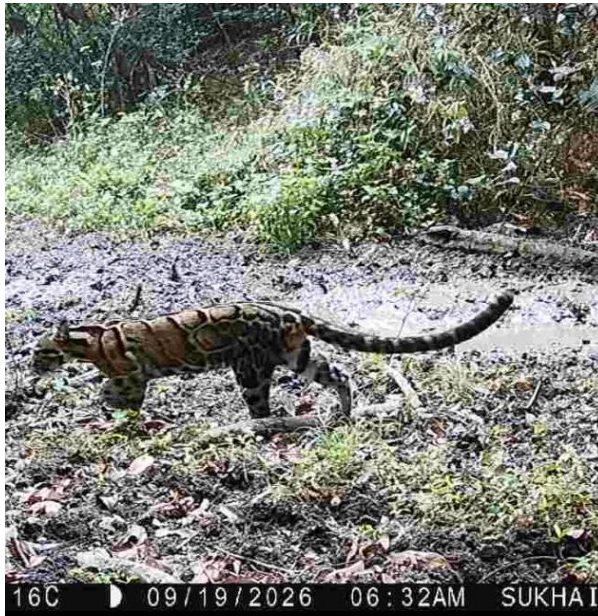




DRAFT NAGALAND STATE POLICY ON COMMUNITY- CONSERVED AREAS

*Conserving Ecosystems and
Sustaining Livelihoods through
Strengthened Community-
Driven Governance of Natural
Resources*



Wildlife recovery in a Community-Conserved Area (CCA) after a decade of community conservation. Sükhai CCA, Tizü Valley Biodiversity Conservation and Livelihood Network, Zunheboto district.

Source: Tizü Valley Biodiversity Conservation and Livelihood Network, 2026

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Overview and Rationale

Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs), including the diverse tribal communities and Scheduled Tribes recognised under India's constitutional framework, are key custodians of lands, waters, forests and biodiversity. IPLCs are at the forefront of conservation and sustainable natural-resource management in India and worldwide, including through customary systems of land ownership, governance and resource management such as the Community-Conserved Areas (CCAs) of Nagalandⁱ. IPLCs own or govern about 32% of global lands and inland watersⁱⁱ—almost twice the extent of protected areas.ⁱⁱⁱ Of these IPLC-governed lands and waters, 91% are reported to be in good or moderate ecological condition^{iv} and include at least 36% of Key Biodiversity Areas^v and Intact Forest Landscapes.^{vi} The long history of IPLCs governing and managing natural resources in ways that are compatible with, or actively support biodiversity conservation, has fostered recognition—including by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), in its 2019 Global Assessment^{vii}—of their key role in maintaining, shaping and conserving biodiversity, addressing climate change through mitigation and adaptation, and in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDGs 1, 2, 5, 6, 12, 13 and 15.^{viii}

International environmental frameworks such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) under which the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) was adopted in 2022, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Convention on Wetlands and the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)—to which India is a party—acknowledge the important contributions of IPLCs to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and natural resources, ecosystem resilience and the achievement of their respective objectives. The KMGBF, further recognises IPLCs as important custodians and partners in the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of biodiversity^{ix}.

Recognition of the areas and territories—and their constituent biodiversity—that local communities govern, sustainably manage and conserve, including Community-Conserved Areas, directly supports India's implementation of Target 3 of the KMGBF^x. Target 3 calls for the effective conservation and management of at least 30% of terrestrial, inland water, coastal and marine areas through ecologically representative, well-connected and equitably governed protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs), recognising and respecting the rights of IPLC, including over their traditional territories where applicable. CCAs offer an important pathway for India to advance Target 3 and, more broadly, the implementation of the KMGBF.

CCAs support India's achievement of the SDGs, and constitute important nature-based solutions for climate change adaptation and mitigation. Through community-led conservation, ecological restoration and sustainable landscape management, CCAs conserve existing carbon stocks, enhance carbon sequestration and aid the recovery of degraded ecosystems, thereby contributing to India's climate commitments under the UNFCCC, the implementation of the National Action Plan on Climate Change and the UNCCD. These contributions are especially relevant to India's commitments to create an additional carbon sink of 2.5–3 billion tonnes of CO₂ equivalent through additional forest and tree cover, and to restore 26 million hectares of degraded land, by 2030.

Community Conservation in Nagaland

The State of Nagaland is a culturally vibrant region with exceptional biological diversity and frontier forests. Nagaland, lies within the Indo-Burma biodiversity hotspot and is contiguous with the Himalaya (Eastern) biodiversity hotspot. The State's faunal and floristic diversity reflect its unique biogeographic position, with affinities to both the Indo-Malayan and Indo-Chinese regions. Nagaland encompasses nine Key Biodiversity Areas

and lies within the Eastern Himalayas Endemic Bird Area, highlighting its significance for globally important and restricted-range biodiversity.

Distinctive systems of land ownership and management characterise forest governance in Northeast India, with community and customary institutions playing a pivotal role in the stewardship and use of natural resources. More than 60% of the Northeast is under forest cover, accounting for almost a quarter of India's total forest cover, as well as 25% of its dense forest cover, while occupying less than 8% of its geographical area^{xi}. Nagaland exemplifies the Northeastern regional tradition of community-led forest management where the 17 major and many subtribes, own, govern, and manage the land and resources.

