



Biodiversity Framework & Indigenous People

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

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

Why in News?

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

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

What are the Key Areas Stressed by Indigenous People?

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

What is the Role of Indigenous People in Biodiversity Conservation?

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

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

What are the Difficulties Faced by Indigenous People?

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

What is the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework?

- **About:**
 - The post-2020 global biodiversity framework builds on the **Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020**.
 - As the **United Nations Decade on Biodiversity 2011-2020** comes to an end, the [International Union for Conservation of Nature \(IUCN\)](#) actively supports the development of what needs to be an ambitious new global biodiversity framework.
- **Goals and Targets:**
 - The new frameworks have four goals to achieve by 2050.
 - To halt the extinction and decline of biodiversity.
 - To enhance and retain nature's services to humans by conserving.
 - To ensure fair and equitable benefits to all from use of genetic resources.
 - To close the gap between available financial and other means of implementation and those necessary to achieve the 2050 Vision.
 - **2030 Action Targets:** The framework has **21 action-oriented targets** for urgent action over the decade to 2030, which includes:
 - To bring **at least 30% of land and sea** under the world's protected areas.
 - A **50% greater reduction in the rate of introduction of invasive alien species**, and controls or eradication of such species to eliminate or reduce their impacts.
 - **Reducing nutrients lost to the environment** by at least half, and pesticides by at least two thirds, and eliminating the discharge of plastic waste.
 - Nature-based contributions to global [climate change mitigation efforts](#) of at least 10 GtCO₂e (gigatonnes of equivalent carbon dioxide) per year, and that all mitigation and adaptation efforts avoid negative impacts on biodiversity.

What is the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity?

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

What should be the Approach Moving Forward?

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

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

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

Source: DTE