

Darwin Initiative Innovation Annual Report

To be completed with reference to the "Project Reporting Information Note":

(<https://www.darwininitiative.org.uk/resources/information-notes/>)

It is expected that this report will be a maximum of 20 pages in length, excluding annexes)

Submission Deadline: 30th April 2025

Submit to: BCF-Reports@niras.com including your project ref in the subject line

Darwin Initiative Project Information

Project reference	DARNV011	
Project title	A new tool for advancing locally led conservation	
Country/ies	Nepal, Philippines, Uganda, Kenya	
Lead Organisation	International Institute for Environment and Development	
Project partner(s)	RECOTFC Nepal, Bukidnon University, Philippines CORDIO, Kenya Makerere University, Uganda	
Darwin Initiative grant value	£200,000	
Start/end dates of project	April 1 st 2024-March 31 st 2025	
Reporting period (e.g. Apr 2024 – Mar 2025) and number (e.g. Annual Report 1, 2, 3)	AR2	
Project Leader name	Phil Franks	
Project website/blog/social media	https://www.iied.org/site-level-assessment-governance-type-sage-gt	
Report author(s) and date	Phil Franks	

1. Project summary

Summary from the proposal: *To combat the biodiversity crisis, governments, NGOs and donors are advocating a stronger role for communities, requiring, at scale, a shift in the balance of authority/power towards "locally-led" conservation (LLC). But there is no tool to assess the balance of authority/power at site level and guide necessary changes. The project, with partners in the Philippines and Kenya (marine) and Nepal and Uganda (terrestrial), will develop and demonstrate such a tool, and its potential contribution to national and global conservation objectives.*

The tool that is being developed to assess the balance of power in conservation of protected/ conserved areas between community actors and non-community actors - the extent to which conservation is really led by Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (Ips&LCs) - is the first

of its kind. Most importantly the tool enables site-level actors to shift the balance of power towards IP&LCs where there is the political will to do so, in so doing closing all-too-common “implementation gaps” between the level of IP&LC empowerment provided for in law and policy and the reality at site level.

It is innovative and novel both in the analytical framework which is based on a typology of power balance and framework of power dimensions that was developed at the IP&LC-led governance workshop co-sponsored by the project in June 2023, and in the multistakeholder self-assessment process that is adapted from the SAGE tool.

Academic research is increasingly generating evidence that sites with stronger empowerment of IP&LCs delivers better conservation as well as social outcomes. Some of the most compelling evidence to date was published only last week¹ in a paper which uses a very similar typology of power balance. Thus, it may be assumed that use of a tool that empowers IP&LCs at certain conservation areas (but not all) should improve conservation outcomes.

In the many situations where IP&LCs have been alienated from their ancestral lands the tool responds to the challenge of failure to meet the governance conditions for sustainable management of common pool resources. and, on the one hand, the social injustice of this alienation. But it also responds to opportunities presented by growing political and financial support for the notion of IP&LC-led conservation.

Though use of the tool will in some cases contribute to reducing economic poverty – for example where it leads to more financing for conservation reaching organisations of IP&LC’s or increased fish catch – its benefits for people will be as much an indirect contribution to human well-being as reflected in the project’s M&E indicators on decision making and information access, and increasing recognition of, and respect, for the contribution of IP&LCs.

The project focuses on four countries – Nepal, Philippines, Kenya and Uganda. Partners in each country will pilot the tool at two protected/conserved areas where there is a gap in one or more dimensions (management, governance, rights and duties, knowledge and values and financing) between the level of authority/influence of IP&LCs that is provided for in policy and the reality on the ground, ie potential for IP&LC empowerment.

2. Project stakeholders/partners

The partners in this project are listed in the table on the first page. They are all organisations that have been working with IIED to develop tools for improving governance for more than two years and in the case of Uganda and the Philippines nearly 10 years. To date this work has focused on improving the quality of governance. In the world of environmental governance, it is well known that a key enabling condition is IP&LC empowerment, and when we said to these partners that we were developing a tool to assess and change the balance of power in conservation all expressed interest.

The focus on partner engagement in this project is not so much in developing the workplan which is a relatively straightforward process of developing a prototype tool and two rounds of piloting, reflection and revision, but rather in the development of the tool itself over the first 18 months of the project. This tool development process is genuinely a joint venture of the four partners and IIED which started with the project meeting at the end of June 2023.

Stakeholders in piloting the tool at a site level are determined by stakeholder analysis. Each pilot starts with an introductory meeting for all key stakeholder groups which are asked if they

¹ Dawson, N.M., Coolsaet B., Bhardwaj A., Booker F., Brown D., Lliso B., Loos J., Martin A., Oliva M., Pascual U., Sherpa P., Worsdell T. (2024). Is it just conservation? A typology of Indigenous Peoples’ and local communities’ roles in conserving biodiversity, One Earth. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.oneear.2024.05.001>

are willing to proceed with the process. Then it is carefully selected representatives of IP&LCs and other key stakeholders at the site who themselves conduct the assessment and then collectively plan actions to empower IP&LCs where there is potential to do so. If this is viewed as a form of action research, then it is the stakeholders who are leading the research and the action, facilitated by the project partner agency. All four assessment – one per country – planned for year one have been conducted in this way.

3. Project progress

3.1 Progress in carrying out project Activities

This report on activities is based on the revised workplan that was part of the request for a no-cost extension that was submitted in December 2024. See Annex 2 after the logframe. In the following sections we refer to the tool as “SAGE-GT”. This is because it uses a process that is very similar to our SAGE tool which is a tool for improving governance quality but this new tool focuses on “Governance Type” which is the technical term for the balance of power between key actors in the governance of a protected or conserved area.

