



Engaging with Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities

Acknowledgments

This document is an accompanying resource to the Watershed Investment Program How-To Guide. Readers are strongly encouraged to review the guidance before delving into any accompanying subject-matter “Deep Dives,” including this document.

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COVER: Pedro Rodrigueus De Oliveira and Matheus Correia Dutro walk to the forested area that The Nature Conservancy is working to restore in Brazil. TNC’s innovation is enabling compliance with Brazil’s progressive Forest Code while increasing economic opportunity. We are working with Indigenous Peoples to integrate traditional knowledge with modern approaches to landscape planning to enable greater leadership in deciding how their traditional territories will be managed and to have a stronger voice in policy decisions. © Kevin Arnold; **BACK COVER:** © J. Fritz Rumpf/TNC Photo Contest 2023

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Foreword

The following Deep-Dive incorporates components of TNC's ["The Voice, Choice, and Action Framework: A Conservation Practitioner's Guide to Indigenous and Community-Led Conservation, Version 2.0"](#) (VCA Framework) which provides foundations for working with Indigenous Peoples and local communities, the ["Human Rights Guide for Working with Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities"](#) which provides the methodology and best practices for implementation, and the ["Human Rights Screening Tool"](#), which helps practitioners identify human rights-based project risks and overall screening to conduct a due diligence process.

Key terms and tools are brought out of the VCA Framework. For more information, it is recommended that you visit the VCA Framework and reference documents. This Deep-Dive does not dive into Gender Equity, but for guidance on how to integrate it while engaging with Indigenous Peoples or local communities please visit [Integrating Gender Equity in Conservation at The Nature Conservancy](#).

By building on these resources, we aim to provide an applied roadmap for practitioners engaged in Watershed Investment Programs (WIP) operating with Indigenous Peoples and local communities, or within historical and current Indigenous Territories or lands occupied by local communities. While strict adherence to the steps and tools recommended in this document is not mandatory, the document underlines the importance of incorporating the Human Rights and VCA Pillars outlined herein when collaborating with Indigenous Peoples and local communities. Incorporating these facilitates safeguarding Indigenous Peoples' and overall human rights and promotes the enabling conditions for an enriching and successful WIP.

Recognizing the distinction between Indigenous Peoples and local communities, with the first holding collective rights as enshrined in the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) and respecting the statement issued by the United Nations Permanent Forum of Indigenous Issues requesting *"that all UN Member State parties to treaties related to the environment, biodiversity, and climate cease using the term "local communities" alongside "Indigenous Peoples" we have refrained from using the acronym "Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLC)." Instead, we will spell out the full name with the appropriate capitalization of "Indigenous Peoples" to recognize these diverse, sovereign communities. However, given their relevance within a WIP, we continue to include local communities as relevant actors who should be engaged, well-informed, and invited to participate in the various stages of a WIP.*

Introduction

GUIDE'S PURPOSE AND RELEVANCE FOR WATERSHED INVESTMENT PROGRAMS

A Watershed Investment Program (WIP) is an initiative that aims to deliver water security and associated co-benefit outcomes via a defined portfolio of Nature based Solutions (NbS) interventions within a specified service area (the “NbS Investment Portfolio”) (TNC, 2022). Water security challenges (WSC) such as water quality, quantity, floods, and droughts, vary widely from basin to basin, and so do their drivers.

The *Watershed Investment Program How-To Guide* (How-To Guide) defines the governance process as “assembling and aligning stakeholders with political influence, vested interest and societal trust that bring credibility to the watershed investment program (WIP) and help the WIP make decisions and implement interventions”. The process can involve groups from all sectors—public, private, civil society, Indigenous Peoples and local communities, and academia—to varying degrees.

To ensure the success and sustainability of a WIP, the involvement of Indigenous Peoples and local communities should be prioritized and initiated at the earliest stages. Building strong, trust-based partnerships with these groups, who depend on and steward many of the basin’s ecosystem services, is essential. Their participation is crucial; without it, there may be poor implementation outcomes, community opposition, or even legal action. Practitioners could overlook areas of high cultural value, and communities may feel threatened. Most importantly, a lack of knowledge and proper engagement could lead to human rights violations.

Furthermore, Indigenous Peoples and local communities may be the most relevant knowledge carriers and partners in WIP preparation and implementation processes, as “they have proven to be the most effective stewards of nature in the world—achieving greater conservation results and sustaining more biodiversity than government-protected areas.”¹ Additionally, “they manage or have tenure rights to over 25 percent of the world’s land, including interconnected systems of forests, grasslands, wetlands, rivers, lakes, the underlying groundwater, and coasts.”²



Morning gillnet fishing with Samuel Evoung from Aschouka Island. Gabon’s ‘great lakes’ are dangerously overfished and so to manage this pressure, people living around Lake Oguemoué have turned to TNC and its partners to help them form and expand community fishing associations. © Roshni Lodhia

1 TNC, 2022.

2 TNC, 2022.

The Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities Deep Dive is organized according to the phases shown in Figure 1. Readers are encouraged to read the entirety of the document before beginning any exercises described therein.

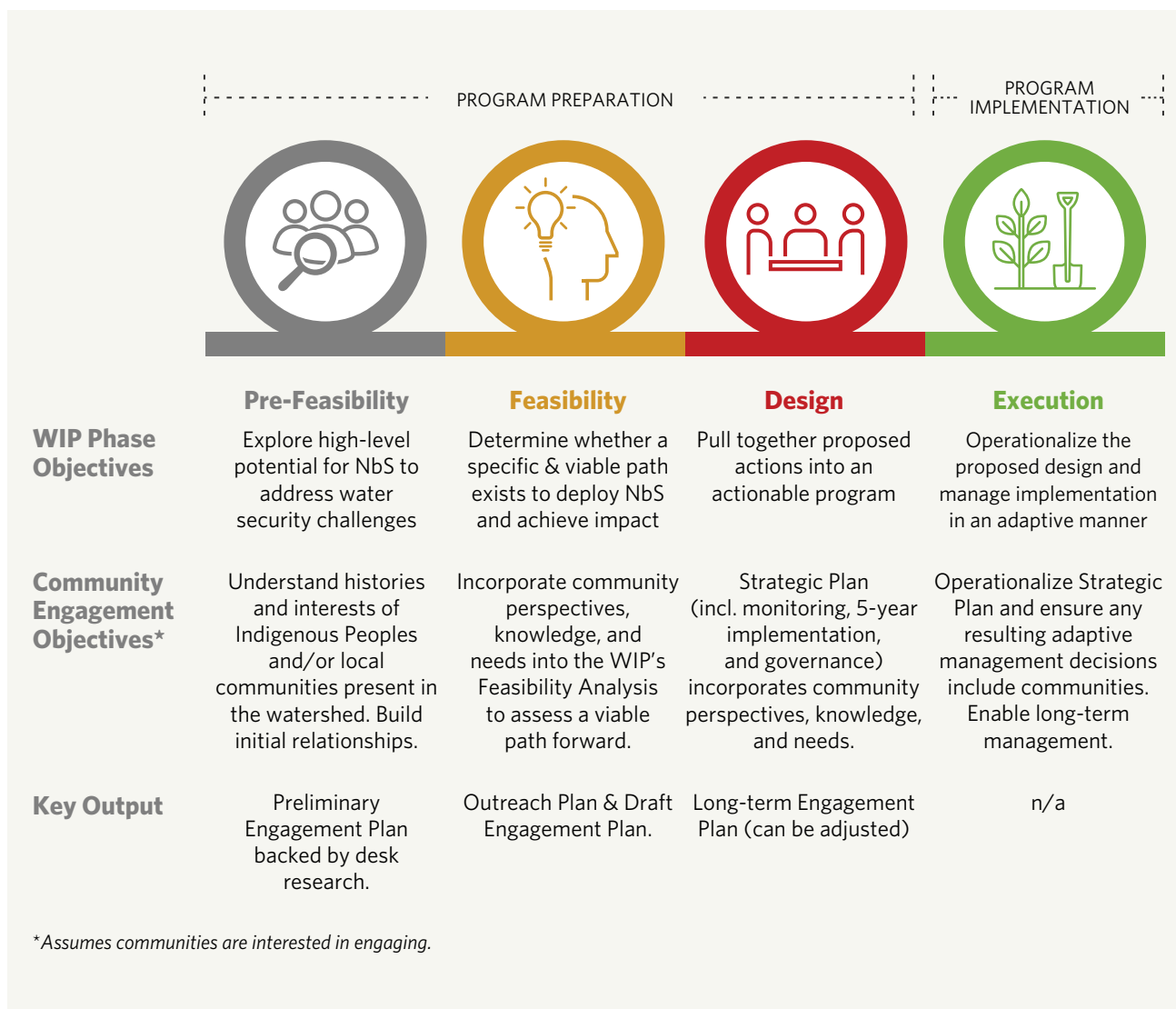


FIGURE 1. WIP development process

A first step towards engaging with Indigenous Peoples and local communities is gaining awareness of their history and the impacts left by colonialism or development. It is also essential to understand that even to-date, well-intended conservation initiatives that have overlooked the Indigenous Peoples and local communities in their planning processes have caused adverse effects such as displacement, violence, poverty, and even torture. These are unacceptable outcomes that practitioners must prevent, such as the example provided below.

Protected areas and human-rights violations in Tanzania

There have been multiple reports of human rights violations documented during the expansion of the Ruaha National Park in Mbarali District in 2006 and 2007, and more recently during the establishment of the Pololeti Game Control Area, later upgraded to the Pololeti Game Reserve, in Ngorongoro District, Tanzania (IWGIA, 2023). Human rights violations reported include the forcible relocation of Maasai pastoralists, the destruction of villages, sexual violence, harassment and intimidation, and other forms of brutality executed by government forces or paramilitary groups (Maasai Forcibly Displaced for Game Reserve, 2023).