Article 371 A of the Indian Constitution recognises and upholds the customary land ownership and forest tenure in Nagaland, where the vast majority of forest lands are privately owned by clans, *kehels*^{xii}, individuals or village councils, or are under community ownership. Forest Department records indicate that "Village-owned Forests" account for more than 88% of forest lands (7621.07 sq. km) with the remaining 11.7% (1008.23 sq. km) of forest land under the management of the department^{xiii}. Virgin forests—according to Forest Department records—cover 62.6% of these village-owned, communally managed forest areas. The forest cover spans a larger area of 12,222.47 sq. km or 73.7% of the State's geographical area of which almost 50% consists of dense forest^{xiv}. Forest management within each village comes under the purview of Village Councils. The Nagaland Village and Tribal Councils Act, 1978, provides statutory recognition to the Village Councils, and grants them the powers and duties to "supervise the proper maintenance of forests." The Nagaland Communitisation of Public Institutions and Services Act, 2002 buttresses community-based local self-governance, including of forests.

Tribal communities' traditional conservation practices and ecological knowledge governed resource use in the past and continue to do so today—such as protecting watershed forests on hill ridges, and encouraging wise-use of resources. There are records of conservation efforts dating back to the 1800s where communities conserved natural ecosystems such as patches of forests, rivers, streams and other biodiverse habitats within productive *jhum* (shifting cultivation) landscapes—a practice that has seen a resurgence since the early 1990s. Formally referred to as Community Conserved Areas^{xv}, local people conserve these areas for security and strategic reasons in times of conflict, biodiversity values, cultural significance, to support livelihoods, food and water security, in response to declines in flora or fauna or to regenerate and restore ecosystems. Initiated and/or managed by village councils, youth and women groups or by religious and cultural organizations, these CCAs formulate their own governance and management mechanisms. In consonance with their customary practices recognised under Article 371 A, these CCAs exhibit flexibility in the structure of their management committees, the nature and areal extent of lands areas conserved, and the types of protection initiated.

Evolving organically from its historical conservation ethos and in response to contemporary needs, Nagaland has the most self-initiated CCAs in India; almost a third of villages have CCAs—more than 400^{xvi}—on an estimated 1700 sq. km or 22% of the village forest area^{xvii}—that have been formalized via a village resolution. The number of informal CCAs, are likely to be far more^{xviii}. Conservation activities also extend to the entire village areas or spill over into the larger landscape. The area under CCAs in Nagaland is much higher than the number of formal National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries in many States^{xix}.

Nagaland's CCAs help conserve and protect key species, habitats, ecological interactions and ecosystem services that in turn sustain communities' natural resource-based livelihoods. Yet they face numerous challenges—in their creation, maintenance, effectiveness and sustainability. Nagaland requires an enabling policy that recognises, supports and strengthens CCA formation in accordance with local norms, practices and customary rights. Conserving communities also require consistent and adequate financial, policy and technical support for the protection and management of CCAs, as well as to support livelihoods to compensate for the lost opportunities as clans, individuals, village councils and communities donate their lands for conservation, and institute rules and restrictions for hunting, fishing, logging, *jhum* cultivation and use of other forest products.

Guiding Principles

Considering the unique context and constitutional status of Nagaland, including

- The prevalence of customary rights over the ownership and transfer of land and its resources, protected under Article 371A of the Constitution of India;
- The established customary governance systems and socio-cultural practices through which communities have long conserved and sustainably managed forests, biodiversity and other natural resources; and
- The emergence of a network of Community-Conserved Areas (CCAs) as the primary form of community-led, area-based conservation in the State, alongside but distinct from government-managed protected areas;

And recognising that, despite the significant contribution of CCAs and other community-initiated conservation measures to biodiversity conservation and ecosystem stewardship in Nagaland, there is currently no State policy framework to formally recognise, support and strengthen CCAs, and limited avenues for communities to access financial, technical and institutional support;

Noting that a policy on CCAs will strengthen sustainable management of habitats and ecosystems such as forests, streams, grasslands, rivers; promote species conservation including of rare, endangered or threatened species, restore degraded areas, enhance ecosystem services and ensure livelihood security;

Reaffirming that a policy on CCAs will contribute to India's national and international commitments on forests, land, biodiversity conservation, sustainable use of natural resources, climate resilience and sustainable development, including commitments under the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, the UNFCCC, UNCCD, the SDGs, and others.

Recognising that Free, Prior, Informed Consent, that ensures transparency, and participation of village communities shall form the foundation of decision making and governance of CCAs and contiguous landscapes.

Further Acknowledging, that this policy represents the cumulative efforts of local communities, government institutions, civil society organisations, academic and research institutions and practitioners—over more than a decade^{xx}—to develop a framework for recognising the State's network of CCAs and strengthen the role of community-led conservation and ecosystem management in Nagaland;

The Government of Nagaland hereby adopts the Nagaland State Policy on Community-Conserved Areas

Objectives of the Policy

The objective of this Policy is to secure the future of Nagaland's CCAs and community-governed conservation initiatives as a foundation for safeguarding the State's forests, rivers, wetlands, grasslands and biodiversity, together with the interconnected cultural heritage and nature-based livelihoods they sustain.

