Women4Biodiversity

SUBMISSION

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Views and information relating to the strategic review and analysis of the current Programme of work on protected areas (PowPA) in the context of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework

Women4Biodiversity welcomes the opportunity to provide views and information to support the strategic review and analysis of the Programme of Work on Protected Areas (PoWPA) in the context of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF), in response to Notification 2025-135. As an organization working to advance gender-responsive, and human rights-based biodiversity governance, Women4Biodiversity recognizes the continued importance of PoWPA as a foundational instrument for area-based conservation under the Convention.

We submit this input to strengthen the alignment of PoWPA with Target 3, to ensure that protected and conserved areas are ecologically effective, socially just, equitably governed, respectful of the rights, knowledge, and leadership of women, Indigenous peoples and local communities, and fully contribute to the 2030 outcomes of the Framework. Target 3 of the KM-GBF significantly broadens the ambition and scope of area-based conservation beyond what was envisaged under earlier frameworks. Section C further requires that implementation be inclusive, equitable and gender-responsive, integrating the rights, participation and leadership of women, Indigenous peoples and other local communities. On this basis, the present submission provides inputs and recommendations to support the strategic review and analysis of the Programme of Work on Protected Areas.

Guiding question 1. What aspects should be incorporated or reinforced in the current review of the Programme of Work to improve alignment with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework?

The rapid analysis identified that, in relation to Target 7, only one activity addresses pollution and the need to incorporate the polluter-pays principle. Therefore, Target 7 is addressed in a limited and insufficient manner.

Target 7 calls for Parties to reduce pollution risks and negative impacts from all sources to levels not harmful to biodiversity by 2030, including nutrient pollution, pesticide and highly hazardous chemical risks, and plastic pollution. Scientific evidence shows that contamination from mercury, pesticides, nutrient runoff and plastic waste is widespread in and around protected and conserved areas. In the Amazon basin, mercury contamination linked to artisanal and small-scale gold mining has affected protected areas and Indigenous Peoples who depend on river systems. Pesticide drift from surrounding agricultural lands compromises biodiversity

within protected areas, marine protected areas contain high concentrations of plastic debris. These pollution pressures may be associated with illegal activities, weak governance and high levels of violence against Indigenous Peoples and local communities. In this context, PoWPA could promote an integrated and comprehensive pollution prevention and reduction measures that explicitly incorporate territorial security and community-based monitoring within protected area planning and management. This includes the identification and mapping of areas within and around PAs, OECMs, and ITTs that are at risk of mercury contamination or other hazardous pollutants, along with the development of appropriate mitigation and restoration plans, in coherence with Parties' obligations under relevant multilateral environmental agreements, and including measures to ensure the safety and protection of Indigenous People and local communities, involved in monitoring and territorial security.

Another gap identified in the rapid analysis was related to Target 23. PoWPA, in its Programme Element 2: Governance, participation, equity and benefit-sharing, includes activity 2.2.1, which only addresses the need to ensure gender equality in protected area policy and management, requiring a more transformative and gender - responsive approach. A revised PoWPA should ensure that women's and girls' equal rights to land, water and natural resources, as well as their full, equitable and meaningful participation and leadership in decision-making, are integrated as a cross-cutting condition for effective conservation across all Programme Elements. In contexts marked by violence and environmental conflict, targeted measures are needed to ensure Environmental Human Rights Defenders protection and safety.

Implementing Target 23 within PoWPA requires the integration of a human-rights-based approach across all the Programme of Work, strengthening governance systems with gender-responsive safeguards and FPIC processes, and addressing structural barriers faced by Indigenous and local women. Gender analysis and gender-disaggregated indicators into monitoring frameworks are needed, as well as the creation of enabling conditions, such as legal, financial and institutional, that support women's leadership and the protection of environmental human rights defenders, in line with the Gender Plan of Action.

Guiding question 2. How could the approach to implementing the Programme of Work be revised to better contribute to achieving Target 3 of the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework? In your response, consider potential actors and timeframes.

The Program of Work on Protected Areas (PoWPA) was designed for the 2010 target and primarily for state-managed protected areas. To better contribute to the achievement of Target 3, the approach to implementing the Program of Work should be refocused on rights and equitable governance.

a. Expand the scope of the PoWPA in line with the three pathways or approaches to Target 3

This target calls for the expansion and enhancement of protected and conserved areas, indicating three approaches that may be employed to achieve this aim: protected areas, other effective area based conservation measures (OECMs), and indigenous and traditional territories

. PoWPA's goals 1–4 focus on actions related only to protected areas. The approach should now be reframed as "protected and area-based conservation" or another term that reflects and includes:

- Protected areas (all governance types)
- OECMs
- Indigenous and traditional territories

Hence, all PoWPA actions will apply to the three pathways identified in Target 3 as area-based conservation measures.

