

POLICY ON INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES

**FZS CONSERVATION & HUMAN RIGHTS
FRAMEWORK**

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**FRANKFURT
ZOOLOGICAL
SOCIETY**

POLICY ON INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES

INTRODUCTION

The core task of the Frankfurt Zoological Society (FZS) is protecting large, biodiverse wilderness areas of the world, with a focus on protected areas. We are committed to this task because we understand the intrinsic value of nature, and that natural resources are limited and should be protected for current and future generations. At the same time, to achieve durable and effective conservation impacts, FZS commits to ensuring that our work and actions are designed and implemented with due consideration and respect for the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLCs).

- 1.1 We recognise that IPLCs manage or have tenure rights over a quarter of the world's terrestrial surface and that these areas are often found in the most remote parts of the world. We recognise that these areas are of global significance because of their biodiversity and ecosystem values, and their importance for climate regulation and adaptation strategies. These areas also contain over one-third of the global Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs), and they intersect with an estimated 40% of protected areas and ecologically intact landscapes.
- 1.2 We recognise the diversity of IPLC people, their often-sustainable nature-based economies and dependencies, and their profound and meaningful cultural relationships with the landscapes they occupy, use or to which they relate. We also recognise the histories and roles that IPLCs have had in these areas, including the different gender and generational norms, roles and relations within nature-based economies and relative to access to and use of natural resources. We recognise that IPLCs' relationship to, experience of, and attachment to nature and to natural resources are equally (if not more) valid than our aspirations and visions for, relationship with, and experience of nature in the areas in which they live. Finally, we recognise the traditional ecological knowledge that IPLCs have.
- 1.3 We recognise that the conservation of a significant proportion of IPLCs' lands and the sustainable nature of IPLC livelihoods are threatened by external development pressures, environmental injustices, population growth, expanding infrastructure, and extractive industries and that these forces have led to the proliferation of unsustainable and consumption-oriented economies, environmental degradation, the breakdown in the interlinkages and relationships that IPLCs have with nature, and the loss of traditional ecological knowledge.
- 1.4 We recognise that IPLCs have been historically marginalised and often remain excluded from power structures and decision-making despite being disproportionately impacted by the climate crisis, biodiversity loss and the degradation of ecosystem services. We also recognise that within IPLCs there are power asymmetries, and that women and youth are often marginalised and excluded despite their role in use of natural resources.
- 1.5 This policy sets out the framework for the work that FZS carries out with IPLCs in the landscapes where we work. The goal is to ensure that conservation practices do not unjustly burden IPLCs whose livelihoods, well-being and cultural identities are intrinsically linked to nature, as defined by those people, and to access to and use of natural resources. The policy provides a framework to ensure, at least, that we do no harm, especially to vulnerable and marginalised people.

2 SCOPE OF APPLICATION

The following principles will guide FZS to practice a human rights-based approach across its work in conservation:

- 2.1 There is no universally accepted definition of “Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities”. IPLCs are diverse and may be referred to in different locations or countries by terms such as “Traditional Communities”, “First Nations”, “ethnic minorities”, “aboriginals,” “hill tribes,” “national minorities”, “forest peoples”, “grassroots rural communities”, and/or “tribal groups.”
- 2.2 In this policy, the term “Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities” refers generically to a distinct social and cultural group possessing the following characteristics in varying degrees:
 - a. Self-identification as members of a distinct ethnic identity or indigenous cultural group and recognition of this identity by others;
 - b. Collective attachment to geographically distinct areas, lands, habitats and/or ancestral territories, and to nature and the natural resources in these areas and/or
 - c. Customary cultural, economic, social, or political institutions and/or a language or dialect distinct from the mainstream society or culture.
- 2.3 This policy applies to IPLCs who maintain, have had within their lifetime, or have otherwise lost a collective attachment to any self-defined aspect of nature, including distinct habitats, ancestral territories and/or natural resources in the areas where we work.
- 2.4 As with other policies central to the management and operation of FZS, this policy will be applied through existing and future programmes and projects and will be reviewed when needed. Operationalisation will be supported by the allocation of financial, human, and organisational resources. Due to regional differences across FZS’ projects and programmes, this policy provides a broad framework, enabling contextualized solutions.

3 REQUIREMENTS

Acknowledging variation in the scope and context of FZS’s work, as well as the varying needs of current and future generations of IPLCs, we commit to the following:

- 3.1 To respect the right of IPLCs to self-determination by supporting and advocating for the right to a process of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) in any conservation activities that could impact them, including FZS’ programmes, in alignment with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).
- 3.2 To strive to ensure that IPLCs are free from any kind of discrimination in exercising their rights, in particular to those based on their origin or identity, and to work with government partners to create or amend legislation if they discriminate against IPLCs and their rights.
- 3.3 To create an enabling environment that allows for the inclusion and participation of IPLCs in the design, planning and implementation of conservation projects, and to facilitate IPLCs’ access to relevant information. With defined and shared responsibilities, work in partnership with IPLCs to conserve biodiversity, ecosystem services and ecological processes, especially in those initiatives that affect the lands, territories, waters, and other natural resources to which they originally, customarily or traditionally had access to and used.
- 3.4 To respect and preserve knowledge, innovations and practices of IPLCs relevant to the conservation of biological diversity and climate change, to promote their wider application with the approval of knowledge holders, and to encourage the equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilisation of such knowledge, innovations and practices.
- 3.5 To respect the rights of IPLCs regarding protected areas, biodiverse landscapes and genetic and biological resources as affirmed by legislation, covenants, treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements with governments in countries where FZS works.

- 3.6 To facilitate, where feasible, IPLCs' fair, equitable and sustainable access to and use of natural resources and sharing of benefits and responsibilities, and to improve collective land tenure and governance.
- 3.7 To consider the rights and needs of vulnerable and marginalised groups among IPLCs, with an emphasis on women and youth. This includes understanding and then mainstreaming gender and generational considerations into conservation programming and natural resource management and creating opportunities that include women and youth in decision-making.
- 3.8 To support IPLCs in their role as environmental defenders, condemn all threats and attacks against them in pursuance of this role, and work for better protection, effective law enforcement, and environmental rule of law.
- 3.9 To engage with other actors and partners – especially governments – with whom we also work to encourage and facilitate adherence to the spirit and commitments of this policy.

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