The Policy adopts a multi-pronged approach to strengthening CCAs and allied community-led conservation initiatives through sustainable livelihood opportunities and targeted technical, institutional and financial support for protection and sustainable management, ecological restoration, nature-based, community-driven and low impact ecotourism, long-term ecological monitoring and other locally determined conservation priorities.

- a. Recognise, promote, strengthen and sustain the diversity of CCAs and community-led conservation initiatives in Nagaland, taking into account the State's customary and constitutional context of land

ownership and tenure, and the diverse motivational, cultural, ecological, management and regulatory systems and the biocultural values that underpin them.

- b. Establish consistent, adequate and needs-based mechanisms to provide technical, institutional and financial support to CCAs and community-led conservation, including support sustainable nature-based livelihoods that reinforce conservation outcomes and community wellbeing.
- c. Recognise, support and strengthen traditional and other forms of local knowledge, innovations and practices that contribute to adaptive and effective ecosystem management and ecological and socio-cultural wellbeing, consistent with Article 8(j) of the Convention on Biological Diversity.
- d. Strengthen conservation and ecosystem management at the landscape level by promoting the ecological and institutional connectivity and joint management of adjoining CCAs and their integration within the wider forest–*jhum*–riverine–village landscape.
- e. Support and promote networks and federations of CCAs at cluster, block district and State level and a registry of CCAs of the State
- f. Encourage community-led and/or collaborative research, documentation and ecological monitoring and provide capacity building and financial support.
- g. Ensure the protection, documentation and revival of the cultural values, folklore, traditional and local knowledge and practices that sustain wise-use of resources
- h. Promote awareness and knowledge of biodiversity, ecology, ecosystem interactions and the value of CCAs especially amongst the youth of Nagaland.
- i. Recognise, and strengthen the contribution of CCAs to India's national and international commitments on forests, land, biodiversity conservation, sustainable development and climate action.

Guidelines for Implementation of the Policy on CCAs

The process for policy implementation has been developed based on consultations with communities across Nagaland, government institutions, civil society organisations, academic and research institutions, experts and practitioners, and a review of other similar guidelines, policies and literature. These are intended to help guide the creation and recognition of CCAs in the State, rather than as prescriptions to be strictly followed, and shall have a validity period of ten years, with a review once every two years.

1. Criteria for Declaration/Formation of CCAs

Community-Conserved Areas (CCAs) are natural or modified landscapes or ecosystems—referred to as Territories of Life,^{xxi}—including forests, wetlands, rivers, grasslands and other areas, or mosaics of such areas—often with significant biodiversity, ecological, cultural and/or livelihood values—that are voluntarily conserved, protected and/or managed by communities for their conservation, sustainable use, ecological restoration, enhancement of agro-ecological values, provision of ecosystem services, or for cultural, religious and livelihood purposes. These CCAs are governed through customary laws, community institutions or other effective means, and contribute to the conservation and/or restoration of species, habitats and ecosystems while supporting the overall wellbeing of custodian communities^{xxii}.

According to local communities in Nagaland, a CCA is an area where the community collectively takes responsibility for conserving biodiversity and managing natural resources through locally agreed rules, regulations, and practices. CCAs have a clearly specified or demarcated boundary and defined area or size. Its establishment and management is based on the collective decision and consensus of the community rather than an individual, without any obligation or external pressure from outside agencies or individuals. The CCA is supported by a formal village resolution, and properly mapped and documented. CCAs are repositories of traditional knowledge, culture, practices, and values that have been passed down through generations.

i. Size criteria for Community-Conserved Areas

Larger CCAs, in general, are desirable for maintaining ecological integrity and supporting viable populations and ecological processes. Accordingly, and in keeping with recommendations from local communities, CCAs should, wherever feasible, encompass areas of least 30 ha, and preferably more than 100 ha. Nevertheless, while larger areas are recommended, there shall be no prescribed minimum area for recognition as a CCA. Areas of any size may have important ecological, cultural or livelihood values and may perform critical conservation functions. Smaller areas may act as wildlife corridors providing connectivity between important habitats; serve as ecological stepping stones, niche habitats or conserve small populations of endemic, rare or threatened species. Moreover, CCAs are embedded within larger forest–*jhum* landscapes, where surrounding mosaics of forests, fallows, agricultural areas, water bodies and other land uses, enhance the ecological functionality and effective conservation value of individual CCAs.

ii. Potential values and functions of Community-Conserved Areas

Areas may be selected for recognition as CCAs based on a range of ecological, conservation, cultural, social and livelihood values and functions, including, but not limited to:

- Mosaics of forests and other ecosystems, such as grasslands, wetlands, rivers, streams and agro-ecologically important areas, collectively supporting biodiversity and ecological connectivity.
- Areas important for water security, including spring heads, catchments, watersheds and associated catchment forests that regulate, recharge or protect water sources.
- Areas that conserve culturally or economically important species and resources, including NTFPs, medicinal and edible plants,
- Areas of high biodiversity value including habitats important for threatened, rare, endemic, endangered or locally significant flora and fauna, high species richness or for migratory species,
- Culturally, socially, or historically important areas such as those associated with collective identity, or important for security reasons, or those with religious significance.
- Niche habitats such as salt licks, spawning and breeding areas, seasonal refuges, seedbanks, wildlife corridors/habitats for the movement of species or acting as buffers/connections to CCAs/ PAs.
- Forests and other ecosystems, including former *jhum* lands, that would benefit from ecological restoration and/or protection and wildlife recovery.
- Areas that provide important ecosystem/and or other ecological services including supporting sustainable livelihoods or areas that act as safeguards against natural and other calamities.

iii. Declaration and Formation of CCAs

The decision to establish a CCA shall be made through a collective, consensus-based, village-initiated process at a Village General Body meeting, ensuring the free, prior and informed participation and consent of adult members of the village, including women and men, and of the relevant landowner(s). Recognition of a CCA shall be formalised through a Village Resolution authorised by the Village Council (VC), with at least one VC member present, and endorsed by the adult members of the village.