Activity 1.6: Hold a virtual workshop of the GTTF to reflect on the field-testing experience and modify the tool as necessary to produce Beta version – core group two days, other members up to one day.

This meeting to review the experience from the first round of pilots took place in mid-May.2024 with the core group of partners and IIED staff as it was clear that this would be a very technical discussion that would only make sense for people who had been involved in the pilots. Appendix 1 summarises the outcomes of this meeting and key outstanding issues. Decisions on these outstanding issues were made over the course of the following two months.

Activity 1.7: Develop a draft users’ manual for the Beta version of the new tool to support round 2 field testing

This revised users’ manual was drafted and reviewed by partners in July and then finalised in early August. See Appendix 2. The second round of pilots closely followed this guidance. In addition to developing an improved user guide, we contracted an academic at the University of Edinburgh to develop an on-line App to automatically generate a graphic representation on SAGE-GT results which for the first pilots had been drafted manually. See Appendix 5 slide 7.

Activity 2.1: Plan round 2 field-testing for at least one additional sites per country.

Completed on schedule. But given that all four partners are participating in this project on a voluntary basis – their time being a contribution in kind – these pilots were not their top priority and there was some delay in them actually taking place – see next section.

Activity 2.2: Collaborators conduct round 2 field-testing in at least one additional sites per country.

The revised user manual for the second round of pilots was finalised and sent to the partners in early August – see appendix 2. The second round of pilots – one site per country – then started on schedule in August (Nepal) and was completed by the end of November.

Kenya – October/November 2024

Nepal – August/September 2024

Philippines – October/November 2024

Uganda – October/November 2024

Activity 2.3: Hold an in-person workshop of the whole GTTF (20 people) to reflect on experience to date (June 2024) and make further adaptations to the tool (indicators and process) to create version 1.

By this point the ad hoc Governance Type Task Force that contributed substantially to the design of the tool at its first meeting in Cambridge UK in June 2024 had been formerly adopted by IUCN as the “Community-led Governance Task Force” of the WCPA and CEESP commissions of IUCN with a much more substantial remit but still very interested in the tool it had helped to create. The in-person workshop was originally scheduled for October 2024 but eventually took place in Kenya March 17-20th 2025. There were 35 participants from all over the world. This project sponsored the four members who are partners in the SAGE-GT project and who stayed on for an extra day and a half for the in-depth discussion of SAGE-GT.

The agenda of the Task Force workshop agenda included an update on progress with SAGE-GT – see the powerpoint in Appendix 3. Slide 3 shows the power balance typology that was developed by the Task Force at their first meeting which still forms the basis of a SAGE-GT assessment, and provides some clarity on the meaning of “community-led”. The last slide shows a how SAGE-GT results are presented using the App described under activity 1.7 – in this case for the indicator “Deciding which members of the communities (ie IP&LCs) can use resources in the forest reserve (in Nepal). This shows that while government agencies say that community members have the authority to do this, community members say this type of decision is in reality taken by government agencies. The key point here is that the ensuing discussion of why there is such a difference of opinion usually reveals governance challenges that can be resolved at the site level as being not issues of national policy but rather how government agencies are choosing to interpret and apply the policy.

Activity 2.4: Develop a users’ manual and virtual training package for version 1 of the tool that will be rolled out post project

Activity 2.5: Develop a strategy for rollout and engage donors to secure funding for a technical support facility

Activity 3.1: Conduct applied research on impact pathways and enabling conditions for roll out based on focus groups and key informant interviews with actors at testing and other adopting sites, and higher levels.

Activity 3.2: Prepare an IIED Working Paper and Briefing on experience and results that validate the tool, make recommendations for enabling roll out, and support advocacy on the importance of PCA governance type and quality for conservation effectiveness and equity and promoting IPLC-led conservation

Not started in the fourth quarter but started in April 2025 ie 3 months behind schedule because all of these activities had to follow activity 2.3 above which was originally scheduled for October/November 2024 but then, as explained above, postponed to March 2025.

