

30 X 30

An aerial photograph of a small, circular island completely covered in dense green forest. The island is surrounded by dark water, and its reflection is visible in the water below. The lighting suggests a bright day, with some highlights on the trees.

HOW DO WE SEE AND UNDERSTAND THE
HIDDEN CONTOURS OF 30 X 30?

THE RESEARCH COLLECTIVE
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The Research Collective, a unit of Programme for Social Action (PSA), facilitates research around the theoretical framework and practical aspects of development, sustainable alternatives, equitable growth, natural resources, community and people's rights. Cutting across subjects of economics, law, politics, environment and social sciences, the work bases itself on people's experiences and community perspectives. Our work aims to reflect ground realities, challenge conventional growth paradigms and generate informed discussions on social, economic, political, environmental and cultural problems.

How do we see and understand the hidden contours of 30 x 30?

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Summary

30 by 30 is a global target which calls for protecting 30% of land and seas by 2030. It is based on a ‘theory of change’ propounded within the scientific milieu, which rests its argument on the necessity of a gradual increase in the percentage of areas protected on earth, to solve the global climate crisis. Hence, 30 by 30 is not a magical number or a scientific formula for protecting earth’s resources; rather it is only speculative that by subsequently increasing the percentage of protected areas (for instance, 30% by 2030, 40% by 2040 and so on) science will be able to stop biodiversity loss and the climate crisis.

The framework for 30 by 30 is guided by conservation science and conservation finance which proposes increasing the number of protected areas, creating more animal corridors, connectivity between forests and special protection of areas with high biodiversity. One of the most highlighted methods of reaching their targets has been portraying Indigenous groups and Local communities as important stakeholders of Conservation. However, this target is in contrast with the financial framework of 30 by 30 which discusses levers of the carbon market such as debt swap, carbon offsetting or carbon credits and False solutions to the climate crisis such as Nature-based solution (NBS). This tells us that 30 by 30 is more concerned with creating more avenues for the carbon market rather than upholding the rights and justice of communities. By portraying them as stakeholders, groups and communities who have been working towards bettering their environment and ecology will be forced to fulfill the outcomes of conservation projects which are funded and overseen by financial institutions.

In December 2022, the framework for 30 by 30 which was conceptualized and negotiated by the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD) was signed and declared in Montreal, Canada and it was released as the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework at the 15th meeting of the Conference of Parties to the UN.

In India, the government has also laid plans to fulfill the outcomes of 30 by 30. Announcements on 30 by 30 included having a balancing act between 30 by 30 and meeting the country’s developmental goals, green bonds to mobilize India’s own financial resources, and a refusal to cut farm-related subsidies.

However, on the ground, apart from several important environmental laws being amended for the worse, there has been subsequent land grab in terrestrial and coastal areas under categories like conservation reserves, community reserves and Important Coastal and Marine Biodiversity Areas (ICMBAs).

It is also seen that the management of conservation projects is given to financial institutions like the World bank who have developed conservation and biodiversity projects like the ENCORE project in the Coastal regions of India. India has also announced biodiversity exploration projects, banning of plastic and deep-sea missions outlined along the 'Blue economy policy of India'.

What is 30 by 30 and what is the rationale behind it?

One of the ways to tackle the global climate crisis (apart from reducing carbon footprints, greenhouse gas emissions, etc.) is by stopping biodiversity loss. Biodiversity loss occurs due to several reasons – habitat loss and fragmentation (changes in land and sea use), direct exploitation and over-exploitation. To improve biodiversity and the protection of existing species, several methods of stopping the process of biodiversity loss has been recommended over the years by Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD). The most recent of such efforts that has received global attention is the 30 by 30 global target to stop biodiversity loss and tackle the global climate crisis by conserving 30% of the world's land and seas by 2030.

30 by 30 is not a magical number or a formula for protecting earth's resources; rather it is considered to be one of the steps in ensuring global biodiversity protection. Before it was popularised as a global biodiversity target in 2019, the rationale of conserving significant percentages of earth for biodiversity protection has been analysed in the scientific milieu consistently. These analyses have formed the basis of previous conservation goals. The latest conservation goal before 2019 has been Convention on Biological Diversity's (CBD) Conference in 2010 wherein 17% of earth's land and 10% of earth's seas were targeted to be conserved under Aichi target 11¹. The 30 by 30 is in many ways the continuation of the Aichi targets and many factors contributed to increasing the percentage from 10% to 30%.