The Village Resolution, which should be accessible to the entire village, shall specify the following:

- Written consent of the landowner(s) prior to the establishment or recognition of the CCA.
- Composition of a CCA Committee, authorised by the VC.
- Rules and regulations for CCA governance and management, including the composition and membership of the committee, roles and responsibilities, tenure of office, meeting schedules and quorum requirements, decision-making procedures, and the designation of office-bearers.
- Clearly defined and demarcated boundaries, specifying the extent of the CCA and, the ecological, cultural, livelihood or other values for which it is being conserved.

Post declaration of a CCA, installation of notice boards in the local dialect mentioning the objectives of the CCA and the fines to be imposed for violations of established rules and regulations, creates awareness and strengthens compliance, along with regular monitoring and patrolling. Lands identified for CCAs should, as far as possible, be free from existing land ownership or intra or inter-village use disputes. Wherever possible, they should be established on community or clan/*kehel*-owned lands.

The same principles and process shall apply to the establishment and recognition of joint CCAs involving two or more villages, with arrangements for joint governance, decision-making, management, and conflict resolution.

2. CCA Governance and Management

i. Institutional Framework

The recommended multi-tiered institutional framework for the management of Community-Conserved Areas (CCAs) integrates customary institutions of governance and community decision-making while simultaneously ensuring inclusive and multi-level governance. This includes customary institutions, village councils, village elders, *Angbs*, clans, individual or family landholders, resource users, women, youth and other associated groups.

Village Council

The Village Council (VC), as the principal village-level customary governance institution, will function as the final decision-making authority for all matters related to the CCA. The VC shall provide approval for CCA establishment, management, endorse rules and regulations, support implementation, compliance, enforcement and amendment, facilitate community discussions, ensure financial accountability and review performance. The VC shall have final responsibility for addressing conflicts and violations, in accordance with customary practices. The VC shall authorise the establishment of a committee to manage the CCA and oversee its functioning, and facilitate coordination with neighbouring villages, government departments, civil society organisations, research institutions and other relevant organisations.

CCA Management Committee

A CCA Management Committee (CCAMC) shall be established through a Village General Body meeting, with the full and effective participation of village members, including women, and authorised by the Village Council. The CCAMC shall be responsible for the management, supervision, monitoring and implementation of activities relating to the CCA, working in close coordination with the VC and other customary and village institutions. The committee will be a bridge between the community and external institutions, ensuring that community priorities and concerns are communicated and that relevant technical, financial and institutional support reaches the CCA. A Village Resolution shall formalise the establishment and composition of the CCAMC.

The CCAMC shall be inclusive. Formally, it shall include at least one member of the VC, with representation of women, men, village elders and youth, and relevant landowner(s) as well as other village-level institutions. Women will comprise 30% including at least one office-bearer. Representation of landless and marginalized groups will be important in enhancing equitable involvement in resource governance.

The committee shall have a tenure of five years, with renewal or extension determined by the village council through an appropriate consultative process with the village general body. The composition, number of members and office-bearers will depend on the size, institutional arrangements and needs of each village, but will typically comprise 8-10 members and include a chairperson, secretary and treasurer. The CCA shall maintain a dedicated bank account and appropriate financial records, with annual financial reporting and audits, as required.

Suggested Functions of the CCA Management Committee

- Develop and implement rules and regulations for CCA management in consultation with the village community, VC and other relevant customary institutions.
- Develop and implement an inclusive CCA Management Plan, and, where appropriate, for the surrounding landscape, endorsed by the village community, VC and other relevant village institutions.
- Establish conservation, ecosystem, and livelihood priorities for the CCA and monitor outcomes.
- Organise regular meetings including village-level meetings to ensure transparency and grievance redressal.
- Develop and implement mechanisms for compliance, enforcement, grievance redress and conflict resolution, consistent with customary practices and the CCA rules.
- Maintain records and internal monitoring of management activities, biodiversity conservation, violations, imposition of sanctions, restoration activities and other relevant outcomes.
- Identify and facilitate research and long-term ecological monitoring.
- Integrate traditional and local knowledge, customary practices into CCA management.
- Manage CCA finances transparently, maintain a financial records and conduct annual audits. Register the CCA as a trust or society, if required, with VC endorsement and community approval.
- Engage with neighbouring villages on joint conservation and landscape management.
- Establish linkages with government departments, NGOs, academic and research institutions and other agencies, to obtain technical, financial and institutional support for CCA management.
- Promote coordination among village-level institutions and committees, including through sharing information, resources, knowledge and planning, and coordination of activities.