3.2 Progress towards project Outputs

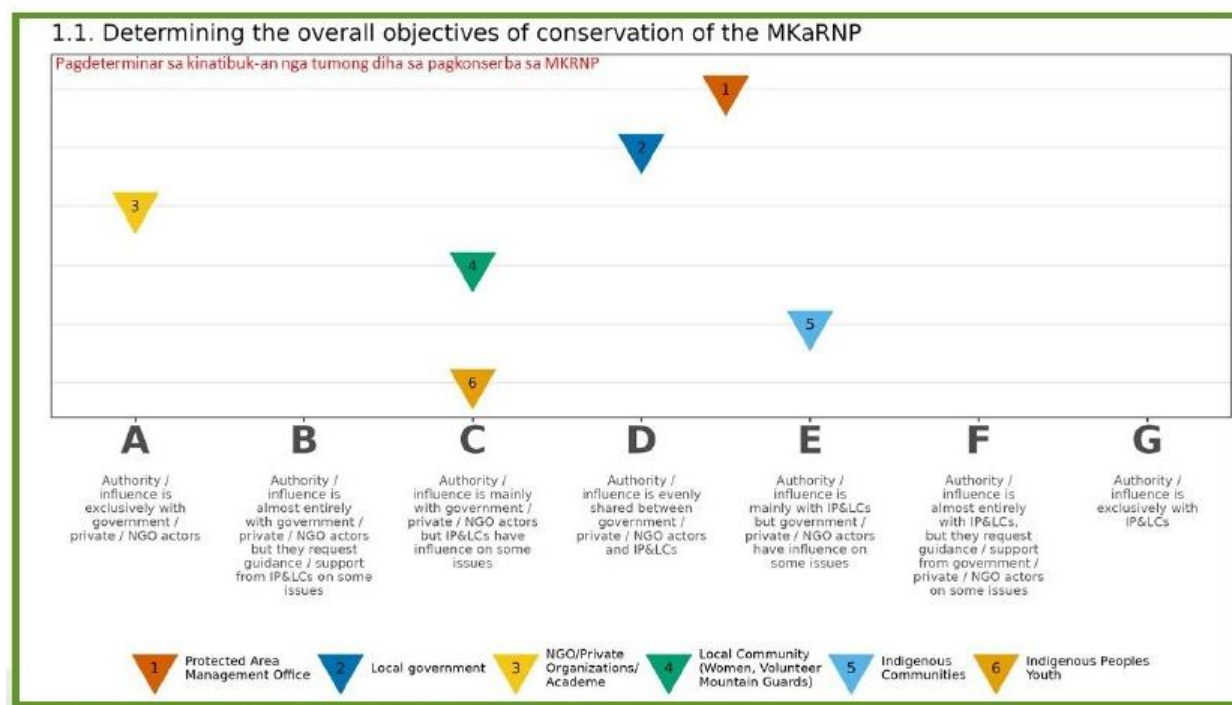
Output 1. A prototype tool created, tested at one site in each country, and improved	1.1. First prototype tool developed and basic manual 1.2. First prototype tested at 1 site in each country and 4 site reports produced 1.3. Second prototype of the tool developed and a revised users’ manual 1.4. At least 200 peer-to-peer messages on the Whatsapp group in the first year
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Output indicators 1.1 and 1.2 were achieved in year 1, and indicator 1.3 – the revised users’ manual was released in August 2024 (see Appendix 2).

With the second prototype for the second round of piloting there have been a number of significant changes in response to learning from the first round of piloting, notably:

- a. The typology of governance sub-types – notably to replace “inputs” in columns 2 and 6 with “guidance/support” (see below). Guidance means information and opinions that are obtained through consultations, and support means something more than verbal/written inputs, for example assistance with law enforcement, technical advice.
- b. For topics/indicators where the power/authority of actors at site level is limited by policies and laws at higher levels the assessment should look at the full picture, for example if national law says that use of resources from a PA is limited to non-timber forest products (NTFPs) then the power of communities should be assessed as low even if they have some power to decide the quantity and timing of permitted harvesting.
- c. Co-convenors of the assessment should include a community organisation
- d. Use of the “staggered” or “decentralised” approach for assessment by actors rather than having all actor groups conduct the assessment in the same place on the same day, and then holding the pathways to change workshop the next day. This also enables a reduction in the number of participants at the pathways to change workshop and therefore cost savings.
- e. In the chart we use to present the results for each indicator we have dropped the large arrow that we had for average score as average for an specific indicator has no useful meaning. However averaging results across all 4 indicators of a certain dimension, by group and across groups, may still have value and we need to look more closely at this.
- f. Extend the pathways to change workshop from one day to 1.5-2 days to allow time for prioritising ideas for changes that have been proposed and developing action plans.
- g. A different process for developing ideas for change, prioritising these and developing action plans. In normal SAGE the output of the assessment is a “long list” of around 20-40 ideas for action where an “action” is a fairly high-level statement of something that could be done to address a weakness in governance that has been identified. Then in a later action planning workshop (step 3.1) these are further prioritised down to less than 10 and a plan developed for each action in the standard format of activities, who is going to do what (roles) and timeline. In SAGE-GT instead of moving from assessment to ideas for action, the assessment of power balance for a given indicator is followed a discussion of whether change is needed and if so what that change should look like after 1-2 years which we call the desired change or desired outcome. This is followed by a two stage process to prioritise these changes/outcomes down to six that should be delivered in year 1, and developing an action plan to deliver each of these.
- h. A more systematic approach to prioritise desired changes/outcomes based scoring the options against two criteria – importance and likelihood of success within two years.

Along with the revised manual we produced an improved version of the Excel-based data entry and analysis tool – see appendix 4. In addition, an IIED partner at the University of Edinburgh produced an App that creates charts from the output of the Excel tool – see futureofconservation.shinyapps.io/governancetype/. The charts show, for each question, the opinion of each actor group regarding where the power lies, in this case for the question: *What is the balance of authority/influence between community and non-community actors with regard to determining the overall objectives of conservation of the park.*



<p>Output 2. A further improved tool developed through testing, learning and adapting in at least two more sites in each country, and a strategy and supporting materials for roll-out.</p>	<p>2.1 Second prototype tool tested in at least 2 sites in each of the 4 countries</p> <p>2.2 Version 1.0 of the tool, users' manual and virtual training package developed</p> <p>2.3 Roll-out strategy and supporting materials developed</p> <p>2.4 At least 400 peer-to-peer WhatsApp messages in year 2</p>
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As described under activity 2.2, the improved tool (second prototype) of the tool was tested at a second site in each of the four countries. All four assessment reports are submitted with this annual report. If you only have time to look at one, then look at the one from the Philippines which reflects higher capacity of the facilitation team both in terms of facilitation and output. For reasons explained in the outcome section, we have not tried to extend the tool to an additional site in each country beyond the first and second pilot sites.

Feedback from the partners during the second round of piloting led to one further modification of the process, namely to move assessment on the four financing indicators from the actor groups to plenary a) because many participants, and especially IP&LCs, have little knowledge of how the financing works and thus discussion in groups could be dominated by just a few people, and b) because financing could be more controversial than the other four dimensions in some cases and thus better to be facilitated by the Lead Facilitator. This modification is reflected in the mid-November version of the user manual – see Appendix 3.

