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The National Indigenous Women's Forum (NIWF)

## Transformative action on gender and biodiversity

In the face of the twin crisis of biodiversity loss and climate breakdown, feminist organisations are advancing community-driven and sustainable biodiversity conservation. Their approach is effectively halting biodiversity loss and restoring critical ecosystems, with scalable results. Mama Cash resources eight feminist and Indigenous women's organisations that are leading transformative interventions on biodiversity across Latin America and

South Asia. These organisations deliver equitable and measurable outcomes aligned with targets identified in the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), the UNFCCC Gender Action Plan, the Convention on Biological Diversity's (CBD) Article 8(j) on traditional knowledge and the Sustainable Development Goals 5, 13, 14, and 15 on Gender Equality, Climate Action, Life Below Water, and Life on Land, respectively.



## Snapshot: global biodiversity loss

Unregulated and unsustainable economic development and extractive industries have created a twin crisis of biodiversity loss and climate change; extreme weather events and ecosystem degradation accelerate biodiversity loss

Global biodiversity loss is **estimated to be 100 to 1000 times higher** than the naturally occurring extinction rate—one million species risk extinction

**Close to 90%** of the world's marine stocks are fully exploited, overexploited, and depleted

Agricultural expansion is said to **account for 70%** of the projected loss of terrestrial biodiversity

## Positive policy developments

- In response to the escalating crises, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) was adopted in 2022 to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030 and to achieve “living in harmony with nature” by 2050.
  - GBF Target 22 calls for ensuring equitable, inclusive and gender-responsive participation in decision-making and respect for Indigenous peoples and local communities’ rights over lands, territories and resources, explicitly citing women and girls as well as environmental human rights defenders among others.
  - Target 23 ensures a gender-responsive approach to biodiversity action, including by recognising women and girls’ equal rights and access to natural resources and to participation and leadership in biodiversity related decision-making.
  - Under Target 19 of the GBF (mobilise 200 billion per year for biodiversity), enhancing and resourcing collective action aimed at biodiversity conservation is recognised, particularly collective action led by Indigenous peoples and local communities, community-based natural resource management, civil society cooperation and solidarity.
- Similarly, the **New Collective Quantified Goal (NCGQ)** adopted at COP29 prioritised scalable adaptation and locally-led approaches.
- At COP30, operational discussions **emphasised that scaled climate finance must reach local and sub-national actors**, support community-driven adaptation (including ecosystem-based adaptation), and deliver measurable outcomes on resilience, livelihoods, and ecosystems.

Together with the Paris Agreement, the CBD, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), climate finance for biodiversity consistently prioritises collective action, community-based natural resource management, **locally-led adaptation**, mitigation, and **ecosystem restoration initiatives** with measurable outcomes.

## Securing forest and land rights

In South Asia, one feminist organisation has successfully pressured the national government to recognise and enlist 12 villages into relevant laws - ensuring access to natural resources and governmental support in the management of natural resources. The organisation supported an indigenous community in their legal claim to securing tenurial rights over 110 villages and community forests, which is expected to receive State approval. They also strengthened the village councils to exercise their right to Free Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) in order to resist skewed conservation policies and illegal expansion of extractives in forest reserves by effectively employing national legislation on forest governance. The organisation's work on curtailing mining expansion and forest commercialisation, restoring ecosystem balance, and protecting endangered flora and fauna, contributes to the enforcement of indigenous peoples' right to participation and biodiversity conservation under Article 8(j) of the CBD and Targets 1, 3, 13, and 22 of GBF.



## Influencing biodiversity decision-making

Feminist organisations are using a range of tools, including documentation of biodiversity, traditional knowledge and community mobilisation, and multi-stakeholder advocacy, to ensure gender-transformative biodiversity policies. Consejo de Mujeres Indígenas y Biodiversidad (CMIB) collaborated with the Guatemalan Ministry of Environment for over four years on the implementation of an institutional gender equity policy which recognises equal participation of women and men in the sustainable use and conservation of natural resources and


promotes strengthened integration of a gender perspective in the ministry's climate interventions. CMIB is also driving change internationally by participating in the [working group of Article 8 \(j\)](#), which oversees the implementation of the obligation of states to respect, preserve, and maintain the traditional knowledge, innovations, and practices of Indigenous peoples. These interventions align with GBF Target 22 and 23 on equitable decision-making and gender-responsive approach to biodiversity and with locally-led adaptation principles.



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Through capacity building of policy-makers and by directly engaging in policy-making processes, feminist organisations are institutionalising recognition of traditional knowledge and Indigenous women's rights. The National Indigenous Women's Forum (NIWF) in Nepal is part of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) Steering Committee where they advocate for the recognition of Indigenous Traditional Territories and Indigenous women's rights. Through its work in the committee working alongside government officials, NIWF influenced national biodiversity conservation policies and plans to meaningfully recognise Indigenous women's knowledge systems, cultural heritage and land rights. At 2024 UN Biodiversity Conference of Parties (COP16), it co-presented the NBSAP

draft—demonstrating the ability of feminist organisations to influence international policy-making processes. Its interventions integrate traditional knowledge and participatory monitoring of biodiversity in line with the GBF Targets 20 and 21. Additionally after persistent advocacy, in May 2025 it influenced the Women and Social Affairs Committee of the Federal Parliament to direct the Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens to take concrete action toward implementing CEDAW GR No. 39 on the rights of Indigenous women and girls – a significant policy win. The use of traditional knowledge creates resilient and self-reliant systems—effectuating the gradual but transformative action required to meet biodiversity restoration and conservation targets.