Role of Women and Engagement of the Youth

Women shall play a key role in CCA governance and management, including decision-making, planning, monitoring and implementation. Their knowledge and experience are particularly important to the conservation and sustainable use of forests, water resources, medicinal and edible plants, NTFPs and other natural resources. CCA governance and management shall build upon, and strengthen women's knowledge, skills and experience, and ensure equal opportunities for membership, participation, decision-making, empowerment and leadership.

Youth shall participate as full members of the community, including in decision making. Youth already play important roles in patrolling and monitoring, biodiversity surveys and documentation, awareness, nature-based tourism and conservation campaigns. Youth can be enabled to participate fully in CCA governance, planning, decision-making, implementation and monitoring by contributing their knowledge, influencing management approaches and assuming leadership positions. Their familiarity with digital tools, mapping, photography and documentation can strengthen how CCAs monitor, record and communicate their conservation efforts.

ii. Management Planning

The CCA Management Committee shall prepare a Management Plan in consultation with the Village Council, other customary and village institutions, and community members, through inclusive consultations with women and youth groups, student bodies, landowners and other relevant stakeholders.

The management plan must be presented to the village assembly and incorporate their suggestions and changes. The Village Council Final will provide final endorsement. The objective of this plan should be to strengthen biodiversity conservation in the village while supporting sustainable livelihood outcomes that ensure the equitable sharing of benefits amongst the village population. The plan should be simple, accessible to the local community and highlight what it wants to conserve, what pressures exist, what activities need to be undertaken, who will be responsible what resources are required and how progress is to be monitored.

The plan may be limited to the CCA or encompass the entire village area, and may include

- Documentation of the biological, social, socio-economic, cultural aspects and history of the CCA and villages, and recognition of inter-generational traditional knowledge, culture, practices, and values.
- Conservation and livelihood priorities, including measurable and time-bound objectives, as appropriate.
- Restrictions or prohibitions on hunting, logging, fishing, collection of NTFPs, other forest produce, *jhum* cultivation, mining and commercial extraction including of threatened and rare species, as appropriate to the objectives and customary context of the CCA.
- Priority to sustainable harvesting for household consumption and local community needs, rather than commercial extraction.
- Ecological restoration of degraded areas, rejuvenation of water bodies; removal of invasive species; and protection of habitats and wildlife from threats and detrimental activities.
- Management prescriptions for access to, and sustainable harvest of timber and NTFPs such as medicinal and aromatic plants, oilseeds, resins, wild edibles, fibres, bamboo, grasses and other forest produce and agrobiodiversity in ways that sustain livelihoods while contributing to ecological integrity.
- Mechanisms for compliance and enforcement, using customary sanctions and procedures
- Established mitigation measures, as appropriate, to address conservation challenges.
- Conservation and regeneration status of local, commercially important species including sustainable harvesting techniques and potential in high-end markets
- Equitable benefit-sharing arrangements where benefits accrue from conservation and sustainable management that include the socially or economically underprivileged, women, and those who contributed land.
- Arrangements to plough back a percentage of revenues for conservation and community well-being.

Joint management plans and/or landscape level management plans may also be prepared for clusters of CCAs and/or at the level of the landscape.

2. Process of Formal Recognition, Registration and Derecognition of CCAs

Formal recognition of CCAs confers legitimacy on community-led conservation while underscoring the contribution of CCAs to conservation and sustainable natural-resource management. Such recognition shall originate at the behest of the village communities. Formal recognition of CCAs shall not:

- 1) Interfere with customary laws and practices or weaken the authority of the Village Council;
- 2) Transfer ownership or control of community lands to the government; and
- 3) Impose restrictions that negatively affect sustainable livelihoods.

i. Process of CCA recognition and registration

Village-level consensus and Free Prior Informed Consent

The CCA Management Committee shall initiate the process of formal recognition after the Village Council authorises it, and based on the Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) of the village community. The process shall be participatory, transparent and inclusive. A Village General Body meeting shall be convened to present the proposal for formal recognition and seek the consent of the community. The process followed shall ensure the protection of customary rights, land ownership and tenure, traditional knowledge and other sensitive information. Consent shall be given following adequate opportunity for the community to consider the proposal, seek clarification and deliberate through its customary decision-making processes. The FPIC process and its outcome shall be appropriately documented and circulated in the village via a Village Resolution that will include the signature of the members of the village assembly, demonstrating the village's consent for CCA recognition. Boundary disputes between villages or within a village and internal disagreements within communities must be resolved or minimised prior to CCA recognition.

The documents required for formal recognition shall include:

- Village Resolution for CCA recognition, signed by the VC, authorising the formal recognition process;
- Formal document signed by landowner/s giving their FPIC and details of area donated for CCA;
- Village Resolution for CCA formation including boundary map and demarcation details, List of CCA Committee members, CCA rules and regulations, descriptions of natural resources/biodiversity related details; and relevant management information. The testimony of village elders may also be submitted.

Role of the Nagaland Community-Conserved Areas Forum, NCCAF^{xxiii}

The apex forum of Nagaland's CCAs, the NCCAF may assist the CCAs in document submission and verification for CCA recognition and registration. NCCAF will function as the nodal agency for the initial review and endorsing of applications and will submit completed and verified applications for further district and state-level verification and review.