Work under output 2 will be completed during the six month no cost extension, notably final revisions to the user's manual, and development a virtual training package and roll-out strategy.

<p>Output 3. Evidence of the tools' potential for enhancing conservation effectiveness and equity and promoting locally-led conservation has been co-produced and effectively communicated at national and global levels.</p>	<p>3.1. Number, type and quality of communications materials produced by IIED, in country collaborators and GTTF</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - at least 3 blogs - at least 2 articles in WCPA and/or other relevant newsletters - IIED working paper and Briefing <p>3.2. Number of mentions of the tool in descriptions of events at the World Parks Congress 2024</p>
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Output 3 is about generating evidence of the value of the tool to support rollout. Work on this started in March at the Community-led governance Task Force and SAGE-GT workshop that followed it with planning the applied research on impact pathways and enabling conditions for roll out (activity 3.1). Implementation will start in mid-May and be concluded by end of June, ie six weeks later than planned. This will mean that we will have to reduce the number of deliverables to one blog, 1 article, and one IIED working paper and will shortly submit a change request to this effect.

Activities 3.2 to 3.6 are activities of the WCPA/CEESP Community-led Governance Task Force, supported by GIZ and thus a contribution in kind to output 3 of the project. They build on the work of this project to elaborate the concept of PCA governance type and its relevance to the broader notion of equitable governance that is an element of the 30x30 target, and to develop and demonstrate a practical tool to assess and change the balance of power between actors and thus the governance type of a PCA.

3.3 Progress towards the project outcome

<p>Outcome (By end of project):</p> <p>Proof of concept for an effective and readily replicable tool for assessing PCA governance type in both terrestrial and marine contexts, including early indications of conservation becoming more IPLC-led.</p>	<p>0.1. At least 12 PCAs in 4 countries are using the tool,</p> <p>0.2. Indirect contribution to human well-being:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - At least 600 community women and/or IPs have more influence over PCA-related decision-making - At least 600 community women and 300 men have better access to PCA-related information - At least 450 community men and women reporting a change in power balance in their favour based their indicators of locally led conservation <p>0.3. Reduction in unauthorised resource use that can be expected to improve conservation outcomes</p> <p>0.4. The tool has been recommended for rollout by the Governance, Equity and Rights Specialist Group of IUCN's World Commission on Protected Area</p>
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After two rounds of pilots and meetings of the facilitators after each round we have a tool that is fundamentally the same tool in terms of core concepts of the process and analytical framework but much improved in terms of process and indicators that form the basis of the assessment. Like our SAGE tool for governance quality assessment and action, SAGE-GT enables site-level actors to assessment the balance of power between actors in five different dimensions and plan actions to shift the balance of power more towards IPs&LCs where there is consensus to do so and national policy allows for this.

Gaps between what is provided for in policy and the reality of practice are known as “implementation gaps” and are common in all sectors. A lot of evidence suggests that they are very common in area-based conservation, in part because policy has been changing to become more progressive and enabling for community-led conservation over the last c 30 years but practice lags behind, constrained by traditional mindset and vested interests in the status quo. Social research in specific contexts has produced robust evidence of this but until now there has been no tool that could be applied across a range of different contexts to reveal implementation gaps of this kind and engage key actors in discussions on how to close this gap. This is the primary purpose of SAGE-GT and this project without doubt provides basic proof of concept in a marine context (Kenya) and a range of different forest contexts.

The workshop of SAGE-GT facilitators held in March 2025 in Kenya after the Task Force workshop as the analysis strengths and weakness of the SAGE-GT tool – see appendix 6. Some of these constraints can be addressed by further modifications to the tool but there are three fundamental issues that are inherent to the concept:

1. Changing the balance of power/authority/influence between community and non-community actors (governance type) is (or at least appears to be) a more sensitive proposition than improving governance quality on which the SAGE tool is based. In three of the four sites the facilitators chose to use the term authority/influence rather than power for this reason – in Kenya after being summoned by a senior government office who was alarmed by the language being used. But even using the softer language, this tool needs a more cautious feasibility assessment to avoid using it in a situation that might create conflict and a higher quality of facilitation than the SAGE tool.
2. Planning based on defining desired outcomes, barriers to change and actions to deliver these outcomes and address potential barriers is inherently more complex than the standard problem-based approach used by SAGE, ie what are the weakness and what can we do to improve the situation? Several of our SAGE-GT facilitators who have also facilitated noted that community participants struggled to understand the concepts of outcomes and barriers to change. In effect the more sophisticated methodology of SAGE-GT risks marginalised the very people that it seeks to empower.
3. Whereas most of the actions to improve governance quality that are identified in a SAGE assessment may be under the control of site-level actors, actions to change the balance of power are more likely to require support from more senior people at sub-national or national level who have not participated in the site-level SAGE-GT process. Thus, there is a risk that participants in a SAGE-GT assessment become enthusiastic and empowered by the prospect on a power-shift but then frustrated by lack of support from higher levels. In Nepal the SAGE-GT team addressed this by organising a meeting at the level of the provincial government (which has substantial power in the devolved system of Nepal) where the assessment results were presented and discussed.

So, we conclude that SAGE-GT is an excellent tool but only in certain situations, ie relatively strong capacity in facilitation, devolved local government, most community members having some basic level of education. This was the case in Philippines and Nepal but much less so in Uganda and Kenya although these assessments still went well because of the exceptional quality of our facilitators in each case. But these concerns explain why we have not progressed to roll out as planned.