June 2015. Leboi, a Maasai man walking his herd of cattle back home to his boma so that his wives can milk the cattle before sundown in Tanzania. The Nature Conservancy is working to protect the land that the Hadza people of Tanzania depend upon to maintain their hunter gatherer way of life. © Nick Hall

Upon reviewing this document, you should understand how involving Indigenous Peoples and local communities during each stage of WIP development will ensure their collective and human rights are respected. Moreover, this document seeks to provide guiding questions that should be answered in the process of engaging Indigenous Peoples and local communities in the WIP cycle and provides guidance on how to address these questions effectively. In case your engagement is far along in Execution, and you are just understanding the importance of engaging with Indigenous Peoples and local communities, these questions may also entail determining whether it is appropriate to pause, revisit the questions that remained unanswered, or evaluate if situations have changed and require a new approach or reassessment.

Understanding Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities

IMPORTANCE OF DIFFERENTIATING

Understanding the differences between Indigenous Peoples and local communities is crucial for several reasons:

- **Cultural Sensitivity:** Policies and engagement strategies must be culturally sensitive and appropriate for each group.
- **Legal and Ethical Considerations:** Indigenous Peoples have specific legal rights under international law that must be respected, such the right to self-determination and tenure over land and water resources.
- **Effective Participation:** Ensuring meaningful participation and representation of both groups requires understanding their unique perspectives and needs.
- **Conflict Avoidance:** Recognizing and addressing Indigenous Peoples' distinct identities and rights can help prevent conflicts over resources, land, and decision-making processes. By acknowledging and respecting these differences, programs and initiatives can be more effective, equitable, and sustainable.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES



April 2013. Portrait of local community members, The Nature Conservancy's conservation initiatives in East Kalimantan, Indonesia. © Nick Hall for TNC

Indigenous Peoples: Indigenous communities, Peoples, and Nations are those which have a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories and consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing on those territories or parts of them. Many [or most] form, at present, non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop, and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories and their ethnic identity as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, per their cultural patterns, social institutions, and legal systems (Martínez Cobo, 1982).³ **While Martínez Cobo's definition of Indigenous Peoples is widely accepted, it should be noted that Indigenous Peoples are diverse, and there are exemptions to the previous definition, such as the one mentioned below.**

Exemptions to the commonly adopted definition of Indigenous Peoples: Africa

In Africa, the common definition of Indigenous Peoples doesn't fully apply due to the widespread claim of indigenous status by many who have always inhabited the continent. The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, recognizing this, stated that all Africans are indigenous to Africa. However, specific groups use the term "indigenous" to highlight and address the discrimination they face. The overall characteristics of Indigenous Peoples in Africa include significant cultural differences from the dominant society, threats to their culture's survival, geographical isolation, political and social marginalization, reliance on traditional land and resources, and often being hunter/gatherers or pastoralists. Recognizing and respecting these differences and allowing each group to thrive democratically can prevent conflict rather than incite it.



Hamesi Hasani a Hadza hunter admires the sunset and Hadza landscape from a rocky outcropping at his camp in the Central Rift Valley of Tanzania. The Nature Conservancy is working to protect the land that the Hadza people of Tanzania depend upon to maintain their hunter-gatherer way of life. © Nick Hall

Most Indigenous Peoples suffered catastrophic traumas during the colonial and post-colonial eras, including but not limited to⁴:

- Forced displacement and relocation;
- Populations decimated by violence or disease;
- Children stolen away to boarding schools;
- Prohibitions on speaking their languages and practicing cultural and spiritual traditions;
- Severe restrictions on the use of land they inhabit;
- Non-recognition by colonial governments;
- Different forms of racial discrimination.

³ TNC, 2022.

⁴ TNC, Human Rights Guide, 2020.

TIP FOR PRACTITIONERS

To further understand these injustices, we recommend the [Indian 101 Country training](#), which focuses on tribes located in the United States, but provides broad principles that can be applied when working with Indigenous Peoples, elsewhere. The training series was built for natural resources practitioners and is free.

A relevant aspect that differentiates Indigenous Peoples from local communities is their collective rights.

Collective Rights: Collective rights are specific rights held by a group. Indigenous Peoples have collective rights that are indispensable for their existence, well-being, and integral development as people. The signatory states of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples must recognize and protect the rights of Indigenous Peoples to their self-determination, juridical, social, political, and economic systems or institutions, their own cultures, to profess and practice their spiritual beliefs, and to use their lands, territories, and resources.⁵ One of the rights recognized by international human rights law is Indigenous Peoples' rights to Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC).

Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC)

An FPIC process is designed to uphold Indigenous Peoples' right to self-determination. FPIC is the international legal assessment standard for interactions with Indigenous Peoples and any decision-making that can affect Indigenous Peoples⁶. Member states of the United Nations have committed themselves to using and applying FPIC through the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Despite its widespread acceptance, no universal standards prescribe how to implement FPIC principles. In response to this lack of agreed-upon and widely used standards for conducting FPIC processes, many Indigenous Peoples have developed their own FPIC protocols to safeguard genuine self-governance. Given these circumstances, it is best practice to follow Indigenous Peoples' lead on how they wish to be consulted, how the consultation process should unfold, how decisions will be made, and if your involvement is required in any way.

Elements of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC)

Free: Free emphasizes the autonomy to agree or disagree with a proposed project and the ability to set conditions and justify decisions. Indigenous Peoples must have the right to withdraw their consent if the agreed-upon conditions are breached. This freedom extends throughout the negotiation process, allowing Indigenous Peoples to freely enter, withdraw from, or abstain from discussions.⁷

Prior: Prior means that consent should be sought before any authorization or commencement of activities and at the earliest stages of project development before key decisions are made. This objective can be challenging to achieve in practice, so careful planning and restraint are called for in the early stages of an initiative⁸.

Informed: Informed means that the IPLC has been given access to all relevant information about the purpose of the project; its size, scope, lifespan, participants, and impact assessments. Possible impacts include environmental, human rights, economic, political, social and cultural. Information should be provided in culturally responsive

⁵ TNC, 2022.

⁶ TNC, Human Rights Guide, 2020.

⁷ Cultural Survival and First Peoples Worldwide, 2023.

⁸ TNC, Human Rights Guide, 2020.

formats and languages, accommodating the needs of people from different social identities. Sufficient time must be spent learning about underlying issues, following up, and allowing for dialogue within the IPLC and between the IPLC and your organization.⁹

Consent: Consent means the right to decide “yes” or “no” freely, or “yes” or “no,” but under the conditions the Indigenous community determines. The decision-making process reinforces the right to self-determination.¹⁰

Key considerations for practitioners participating or guiding WIPs that may require an FPIC process:

- Once core components (location, historical tenure rights, preliminary NbS options) of the initial stages of the proposed WIP are clear, it is appropriate to engage in initial conversations with community leaders, building trust. Indigenous leaders who are trusted and represent their communities can be an effective means of gauging initial interest, support, needs, requests, and concerns over the proposed WIP and mapping out an initial plan for how FPIC could be implemented during the project implementation¹¹.
- If, by the final stages of Feasibility an FPIC process is determined to be needed, stakeholders should follow the FPIC protocols determined by the communities. If a community has not determined FPIC protocols, you can rely on resources available through the [Human Rights Guide](#) or the [Human Rights Screening Tool](#) to facilitate discussions with community leaders to define their desired protocol for conducting the FPIC process.
- Be sure to allocate ample time to conduct an iterative & continuous process that respects the timelines and procedures of Indigenous Peoples. An FPIC process cannot be completed in a single meeting and should never be considered a one-time agreement. Practitioners should revisit the process whenever the scope of a proposed WIP changes, new substantive information arises, or a new phase of the WIP begins.
- Respect the Indigenous Peoples’ decisions resulting from an FPIC process. If a community decides to withhold their consent to the proposed WIP, *the WIP must be halted*.

Suggested Tools or Resources

[TNC’s Human Rights Guide FPIC Module](#) and [Frequently Asked Questions](#) resource and human rights indicators can be found in the Guide, and the [Human Rights Screening Tool](#), provides the human rights screening process and more in-depth information and tools.

Documents such as “Securing Indigenous People’s Rights to Self-determination” can give an Indigenous Peoples’ perspective on what they expect from an FPIC Process.

[Free Prior and Informed Consent an Indigenous peoples’ right and a good practice for local communities, Manual for Practitioners](#) is designed as a tool for a broad range of practitioners and provides information about the right to FPIC and how it can be implemented in six steps.

⁹ TNC, Human Rights Guide, 2020.

¹⁰ TNC, Human Rights Guide, 2020.

¹¹ UNDP, 2022.

LOCAL COMMUNITIES



Juan Butron navigating the waterways of Mexico's Ciénega de Santa Clara, the largest wetland in the Colorado River Delta. Butron is a leader of the Mexican community Ejido Johnson that is adjacent to the ciénega. © Nick Hall for TNC

Local Communities: Local communities may have a similar connection to and dependence on lands, waters, and resources for their culture and livelihoods, as well as systems of communal or shared governance of natural resources. However, members of local communities have not collectively self-identified as Indigenous Peoples and/or have not been recognized by their State government. As such, collective rights under international law available to Indigenous Peoples' does not apply to local communities¹². However, communities should still be considered during the WIP development process given their connection with their natural resources.

Upland Wetlands: an example of when to engage local communities

During the Feasibility phase of a WIP, the team may determine upland wetlands, crucial for regulating the water system of a basin, should be protected. These wetlands provide numerous ecosystem services, including carbon sequestration, water quality protection, flood protection, aquifer and soil water level regulation, peak flow regulation, and biodiversity support. Local communities surrounding or using the wetlands should be engaged and involved in the WIP. Hence, local communities could help the WIP team decide on the best mechanism for protection based on their unique local knowledge and understanding and share information about how the wetland is currently used, stewarded, or threatened. If not engaged, however, they may feel threatened that the protection measures could prevent them from accessing previously open or important areas for their local community, or your WIP could miss out on valuable local knowledge that would improve the design of your WIP.

¹² TNC, 2022.

Indigenous and local knowledge

WIPs have relied heavily on Western science to understand a basin's hydrological, and geomorphological interactions with the land cover and land use and how these relate to the water security challenges and appropriate nature-based solutions to help address those challenges. However, Indigenous Peoples have gathered a wealth of knowledge about their landscapes through countless generations, sometimes referred to as traditional or local knowledge. This traditional knowledge is an invaluable element to understanding the challenges and viable solutions further.