NCCAF would conduct field verification as a neutral observer, provide recommendations based on the conditions on the ground, and supporting evidence of the community's conservation efforts. NCCAF shall facilitate the CCA recognition process and also help communities navigate the process, connect with relevant authorities, and raise concerns regarding delays or procedural issues.

District-level Verification Process

Following initial verification by NCCAF, the documents will be submitted for review and endorsement by the district administration which may include the District Commissioner, Extra Assistant Commissioner (EAC), the Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) and the Home Department. The district administration provides a bridge between the community's application and state-level recognition with the mediation of NCCAF. The DC, in coordination with the District Forest Department, will verify the application and the relevant information and subsequently forward it to the State-level designated nodal agency, the State Biodiversity Board. District-level verification would help establish that:

- the proposed CCA with identifiable boundaries exists;
- the community has undertaken the necessary processes, and the relevant village institution/s have endorsed the CCA; and
- the submitted information is accurate and consistent with the local context.

State Level Recognition

The State Biodiversity Board (SBB) or Forest Department will be the nodal agency for the CCA recognition process. The SBB shall register and recognise CCAs based on the inputs of a **State-level Steering Committee**.

The process would include allotting each CCA an unique registration number and a certificate of recognition. It shall feed into a state-level CCA portal maintained by NCCAF and endorsed by the State Biodiversity Board. If desired by the CCA, the certificate will be forwarded by NCCAF to the national portal on CCAs and the ICCA registry. The maximum time period for review, verification and registration should be three months from submission to district authorities with a provision for grievance redressal.

ii. Deregistration of CCAs

A CCA may be de-registered where it has ceased to function as a CCA or where its governing arrangements have become defunct—subject to verification and due process. Grounds for de-registration may include:

- The CCA has ceased to exist, as determined through a decision of the CCA governing body in accordance with the resolution of the Village General Body
- The CCA has failed to submit its annual self-assessment and continuation certificate for three consecutive years, and verification confirms that the CCA has ceased to function.

- The CCA has ceased to follow its own rules and management arrangements, and, following review and an opportunity to respond, no reasonable explanation or corrective action is provided.
- The CCA governing or management institutions have become defunct, and no action is taken within a reasonable period to reconstitute or reinstate them.

The absence of a formal management committee, written management plan or other institutional mechanism shall not constitute grounds for de-registration where the area continues to be effectively conserved and protected through customary practices, community institutions or other locally effective arrangements. Prior to de-registration, the concerned village/s shall be informed of the proposed action with an opportunity to clarify the circumstances and, where appropriate, to undertake corrective measures within a reasonable period.

3. Review and Monitoring of CCA Performance and Functioning

Each CCA shall undertake an annual community-led self-assessment to confirm its continued functioning and management. The self-assessment shall provide an opportunity for the community to collectively review the status and management of the CCA, identify challenges and priorities, and take responsibility for its continued conservation and effective management. Similar self-assessments may also be undertaken for joint CCAs. Indicators for annual self-assessment and monitoring may include:

- records of patrolling and monitoring activities;
- minutes and attendance records of CCA Management Committee meetings;
- photographs, camera-trap records and other monitoring evidence;
- biodiversity, wildlife and habitat-monitoring data;
- records of violations or illegal activities and actions taken in response;
- progress in implementing the CCA Management Plan and other conservation activities; and records of community participation in CCA activities, including the participation of women and youth.

State-level Steering Committee

Recognition and monitoring of the functioning of CCAs shall be carried out via a State-level Steering committee established under the State Biodiversity Board (SBB) or Forest Department. The committee shall have a minimum of 7 and maximum of 15 members including representation from the State Biodiversity Board, Tribal Department, Forest Department, Rural Development, Agriculture and allied departments, relevant civil society organisations/NGO, NEPED, technical/community-development institutions; and representatives from NCCAF and the CCA network, including youth and women organisations.

The committee shall include one-third participation of women, meet quarterly, review and formally recognise CCAs, review CCA information, address governance and management issues, advise on appropriate support, establish mechanisms for evaluation of conservation, ecosystem management and livelihood outcomes, and institute awards and other forms of recognition. The committee shall also establish a mechanism for consistent, timely, adequate and needs-based annual financial support to CCAs for conservation, management, ecological restoration, monitoring and livelihood activities.

4. Landscape Coordination Mechanisms and Creation of CCA Clusters

CCAs are embedded in a surrounding landscape of forests and jhum fields rivers, lakes, grasslands and homesteads, apart from habitation. Joint management of clusters of CCAs, including those that are contiguous and adjacent to each other and/or the landscape as a whole, can greatly enhance the efficacy of CCAs and conservation and sustainable natural resource management at the level of the landscape. For achieving effective conservation and sustainable natural resource management across landscapes, several steps may be considered:

- Creating clusters of CCAs to strengthen management, patrolling, rule enforcement and pooling of knowledge and resources, including interlinking CCAs to enhance connectivity.
- Strengthening governance, coordination, ecological management and enforcement through landscape-level rules/by-laws and management plans.
- Utilizing and reviving traditional and local ecological knowledge and wisdom for effective landscape-level conservation and management.
- Supporting inclusive participation, improving women's representation and inclusion, and building community buy-in to increase participation, joint management and monitoring across the landscape.
- Carrying out capacity building and awareness with a focus on youth engagement, and skills for documentation and monitoring.
- Ensuring government support and scheme convergence through coordination amongst government line departments
- Incentivizing livelihood support through alternative/supplementary livelihoods to reduce pressure on natural resources and enhance market value chains.
- Providing financial and operational support including for joint patrolling and monitoring.
- Supporting research and documentation of landscape biodiversity to guide planning, and conservation.
- Promoting collaborative landscape planning and support for nature-based tourism.