Now that we have a group of SAGE-GT facilitators (who are also SAGE facilitators) who much understand the concept of governance type and relative strengths and weaknesses of SAGE-GT versus SAGE, the other issue we face is now to best position the two of them. Our first thought at the SAGE-GT facilitators in Kenya in late March was that while SAGE is clearly a tool for site-level assessment since most of the change can be driven by site-level actors, perhaps SAGE-GT should be used as a landscape or even national level. But against this proposition is the fact that a big plus for both tools is being able to engage the real practitioners that you find at a site level including ordinary people, but the higher you go the more the risk of political manipulation and elite capture. You may face this sooner or later but start with an process that aims to be really grounded in site/community level realities.

In conclusion we see two opportunities for the SAGE-GT tool:

1. As a standalone tool for situations where there is a real opportunity to shift the balance of power and political support to do so (eg to close a gap between policy and practice), relatively strong facilitation skills and all participants have some level of education.
2. As an add-on to the SAGE tool which has a simpler process than SAGE-GT that would be easier to facilitate and easier to understand (but a blunter tool in terms of assessing the balance of power and identifying actions to improve.

We can and will start to pursue option #2 through existing SAGE scaling up projects such as in Nepal under DAREX011 funded by Darwin Extra. The beauty of this is we will have a tool that more holistically addresses the equitable governance element of the 30x30 target in practical terms and helps to advance understanding of equitable governance conceptually. But for option 1 we need to secure additional funding and currently lack the bandwidth in IIED to do so.

In terms of the indicators at outcome level we expect that the applied research that will be conducted over the next 3 months (activity 3.1) will reveal some initial indications of progress against indicators 3.2 and 3.3, but we do not expect to meet the target of indicator 3.4 before the end of the project in September 2025. That said, Phil Franks of IIED (primary author of this report) is a co-chair of the Governance, Equity and Rights Specialist Group of IUCN's World Commission on Protected Area and thus still able to pursue this target post project.

3.4 Monitoring of assumptions

Output level assumptions	Comment
Two additional countries added to the portfolio with support from IUCN-WCPA members and other donors	Not yet achieved but several members of the Community-led Governance Task Force have indicated interest, notably in Fiji and PNG (in partnership with LLMA Network)
GIZ supports activities 3.3-3.7	Yes this remains valid and they have been doing this.
Actors at 50% of the 12 sites are motivated by the assessment results to take some action towards making governance more locally led. We see this is our work with our SAGE tool and so believe it to be a fair assumption.	This will be verified under applied research activity 3.1 which takes place over the next 3 months

3.5 Impact: achievement of positive impact on biodiversity and multidimensional poverty reduction

As noted in section 3.3, we believe that is a two-year project of this types in is not realistic to expect to see positive impact on biodiversity or poverty although the applied research taking place over the next three months may detect some initial indications.

4. Project support to the Conventions, Treaties or Agreements

This project can make a significant contribution to the further elaboration and implementation of Target 3 (30x30) of the Global Biodiversity Framework. The conceptual work to better understand the concept of PCA governance type, started by the Community-led Governance Task Force and further developed under this project, makes a key contribution to enhancing the understanding of the "equitable governance" element of the 30x30 Target and will be published under activities 3.4 and 3.5 that are being supported by GIZ.

Project partners have not interacted with host country focal points as this is a very small project which is very much experimental in nature and how to frame it is still work in progress eg in terms of power, authority and influence is still under discussion.

5. Project support for multidimensional poverty reduction

See section 3.5 above including prospects for generating some relevant evidence over the next three months. It seems very reasonable to assume that a project that explicitly aims to give stronger voice to community members will contribute to the agency of ordinary community members and thus contribute to wider aspects of poverty reduction and the relational and subjective aspects of human well-being.

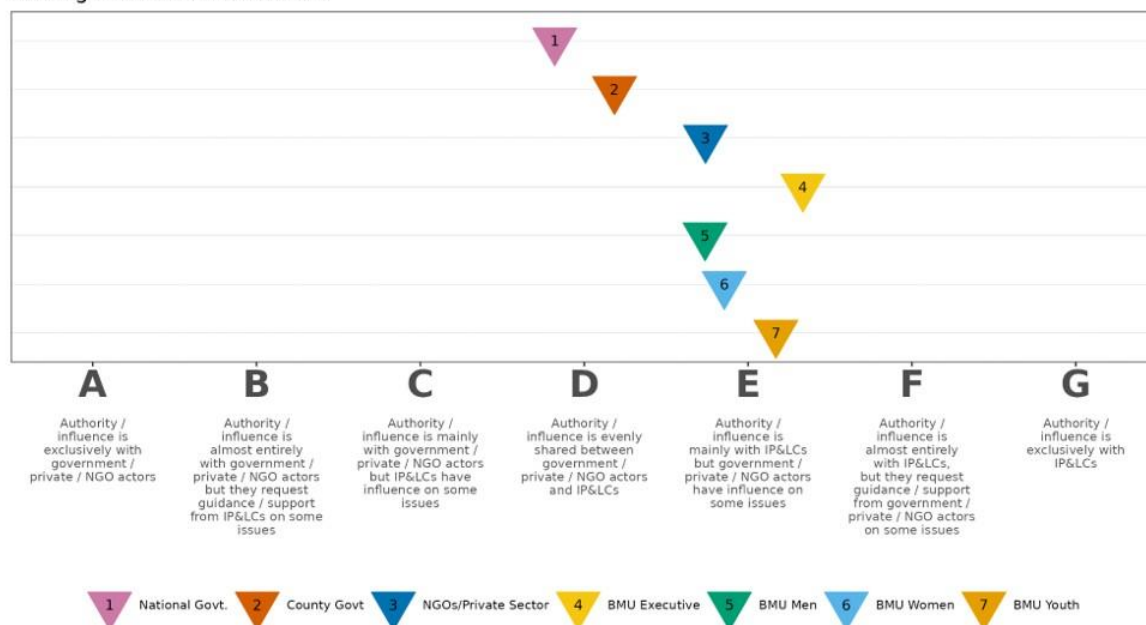
6. Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI)

The chart on the following page shows the opinions of seven different actors groups on the level of power/authority influence of community versus non-community actors when averaging

the results from indicators. This shows the opinions of community men, women and youth separately. In the assessments in Nepal and the Philippines with substantial numbers of Indigenous Peoples these were also regarded as a separate actor group.