The key actors identified at the national level are PA agencies, ministries of environment, spatial planning authorities, Indigenous Peoples and local communities, women's organizations, and managers of privately and jointly governed PAs and OECMs.

The timeframe for expanding the scope is short-term (COP17), since the PoWPA is supporting the implementation of the KM-GBF.

b. Human rights and gender approach in PoWPA implementation

Target 3 and GBF Section C require an explicit human-rights-based and gender-responsive approach, including respect for Indigenous people and local communities' rights over their traditional territories and full, equitable and gender-responsive participation.

To ensure that PoWPA is fully aligned with Target 3, it is essential to guarantee free, prior and informed consent (FPIC), as well as equitable access to information, meaningful participation, and access to justice for Indigenous Peoples and local communities, women, youth, persons with disabilities, and environmental human rights defenders. Moreover, the revised PoWPA should require gender-responsive design and monitoring, ensuring women's rights, leadership, and equal access to land, water and natural resources in line with GBF Targets 22 and 23.

c. Operationalize the recognition of Indigenous traditional territories as the third pathway under Target 3

Indigenous and traditional territories constitute a central pillar of biodiversity conservation and are recognized under Target 3 as a distinct pathway, different from protected areas and OECMs. The PoWPA should prioritize and support the legal recognition of collective land tenure, customary governance systems, and the right to self-determination of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, ensuring that these territories are fully acknowledged as distinct and legitimate governance systems. Such recognition must be voluntary and occur only with their free, prior and informed consent (FPIC), in ways that strengthen their governance systems and establish enabling conditions for the effective exercise of their self-governance and decision-making authority. In addition, the implementation of PoWPA Goal 2.2 on equity and the

full participation of Indigenous Peoples, local communities, must include the participation of women and youth, elders, and children.

d. Effectively conserved and managed

Target 3 emphasizes that effective management and sustained positive outcomes for biodiversity conservation require the adoption of appropriate management objectives and processes, governance systems grounded in equity and rights, adequate and appropriate resourcing, and consistent monitoring. To align the Programme of Work with Target 3, it is necessary to strengthen guidance on:

- Ensuring effective and equitable governance, including a human-rights-based approach, FPIC, gender-responsiveness and the full, meaningful participation of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in decision-making and management;-
- Securing sufficient, predictable and long-term financial resourcing for locally led management, including support for Indigenous and community monitoring systems and restoration activities
- Incorporating robust monitoring frameworks that track not only biological and ecological outcomes but also cultural, social and equity indicators, in order to assess the quality of governance, rights protections, and the distribution of benefits and impacts across different groups.

Guiding question 3. Which goals, targets, or activities of the Programme of Work should be prioritized to support national implementation of the Framework by 2030?

To support national implementation of the KMGBF by 2030, prioritization of the Programme should focus on those goals that enable rights-based and equitable governance; the full, fair and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women, youth and elders, with a gender-responsive and intergenerational approach, as well as accessible and adequate financing, in line with the cross-cutting commitments of the Framework.

a. Goal 2.1 & Goal 2.2: Equity, participation and rights

Target 3 requires systems that are equitably governed as a core element, ensuring the involvement of all actors in the establishment, management and governance of conserved areas. Priority must be given to the recognition and respect of the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities over their territories, recognizing them as key actors in biodiversity conservation, with self-identification and free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) as prerequisites for any external recognition, and with the effective participation of women, youth and elders in decision-making processes. Under these goals, explicit obligations to respect, protect, promote and fulfil human rights should be included.

b. Goal 3.4 – Financial sustainability with direct access mechanisms

Without adequate and accessible financing, the actions required under Target 3 cannot be implemented, and safeguards are needed to prevent risks of exclusion or "fortress conservation". Effectiveness and equity depend on sustainable financing and inclusive governance arrangements, with the participation of women and other under-represented groups. Priority should be given to the fair and equitable distribution of financial resources, including through direct access mechanisms for Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

c. Goal 1.5 – Threats and negative impacts

Threats to protected areas include not only bio-physical pressures but also social and human rights impacts, such as criminalization, violence, forced displacement and conflicts associated with illegal or poorly regulated activities, which directly undermine the legitimacy, equity and sustainability of Target 3 implementation.

Goal 1.5 should be expanded to include access to justice and the protection of environmental human rights defenders. Protection and territorial security are enabling conditions for conserving biodiversity in a just, effective and durable manner. Specific measures are needed to protect environmental human rights defenders, with particular attention to women and youth, recognizing the differentiated risks they face in contexts of illegal activities and pollution.

In accordance with Target 7, Parties should establish and implement measures to address pollution from mercury, pesticides, nutrient runoff and plastics within and around protected areas, OECMs and Indigenous and traditional territories, including appropriate mitigation and restoration plans. In addition, actions to control illegal activities should recognize and respect sustainable customary use and strengthen the territorial security of Indigenous Peoples and local communities.