Traditional knowledge is knowledge, know-how, skills, and practices that are developed, sustained and passed on from generation to generation within a community, often forming part of its cultural or spiritual identity"

— World Intellectual Property Organization, 2023

The knowledge and expertise held by Indigenous Peoples or local communities should be granted the respect it deserves and integrated into WIPs, when permitted by the community. Here are some considerations to keep in mind when incorporating Indigenous knowledge:

- Indigenous knowledge is intellectual property that belongs to Indigenous Peoples and is protected under international frameworks.
- Practitioners should follow best management practices concerning intellectual and cultural property as outlined in the extract below from the Human Rights Guide (TNC, 2020).
- This series of background briefs, developed by the World Intellectual Property Organization, provides additional resources on traditional knowledge and intellectual property concerns (WIPO, 2023).



Practitioners should understand the Indigenous Peoples' and local communities' definition of their intellectual and cultural property and implement a code of ethics that outsiders must observe when recording or transmitting this knowledge in visual, audio or written form. This may require broader agreement from the Indigenous Peoples and local communities, going beyond the smaller representative body engaged in initial conversations. The same applies when photographing Indigenous individuals, especially children. Indigenous Peoples cannot waive their rights to photos; they always maintain their rights and can always revoke permission for others to use them. When possible, use Indigenous Peoples' own intellectual property and photo release templates."

— TNC, Human Rights Guide 2020.

Engaging Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities in the Watershed Investment Program Development Phases

OVERVIEW

Engagement with Indigenous Peoples or local communities is a continuous and dynamic journey integral to the WIP development process. Like the [Stakeholder Mapping](#), [Governance](#), and [Policy & Regulatory Mapping](#) processes, engagement with Indigenous Peoples and local communities provides answers to critical questions about the structure, components, and objectives of a WIP. When engaging with Indigenous Peoples and local communities, critical questions gravitate around understanding how a proposed WIP connects to the following dimensions:

- **Geographic & Cultural** considerations for people that may be affected by a WIP
- **Politics & Governance** implications for how people can engage with a WIP
- **Legal & Tenure** considerations related to land and any resources in the proposed area of a WIP

The tools and processes highlighted in this Deep-Dive are designed to help practitioners answer critical questions, with the appropriate level of detail, at each phase of a WIP development process. Thus, revisiting said tools at each phase of the WIP cycle is essential. The following paragraphs provide a general description of **how** engagement with Indigenous Peoples and local communities can look during each stage of the WIP development process. The section afterwards includes some examples of the questions frequently asked **during** the engagement process at each WIP phase.

As a practitioner supporting or leading a WIP, you might encounter instances where a program is well underway in the execution phase with no prior involvement of Indigenous Peoples or local communities. In such cases, it's highly recommended to **pause**, understand why Indigenous Peoples or local communities were not engaged early, and, if applicable, proactively initiate these vital engagements, guided by the questions below. You should avoid thinking of engagement processes with Indigenous Peoples and local communities as sources of "delays" in your work, but rather as the necessary steps for developing effective and long-lasting WIPs. Working with people is frequently not a linear or straightforward process and therefore requires flexibility in project timelines. However, taking the time to engage critically and repeatedly with questions about your proposed WIP is precisely what increases its effectiveness, fosters more equitable outcomes, and protects the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

[Table 1](#) provides an example of the level of engagement and key questions that should be answered during at each phase of a WIP to ensure Indigenous Peoples and local communities are decision-makers helping to drive the creation. This level of engagement can always be deepened, if necessary, especially if requested by the community. In this sense, engagement across WIP phases should be thought of as a continuum with varying degrees of depth and frequency. A successful engagement process relies on striking the appropriate balance between the amount of time, information, and commitment requested from communities and the level of detail that WIP components usually have at each stage. Questions have been divided into three thematic areas—Geographic and Cultural, Governance and Politics, and Legal and Tenure—but they all play an integral role in the overall engagement process. The following paragraphs provide examples of the interplay between depth of engagement and level of detail for WIP components, as well as existing tools and resources to help practitioners answer these questions.

If at any point in the WIP development process you're unable to answer the questions or your answers are negative (e.g., Is the culture of Indigenous Peoples and local communities being respected?), the project team should pause and revisit the initial questions! Also, in time, circumstances may change, so be flexible and open to re-doing and re-visiting once and again.

TABLE 1. Engagement Actions and Guiding Questions by WIP phase to engage Indigenous Peoples and local communities

TOPICS	PRE-FEASIBILITY	FEASIBILITY	DESIGN	EXECUTION
Engagement Actions	In case of work with Indigenous Peoples, determine if an FPIC process is needed in each phase			
	<p>Conduct desk research to understand the context of Indigenous Peoples or local community members</p> <p>Determine the tenure status of land and water resources.</p> <p>Coordinate preliminary expert interviews for a deeper understanding.</p> <p>Identify community leaders or organizations and request permission to arrange a visit.</p> <p>If permission is granted, plan your visit at the communities' convenience.</p> <p>Develop a Preliminary Engagement Plan</p>	<p>Following your Preliminary Engagement Plan, initiate dialogue</p> <p>Build trust: using a well-planned outreach plan, share your background, the organization you represent, your objectives, and information about the WIP, including potential benefits/impacts.</p> <p>Discuss their perspectives on the water security challenges (WSC) and WIP, as well as their needs.</p> <p>If the community agrees, plan a participatory workshop to analyse the WSC and possible interventions.</p> <p>Understand their willingness to participate in the WIP and to what extent</p>	<p>Develop follow-up participatory workshops to begin designing the WIP: consolidate findings, present potential benefits of the interventions, discuss locations, and make necessary adjustments.</p> <p>Collaboratively design WIP SMART objectives, and what data can be collected.</p> <p>Collaboratively design the governance and decision-making structures of the WIP</p> <p>Collaboratively agree on the 5-year implementation plan applicable to their territory or community: detailing roles, responsibilities, and communication mechanisms</p> <p>Document all agreements</p>	<p>Execute according to the agreed upon Strategic Plan (Design). At this stage, all parties should have a clear understanding of the expected level of engagement, and participation, execution, and communication activities should proceed, as agreed.</p> <p>Adaptive Management: If at any point the WIP decides to change its objectives, implementation priorities, and/or governance and operational structure (especially as the WIP matures), be sure to collaboratively discuss and agree to any changes.</p>

TOPICS	PRE-FEASIBILITY	FEASIBILITY	DESIGN	EXECUTION
Geography & Culture	<p>Are there Indigenous Peoples and local communities in the watershed?</p> <p>Where are they located, and what is the extent of their territory (even if not legally recognized)?</p> <p>What are the tribe or community names?</p> <p>What are their traditions, language, and beliefs?</p> <p>What is their relationship with nature?</p>	<p>Is there consent to enter the territory?</p> <p>Are there priority conservation or sacred areas?</p> <p>Are there sacred places that must be protected?</p> <p>Would they like to share traditional practices to address water security challenges? What are the community's values and vision?</p> <p>Are there any specific cultural or spiritual values the tribe or community wants to incorporate into the proposed WIP?</p>	<p>How can traditional knowledge inform where interventions should take place?</p> <p>Is the culture of Indigenous Peoples and local communities being respected?</p> <p>Has local knowledge been incorporated into the design process? If so, has this been recognized?</p>	<p>Is the executing organization aware of the presence of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in the basin it works on?</p> <p>Is the culture of Indigenous Peoples and local communities being respected?</p>
Politics & Governance	<p>How are they organized, and how do they make decisions?</p> <p>Who represents the community?</p> <p>What are the existing leadership roles in the community, and how are the leaders chosen?</p> <p>Are there any human rights-related considerations that must be addressed regarding leadership and decision-making?</p>	<p>What is the community's perception of the project and the challenges being addressed?</p> <p>Are there triggers that could require a Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) process?</p> <p>Does the community have a protocol for an FPIC process and resources?</p> <p>How will different groups or community members be engaged to ensure diverse community voices can provide input as the WIP is developed?</p>	<p>Are community members at the table defining the decision-making process that informs the design of a WIP?</p> <p>Was consensus reached on the project?</p>	<p>How are Indigenous peoples and local communities represented in the governance arrangement that defines the ongoing WIP's trajectory?</p> <p>What feedback loops exist to ensure the WIP does not stray from serving these parties?</p> <p>Is there a documented agreement—or internal disagreement—about what to do and who to engage with?</p>
Legal & Tenure	<p>Who has tenure over the land and water resources?</p> <p>Are there any active or a history of tenure conflicts over the land in their territory? and/or with the natural resources upon which they depend?</p>	<p>If there is a conflict over land tenure and other natural resources, do we have the expertise, legitimacy, and capacity to contribute positively to resolving this conflict?</p>	<p>If there is a conflict about tenure rights over the land, who are the project oversight entities I must contact to discuss appropriate paths forward?</p>	

Pre-Feasibility

LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT

During the **Pre-Feasibility Phase**, initial **desk research** is required, accompanied by **preliminary interviews with a subject matter expert** or local Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) to increase your understanding of the Indigenous Peoples or local communities, their context, leaders, tenure status and possible conflicts. The research should allow you to answer the questions in Table 1. At this point, **requesting permission to visit the Indigenous Peoples territory** or local community through local points of contact—ideally, a community leader—is encouraged. At this stage, a key engagement focus is to explore community interest in being part of the WIP development process, as well as understand any barriers (institutional, political, cultural, or otherwise) that would inhibit or undermine their ability to participate in the WIP development process.

In preparation for your visit, your team should develop a Preliminary Engagement Plan addressing the following components:

- **When to meet?** Preferred day, time, place...
- **Understand who you are meeting with.** Is this a community leader, to what degree?
- **What is the culturally appropriate language?** Do you need interpretation?
- **What will you say?** What messaging do you want to convey, who will attend from your organization, and what do you want to learn more about from the community?
- **Next Steps:** Determine if the Indigenous Peoples or local communities are interested in a second meeting to discuss the possibility of a WIP and the frequency in which follow-up meetings or workshops could be held.
- **Unanswered questions:** As appropriate, address the unanswered questions from your desktop research through questions and participant observation. However, gathering additional information in your first meeting may be inappropriate before relationships and trust are established.