With this degree of aggregation, differences in opinion between actors groups are relatively small compared to the earlier chart relating to one specific indicator. But what this chart of overall average shows is that governance type overall is shared governance with community level actors having more influence than government (as per the policy).

Average across all indicators



SAGE-GT assessment framework is based on indicators under five “dimensions of power”, meaning aspects of PCA management and governance where the balance of power tends to be more clearly evident:

- PCA management
- PCA governance structures and process
- Rights and duties
- Knowledge and Values
- Financing

Dimensions B-E closely map onto the GESI core principles aside from environmental stressors.

- Rights: Legal and customary
- Practice: Attitudes, customs & beliefs
- Environment: Stressors & vulnerability
- Roles and Responsibilities: Division of time, space & labour
- Representation: Participation, inclusion & power
- Resources: Access & control of assets and services

SAGE-GT in aiming to shift the balance of power/authority/ influence in PCA conservation and so is transformative by nature and explicitly recognises the interests and opinions of different social groups which then shape plans for action. Furthermore, the SAGE-GT process includes up-front community meetings to enable community participants to have a good understanding of the tool before engaging with other actor groups (phase I - levelling the playing field). See SAGE GT users’ manual (appendix 3 pages 8-11).

GESI Scale	Description	Put X where you think your project is on the scale
Not yet sensitive	The GESI context may have been considered but the project isn't quite meeting the requirements of a 'sensitive' approach	
Sensitive	The GESI context has been considered and project activities take this into account in their design and implementation. The project addresses basic needs and vulnerabilities of women and marginalised groups and the project will not contribute to or create further inequalities.	
Empowering	The project has all the characteristics of a 'sensitive' approach whilst also increasing equal access to assets, resources and capabilities for women and marginalised groups	
Transformative	The project has all the characteristics of an 'empowering' approach whilst also addressing unequal power relationships and seeking institutional and societal change	X

7. Monitoring and evaluation

As expected with a small project like this the M&E system is simple comprising indicators that are simple to verify with basic information from the partners. The exceptions are outcome indicators 0.2 and 0.3 which will be addressed as part of the applied research activity 3.1 that will take place over the next three months, and which also explicitly addressed the issue of scaling up and durability of outcomes.

There have been no changes in the M&E system to date.

8. Lessons learnt

Over the years IIED has designed and implemented several methodology/tool development projects including a Darwin Main project for development of our social assessment tool (DAR 20-010). In this project we used more of a collective approach where the partners have been involved in every stage of developing the tool. This has made it truly a partnership of tool development which is reflected in a deeper understanding for and ownership on the tool. In particular, the conversations we have had after the first round of piloting and then again in March 2025 after round 2 have been incredibly rich and the tool is very much stronger as a result. That said, such a development process that engaged 4 partner staff and 3 IIED staff has generated a tool that is considerably more sophisticated than would otherwise have been the case and we are now faced with tough trade-offs on how much the tool can be simplified and cost reduced without seriously compromising the quality. Then with a somewhat simplified version – for example in combination with the regular SAGE tool - we will need to conduct a further round of pilots. Reflecting on this I would conclude that where you have a very strong development team such as we put together for this project and less control from IIED, you are likely to get a product that needs more than two rounds of piloting.

We found that the budget was extremely stretched in trying to work in four countries and this would only have been possible with tough cost control and partners themselves making

substantial contributions in kind in terms of their time which the project did not cover. In retrospect I would have had just three countries in a project with a budget of £200k.

This project has greatly benefitted from its link to the WCPA/CEESP community-led governance Task Force – the analytical framework of governance sub-types, power dimensions and initial thoughts on indicators. This has been of benefit both in terms of technical input into the design and also, we hope, in terms of broad ownership of the analytical framework as a framework for better understanding the concept of PCA governance type which should significantly contribute to implementation of the 30x30 target.

We will be submitting a change request for some adjustments to a couple of M&E indicators, including reducing the number of communication products.

9. Actions taken in response to previous reviews (if applicable)

The review of the year 1 annual report included two specific comments that we were asked to respond to:

1. While the site reports supplied with the AR provide excellent visibility into the work of the project, it would have been useful to also see the draft manual, and workshop agendas, presentations, working documents etc.

We have included with this report the draft manual and notes from the two key workshops that reviewed the experience of round one and round two of the pilots and implications for the SAGE-GT tool.

2. Disturbing existing social power dynamics must have significant potential to engender conflict and grievances. It would be useful if the next AR could discuss these challenges.

We have not directly addressed this point in a specific section of this report, but have touched on this in several places notably in identifying that SAGE-GT facilitators need to have strong facilitation skills to facilitate what can at times be tricky and sensitive conversations that could create conflict. Since such facilitators can be hard to find at an acceptable cost, we note that this is a factor that limits the potential of the tool.