Since 2010, targets articulated by conservation scientists for conserving a bigger chunk of earth for biodiversity protection seemed to gather traction. By 2018, international coalitions of scientists, conservationists and NGOs were formed like the Half Earth Project and Nature needs Half Movement². The lobbies carefully articulated the need to protect a bigger percentage but a global target calling to protect 50% or more might not be 'socially acceptable'. Hence, protecting 30% of land and seas by 2030 became a compromise. It became one of the milestones of reaching a bigger percentage eventually. The urgency and the importance of 'protection' is what gave weightage to the number 30. In 2020, this conservation planning discussed largely within the framework of conservation science echoed in

1 The Aichi Biodiversity Targets are an ambitious set of global goals aimed at protecting and conserving global biodiversity. They were adopted by Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) at its Nagoya Conference in 2010. There are 20 Aichi Targets.

2 Woodley, Stephen, Harvey Locke, Dan Laffoley, Kathy MacKinnon, Trevor Sandwith, and Jane Smart. "A review of evidence for area-based conservation targets for the post-2020 global biodiversity framework." *Parks* 25, no. 2 (2019): 31-46. Pp. 3

Convention on Biological Diversity's Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework -

“The framework is built around a theory of change... which recognizes that urgent policy action globally, regionally and nationally is required to transform economic, social and financial models so that the trends that have exacerbated biodiversity loss will stabilize in the next 10 years (by 2030) and allow for the recovery of natural ecosystems in the following 20 years, with net improvements by 2050 to achieve the Convention’s vision of ‘living in harmony with nature by 2050”

(Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework)

CBD’s *Post-2020 global biodiversity framework* is the primary agreement which governments around the globe negotiated towards. On 22nd December 2022, CBD released its final text in Montreal, Canada at the 15th meeting of the Conference of Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity and named it the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. The document contains the framework for 30 by 30 and describes the means through which it will be achieved.

Under Target 3 of the document, this is outlined as such: -

Ensure and enable that by 2030 at least 30 per cent of terrestrial, inland water, and of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, are effectively conserved and managed through ecologically representative, well-connected and equitably governed systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, recognizing indigenous and traditional territories, where applicable, and integrated into wider landscapes, seascapes and the ocean, while ensuring that any sustainable use, where appropriate in such areas, is fully consistent with conservation outcomes, recognizing and respecting the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities, including over their traditional territories. (**Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, December, 2022**)

30 by 30 has several lobbies that interact, engage and direct governments on how the goals should be achieved. The primary one being created by the **High Ambition Coalition** which is an informal group of countries within the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) that aims towards ensuring the implementation of Paris Agreement. The intergovernmental group created by this coalition for furthering 30 by 30 was named **High Ambition**

Coalition for Nature and People (HAC). By 2019, this group became the principal international coalition and by 2020, more than 100 countries signed the HAC, with India coming to be a part of the coalition on October 7, 2021. India is the first BRICS country to join the coalition.

The science behind this particular lobby is highlighted in an article titled "*A Global Deal for Nature: Guiding principles, milestones, and targets*" published in a journal named *Science advances*³. The paper pairs the *Global Deal for Nature (GDN)*⁴ with the *Paris Agreement* to show how climate targets could be met and biodiversity protected in terrestrial, freshwater and marine realms. Based on the GDN, the paper highlights 67% of the world's terrestrial areas that could meet the goal for 30% protection.

Similarly, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) who is responsible for deciding conservation outcomes and definitions of conservation methods has also created a lobby of 30 by 30 along with institutions like *The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)*, *Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)* and *World Economic Forum (WEF)*⁵.

Ever since 30 by 30 has come out with its' framework, there has been opposition and criticism for the proposed measures and methods of biodiversity protection. 30 by 30 proposes to further a new paradigm of conservation which requires the collaboration of indigenous and local communities since a large part of these groups live in important biodiversity conservation areas⁶. There is a close interaction between conservation science and conservation finance that guides and directs 30 by 30. Activists, academicians, civil society organizations have written about this in the period when 30 by 30 was being negotiated by governments across the world and they have outlined the problems this can create, from past examples⁷.