The Preliminary Engagement Plan should be adapted to a long-term Engagement Plan during the Design stage as an element of the governance and implementation components of the WIP Strategic Plan. Additionally, information gathered during your outreach and desk top research should be incorporated into a broader Stakeholder Mapping exercise as outlined in the [Deep Dive](#).

During Pre-Feasibility, WIP teams will conduct a Pre-Feasibility analysis that collates key features of the watershed, water security and other challenges, potential NbS, stakeholder mapping, key data sets, and institutional and political frameworks governing the watershed. Outputs from this analysis can help inform initial conversations with Indigenous Peoples and local communities, but it's unlikely you'll have deep enough relationships, at this point, to gauge the key challenges and potential solutions of interest—or not—to communities. Building trust takes time, and most teams engage more deeply with communities beginning in Feasibility. If that is the case for your team, it may be material to revisit and edit your team's Pre-Feasibility analysis to incorporate input resulting from deeper engagement during Feasibility. For example, a Ministry says they manage forests adjacent to the community's territory and they have a great relationship with the community. However, in speaking with the community, their opinion on the strength of the relationship differs. This should be included in your Pre-Feasibility analysis.

Regardless, it's important not to move forward with a detailed [Feasibility Analysis](#) before your team is able to gauge important insights from communities including primary watershed challenges (including water security), areas of importance or off limits, key nature-based solutions, rights to resources, and how they are included or excluded from watershed governance. To find out more information about rights to resources and watershed governance, refer to the "Politics and Governance" and "Land and Tenure" sections below.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

The primary objective at this point is to comprehensively understand the Indigenous Peoples and local communities in the program's areas, including location, language, sacred places (if applicable), culture, and any detail that might enrich the WIP process and safeguard human rights.

Topic: Geography & Culture

1. *Are there Indigenous Peoples and local communities in the watershed?*
2. *Where are they located, and what is the extent of their territory (even if not legally recognized)?*
3. *What are the tribe or community names?*
4. *What are their traditions, language, and beliefs?*
5. *What is their relationship with nature?*

As established by the "[How-to-Guide](#)" during Pre-Feasibility, the first step in [stakeholder engagement](#) is exploring the stakeholder landscape. Indigenous Peoples and local communities within the watershed must be identified clearly (e.g., name, location, extent of their territory, language, etc.). Several tools, like Landmark (see below), can effectively complement this information-gathering process, but it's advisable to cross-reference data from at least two distinct and reliable sources before conclusively determining the existence of a community within the watershed of interest. This ensures a more comprehensive and accurate understanding of the situation.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Many countries have one or more institutions or ministries dedicated to Indigenous affairs. These entities serve as crucial repositories of information regarding the presence and characteristics of Indigenous communities within the watershed of interest. Also note that in various countries, particularly in Africa and Asia, Indigenous Peoples are not recognized by the State, despite Indigenous Peoples self-recognizing themselves as Indigenous (e.g., Bangladesh,¹³ Russia¹⁴).

Non-recognition of Indigenous Peoples can lead to a lack of specific protections and rights, impacting their ability to preserve their cultures, languages, and traditional ways of life. It often reflects broader issues of marginalization and exclusion within these societies. In countries that lack recognition or official institutions representing Indigenous Peoples, it is advisable to search for Local or International Organizations for Indigenous Peoples as a first resource.

Suggested Tools or Resources

[Landmark](#) is an online, interactive global platform providing maps and other critical information on lands collectively held and used by Indigenous Peoples and local communities. The global platform is designed to help Indigenous Peoples protect their land rights and secure tenure over their lands. Landmark provides several categories of data to show the land tenure situation for Indigenous Peoples and communities, potential pressures on their lands, changes in land cover over time, and their contributions to protecting the environment.

[IWGIA](#) provides information on the Indigenous Peoples in each country including population, cultural characteristics, tribes, challenges, and political participation.

[Mapping Cultural Values Tool](#) provided by TNC's Voice, Choice, Action Framework

¹³ IWGIA, 2023.

¹⁴ Bereztkov, 2023.



A community engagement workshop on women's land rights and land succession, led by the Taita-Taveta Wildlife Conservancies Association and a local CBO, Kwaela, in Teri B community land. PFP funding will also cover community empowerment workshops. © Roshni Lodhia

Keywords in your online search: Indigenous communities [country/basin name], Tribal groups [country/basin name], First Nations [country/basin name], Ethnic minorities [country/basin name], Native peoples [country/basin name], Autochthonous populations [country/basin name], Indigenous tribes [country/basin name], Traditional societies [country/basin name], Local Indigenous populations, [country/basin name], Indigenous land [water, resource, etc] rights [country/basin name]

LOCAL COMMUNITIES

As mentioned, local communities do not have an internationally recognized definition but are typically connected to a particular area or place. They also depend on lands, waters, and resources for their culture, livelihoods, and systems of communal or pooled governance of natural resources. They should also be involved in designing interventions located within the community that might benefit or affect them. Moreover, as locals, they will have a better understanding of the water security challenges of the watershed and might already have the answer to address it.

Suggested Tools or Resources

Municipalities or local governments should have initial community information, such as socio-economic analyses or censuses. Additionally, local associations, including water or basin committees, in those communities can be the ideal point of contact or entry point for a WIP, as they are usually integrated with local leaders or respected community members.

Keywords in your online search: Name of the local communities [country/basin name], Name of local Municipality [country/basin name], Census Name of State or Municipality [country/basin name], Local NGOs + Name of Local Community.

Topic: Politics & Governance

1. *How are they organized, and how do they make decisions?*
2. *Who represents the community?*
3. *What are the existing leadership roles in the community, and how are the leaders chosen?*
4. *Are there any human rights-related considerations that must be addressed regarding leadership and decision-making?*

A vital part of developing a WIP involves understanding the relevant systems that govern the land, waters, and other natural resources contained by the geographic boundaries of a watershed. Frequently, watersheds are governed by different yet overlapping systems, especially when watersheds span across regions, nations, and territories. These governance systems determine how people access and use the watershed and its resources and how decisions for managing the watershed are made. WIP proponents will need to identify all relevant groups that exercise authority over the watershed and design the WIP's governance system to match the local context.

When a proposed WIP includes an area governed by or is important to Indigenous Peoples, (e.g., part of an Indigenous People's ancestral land) the proposed WIP must understand the Indigenous People's governance system and how it will influence the WIP's own governance system. Indigenous Peoples can provide information about their governance system and decision-making processes, but before engaging, you may find basic information through Indigenous Peoples organizations, ministries, or government institutions. However, it is recommended that this information be confirmed directly with the communities once the first visit has been established. Note, you may need multiple visits before you're able to ask about their governance systems.

Understanding the traditional or local governance system will allow you to understand each community's decision-making process and follow their local rules and procedures. Practitioners are encouraged to ensure this process is respectfully implemented to comply with community structures and traditions. It is important to note that, as in any community or society, there might be opposition to a decision made by its decision-makers; however, the decision should be respected. In addition, it is crucial to be mindful of how traditional or local governance systems determine access to decision-making and resources for different community members (e.g., women, elders, young people) to develop WIP governance structures that foster participation and access to decision-making according to equitable conservation principles.

Suggested Tools or Resources

[The Natural Resource Governance Tool – Version 2](#). Developed by the Wildlife Conservation Society

[Equitable Conservation Principles](#)

Topics: Legal & Tenure

1. *Who has tenure over the land and water resources?*
2. *Are there any active or a history of tenure conflicts over the land in their territory? and/or with the natural resources upon which they depend?*

Since the rights held over lands, waters, and resources are critical to understanding the underlying context of an Indigenous Territory or local community, it is important to understand the tenure. Tenure informs who can use what, the type of recognition they hold, and potentially overlapping rights or claims. Some examples of tenure forms include public, private, communal, collective Indigenous, or customary.

The template linked below can be used during [Pre-Feasibility](#) to document the specific circumstances governing rights to land and waters in the area under consideration for a WIP. This template can also be used to consult local, regional, and national policy instruments, government institutions in charge of natural resources (e.g., departments of natural resources or secretariats of environment and natural resources), and the community or its representative institution.

Suggested Tools or Resources

[Tenure Security Assessment Tool](#)

Feasibility

LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT

In Feasibility, it's recommended to begin engaging more deeply with the communities previously identified. It is essential to balance the development needs of the WIP with respect for the time, energy, and effort requested from these communities. Engaging too early, without a clear idea of the potential NbS locations, might create false expectations among community members. Conversely, engaging too late could generate discomfort or opposition, as communities may feel excluded from decision-making. Therefore, it is crucial to balance the timing of engagement to ensure meaningful collaboration and set realistic expectations.

The Preliminary Engagement Plan, detailed in Pre-Feasibility, should guide your engagement with communities at this stage. These first engagements will allow you to understand more about the communities and validate the information you gathered in the desktop research. Most importantly, this will also start the trust-building process.

Building trust takes time and is not expected to happen on your first visit! At this point, you are encouraged to share your background, the organization you represent, and the objective behind your visit—in this case, a WIP—and most of all, you are encouraged to **listen** at this stage. Please note, teams may have already begun visiting communities in the Pre-Feasibility stage.

TIP FOR PRACTITIONERS

When visiting Indigenous Peoples, don't come empty-handed! Bring something as a token of appreciation for their time and opening their community or house to you. It does not have to be material or expensive, it can be a rock, tea, or a local sweet, but it should be something that might open a conversation about where you come from, and what you represent as a person. Good faith gestures such as this help build trust!

At this stage, an **outreach strategy** for each community is incorporated into your Preliminary Engagement Plan. The outreach strategy is, essentially, a communications strategy to introduce the concept of a WIP and share key information such as the different parties interested in its development, the water security challenges, our understanding of the drivers, and potential solutions, etc. The key components of the outreach strategy typically include choosing appropriate communication channels, setting goals for outreach efforts, and developing key messages, including:

- **Who you are:** What is your name, where are you from, and what organization are you representing?
- **What is a WIP:** how does it work, what is the process, what are its benefits and risks? Examples of other WIPs may be appropriate.
- **WIP Progress:** who is involved, what have you done so far, what are next steps? If appropriate, share that you'd like the community to be involved, but let them dictate their willingness and preference.
- **Goal:** Grasp their views and willingness to be involved. If positive, share your team would like to plan a workshop or discussion to hear their Water Security Challenges (WSC), possible interventions, and learn from their knowledge and expertise.