Alternatively with a version of the tool that could be combined with the less conflict prone standard SAGE tool we can mitigate this risk by cutting out the more sensitive indicators. Over the next few months, we will be looking as which indicators should be included in a SAGE+SAGE-GT combined tool and will take this into account.

10. Risk Management

We have not encountered any new risks nor had the need to modify the design to address existing or emerging risks.

11. Scalability and durability

- How have project stakeholders, especially those important to future scaling of your project (i.e. adopters), learnt about or become aware of the project or activity (including the potential benefits, costs, and steps involved)?
- What evidence is there that the project or activity is attractive to potential adopters (including in terms of the benefits and costs to adopters and how benefits outweigh the costs)?

We will be addressing these two points in applied research activity 3.1 that will take place over the next 3 months within the no cost extension period.

- How have you aligned the incentives for key organisations (including government, civil society, business, and local groups) to support initial and ongoing engagement with the project or activity?

Not applicable for this project.

- How have you leveraged specific ongoing or future government policies or led to a change in policy?

No and not applicable for this two-year project in the sense of being premature.

- What evidence is there that the project has changed attitudes, social norms, knowledge, values and behaviours to support initial and ongoing engagement with the project or activity?

We will be addressing this in applied research activity 3.1 that will take place over the next 3 months within the no cost extension period.

- Referring back to your original exit plan, what were the main steps you proposed for ensuring outputs, outcomes and impacts of the project are durable after the project ends?
- What progress has been made with these steps, with what supporting evidence?
- What other steps is your team taking to promote the durability of desired outputs, outcomes and impacts and ensure the project has a sustained legacy?

These are activities for the last 6 months of the project ie April to September 2025.

12. Darwin Initiative identity

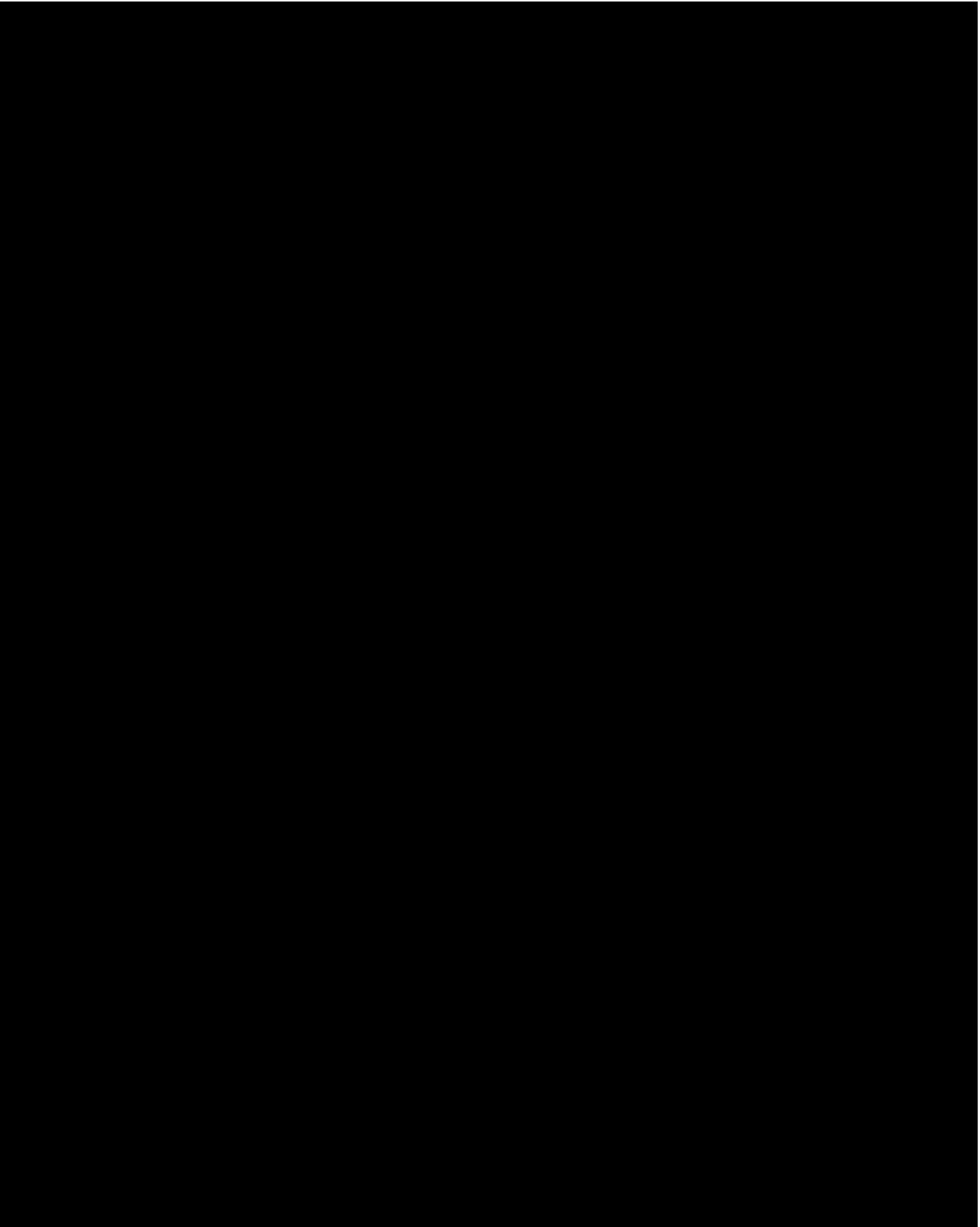
We have a webpage for SAGE-GT which notes that the project is funded by Darwin Initiative.

