

AN OVERVIEW

EXPLORING INCLUSIVE FRAMEWORKS FOR CONSERVATION IN INDIA

Our environment is changing rapidly, with climate change and biodiversity loss posing as two major crises our planet is facing. Halting and reversing the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services is key to mitigating climate change impacts and preventing species extinction.

Securing and sustainably managing areas of land and ocean play an important role in abating habitat loss, maintaining species diversity and providing a functioning environment for human beings. Area-based conservation measures such as Protected Areas play an important role in abating habitat loss, maintaining species diversity and providing a functioning environment for human beings. In 2021, Parties to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) began developing a new global biodiversity framework aimed at halting and reversing biodiversity loss.

Target 3 within the CBD global biodiversity framework popularly known as the 30 x 30 Target, is an initiative led by a coalition of governments and NGOs to protect and conserve 30% of the Earth's land and oceans by 2030. The CBD has underlined Protected Areas and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) as primary conservation tools to reach the 30x30 Target.

While Protected Areas provide refuge for biodiversity and crucial ecosystem services, they are but islands in a sea of humanity. How do we conserve beyond the model of Protected Areas?

WHAT ARE

OTHER EFFECTIVE AREA-BASED CONSERVATION MEASURES (OECMS)

“Other effective area-based conservation measure” means “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...” (Definition provided by CBD).

Simply put, OECMs are a newer conservation approach over and above the traditional concept of Protected Areas. It can apply to any geographically defined area other than a protected area that provides effective and sustained biodiversity conservation, primarily. It is meant to provide effective and sustained biodiversity conservation, primarily as a by-product of existing management systems.

OECMs are recognised to achieve positive and 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 (CBD). The primary difference between protected areas and OECM is its management objective. The in-situ conservation of biodiversity is the primary objective of a protected area, whereas achieving positive biodiversity conservation outcomes, regardless of their primary objective, is the intent behind OECMs.

OECMS IN INDIA

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), National Biodiversity Authority (NBA) and United Nations Development Program (UNDP) have developed and published the Criteria and Guidelines for identifying Other Effective Area Based Conservation Measures (OECMs) in India. Aravalli Biodiversity Park in Gurugram has been designated as India's first OECM site. The MoEFCC, NBA, and UNDP, together with other partners, have also so far identified 12 other potential OECM sites.