Teams should ensure the process encourages the active involvement of diverse groups within communities rather than conversations only with community leaders. Pay careful attention to planning **participatory processes** considering gender, age, and social norms to ensure people can provide meaningful input.

To conduct an effective Feasibility Analysis, it's important to have a clear understanding of the level of engagement (information, consultation, involvement, collaboration, etc.) the Indigenous Peoples or local communities desire and proceed accordingly. In the case of Indigenous Peoples, it is crucial to understand whether an FPIC process is required, and the desired role of your organization, if any, in this process. At the end of this process, the team should have worked with each community to develop a new version of a community **Engagement Plan** (replacing your Preliminary Engagement Plan) that outlines how the community would like to be involved in the project moving forward. The Human Rights Guide offers an [Engagement Plan Template](#).

[Appendix A](#) provides a Terms of Reference (ToR) that can guide the team in understanding the level of engagement that Indigenous Peoples and local communities wish to have with the program. Some key outcomes of the engagement process are as follows:

- Identification and characterization of the Indigenous Peoples and local communities in the areas the WIP intends to work in (narrowed down from the mapping done in the Pre-feasibility stage).
- An outreach strategy tailored to each community.
- An agreed-upon definition of the WSC addressed.
- A joint understanding of the main drivers for the WSC.
- Initial ideas about potential solutions to the WSC.
- Identification of traditional knowledge, cultural and spiritual values, or locations that communities wish to incorporate to the WIP development process, if any.
- Formal confirmation about the Indigenous Peoples and local communities' desired involvement and participation in the WIP.
- A well-established community **Engagement Plan** that matches the communities' desired level of involvement and participation.



Beatrice Manyua with her husband Elijah own this tea plantation in the hills of Othaya, Nyeri County, in Kenya. Beatrice has implemented terracing for her “food crops”—maize, beans, cabbage. © Roshni Lodhia

During Feasibility, the WIP team will conduct detailed modelling of the basin to determine a portfolio of cost-effective NbS to adequately address key challenges, including, but not limited to, water security, biodiversity, adaptation, and socio-economic development. Community involvement can strengthen this analysis in a number of ways:

1. **Confirm Land Use Land Cover Model:** Indigenous Peoples and local communities often have a deep connection to their lands and resources and may be able to confirm whether your WIP's Land Use Land Cover (LULC) model is accurate. For example, while an area may have protected status, they may know of active deforestation or encroachment threats not shown on the model, or they may be able to pinpoint illegal mining activities not known by other stakeholders. In both instances, this insight could impact future trends delineated in the model.
2. **Prioritize Areas for Conservation:** communities can help delineate culturally or ecologically significant areas to help teams prioritize WIP spending within particular polygons. In INVEST, for example, teams can prioritize where first dollars are spent or on which NbS activities, e.g., protected areas, agricultural best management practices, etc., as part of the benefit return function. They may also be able to provide input on areas in the basin where select NbS have not been successful in the past, and why.
3. **New Nature-based Solutions:** Indigenous Peoples and local communities have been stewarding their lands, waters, and resources for generations, and, therefore, may have solutions and iterations on NbS to improve outcomes. These additional options may be more effective at addressing basin challenges and should be considered, even if teams aren't quite sure how to effectively model or quantify benefits. Don't be afraid to get creative!
4. **Unit Costs:** in some cases, Indigenous Peoples and local communities who have been implementing conservation activities for years, may be able to share data on costs & benefits to improve the accuracy of the analysis. Many communities have been monitoring impacts and tracking expenditures for decades, so they are well-positioned to apply for public and private grants that require detailed reporting.

Teams should ensure, at a minimum, Indigenous Peoples and local communities understand and generally agree with the results of the Feasibility Analysis, as this will be used to develop the implementation, governance, and monitoring plans in the Design phase.

NOTE

Remember, being forthcoming about potential challenges, uncertainties, and anticipated risks for the success of proposed WIPs is a key part of building relationships based on trust and managing expectations. Interested parties are entitled to as much information as possible to make informed decisions!

GUIDING QUESTIONS

Topic: Geography & Culture

- 1) *Is there consent to enter the territory?*
- 2) *Are there priority conservation or sacred areas?*
- 3) *Are there sacred places that must be protected?*
- 4) *Would they like to share traditional practices to address water security challenges? What are the community's values and vision?*
- 5) *Are there any specific cultural or spiritual values the tribe or community wants to incorporate into the proposed WIP?*

Engagement during this phase will involve delving into each communities' context, culture, and dynamics to develop an effective engagement plan.

At this time, a first draft of the Pre-Feasibility assessment has confirmed the potential for a WIP and identified locations where NbS activities could address challenges in the basin. This information will help your team effectively communicate how a community may be impacted by or involved in the WIP. For example, a community may rely on a wetland that's important for flood attenuation or proposed activities upstream may impact water flowing into their territories. Before finalizing the Pre-Feasibility analysis, it's important to incorporate experiences and expertise from communities to strengthen the team's understanding of the basin context, especially if Indigenous Peoples and local communities choose to be involved in the WIP moving forward.

If the team has been granted access to the territory, the first step is to plan your first visit with a Preliminary Engagement Plan (Pre-Feasibility). To answer the questions related to Geography and Culture ([Table 1](#)), your team must follow the communities' lead; there may be some information they consider privileged and therefore will not answer. Remember that initial engagements require much more trust-building and listening than talking. Many questions might be answered gradually, not in first encounters.

Topic: Politics & Governance

1. *What is the community's perception of the project and the challenges being addressed?*
2. *Are there triggers that could require a Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) process?*
3. *Does the community have a protocol for an FPIC process and resources?*
4. *How will different groups or community members be engaged to ensure diverse community voices can provide input as the WIP is developed?*

A vital part of developing a WIP involves understanding the relevant systems that govern the land, waters, and other natural resources contained by the geographic boundaries of a watershed. Frequently, watersheds are governed by different yet overlapping systems, especially when watersheds span across regions, nations, and territories. These governance systems determine how people access and use the watershed and its resources and how decisions for managing the watershed are made. WIP proponents will need to identify all relevant groups that exercise authority over the watershed and design the WIP's governance system to match the local context.

When a proposed WIP includes an area governed by or is important to Indigenous Peoples, (e.g., part of an Indigenous People's ancestral land) the proposed WIP must understand the Indigenous People's governance system and how it will influence the WIP's own governance system. Indigenous Peoples can provide information about their governance system and decision-making processes, so it's recommended you verify the information gathered during Pre-Feasibility desk research directly with communities once the first visit has been established. Note, you may need multiple visits before you're able to ask about their governance systems.

Understanding the traditional or local governance system will allow you to understand each community's decision-making process and follow their local rules and procedures. Practitioners are encouraged to ensure this process is respectfully implemented to comply with community structures and traditions. It is important to note that, as in any community or society, there might be opposition to a decision made by its decision-makers; however, the decision should be respected. In addition, it is crucial to be mindful of how traditional or local governance systems determine access to decision-making and resources for different community members (e.g., women, elders, young people) to develop WIP governance structures that foster participation and access to decision-making according to equitable conservation principles. If a community chooses to participate in the WIP, and engage in the Feasibility analysis, teams should consider how to structure engagement to ensure diverse perspectives can be raised in a safe environment.

This context should inform your community Engagement Plan. See [Appendix 1](#) for a Terms of Reference to hire a consultant to develop an Engagement Plan. Outcomes from this Engagement Plan will be critical to informing the governance structure under Design.

Suggested Tools or Resources

[The Natural Resource Governance Tool – Version 2](#). Developed by the Wildlife Conservation Society

Equitable Conservation.

Topics: Legal & Tenure

1. *If there is a conflict over land tenure and other natural resources, do we have the expertise, legitimacy, and capacity to contribute positively to resolving this conflict?*

Since the rights held over lands, waters, and resources are critical to understanding the underlying context of an Indigenous Territory or local community, it is important to understand the tenure. Tenure informs who can use what, the type of recognition they hold, and potentially overlapping rights or claims. Some examples of tenure forms include public, private, communal, collective Indigenous, or customary.

Tenure and legal context may impact which resources communities can access or use. This will influence how a WIP is operationalized, locations where specific NbS can be implemented, and/or income generating activities the WIP can pursue, e.g., selling non-timber forest products or other commodities like produce, fish, and aquatic plants beyond subsistence or cultural use. If there are tenure rights preventing access to or implementation within certain landscapes, then the team should consider whether these lands should be included or prioritized in the Feasibility Analysis. The template linked below can help document the specific circumstances governing rights to land and waters in the area under consideration for a WIP and be excellent reference material for deciding on the scope of your Feasibility Analysis.

EXAMPLE

The Eldoret-Iten Water Fund (EIWF), serving the cities of Eldoret and Iten in Kenya, focuses on restoring three key water towers—Cherangany Hills, Elgeyo Hills, and the northern Mau Forest. The social context of EIWF's operations is heavily influenced by Kenya's colonial history. Indigenous Peoples in Kenya, such as traditional hunter-gatherer communities, have ancestral ties to forest land but were forcibly removed when the British colonial government designated these lands as protected areas in the early 20th century. This history has contributed to the greater social and economic vulnerability of Indigenous Peoples compared to other groups. EIWF received funding from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the International Fund for Agriculture and Development (IFAD) to initiate the program, a requirement of which included an FPIC process with written consent from the Indigenous Communities for the project to proceed.

Through the FPIC process—for which the Kenyan Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources had national guidelines—the EIWF worked with three Indigenous Communities, the Cherangany, Sengwer, and Ogiek, to develop Indigenous Peoples Action Plans (IPAPs). The IPAPs outlined activities to be jointly realized with allocated budgets, implementation plans, and dispute resolution mechanisms. Formal FPIC documentation was signed with each Indigenous Community, and informs the water fund's areas of implementation, NbS activities, and strategic plans. See "Tools into Action" for more information about the Eldoret-Iten Water Fund.