Mujeres Amazónicas Defensoras de la Selva Frente al Extractivismo

## Building resilient ecosystems through locally-led biodiversity conservation

In Ecuador's Sarayaku territory, Mujeres Amazónicas Defensoras de la Selva Frente al Extractivismo lead reforestation and restoration initiatives by identifying native species most vulnerable to climate-induced loss and capable of stabilising riverbanks against erosion. The project, led entirely by women, engages the whole community. These initiatives contribute to GBF Targets 2 and 9 related to ecosystem restoration and sustainable use of wild species. In Colombia, KUICHI, a network of women for the conservation of the Andean bear, is using community-owned scientific evidence and data to monitor and map biodiversity. Community members are provided training to use camera traps, community cartography to map natural resource management areas, and digital documentation. KUICHI has contributed to the current National Development Plan, the creation of multiple local commissions for the protection of the Andean bear, a vulnerable species, and the implementation of Legislative Act 01 of 2023 that recognises the rights of peasants, particularly as stakeholders and beneficiaries of land justice and climate adaptation. Its work demonstrates its vital role in fulfilling biodiversity commitments, such as the GBF Targets 12 and 23 of GBF, by ensuring gender-responsive biodiversity governance and locally-led adaptation

At the centre of transformative biodiversity conservation efforts lies awareness raising and cultural preservation. KUICHI is promoting the protection of the Andean bear through song, carnival, and art, positioning indigeneity and peasantry as an integral part of climate resilience. Their efforts to shift local attitudes toward conservation include engagement with municipal and national policy-makers. An Indigenous group in Central Asia trains Indigenous women and gender-diverse people on interdisciplinary climate education rooted in art, action-based research, and traditional ecological knowledge. Their learning platform brings Indigenous artists and scientists together to co-create knowledge on biodiversity loss, water governance and climate risk. In this region, lakes and other freshwater ecosystems face degradation due to pollution pressures, insufficient public consultation, and contested development decisions. In turn this impacts drinking water, cultural practices, and biodiversity while heightening exposure to drought, extreme heat, and declining water quality, with disproportionate implications for women, due to gendered responsibilities for caregiving, water collection, and household food security. By using visual art exhibitions, storytelling and knowledge-sharing, the organisation supports communities to interpret climate threats through their own cultural frameworks and ground climate education in nomadic principles of interdependence with ecosystems.



**Snapshot:**  
Restoring  
marine  
biodiversity  
and  
addressing  
climate  
change  
impacts  
in tandem  
in Baja  
California  
Sur,  
Mexico.

- The restoration of coastal habitats and critical marine ecosystems, such as mangroves and estuaries, serves as natural buffers and build resilience to sea-level rise and coastal erosion. Ecosystem restoration measures address biodiversity conservation targets and climate mitigation through contributing to carbon sequestration with estuaries and mangroves storing large quantities of Co2. Moreover, these flourishing ecosystems also provide multiple benefits to coastal communities, such as enhancing fisheries-related livelihoods, income, and food security. In Mexico, Guardianas del Estero El Conchalito is redefining marine conservation through feminist leadership. It has secured formal concessions over fisheries development within the waters of Ensenada de La Paz—a significant milestone for community-led marine governance. Guardianas del Estero El Conchalito operate under an agreement with the National Commission of Natural Protected Areas (CONANP) for the conservation of the Ramsar site ‘Mogote-Ensenada de La Paz Wetlands’ spanning 9,184.1 hectares. Additionally, they manage the ‘El Conchalito’ Destination Agreement, a territory of 40 hectares of maritime beach, where they protect key sites within the wetland system. Guardianas del Estero El Conchalito mobilised youth to lead aquaculture and food security initiatives through fisheries restoration in the Ensenada de La Paz ([dedicated RAMSAR site](#)). Restoration efforts include mangrove planting, hydrological restoration, and cultivation of oysters and native clam species such as chirla, which are ecologically significant for attracting migratory birds.
- In addition to scientific collaboration, it also halted the construction of a pier development project to protect the biodiversity and the inhabitant community’s social, cultural, and economic practices through innovative advocacy efforts, demonstrations in public spaces and sports events. The success of this advocacy reveals how feminist environmental organising is key to challenging unsustainable and destructive development projects, protecting coastal biodiversity and community livelihoods. Guardianas’ work has gained recognition from both local and state governments and grassroots civil society actors, positioning it among the leading voices for environmental and gender issues in Baja California Sur. It advises other organisations on local environmental advocacy, and its work serves as a model for grassroots mobilisation, particularly for young people protecting their territories against detrimental developmental activities. Through knowledge generation and sharing with academic partners, Guardianas also creates references for women working in biodiversity conservation. Its work directly contributes to GBF Target 10 (sustainable use of coastal and marine ecosystems) and SDG 14.2 (sustainable management of marine and coastal areas).

## Driving complex, transformative and scalable action on biodiversity conservation

The cases outlined above demonstrate the contribution, impact, and success of feminist organisations in influencing biodiversity policy and governance, centring traditional knowledge and women's leadership in conservation measures and fostering scientific collaboration for biodiversity conservation.

### They are doing this through:



Engagement in national, regional and global policy processes on biodiversity conservation



Adoption of gender-transformative and locally-led solutions



Emphasis on replicability and adaptability through knowledge generation



Recognition of interactions between ecosystems, economy, and society



Identification and management of risks beyond the immediate intervention site