5. Financial & Technical Support Mechanisms

Financial and technical support is critical to sustain CCA formation and effective functioning in Nagaland. Communities and individuals face opportunity costs in creating and sustaining CCAs on their private and communal lands, as well as incurring the costs of conservation. Establishment of a State CCA Fund under the State Biodiversity Board or Forest Department will ensure the long-term viability of CCAs by providing annual seed money for daily CCA functioning, and need-based funding for activities that strengthen community management of natural resources and interlinked sustainable livelihoods. CCAs shall prepare annual budgets and submit them to the State Monitoring and Support Committee, which will be responsible for a mechanism of support to CCAs. Recommended sources for capitalisation of the fund are: Finance Commission revenue flows including from the 10% of the horizontal devolution of tax flows from the Centre to the State that is allocated for forests, and which under the 16th Finance Commission incentivises forest restoration, Grants in Aid for Rural Bodies and Disaster Response Funds such as for forest fires; funds established under the Communitisation of Public Institutions and Services Act, 2002, Payments for Ecosystem Services supported via externally aided programmes, Corporate Social Responsibility, climate and biodiversity finance, amongst others.

Technical Support and Capacity Building

Technical support including building capacity would be best sustained through convergence with relevant government departments to support various activities of CCA and generate sustainable livelihood opportunities. Such support shall be contextualised to local needs and prioritises rather than being target driven. Such training and in-kind support is to be generated via various departments:

- Tourism Department: Appropriate and community-led eco-tourism initiatives;
- Fisheries Department: Sustainable fisheries and related activities
- Land Resources Department: Land and natural resource management
- Forest Department: Camera trapping, biodiversity monitoring and documentation, GPS surveys and mapping, ecological restoration, fire management and conservation awareness. In-kind support such as provision of cameras, binoculars, camera traps.

Support may include management planning, ecological restoration, rejuvenation of water sources, conservation and awareness campaigns, biodiversity and ecological monitoring, CCA delineation, participatory mapping and

demarcation, Sustainable NTFP management and harvesting, coordination with other government departments to harmonise activities in accordance with the CCA management plan, developing livelihood options as well as supporting and building the expertise of NCCAF.

6. Role of Other Agencies

External agencies and individuals including universities, research institutions, scientific and technical organisations, Not-for-Profit foundations and Civil Society Organisations can play an important supportive role in capacity building including for management planning and biodiversity monitoring, ecological restoration, collaborative research including on issues of importance to local communities such as NTFP management and sustainable harvesting, as well as in strengthening and supporting livelihood activities or by providing in-kind support. Support for the local communities in accessing funding, writing proposals, developing websites and enhancing outreach as well as facilitating community exchanges is also required.

Such organisations and individuals shall not undermine community autonomy and customary governance and shall take the permission of the Village Council and the CCA management committee prior to undertaking any such activities. The objectives of their activities shall be communicated in writing and via a gathering of the Village Body as relevant, and based on free, prior, informed consent. The help of NCCAF may be taken for this purpose. A copy of any research or other activity carried out in the CCAs and surrounding areas must be shared with the local communities, State Biodiversity Board and NCCAF.

Suggested Annexures (TBD)

- **Template for Registration of CCA**
- **Composition and functions of a Management Committee**
- **Suggested management plan format**
- **Format for Self-Assessment**
- **Example of a Prior Informed Consent Format**
- **Guidance for applying for ICCA Registry**

Endnotes and Literature Cited

ⁱ Defined as “natural and/or modified ecosystems containing significant biodiversity values, ecological services and cultural values, voluntarily conserved by indigenous, mobile and local communities through customary laws and other effective means,” at the Vth IUCN World Parks Congress in Durban. IUCN (2003). *Recommendation V.26: Community Conserved Areas*. Vth IUCN World Parks Congress, Durban. South Africa, 8-17 September 2003, Durban, South Africa.
https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/resrecfiles/WCC_2004_RES_49_EN.pdf. Accessed 20 August 2026

ⁱⁱ WWF, UNEP-WCMC, SGP/ICCA-GSI, LM, TNC, CI, WCS, EP, ILC-S, CM, IUCN (2021)
https://wwfint.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/report_the_state_of_the_indigenous_peoples_and_local_communities_lands_and_territories.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ UNEP-WCMC & IUCN (2021). Although there is overlap of IPLC lands and PAs. According to, UNEP-WCMC and IUCN (2024), 17.58% is under PAs and OECMS while Indigenous and Traditional Territories account for 13.6%. UNEP-WCMC and IUCN (2024). Protected Planet Report 2024. UNEP-WCMC and IUCN: Cambridge, United Kingdom; Gland, Switzerland. <https://digitalreport.protectedplanet.net/?chapter=0#report> (accessed on August 16, 2026).

