



## Biodiversity Framework & Indigenous People

**For Prelims:** United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, Indigenous People, Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity

**For Mains:** Indigenous People and Their Difficulties, Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity

### Why in News?

Recently, at the **15<sup>th</sup> Conference of Parties (COP15)** to the [United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity \(CBD\)](#), a group representing [indigenous people](#) stressed that the [Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework \(GBF\)](#) must work on respecting, promoting and supporting the rights of **indigenous peoples and local communities (IPCL)**.

- Members of the **International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity (IIFB)** have also stressed upon the rights of indigenous people.

### What are the Key Areas Stressed by Indigenous People?

- The rights of indigenous peoples and local communities, who have always been the **most effective guardians of biodiversity**, also need to be recognised and protected.
- The framework should follow a **“human rights-based approach**, by respecting, protecting and fulfilling the rights, and particularly indigenous and collective rights, and **gender equity**” by actively seeking ways to support and promote indigenous communities and their rights.
- The implementation of the post-2020 GBF must include **traditional knowledge**, practices and technologies while respecting the principles of free, prior and informed consent.

### What is the Role of Indigenous People in Biodiversity Conservation?

- **Conserving Natural Flora:**
  - The **magico-religious belief** of plants’ tribal communities as a god and goddess habitat leads to their conservation in their natural habitat.
  - Further, a wide variety of plants such as crop plants, wild fruits, seeds, bulb, roots and tubers are **conserved by the ethnic and indigenous people** as they have to depend on these sources for edible purposes.
- **Application of Traditional Knowledge:**
  - Indigenous people and biodiversity **complement each other**.
  - Over time, the rural communities have gathered a **pool of indigenous knowledge** for the **cultivation of the medicinal plants** and their propagation.
  - These plants conserved are **antidotes to snake bites** and **scorpion bites** or even for **broken bones or orthopaedic** treatments.
- **Conserving the Sacred Groves:**
  - India’s ethnic people have played a vital role in **preserving the biodiversity** of several virgin forests and have conserved flora and fauna in sacred groves of tribals. Otherwise,

these flora and fauna might have disappeared from the natural ecosystem.

## What are the Difficulties Faced by Indigenous People?

- **Disruption After Designation of the Status of World Heritage Site:**
  - The approach adopted to **isolate the indigenous people** from their natural habitats to protect biodiversity is the **root cause of conflict between them and conservationists**.
  - With the announcement of **natural habitat as a [World Heritage Site](#)**, the [United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization \(UNESCO\)](#) takes charge of the region's conservation.
  - This leads to an infusion of many outside people and technological equipment, which in turn disrupt the lives of the Indigenous people.
- **Lax Implementation of the Forest Rights Act:**
  - Many states in India have a dismal record in implementing the [Forest Rights Act \(FRA\)](#).
  - FRA's constitutionality has been challenged in the [Supreme Court](#) several times by various conservation organisations.
- **Development vs Conservation:**
  - Often, the combined stretch of land claimed by Indigenous people has been taken away for building dams, mining, laying railway lines and roads, power plants, etc.
  - Moreover, forcibly removing tribal peoples from their land will only result in environmental damage and violate human rights.

## What is the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework?

- **About:**
  - The post-2020 global biodiversity framework builds on the **Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020**.
    - As the **United Nations Decade on Biodiversity 2011-2020** comes to an end, the [International Union for Conservation of Nature \(IUCN\)](#) actively supports the development of what needs to be an ambitious new global biodiversity framework.
- **Goals and Targets:**
  - The new frameworks have four goals to achieve by 2050.
    - To halt the extinction and decline of biodiversity.
    - To enhance and retain nature's services to humans by conserving.
    - To ensure fair and equitable benefits to all from use of genetic resources.
    - To close the gap between available financial and other means of implementation and those necessary to achieve the 2050 Vision.
  - **2030 Action Targets:** The framework has **21 action-oriented targets** for urgent action over the decade to 2030, which includes:
    - To bring **at least 30% of land and sea** under the world's protected areas.
    - A **50% greater reduction in the rate of introduction of invasive alien species**, and controls or eradication of such species to eliminate or reduce their impacts.
    - **Reducing nutrients lost to the environment** by at least half, and pesticides by at least two thirds, and eliminating the discharge of plastic waste.
    - Nature-based contributions to global [climate change mitigation efforts](#) of at least 10 GtCO<sub>2</sub>e (gigatonnes of equivalent carbon dioxide) per year, and that all mitigation and adaptation efforts avoid negative impacts on biodiversity.

## What is the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity?

- **The IIFB** is a **collection of representatives** from indigenous governments, indigenous non-governmental organizations and indigenous scholars and activists that organize around the **CBD** and other important international environmental meetings.
- Its aim is to help **coordinate indigenous strategies** at the meetings, provide advice to the government parties, and influence the interpretation of government obligations to recognize and respect indigenous rights to the knowledge and resources.
- The IIFB was formed during the **III Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological**

## What should be the Approach Moving Forward?

- **Recognition of the Rights of the Indigenous People:**
  - For preserving the rich biodiversity of the region, the **recognition of the rights of the forest dwellers** who depend on the forests is as important as the declaration of natural habitat as a World Heritage Site.
- **Effective Implementation of the FRA:**
  - The government must make an effort to **build trust between its agencies in the area and the people who depend on these forests** by treating them as equal citizens like everyone else in the country.
- **Traditional Knowledge of the Tribal People for Conservation:**
  - **The Biodiversity Act, 2002** mentions the equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the use and knowledge of biological resources with the local communities.
    - Therefore, all the stakeholders should realise that **indigenous people's traditional knowledge is a way forward** for more effective conservation of biodiversity.
- **Tribals, The Forest Scientists:**
  - Tribal peoples are generally regarded as the **best conservationists**, as they connect with **nature more spiritually**.
  - The cheapest and quickest way to conserve areas of high biodiversity is to **respect tribal peoples' rights**.

### UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

**Q.** Examine the uniqueness of tribal knowledge systems when compared with mainstream knowledge and cultural systems. **(2021)**

**Source: DTE**