3 Ibid.

4 Global deal for nature is an international policy mechanism to protect biodiversity in the terrestrial realm; New paper proposes a science-based 'Global Deal for Nature'. Mongabay, April, 2019.

5 There are also other organizations who are spearheading and advocating the implementation of 30 by 30. Some of them being The Nature Conservancy, Connectivity Conservation specialist group, Conservation Corridor

6 Between 1.65 billion to 1.87 billion IPs, LCs, and ADs live in important biodiversity conservation areas, of which 363 million inhabit existing protected areas. Pp.5 Worsdell, Thomas, K. Kumar, J. R. Allan, G. E. M. Gibbon, A. White, A. Khare, and A. Frechette. "Rights- Based Conservation: The path to preserving Earth's biological and cultural diversity?" Rights and Resource Initiative (2020).

7 Mukpo, Ashoka. As COP15 approaches, '30 by 30' becomes a conservation battleground, Mongabay, 26 August, 2021

How did it start? (Table 1.1)

Year	Developments
2010	In 2010, Convention on Biological Diversity conference held in Japan's Aichi prefecture set a number of conservation targets. This included the protection of 17 percent of global land and 10 percent of oceans by 2020 in the Aichi Target 11.
2010-2018	During this period, while countries were trying to achieve the Aichi targets, science that called for conserving bigger percentages of the earth were gathering traction.
2015	UN Climate Change Conference (COP21) in Paris reached a breakthrough on 12 December 2015 which became the historic Paris Agreement .
2018	International coalitions of scientists, conservationists and NGOs were formed like the Half Earth Project and Nature needs Half Movement
2019	Article in Science Advances comes out titled - " A Global Deal for Nature: Guiding principles, milestones, and targets "
2019	High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People is launched by Costa Rica, France and Britain
January 2021	High ambition Coalition for Nature and People is officially launched at the One Planet Summit, Paris, France
May 2021	In 2021, Aichi target 11 was reported to be closely reached in a report released on May 19 by the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)

October 2021	Before CBD COP15 at Kunming, China, India joins the High Ambition
October 2021	<i>Convention on Biological Diversity's Conference, was held between October 11-15-2021 in Kunming, China, also known as CBD COP15 where the Post- 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework laid out new global targets for nature</i>
Oct-Nov 2021	26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow on 31 October – 13 November 2021.
2022	Almost 100 nations signed the HACNP
2023	On January 2023, CBD releases its final text in Montreal, Canada renamed Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

Which paradigm of conservation does 30 by 30 further?

30 by 30 aims to enhance biodiversity and protect earth by using conservation and finance as it's means to achieve it. 30 by 30 is part of a paradigm of conservation where the levers of carbon market direct the outcomes of conservation but is falsely portrayed as one which supports the rights of communities and rights of nature. For instance, under Target 11 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, the systems of nature-based solutions (NBS) and ecosystem-based approaches are mentioned as possible solutions.

Restore, maintain and enhance nature's contributions to people, including ecosystem functions and services, such as regulation of air, water, and climate, soil health, pollination and reduction of disease risk, as well as protection from natural hazards and disasters, through nature-based solutions and/or ecosystem-based approaches for the benefit of all people and nature.

Nature-based solutions (NBS) as a response to the climate crisis is a False Solution which is dressed up in acceptable terminologies and broad concepts which takes our attention away from actual solutions of curbing pollution, cutting carbon at source and properly protect and enhance biodiversity in accordance with science. Beneath the beautiful imagery of NBS, its main objectives are based in carbon and neo-colonialism, discredited market mechanisms and corporate greenwashing.⁸

Apart from this, we should also consider that this new paradigm of conservation will take place in the current model which has led to displacement, militarized forms of violence and human rights abuses. Already, globally, up to 136 million people were displaced in formally protecting half of the area currently protected which is around 8.5 million km².⁹ While the targets under Kunming-Montreal declaration talk about recognizing indigenous rights, they do not acknowledge the realm of communities whose sustainability, human rights, poverty, hunger are intrinsically linked to and affected by the current models of conservation. This leads us to question and criticize the contours of this paradigm which might further alienate communities and lead to degradation of natural resources.