Suggested Tools or Resources

[Tenure Security Assessment Tool](#)

Design

LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT

If communities would like to move forward, it's essential to co-develop specific components of a WIP through participatory workshops, including how NbS interventions will be implemented, how resources will flow to communities, how decisions will be made, and how impacts will be monitored. These will all be elements of the WIP's Strategic Plan.

A WIP's monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework will include SMART Objectives which quantify how you will measure the success of your WIP and will, therefore, act as a framing device for all future adaptive management. Indigenous Peoples and local communities should be involved to help frame the WIP's outcomes and the indicators to track implementation and measure progress, especially if monitoring activities involve data collection (in-person or remote sensing techniques) within the territories of Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

During this phase, the WIP will also determine a more structured governance and operational arrangement to coordinate an initial 5-year implementation plan. This is an opportunity for Indigenous Peoples and local communities to articulate how they would like to be involved in decision-making and implementation, especially activities impacting their territory, community, or resources. At the end of this stage, it's important to either confirm or adjust the previously developed **Engagement Plan** to create a long-term governance arrangement agreed upon by both parties. Again, it should detail how the WIP and the communities are going to collaborate, the frequency of communication, and level of engagement. It can be revisited at any time during the process, as requested by a community.

The Human Rights Guide offers an Engagement Plan Template. **It is essential to document all agreements and ensure both parties have copies.**



Tekakro Xikrin fishing on Rio Bacaja near Pot-Kro Village, Brazil. Tekakro uses many techniques such as coconut larvae to catch minnows and then uses minnows to catch piranhas. © Kevin Arnold

GUIDING QUESTIONS

Topic: Geography & Culture

1. *How can traditional knowledge inform where interventions should take place?*
2. *Is the culture of Indigenous Peoples and local communities being respected?*
3. *Has local knowledge been incorporated into the design process? If so, has this been recognized?*

By this point, a Feasibility Analysis outlining the WIP's opportunity to deploy NbS and achieve impact has been collaboratively developed with Indigenous Peoples and local communities. Design presents an excellent opportunity to co-create and determine the 5-year implementation plan through participatory workshops, especially concerning interventions within their territories or communities. Participation is also strongly encouraged when defining the SMART objectives, MEL Framework, and governance arrangement to ensure Indigenous Peoples and local communities are respected and represented.

EXAMPLE

VivoCuenca, a water fund in Manizales, Colombia, collaborates with communities to design and implement many of its NbS interventions. The Caldas region features diverse geographies and stakeholders including local inhabitants, rural producer families, and laborers. Indigenous communities do not reside in the project municipalities. For project implementation, VivoCuenca works with trusted community leaders and builds trust over at least six months before engaging directly with rural producers to co-design project activities. Land ownership in Caldas is typically clear and well-documented, a major enabling condition.

For technical NbS projects (e.g., PES), VivoCuenca's team identifies and prioritizes areas, maps stakeholders through surveys and interviews, and socializes projects with community leaders and relevant officials. Project agreements are co-designed with stakeholders and implemented, tracked, and monitored by VivoCuenca's technical team. For projects centered on environmental education (e.g., PaSos and Sustainable Agrosystems), methodologies vary based on community input. Community engagement ensures the sustainability of projects by securing buy-in from landowners and nearby community members. While the VivoCuenca is now in Execution, designing and defining how NbS will be implemented is incredibly important to your WIP's Strategic Plan and should be regularly revisited as part of adaptive management. See "Tools into Action" for more information on VivoCuenca.

Topic: Politics & Governance

1. *Are community members at the table defining the decision-making process that informs the design of a WIP?*
2. *Was consensus reached on the project?*

When determining the WIP's interim or long-term governance structure, Indigenous Peoples and local communities should be—at a minimum—consulted and included in the stakeholder interview process outlined in the [Governance Deep Dive](#). In some cases, a WIP may be in a position to improve Indigenous Peoples' rights to resources or help hurdle an institutional barrier to autonomous management. In this case, the WIP should consider how its governance and vision support Indigenous Peoples and local communities with long-term management of the WIP, dependent on community interest. Experience shows conservation outcomes are more sustainable when managed by local capacity, so the governance model—whether an umbrella agreement, hosted program, or dedicated vehicle—should be building and augmenting local stakeholders to ensure success over its lifetime.

Ideally, Indigenous Peoples and/or local community members would be on decision-making bodies for the WIP, but they should dictate their level of involvement.

Suggested Tools or Resources

[The Natural Resource Governance Tool – Version 2](#). Developed by the Wildlife Conservation Society

Equitable Conservation

Topics: Legal & Tenure

1. *If there is a conflict about tenure rights over the land, who are the project oversight entities I must contact to discuss appropriate paths forward?*

Since the rights held over lands, waters, and resources are critical to understanding the underlying context of an Indigenous Territory or local community, it is important to understand the tenure. Tenure informs who can use what, the type of recognition they hold, and potentially overlapping rights or claims. Some examples of tenure forms include public, private, communal, collective Indigenous, or customary.

Tenure and legal context may impact which resources communities can access or use. This will influence how a WIP is operationalized, locations where specific NbS can be implemented, and/or income generating activities the WIP can pursue, e.g., selling non-timber forest products or other commodities like produce, fish, and aquatic plants beyond subsistence or cultural use. These elements should be taken into account as the WIP develops its 5-year strategic plan.

Suggested Tools or Resources

[Tenure Security Assessment Tool](#)

Execution

LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT

During the **Execution** phase, it is vital to comply with the established Engagement Plan and to remember that if changes to the agreed-upon WIP occur, the Indigenous Peoples and local communities must be informed. A WIPs Execution stage is characterized by on-the-ground implementation and regular monitoring to track progress toward the WIP's co-defined goals and objectives. At this stage, a WIP Engagement Plan should be active, promoting communication and regular updates with Indigenous Peoples and local communities. Avenues for community members to provide feedback or report any concerns should also be activated and agreed upon, as they represent a vital component of adaptive management, an approach recommended for all WIPs.

Often during Execution, a WIP's governance structure may be amended to better serve the scale at which the WIP is implementing and the amount or type of funding flowing through the organization. For example, a WIP may transition from a hosted program to an independent entity with its own staff, financial systems, and BOD. It's important to ensure that Indigenous Peoples and local communities are included in this transition, especially if it will impact the engagement structure they have become accustomed to. This includes changes to WIP personnel or key stakeholders involved. If possible, new staff should be mentored and transitioned into positions over a longer time horizon to help them build trust and familiarity with communities, and communities should be informed of new stakeholders involved in the WIP, with an avenue to raise concerns or grant approval.

NOTE

Many engagement activities described in this guide involve asking input from individual community members and can therefore be classified as research with human subjects. Be sure to follow best practices regarding approval of research with human subjects, data collection and storage, and research with protected groups, which include but are not limited to Indigenous Peoples and minors. Follow these links for more information and resources: <https://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/index.html> & <https://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/regulations-and-policy/belmont-report/index.html>.



Ecotourism guide, Sam Brown, and TNC's Loisaba Project Manager, Chantal Migongo-Bake, review a map of the Loisaba Conservancy in northern Kenya. Loisaba brings together local communities, government, private enterprise, and NGOs as a model for community development and conservation programs that can be replicated throughout Africa. © Ami Vitale

GUIDING QUESTIONS

Topic: Geography & Culture

1. *Is the executing organization aware of the presence of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in the basin it works on?*
2. *Is the culture of Indigenous Peoples and local communities being respected?*

The above questions are intended for WIPs that have been in Execution for a while, yet no formal engagement with Indigenous Peoples or local communities has ever been established. In such cases, teams should pause and return to the guiding questions under Pre-feasibility.

EXAMPLE

In the case of Sebago Clean Waters (SCW), a coalition of eleven partner organizations, formed in 2017, has been conserving forestland & working on barrier removal for several years. They are now, however, refocusing on community engagement to ensure inclusion of diverse community perspectives, even though they are in Execution. SCW's forestland conservation efforts are focused on the upstream Sebago Lake watershed communities and provide benefits to both upstream and downstream receiving water communities in greater Portland. The region is part of the unceded territory of the Abenaki, one of five tribes in Wabanaki Confederacy, now largely residing in Odanak First Nation, Quebec

SCW is working on engaging these diverse communities, including the Indigenous people historically connected to the land. They are committed to understanding and addressing societal inequities in conservation practices and are “actively learning how the conservation movement—including [the SCW] partnership—has been complicit in perpetuating injustice in [their] country and in the land and water conservation sector.” To do so, they have gone back to revisit the guiding questions in Pre-Feasibility and have been in a learning journey to articulate an equitable conservation strategy. Rather than forging relationships with Wabanaki leadership, on their own, they have engaged with a local organization, First Light who have a history of working with Wabanaki leaders and have jointly established the Wabanaki Commission on Land and Stewardship. A Conservation Community Delegation from First Light serves as a liaison to facilitate communication between conservationists and Tribal representatives. SCW is engaging through this preferred communication channel to forge relationships, through which three SCW members were able to participate in a statewide non-native First Light delegation visit to Odanak First Nation to begin building relationships face-to-face. See [“Tools into Action”](#) for more information about Sebago Clean Waters.

Topic: Politics & Governance

1. *How are Indigenous Peoples and local communities represented in the governance arrangement that defines the ongoing WIP's trajectory?*
2. *What feedback loops exist to ensure the WIP does not stray from serving these parties?*
3. *Is there a documented agreement—or internal disagreement—about what to do and who to engage with?*

Your WIPs governance structure should clearly articulate how Indigenous Peoples and local communities are involved in WIP execution and decision-making. A corresponding Engagement Plan should be developed with the community to reflect this arrangement, including any additional details required by the community. If there is no such documented agreement or your WIP has not been in contact with Indigenous Peoples or local communities in the basin, return to Design or Pre-Feasibility, depending on the depth of your previously established relationship.

Tools into Action

This section highlights three WIPs engaging with Indigenous Peoples and local communities at distinct stages of WIP development.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA | SEBAGO CLEAN WATERS

Context

The 234,000-acre Sebago Lake watershed is 84% forested, but only 16% of this forest is permanently protected, and development-driven deforestation is on the rise. Due to these development pressures, the U.S. Forest Service has identified this watershed as highly vulnerable. Sebago Clean Waters (SCW), a coalition of 11 partner organizations formed in 2017, aims to conserve 25% (35,000 additional acres) of forestland by 2032 to sustain water quality in Sebago Lake—as well as other co-benefits including recreation and wildlife habitat. To date, SCW has conserved over 11,200 acres.