^{iv} UNEP-WCMC and IUCN. (2021). Protected Planet: The World Database on Protected Areas (WDPA) On-line, March 2021, Cambridge, UK: UNEP-WCMC and IUCN. Available at: www.protectedplanet.net (accessed on August 16, 2026).

^v KBAs are still being identified. See: <https://www.keybiodiversityareas.org/en>

^{vi} Fa, J.E., Watson, J. E. M., Leiper, I., Potapov, P., Evans, T. D., Burgess, N. D., Molnar, Z., Ferdinando-Llamazares, A., Duncan, T., Stephanie, W., Austin, B.J., Jonas, H., Robinson, C.J., Pernilla, M., Zander, K.K., Jackson, M.V., Ellis, E., Brondizio, E.S. and S.T. Garnett. (2020). Importance of Indigenous Peoples' lands for the conservation of Intact Forest Landscapes. *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment*. doi:10.1002/fee.2148

^{vii} The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), in its 2019 Global Assessment—the first global-level assessment to systematically consider evidence on the contributions of indigenous and local knowledge and practices—underscored the importance of IPLCs to biodiversity conservation and ecosystem stewardship in the face of accelerating global environmental change. The Assessment noted that community-based conservation institutions and local governance regimes have often been effective, in some cases more effective than formally established protected areas, in preventing habitat loss. IPBES (2019): Global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy

Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. E. S. Brondizio, J. Settele, S. Díaz, and H. T. Ngo (editors). IPBES secretariat, Bonn, Germany. 1148 pages.

viii <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

ix CBD (2022). Decision Adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity [15/4: Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework], Convention on Biological Diversity. <https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-15/cop-15-dec-04-en.pdf>

x Ensure and enable that by 2030 at least 30 per cent of terrestrial and inland water areas, and of marine and coastal areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, are effectively conserved and managed through ecologically representative, well-connected and equitably governed systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, recognizing indigenous and traditional territories, where applicable, and integrated into wider landscapes, seascapes and the ocean, while ensuring that any sustainable use, where appropriate in such areas, is fully consistent with conservation outcomes, recognizing and respecting the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities, including over their traditional territories.

xi Derived from FSI (2023). India State of Forest Report 2023. Forest Survey of India, Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change Government of India, Dehradun.

xii A *kelhel* is a Naga institution that brings together several clans within the village community.

xiii Department of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (2025). Management of Forest. <https://forest.nagaland.gov.in/management-of-forest/> Accessed 12 August 2026

xiv 34.49% of this forest cover encompasses dense forests while 39.23% consists of open forest cover (FSI 2023). The total Recorded Forest Area encompasses 52% of the State's Geographical Area

xv Local communities have their own names for areas conserved by them. The term CCA is relatively new and has largely entered their lexicon through projects, programmes and external conservation initiatives..

xvi TERI (2015). Documentation of Community-Conserved Areas of Nagaland. Report submitted to the Department of Environment, Forests and Climate Change. Government of Nagaland. The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), New Delhi.

xvii That is, almost 20% of the Recorded Forest Area of Nagaland (8,629.30 sq. km)

xviii For example, Bhupathy et al. (2011) recorded 766 CCAs in five eastern districts of Nagaland. TERI's (2015) criteria included CCAs proclaimed by village resolution-either at the time of formation or subsequently, but Bhupathy et al. did not use this criteria and hence their list includes several CCAs per village. Bhupathy, S., Nakro, V., and P.A. Azeez (2011). Strengthening community conservation efforts in Nagaland: A programme to impart technical support on biodiversity conservation and livelihood options. Final Report submitted to Sir Dorabji Tata Trust, Mumbai.

xix Nagaland has one National Park (Intanki NP) and three Wildlife Sanctuaries (Singphan, Fakim and Puliebadze WLS) covering 242.96 Sq. Km which constitutes 1.46% of the State's geographical area. Department of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (2026). Annual Administrative Report 2025-2026, Government of Nagaland. <https://forest.nagaland.gov.in/nagaland-forest-department-annual-administrative-report-2025-26/>

^{xx} This includes TERI which developed a draft policy on CCAs with the support of the Nagaland Forest Department under the GEF-Satoyama project of Conservation International-Japan in 2016. This process was carried forward by NCCAF, Kalpavriksh and others in 2024-2025. The current policy of 2026 integrates and updates the above two processes along with consultations with communities, experts and others to develop a consensus document that best reflects the views of the people of Nagaland. The latter process has been anchored by the Nagaland State Biodiversity Board in partnership with NCCAF and FES and the funding support of ICIMOD. This policy also draws from the draft Guidelines for the Recognition of Community-Conserved Areas (CCAs) in the State of Arunachal Pradesh 2024.

^{xxi} Often referred to as Territories of Life. <https://www.iccaregistry.org/en/about/the-evolution-of-the-terms-icca-territories-of-life>

^{xxii} The 2003 IUCN definition of CCAs has been modified to the Nagaland and Northeast India context while incorporating elements from other definitions of CCAs currently in use. E.g. the Draft Guidelines for the Recognition of Community-Conserved Areas (CCAs) in the State of Arunachal 2024 and the ICCA registry.

^{xxiii} <https://nccaf.communityconservedareas.org/data/list>