⁸ For more details look at- Chandrasekaran et.al. Nature Based Solutions: Wolf in Sheep's Clothing, Friends of the Earth International, October, 2021.

⁹ Worsdell, Thomas, K. Kumar, J. R. Allan, G. E. M. Gibbon, A. White, A. Khare, and A. Frechette. "Rights- Based Conservation: The path to preserving Earth's biological and cultural diversity?" Rights and Resource Initiative (2020).

To understand how this is done, one must look at the framework of conservation proposed under 30 by 30, the mechanisms of conservation finance that supports it and the history and pattern of previous biodiversity conservation targets achieved by countries.

Several conservation measures were discussed under 30 by 30. In addition to increasing protected areas, the creation of *corridors for connectivity*, *Other effective conservation measures (OECMs)* and *Climate Stabilization areas (CSA)* have been discussed.

What are corridors?

Corridors are essentially creating connectivity between protected areas to help facilitate movement of animals. In terrestrial areas, the paper by Dinerstein and his team suggests “replanting of trees or simply allowing degraded forest lands to recover as forest corridors”.

What are Other Effective Conservation Measures (OECM)?

The concept of OECM was first introduced in 2010 and in 2018, the definition was decided at the Fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Sharma-El-Sheikh, Egypt. This was -

"A geographically defined area other than a Protected Area, which is governed and managed in ways that achieve positive and sustained long-term outcomes for the in-situ conservation of biodiversity, with associated ecosystem functions and services and where applicable, cultural, spiritual, socio-economic, and other locally relevant values."

In OECMs the core management goal might not be conservation but conservation occurs as a secondary outcome of managing the place **but conservation is still the desired outcome**. This might include areas protected by indigenous communities, areas managed by small-scale fisheries, low impact agroforestry, etc. The category of OECM is given by IUCN but it is the national governments who will define what an OECM is in their nation and report it to the UN. OECM is perhaps one of the most highlighted conservation measures under 30 by 30. One of the things to consider regarding OECM is that it might make indigenous communities reliant on conservation outcomes.

What is CSA?

Climate Stabilization areas are essentially areas where ‘vegetation occurs and greenhouse gas emissions are prevented’. These can include both protected areas and areas outside of them. This suggests the protection of existing forests which are major carbon sinks or conserving animal habitats for e.g., tiger habitats since tigers are habitat generalists (meaning they help in species regeneration and recovery of lost habitat which facilitate in climate stabilization). To successfully create CSAs, these animal habitats need adjacent reserves or new reserves. The paper by Dinerstein and his team suggests that the management of these adjacent reserves could be done under the OECM category¹⁰.

Right now, whether these methods of conservation will have any effect on the current models of conservation and whether it will re-define indigenous community management and governance of resources, is only speculative. In the context of India, we are getting some hints on how this will be implemented.

10 Dinerstein, Eric, Carly Vynne, Enric Sala, Anup R. Joshi, Sanjiv Fernando, Thomas E. Lovejoy, Juan Mayorga et al. "A global deal for nature: guiding principles, milestones, and targets." *Science advances* 5, no. 4 (2019): eaaw2869.

What is happening in India?

There are a series of developments taking place in India to reach the targets under 30 by 30. Since, India is also a party to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), it follows and reports its developments to CBD. In 2021, in its Year-end review, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change reported India to have conserved 27% of area under the Aichi target 11 to CBD¹¹. Prior to this, India had also endorsed 30 by 30 at the G7 convention held at Cornwall, England from 11th- 13th June 2021.

Earlier in 2019, India had committed to restore 26 million hectares of degraded land by 2030 at the High-Level Segment Meeting of the 14th Conference of Parties (COP14) to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). By 2022, India released its criteria and guidelines for OECM category which addressed how the OECM vision of 30 by 30 will be achieved (Look at Box 1.1 for details). OECM has also become Target 6 under India's National Biodiversity Register.

In January 2023, Bhupender Yadav, Union Environment Minister said that India can have a balancing act between reaching the goals under 30 by 30 as well as meet the country's development needs. He talked about an 'ecosystem-based approach' and refusal by India to cut farm-related subsidies to re-direct savings for biodiversity conservation. India is also planning to mobilize its own resources by promoting 'green bonds'.

Alongside these developments, there have also been a series of other events which has raised serious concerns for India's biodiversity and people's welfare.