One partner, the Portland Water District (PWD), provides drinking water from Sebago Lake to the downstream greater Portland urban and suburban area and has an EPA waiver from filtration, a rarity attributed to the lake's high water quality maintained by the watershed's forests. This waiver is at risk if water quality declines and could require the construction of a filtration plant estimated to cost \$150M in 2018 dollars.

Community Engagement Efforts

SCW's forestland conservation efforts are focused on the upstream Sebago Lake watershed communities and provide benefits to both upstream and downstream receiving water communities in greater Portland. These regions are socioeconomically diverse, including wealthy second-home owners, upper and middle-class residents, and impoverished rural and urban immigrant communities. The region is part of the unceded territory of the Abenaki, one of five tribes in Wabanaki Confederacy, now largely residing in Odanak First Nation, Quebec

SCW is working on engaging these diverse communities, including the Indigenous people historically connected to the land. They are committed to understanding and addressing societal inequities in conservation practices. As the SCW website states: "Sebago Clean Waters is actively learning how the conservation movement—including our partnership—has been complicit in perpetuating injustice in our country and in the land and water conservation sector. We are engaged in learning about the history and present-day inequities within conservation organizations. While we have just begun, we are committed to being part of positive and lasting change that will lead to more equitable, just, diverse, and inclusive professional networks and conservation processes and outcomes." SCW's Steering Committee is evaluating its own internal practices and learning—both through general equity education and more specific cultural training—as a foundation for greater community engagement. This education includes participation by several leaders and staff in an intensive year-long First Light Learning Journey and by the full SCW steering committee in an indigenous-led Wabanaki REACH training to understand the Wabanaki's history and present-day challenges. Building on this education and led by expert facilitators, SCW is undertaking an equity-infused strategic planning process.

In Maine, First Light staff have worked with Wabanaki leaders to establish the Wabanaki Commission on Land and Stewardship which represents five Wabanaki nations who work with the non-native First Light conservation community on land access, return and stewardship. A Conservation Community Delegation to the Wabanaki Commission comprised of well-trained non-native First Light members serves as a liaison to facilitate communication between conservationists and tribal representatives. SCW has consulted the Delegation on a

proposed project to gauge alignment with Wabanaki interests. In November 2023, three SCW members were part of a statewide non-native First Light delegation visit to Odanak First Nation to begin building relationships with the Abenaki diaspora.

SCW is currently focusing on community engagement during the water fund execution phase to ensure diverse community perspectives are included. The coalition is working to build relationships with new community partners and determine effective engagement strategies. SCW's strategic planning aims to center equity, expand the collaborative's work to address conservation-related needs of underserved communities, and include new voices in decision-making, particularly through an expanded Grantmaking Committee to better reflect community needs and priorities.

COLOMBIA | VIVO CUENCA WATER FUND

Context

In response to severe flooding and mudslides in 2010 that damaged Manizales' water supply, a stakeholder initiative called Pacts for the Cuenca was launched. This voluntary 5-year agreement, signed in 2012 by various institutions, aimed to implement a master plan for the watershed covering five municipalities (Manizales, Chinchiná, Villamaría, Palestina, and Neira) to improve ecosystem services and reduce vulnerability. In 2017, this initiative evolved into the VivoCuenca Water Fund.

VivoCuenca's purpose is to manage resources to protect the ecosystem services of the 106,000-hectare Chinchiná River basin in Caldas, roughly 15% of the department's area. Their interventions focus on three main areas:

1. Implementing green infrastructure enhances ecosystem services, especially water quality and climate change mitigation.
2. Engaging communities to foster sustainability.
3. Ensuring financial sustainability for these interventions.

The Caldas region features diverse geographies and social contexts. Highland areas are inhabited by migrants from central Colombia, who often own large parcels and live in urban areas. Lowland areas are populated by migrants from western Colombia, engaged primarily in coffee farming, and more willing to work with environmental institutions. Unlike other regions, land ownership in Caldas is typically clear and well-documented.

Community Engagement Process

VivoCuenca engages various community groups, including local inhabitants, rural producer families, and laborers. Indigenous communities are not currently involved as they do not reside in the project municipalities. VivoCuenca's engagement approach involves working with trusted community leaders and direct interaction with rural producer families for project implementation. Community members are involved in co-designing project activities to different extents based on the project type (technical vs. educational).

Key stakeholders include individual landowners and laborers, community groups like producer associations and environmental organizations, educational institutions, and public and private companies. VivoCuenca builds trust over at least six months through connections with trusted social actors before engaging directly with producers.

For technical environmental projects (e.g., PES projects), VivoCuenca's team identifies and prioritizes areas, maps stakeholders through surveys and interviews, and socializes projects with community leaders and relevant

officials. Project agreements are co-designed with stakeholders and implemented, tracked, and monitored by VivoCuenca’s technical team.

For environmental education projects (e.g., PaSos and Sustainable Agrosystems), methodologies vary based on community input as can be seen in Table 2. Community engagement ensures the sustainability of projects by securing buy-in from landowners and nearby community members, recognizing the impact of broader ecological processes.

Engaging communities is crucial for the medium- and long-term success of VivoCuenca’s initiatives, ensuring that projects on private lands have the support of both property owners and surrounding community members.

TABLE 2. Engagement Approach for Community Groups in the VivoCuenca Service Area

VIVOCUENCA PROJECT	COMMUNITIES ENGAGED	PROJECT CYCLE PHASE OF ENGAGEMENT	ENGAGEMENT APPROACH
Sustainable Landscape Project (PaSos)	Rural producers (landowners and laborers)	Execution	Mapping of communities in prioritized areas -> identification and engagement of trusted community leaders -> survey and meetings with community members -> co-design of educational and awareness activities with community members Community survey following Aizen’s Theory of Planned Behavior Change
Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES)	Rural producers (landowners)	Execution	Prioritization of project areas based on technical models -> mapping of communities in prioritized areas -> identification and engagement of trusted community leaders -> survey and meetings with community members -> development of written agreements including specific interventions co-designed with landowners
Sustainable Agrosystems	Rural producers (landowners and laborers)	Execution	Mapping of communities in prioritized areas -> identification and engagement of trusted community leaders -> survey and meetings with community members -> co-design of educational and awareness activities with community members

KENYA | ELDORET-ITEN WATER FUND

Context

The Eldoret-Iten Water Fund (EIWF) was established in August 2022 with funding from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the International Fund for Agriculture and Development (IFAD) to provide a proof-of-concept by 2023 and to attract downstream funders starting in 2024. The Fund is implemented by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and Eldoret Water and Sanitation Company (ELDOWAS). EIWF focuses on three key water towers—Cherangany Hills, Elgeyo Hills, and the northern Mau Forest—which supply water to Eldoret and Iten. The Fund’s interventions span three ecosystems, with about 80% of efforts dedicated to tree planting:

1. Protected Areas: Tree planting for rehabilitation of degraded areas and working with communities to install enclosures that facilitate natural regeneration.

2. Riparian Areas: Collaborating with communities, including Water Resource User Associations (WRUAs), to create buffer zones along riparian areas, plant trees, and enclose spring areas to prevent livestock disturbance.
3. Farmlands: County extension assistants work with farmers to develop farm-specific action plans balancing conservation measures with income-generating activities. These measures include terraces, windbreak trees, grasses and shrubs for livestock feed, and water pans for rainwater harvesting.

Community Engagement

During the feasibility stage, EIWF hired a consultant to develop a stakeholder map for the service area, including Indigenous Peoples and other interested parties. The consultant led the Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) process. EIWF engages all identified communities, prioritizing upstream communities during the initial execution phase. The Fund works with four community categories, tailoring engagement approaches to each. In the first year, EIWF engaged roughly 15,000 households, providing tree seedlings and water pans. Additionally, 18 youths have been trained to use drones for landscape monitoring.

The social context of EIWF's operations is heavily influenced by Kenya's colonial history. Indigenous Peoples in Kenya, such as traditional hunter-gatherer communities, have ancestral ties to forest land but were forcibly removed when the British colonial government designated these lands as protected areas in the early 20th century. This history has contributed to the greater social and economic vulnerability of Indigenous Peoples compared to other groups. Consequently, Indigenous Peoples are a focus for specific development efforts in the country.

GEF and IFAD funding requirements include the FPIC process with Indigenous Peoples, necessitating direct engagement to communicate project activities and obtain written consent ensuring no harm. This process forms the basis for developing an Indigenous Peoples Action Plan (IPAP). The Kenyan Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources supports this through national FPIC guidelines. Initial funding from GEF and TNC allowed EIWF to engage Indigenous Peoples and conduct the FPIC process during the pre-feasibility stage.

In 2020, EIWF engaged the Cherangany and Sengwer IP groups during the pre-feasibility phase to undergo the FPIC process, formalizing their involvement. A third group, the Ogiek, was identified and considered for FPIC during the project household survey. The FPIC process ensures project ideas are communicated to Indigenous Peoples, allowing them to adjust these ideas and self-determine potential impacts.

A formal FPIC document was signed between each community and an EIWF Steering Committee representative. Engaging these Indigenous communities resulted in an IPAP for each, implemented jointly by the communities and EIWF, with allocated budgets, implementation plans, and dispute resolution mechanisms. Ongoing budget decisions are made in consultation with the IC.

Beyond the FPIC process for the Ogiek and Cherangany, EIWF engages all community groups through community meetings and a volunteer Stakeholder Steering Committee. Community meetings, central to the engagement approach, are informal and frequent, led by a Field Conservation Coordinator and other ELDOWAS-hired staff using project funding. Each community group typically has monthly meetings to discuss project implementation and community concerns.

The success of EIWF has introduced challenges. Increasing demand for interventions, such as avocado trees, has left some communities feeling excluded due to project limits. Additionally, some communities feel left out because the FPIC process was exclusive to Indigenous Peoples, and initial focus was on upstream areas. To address this, EIWF shares its work plan with communities to demonstrate how work is planned and distributed.