Between the year 2019-2023, India introduced amendments to several environmental laws of India which invited scrutiny for circumventing safeguard and public accountability mechanisms [Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ), Indian Forest Act, 1927, Dilution of rights under Forest Rights Act, 2006, Environment Impact Assessment, 2020, Environment (Protection) Act, 1989 and the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980]. In the context of biodiversity, in 2021, India

¹¹ Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Year-end review, 2021.
<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetail.aspx?PRID=1786057>

introduced amendments to the Biological Diversity Act, 2002 and it was met with strong opposition and criticisms by environmental activists, legal experts and academicians. The proposed amendments were contrary to the existing laws that safeguarded people's interests for e.g. The Forest Rights Act, 2006 and the Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled areas) Act, 1996. It was also assessed that the amendments will only benefit private corporations and Multi-National Corporations and would result in exploitative extraction of India's bioresources leading to loss of several valuable plant species very rapidly.¹²

¹² Press Release. Demand immediate and complete withdrawal of proposed Biodiversity Act Amendment Bill 2021, A Statement issued by Coalition for Environmental Justice in India (CEJI), 26 January, 2022

Box 1.1 Criteria and Guidelines for Identifying Other Effective Area Based Conservation Measures (OECMs) in India, May 2022

What is in the document?

The report is written jointly by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, India, National Biodiversity Authority and UNDP. This report talks about the criteria and guidelines for OECM (Other effective Conservation Measures) in India. The primary inputs put forward in this document are by Wildlife Institute of India (WII), NBA, World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)-India, Foundation for Ecological Security (FES), UNDP, Wildlife Trust of India (WTI), International Union of Conservation of Nature (IUCN) India, Network for Certification and Conservation of Forests (NCCF), and The Energy and Resource Institute (TERI).

Who has developed it: Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), National Biodiversity Authority of India (NBA) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

To do what: To identify OECMS in India

How will they identify it: A 14-category classification, clustered under three broad groups- terrestrial, waterbodies, and marine, covering a broad spectrum of potential OECMs in India including unique agricultural systems, biodiversity parks, industrial estates, coastal waterbodies, and important marine biodiversity areas.

Why: India has already exhausted its Protected area (PA) categories and to achieve global priorities and national targets on Biodiversity conservation

Who will govern these areas: Government, by private, by indigenous/local communities, or under shared governance.

How will it be governed: Government rules/acts or traditional/customary rules and
Tenurial and ownership status must be unambiguous.

Management: In areas which are not government owned OECMs, there will be field visits, meetings with local authorities, discussion with communities.

The document also does not clearly state the stake indigenous communities might have. Rather, it only mentions forested community land which cannot be identified as OECM since they are already categorized as state land and they are also Protected Areas. For the marine and coastal communities, they are brought under the category of ecologically/culturally/internationally significant coastal and marine areas. For them to be an OECM, they have to not come under Protected Area category and only government authorities on mapping will declare whether an area is Protected Area or not. Also, conservation should be occurring there since generations.

Source - UNDP, India

There is also a fear that the implementation of conservation outcomes under 30 by 30 might lead to more land grab in India under the guise of community-led conservation. This standpoint comes from earlier methods of conservation which has led to obscured definitions of community rights. Under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 categories of conservation reserves and community reserves were introduced in 2002 by amending the Act. Community reserves and conservation reserves function as buffer zones between protected areas and they fall under the category of Protected areas (along with Marine protected areas, National Parks and Wildlife sanctuaries). Additionally, the authority of the reserve goes to the Chief Wildlife warden. Currently there are 100 conservation reserves in India and 219 community reserves covering an area of 4928 km^2 and 1446 km^2 respectively. The amount of land taken for this purpose is considerable.

Since 2011, the number of community reserves has risen exponentially. This was also the time when India, under the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, took several steps, especially Target 11 (at least 10% of land and seas are conserved in networks of protected areas) and Target No.14 (ecosystems that provide water, health, livelihoods and well-being are restored and safeguarded). In the North-east, which has seen an increase of community reserves post 2011, communities have experienced a complete ban on their practices like hunting, jhum cultivation, foraging, inside their community forests after it has been made into a community reserve.¹³

13 Community reserves, are they forest department's backdoor entry into north-east India, Down to earth, 2018

According to data from Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), Nagaland has 114 community reserves with a total area of 851.57 square kilometers. In Arunachal Pradesh, until 2020, nine community reserves covering an area of 113.595 sq km were created. Ten such reserves spread over 103.716 sq km have come up in Manipur between 2016 and 2020. Around 69.02 sq km forest area in Meghalaya has been brought under 71 community reserves till 2020.¹⁴

Similarly, in the coastal region, the Wildlife Institute of India identified and declared 106 coastal and marine sites as Important Coastal and Marine Biodiversity Areas (ICMBAs). Sixty-two ICMBAs were identified along the west coast of India, and 44 along the east coast. For instance, in Kerala, which has a coastline of 590 Kms, there are 18 ICMBAs which cover an area of 801.1 sq.kms. Similarly, in the state of Tamil Nadu 14 ICMBAs cover an area of around 660 sq.kms where the coastline is around 1076 Kms. These are significant percentages of areas in the coast where communities have been living for generations.

Government has also introduced development plans in community and conservation reserves with significant funding and intervention by financial institutions. In the coastal regions, government has introduced the ENCORE project which is funded by the World Bank in an eight-year multi-phase programmatic approach operation with two overlapping phases of five-year each. This project is anchored under the umbrella of India's National Coastal Mission. Its programmatic intervention includes; (i) mangrove restoration, shelterbelt protection, eco-restoration of seagrass meadows, sacred groves, beach clean-up and; (ii) livelihood development projects like climate resilient agriculture, creation of infrastructure and facilities to support tourism, community based small-scale mariculture, small-household industries and value addition, other livelihood activities ranging from fish processing and preparation of value-added products to local crafts.

In addition to conservation projects being taken over and handled by financial institutions, within this wide range of work, the community people are expected to undertake these projects. The project fails to mention the existing communities who live in these areas and who carry out sustainable livelihood patterns that compliment and protect the ecology.

¹⁴ Ibid

Apart from creating reserves, India has also announced biodiversity exploration projects in coastal areas, banning of plastic and deep-sea missions outlined along the 'Blue economic policy of India'. In 2022, Ministry of Earth Sciences announced their commitment to 30 by 30 and Dr Jitendra Singh, the Minister of State for the Ministry of Science and Technology unveiled the plan for 30 by 30 at the UN Ocean Conference at Lisbon, Portugal. Such announcement at global platforms signifies a severe lack in the Indian climate governance model. This is because the current governance system in India is less likely to incorporate a decentralized or locally interpreted international climate target. India does not have a specific climate change or renewable energy law, but that has not stopped the government from announcing various plans and targets for meeting climate change goals announced at the international fora.¹⁵ Goals of climate change are decided at central level and the task of realization of these goals falls under institutions across sectors and states. This means that the goals of conservation and protection falls under departments which might be understaffed and under-funded.¹⁶

This lack of coordination among departments and lack of resources across sectors, translates into weak capacity and fragmentation of autonomy. Additionally, this lack of effective governance can also undermine and interject processes of local conservation models. Local communities become susceptible to forceful fulfillment of international climate targets by giving up their rights to food sovereignty and Justice. This makes the possibility of creating and reaching utterly pointless targets. Environmental experts have also looked at this development as fostering an 'ease of business' by circumventing the safeguards and scrutiny of a parliamentary debate that a bill or legislation may be subjected to.¹⁷

These developments in India are part of a global mechanism of conservation finance and politics which often hide the real solutions to the climate crisis and provide magical solutions to complex problems.

15 Environmental Laws in India: In the age of a global climate crisis (A dossier), September 2022, The Research Collective, Delhi.

16 Felix Mallin & Hugh Govan. The 30x30 Conservation Race: A Dilemma for Small-Scale Fisher? Right to Food and Nutrition Watch. November 2022

17 Environmental Laws in India: In the age of a global climate crisis (A dossier), September 2022, The Research Collective, Delhi.

How do we see and understand the hidden contours of 30 by 30?