The project area was mapped based on hydrological boundaries, leading to some community members being excluded from the project footprint. EIWF addresses this by coordinating with partners who can meet community needs outside the project area, as EIWF resources are limited to the established catchment area.

Future work includes improving gender equity by better engaging women, the primary users of firewood. TNC funded a survey to collect data on women’s empowerment using the Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI).

TABLE 3. Engagement Approach for Community Groups in the EIWF Service Area

COMMUNITY GROUP	PROJECT CYCLE PHASE OF ENGAGEMENT	ENGAGEMENT APPROACH	ENGAGEMENT PROCESS CREATED OR LEVERAGED
Indigenous Peoples—Ogiek, Cherangany, and Sengwer	Pre-feasibility, Feasibility, Design and Execution	FPIC engagement Community Meetings Stakeholder Steering Committee	FPIC process and development of Indigenous Peoples Action Plan (IPAP) for each IC
Water Resources User Associations (WRUAs)	Execution	Community Meetings Stakeholder Steering Committee	Use of Sub-catchment Management Plans created by the WRUAs with Kenya’s national Water Resources Authority (WRA), in which WRUAs prioritize activities and budget requirements over 5- to 10-year planning horizons.
Community Forest Associations (CFAs)	Execution	Community Meetings Stakeholder Steering Committee	Use of Participatory Forest Management Plans, which includes forest resource inventory and identification of priority areas. This group has a structure (chairman, secretary, treasury) which helps the WF engage. The CFAs develop a 5-year plan through technical support from Kenya Forest Service.
Local community	Execution	Community Meetings Stakeholder Steering Committee	Engaged through their participation in WUAs and the CFAs.

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Appendix A. Terms of Reference to hire a consultant to develop an Indigenous Peoples and local communities outreach strategy and engagement plan.

GENERAL AND SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF THE CONSULTANCY

General Objective. Hire a local consultant to establish an outreach strategy and engagement plan for Indigenous Peoples and/or Local Communities for a prospective Watershed Investment Program (WIP),

Specific Objectives:

1. Identify and characterize the Indigenous Peoples and local communities in the priority areas contemplated by a prospective WIP.
2. Identify the communication channels and outreach mechanisms accepted by these communities. Including community leaders, local NGOs working closely with the community, etc.
3. Develop an outreach strategy, preliminary engagement plan, and community-appropriate materials to introduce the components of a prospective WIP and its objectives to Indigenous Peoples and local communities that will allow discussing and determining the level of interest and involvement desired by the Indigenous peoples or local communities. (Note that the level of detail included in these materials depends on the WIP's development stage and the outcomes of previous engagements with Indigenous Peoples and local communities, if any).
4. Based on the inputs obtained, develop an engagement plan according to their desired and expected level of involvement. This may include participatory workshops, the need for translators, recommendation of an FPIC process, etc.

Important: The area contemplated for the WIP's implementation of Nature-Based Solutions may include several Indigenous Peoples and local communities with varying degrees of desire for involvement or participation in the proposed WIP. Consequently, the Consultant will devise tailored engagement plans to accommodate these diverse perspectives and foster meaningful participation.

PROFILE

Required characteristics and experience:

- Professional in social sciences, psychology, anthropology, sociology or other related fields.
- Minimum 10 years of experience in community relations.
- Knowledge of the context of the site.
- Previous work with Indigenous Peoples and local communities in the country.
- Ability to work individually and with teams.
- Excellent communication for the involvement of local communities and Indigenous Peoples.
- Respect for the culture of the local communities and Indigenous Peoples.

The following experience is desirable but not required:

- Knowledge of projects related to water security.
- Facilitation/mediation and conflict resolution experience.
- General knowledge of Nature-Based Solutions, conservation practices, ecosystem protection, environmental sustainability, or related topics.

RESPONSIBILITIES

- Carry out the tasks and activities established in the ToR.
- Participate in meetings and workshops within the framework of this consultancy.
- To maintain strict confidentiality in handling information that comes to its knowledge by any means, due to the contract.
- Inform the person in charge of the contract of inconveniences and others that are considered necessary for the normal development of the contract's object. This includes timely alerting about any risk or threat that may delay or affect the normal execution of the project and offering actions and recommendations for their solution.
- Promptly respond to communications between the contract manager and the project team.
- Accompany the face-to-face activities developed within the framework of this consultancy.
- Develop activities in coordination with contracting teams and other project personnel.

ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTS

Activities

- Prepare a detailed work plan and a methodological proposal to carry out the proposed activities and others necessary to comply with this contract's general objective and specific objectives.
- Review of the stakeholder outreach tool (IPAT), and [The Nature Conservancy's Human Rights Guide](#).
- Identification and characterization of the Indigenous Peoples and/or local communities of the areas contemplated for the WIP's NbS interventions. This characterization should include the name of local peoples and communities, history, population, language, religion, land tenure status and land tenure conflicts (if any), natural resource tenure status, water tenure status, internal governance structure, identification of leaders, relationships with other governance mechanisms e.g. government ministries, relationships with other Indigenous Peoples or local communities in the area, local leaders, key contacts, etc.
- Taking into consideration the characteristics of these communities, develop an outreach strategy and preliminary engagement plan.
- Prepare, coordinate, and carry out initial visits to each of the identified communities.
- Prepare, coordinate, and carry out a follow-up visit to each of the identified communities. With the communities' prior consent, document conversations and findings at each visit.
- Analyze documented information and the level of involvement desired by the Indigenous Peoples or local communities.
- Develop the community involvement strategy with the communities in a participatory manner. The consultant must previously design the methodology of the workshops to be implemented for this strategy.
- Communication and follow-up plan that allows the WIP to maintain the desired involvement of the Indigenous Peoples or local communities.

Products

#	PRODUCT	DATE
1	Work plan	
2	Indigenous Peoples or local communities Characterization Report	
3	Outreach strategy to communities of interest	
4	Indigenous Peoples or local communities' engagement and communication strategy	

Interested parties who meet the profile should send their resume and methodological proposal to [XXXXXXXX](#).

Appendix B. Key terms

Capacity: multi-faceted concept generally described as “having the ability to act,” and various types of capital including human, social, institutional, natural, and economic must be used to do so. (TNC, Human Rights Guide, 2020)

Collective Action: an action taken by a group to achieve a common objective (TNC, Human Rights Guide, 2020).

Common Pool Resource: any material good diminished in quantity or quality through use (i.e., subtractable) and costly or difficult to exclude others from using (TNC, Human Rights Guide, 2020).

Design Phase: The Design Phase of the WIP development lifecycle follows the Feasibility Phase and establishes the WIP’s financial, operational and governance profile with the aim of executing against its SMART Objectives (TNC, 2022).

Execution Phase: The Execution Phase is the final phase of WIP development and culminates in WIP operationalization and implementation (TNC, 2022).

Feasibility Phase: The Feasibility Phase is the second phase of the WIP development process. This phase builds upon, tests, and validates the indicative Theory of Change proposed at the conclusion of Pre-Feasibility. Specifically, Feasibility aims to test whether a specific viable NBS portfolio exists that can achieve impact and attract resource commitments from your stakeholder group (TNC, 2022).

Governance: in the context of natural resource management, refers to the norms, institutions, and processes that determine how power and responsibilities over natural resources are exercised, how decisions are made, and how people participate in and benefit from the management of natural resources (TNC, Human Rights Guide, 2020).

Indigenous Knowledge: a cumulative body of knowledge, practices, and beliefs, evolving and governed by adaptive processes and handed down and across (through) generations by cultural transmission; these may include the relationship of living beings (including humans) with one another and with their environment. This concept is sometimes referred to as “local knowledge” by those who do not self-identify as Indigenous Peoples (TNC, Human Rights Guide, 2020).

Institutions: the rules and/or organizations that structure political, economic, and social interaction. They consist of informal rules (e.g., sanctions, taboos, customs, traditions, and codes of conduct), and formal rules (e.g., constitutions, laws, property rights) (TNC, Human Rights Guide, 2020).

Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue: a forum that brings actors with a shared interest in an issue or decision into contact with one another to exchange information and knowledge, generate solutions and relevant good practices, enhance trust, resolve conflict, and/or come to a decision. This forum can be short-term or long-term, can occur at a variety of scales, and can link to other MSDs (TNC, Human Rights Guide, 2020).

Nature-Based Solutions (NBS): Actions to protect, sustainably manage and restore natural or modified ecosystems, which address societal challenges (e.g., climate change, food and water security or natural disasters) effectively and adaptively, while simultaneously providing human well-being and biodiversity benefits (Cohen-Shacham et al. 2016) (TNC, 2022).

Property Rights: Property rights include access, withdrawal (e.g., extraction), management, exclusion, alienation (e.g., title transfer), due process, and compensation. They are often bundled into use rights (e.g., access, withdrawal) and control rights (e.g., management, ownership, exclusion, alienation) (TNC, Human Rights Guide, 2020).

Pre-Feasibility Phase: The Pre-Feasibility Phase is the first phase of the WIP development process which requires negotiating a set of key questions aimed at addressing the high-level potential for NbS to contribute to water security outcomes. Pre-Feasibility culminates with a go / no-go decision to move to Feasibility Phase per the guidance and support of your stakeholder group (TNC, 2022).

Rightsholder: a person or group with recognized rights to provide or withhold consent in decision-making about lands, waters, or resources management. We refer to Indigenous Peoples as “rightsholders” given their internationally recognized human rights most recently articulated in the 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (TNC, Human Rights Guide, 2020).

Tenure Form: determines who can use a resource, for how long, and under what conditions. Some examples include public, private, communal, collective Indigenous, or customary (TNC, Human Rights Guide, 2020).

Tenure Security: the perception or belief a rightsholder has that property rights will be upheld by society—including communities, the government, and other actors. It results from an interaction between tenure form, property rights, and institutions (TNC, Human Rights Guide, 2020).

Watershed Investment Programs (WIPs): An initiative designed to deliver ecosystem services (e.g., filtration, flood control, etc.) by investing in the protection or restoration of nature. WIPs aim to deliver water security and associated co-benefit outcomes via a defined portfolio of NbS interventions within a specified service area (the “NbS Investment Portfolio”) (TNC, 2022).



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