30 by 30 has the contours of politics and finance as much as of science. The scientific rationale for 30 by 30 is the result of negotiations by conservation lobbies which are situated in the more affluent countries. Politically, these negotiations are also flowing from the north to south as evident by the coalitions forming at the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People (HAC). Social scientists have also reviewed the global implications of a 30% target and have discussed how it is an ‘idea proposed by the north and the south will be negotiating to get the best deal possible.’¹⁸ They have also highlighted that ‘the south should be in a strong position because most of the remaining biodiversity, including global fish stocks, is left with them.’¹⁹ This makes a deal like 30 by 30 more attractive to northern countries while developed countries might be obligated to follow the clauses under a deal which might bring unintended consequences.

It must also be noted that the applicability of 30 by 30 is determined a lot by each country’s existing frameworks of environmental governance. 30% means something else for countries in the north like France, United Kingdom or the United States who control vast terrestrial and marine areas which are mostly colonial dominions whereas in countries like India, access to natural resources defines an essential part of the livelihood, nutrition, health etc.²⁰ Environmental governance across nations depend largely on the existing land laws, environmental laws, political environment and the socio-economic relations communities have had with their ecology. An aspect which is not widely discussed in the ‘scientific’ rationale for 30 by 30. It is assuming a uniform tool where a proportion of vast range of habitats – deserts, jungles, mountains, coastal wetlands, reefs and open oceans, will be protected through pre- determined conservation methods.

30 by 30 focuses more on methods of conservation and more specifically on ‘conservation planning’ and while it does mention the need for local and regional translations, it fails to adequately address the bottlenecks that exist in current political systems.

18 Felix Mallin & Hugh Govan. The 30x30 Conservation Race: A Dilemma for Small-Scale Fisher? Right to Food and Nutrition Watch. November 2022

19 Ibid

20 Felix Mallin & Hugh Govan. The 30x30 Conservation Race: A Dilemma for Small-Scale Fisher? Right to Food and Nutrition Watch. November 2022

On top of that, the social and economic repercussions have not been subjected to proper parliamentary debates in several countries (India being one of them).²¹ This is one of the major drawbacks of the propounded 30 by 30 rationale.

Another major aspect of 30 by 30 which is pushed by its advocates is its financial aspects. But this discussion takes place away from its scientific papers or from the milieus of biodiversity concerns. At the UN Climate conferences, the levers of conservation finance planned how private capital will flow to fund the goals under 30 by 30 and Debt swap is the main instrument discussed during these conferences. At the UNFCCC Climate COP (COP-27), world leaders made positive statements about debt swaps.²² Similarly, at the UN Biodiversity Conference (COP-15 of the UN Environmental Program) in Montreal (December 2022), the instrument of debt swap was discussed.²³

Debt swap or ‘Debt-for-nature’ swap is an instrument of conservation finance where a country’s crippling debt crisis is swapped with funding projects that protect nature or mitigate the climate crisis. The funding for these projects is mainly through private capital and they claim to provide relief for developing countries from their debt. However, research on the implications of conservation finance on nature has shown how the ‘mere act of increasing financial flows to conservation efforts does not solve deep-rooted conflicts over the use of resources.’²⁴ An analysis by Andre Standing, a researcher on conservation finance industry and Blue growth has shown how a single organization can come to disrupt democratic systems of protecting nature, by exposing the mechanisms of The Nature Conservancy (TNC) organization and the role it has played in the history of debt swap.²⁵

Apart from debt swaps, funds for 30 by 30 are being raised in the ‘Protect Nature Challenge’ which is a \$5 billion pledge to fund efforts towards 30x30 and the funding organizations are; *Arcadia, Bezos Earth Fund, Bloomberg Philanthropies, Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, Nia Tero, Rainforest Trust, Rewild, Wyss Foundation, and the Rob and Melani Walton Foundation.*

21 In August 2020 a draft working paper was released into the public domain which analysed ways of expanding and paying for new protected areas. This open letter, signed by authors from multiple institutions, explains a series of reservations about that working paper.

An Open Letter to the Lead Authors of ‘Protecting 30% of the Planet for Nature: Costs, Benefits and Implications.’

22 Standing, Andre. The financialization of conservation. TNI Longreads, November 2022.

23 <https://www.undp.org/china/news/heading-montreal-cop15-undp-china-wrap>

24 Standing, Andre. The financialization of conservation. TNI Longreads, November 2022.

25 Ibid. pp 12.

The scientific and finance methods proposed under 30 by 30 are also reminiscent of Nature- based Solutions (NBS) which uses the lever of carbon credits or off-setting as a solution to the climate crisis. By creating more and more protected areas, you create reserves which become credits for any corporation to buy and improve their carbon footprint. This is a non-solution or a false solution which lets any corporation to keep polluting while improving their carbon credit score. This also increases the risk for introduction of programs like the now discredited REDD and REDD+ programs which advocate for monoculture plantations.

While the science and the politics behind 30 by 30 is decided by scientists and policy makers situated at the more affluent parts of the world, the economic rationale is addressed by a rising conservation finance industry where people with backgrounds in finance and banking are deciding the outcomes of big conservation organizations. While this seems to be the actual contours of 30 by 30, it is being branded very differently.

When one reads about 30by30, the positive publicity of indigenous leaders being one of the important stakeholders of the campaign cannot be missed. Described in the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and people (HAC), the goal is expected to be achieved with the ‘inclusion, participation and partnership of Indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs)’ and ‘whose traditional lifestyles embody the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, as well as through promoting Indigenous leadership in conservation.’²⁶

But, the Kunming-Montreal agreement has failed to effectively recognize the brutality of existing conservation models and their perpetuation of colonial historical injustices, abuse, rape, extortion and their implementation of militarized conservation. When the framework was being negotiated, several groups had urged and pushed the CBD to recognize indigenous rights effectively, strengthen respect for rights and ensure that governance is truly equitable.²⁷

There was also no evocation of how communities and the ecology they live with, have been systematically denied rights and justice through modes of overexploitation of natural resources. This is a global phenomenon where natural resources are violently appropriated and involve violation of human rights and rights of nature.²⁸

26 High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People Task force on IPLCs narrative.

<https://www.hacfornatureandpeople.org/iplcs>

27 As COP15 approaches, ‘30 by 30’ becomes a conservation battleground, Mongabay, August, 2021.

28 A.O Lopez, Neoextractivism and state violence: Defending the defenders in Latin America, TNI Longreads, May 2021.

There were also no efforts to address the problem of transnational corporations who evade national justice systems and are protected by an international shield who expand and exploit to new territories.²⁹

Today, the actual percentage of area, indigenous groups and local communities have rights on, constitutes a very small percentage of the globe. In 2021, it was found that, globally, only 10% of land were owned by indigenous people while their claims to land are grounded on almost half of the planet's terrestrial area.³⁰

In light of this, when one reads the targets under CBD, the injustice and torture perpetuated to generations of indigenous people, is negated and overlooked. The document merely states the 'effective' participation of indigenous people on conservation. It fails to acknowledge the necessary steps to create a framework based on human rights to be able to live in harmony with nature.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Worsdell, Thomas, K. Kumar, J. R. Allan, G. E. M. Gibbon, A. White, A. Khare, and A. Frechette. "Rights- Based Conservation: The path to preserving Earth's biological and cultural diversity?" Rights and Resource Initiative (2020). Pp.25.

End remarks

The measures of achieving global Biodiversity protection like 30 by 30 is outlined by ideas of conservation science and conservation finance. This has led to the Kunming-Montreal declaration being unable to clearly state the stakeholder-ship of indigenous and local communities. So, while CBD has created a ‘hopeful’ text that will aim to address the rights of indigenous communities and local communities, it has failed to clearly recognise the importance of legal rights and tenurial rights for communities in a framework that will actually benefit them. While the exact success of this global project will largely depend on its implementation, in countries like India, which has a colonised governance model for ecology and needs to address the gaps in governance of nature, the Kunming-Montreal declaration has failed to provide a way how this can be achieved. The declaration talks about recognising indigenous rights, protecting the traditional knowledge of communities and protecting their territory but does not give away the ideas, methods, levers and mechanisms of how a country should achieve that. In a country like India, to achieve harmony with ‘Mother earth’ is a process which is long in itself which requires the agency of natural resource-based communities to come to the forefront but as several environmental movements across the country has shown, even today, there is still have a long way to go. Without addressing the issues of displacement, food sovereignty, growing militarisation in ecological conservation and human rights abuses carried out over the decades, it is possible that 30 by 30 might again perpetuate the same models where protection is only visible on paper and the conflicts remain unaddressed.

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