<https://www.iied.org/sage-gt-for-enhancing-power-indigenous-peoples-local-communities-area-based-conservation>

We have not published any documents to date but will be doing so over the next 6 months and will ensure Darwin Initiative identify.

13. Safeguarding

The BCFs are committed to supporting projects develop and strengthen their safeguarding capabilities and capacity to prevent, listen, respond and learn. Defra will not automatically penalise projects where safeguarding concerns are identified but will help projects respond and learn from the experience. We are committed to helping project strengthen their safeguarding approach and if you have any sensitive questions around safeguarding please contact NIRAS separately.



14. Project expenditure

Table 1: Project expenditure during the reporting period (1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025)

Project spend (indicative) since last Annual Report	2024/25 Grant (£)	2024/25 Total Darwin Initiative Costs (£)	Variance %	Comments (please explain significant variances)	
Staff costs (see below)					
Consultancy costs					
Overhead Costs					
Travel and subsistence					
Operating Costs					
Capital items (see below)					
Others (see below)					
TOTAL	£95,924.91	£95,775.71			

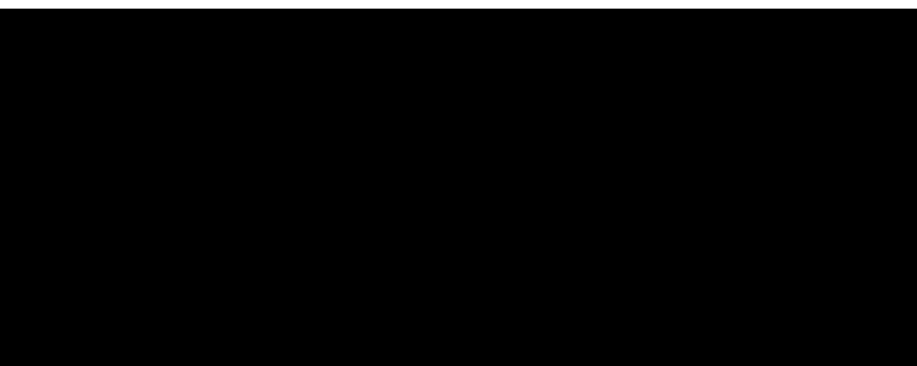


Table 2: Project mobilised or matched funding during the reporting period (1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025)

	Secured to date	Expected by end of project	Sources
Matched funding leveraged by the partners to deliver the project (£)			
Total additional finance mobilised for new activities occurring outside of the project, building on evidence, best			

practices and the project (£)			
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15. Other comments on progress not covered elsewhere

16. OPTIONAL: Outstanding achievements or progress of your project so far (300-400 words maximum). This section may be used for publicity purposes

Annex 1: Report of progress and achievements against logframe for Financial Year 2024-2025

Project summary	Progress and Achievements April 2024 - March 2025	Actions required/planned for next period
<p>Impact</p> <p>At least 500 PCAs across 20 countries have used the tool and 40% reporting significant shifts in the balance of power towards IPLCs and corresponding benefits for people and nature.</p>	Too soon to report on this	
<p>Outcome (</p> <p>Proof of concept for an effective and readily replicable tool for assessing PCA governance type in both terrestrial and marine contexts, including early indications of conservation becoming more IPLC-led.</p>		
<p>Outcome indicator</p> <p>0.1. At least 12 PCAs in 4 countries are using the tool,</p>	8 protected areas in 4 countries	
<p>0.2. Indirect contribution to human well-being:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - At least 600 community women and/or IPs have more influence over PCA-related decision-making - At least 600 community women and 300 men have better access to PCA-related information - At least 450 community men and women reporting a change in power balance in their favour based their indicators of locally led conservation <p>0.3. Reduction in unauthorised resource use that can be expected to improve conservation outcomes</p>	N/A	<p>Assessment to be completed in the next 3 months</p> <p>Assessment to be completed in the next 3 months</p>
<p>Outcome indicator</p> <p>0.4. The tool has been recommended for rollout by the Governance, Equity and Rights Specialist Group of IUCN's World Commission on Protected Area</p>	Not yet	
<p>Outputs:</p> <p>1. A prototype tool created, tested at one site in each country, and improved</p>		

1.1. First prototype tool developed and basic manual 1.2. First prototype tested at 1 site in each country and 4 site reports produced 1.3. Second prototype of the tool developed and a revised users' manual 1.4. At least 200 peer-to-peer messages on the Whatsapp group in the first year	Completed in year 1 Completed in year 1 Completed. For revised user manual see Appendix 2 We no longer consider this a relevant indicator and will be putting in a change request to drop this.	
Output 2. A further improved tool developed through testing, learning and adapting in at least two more sites in each country, and a strategy and supporting materials for roll-out.		
2.1 Second prototype tool tested in at least 2 sites in each of the 4 countries 2.2 Version 1.0 of the tool, users' manual and virtual training package developed 2.3 Roll-out strategy and supporting materials developed 2.4 At least 400 peer-to-peer WhatsApp messages in the second year	Done but only in one site per country Not yet Not yet We no longer consider this a relevant indicator and will be putting in a change request to drop this.	To be completed by September in the 6 month NCE period To be completed by September in the 6 month NCE period
Output 3. Evidence of the tools' potential for enhancing conservation effectiveness and equity and promoting locally-led conservation has been co-produced and effectively communicated at national and global levels..		
3.1. Number, type and quality of communications materials produced by IIED, in country collaborators and GTTF - at least 3 blogs - at least 2 articles in WCPA and/or other relevant newsletters - IIED working paper and Briefing 3.2. Number of mentions of the tool in descriptions of events at the World Parks Congress 2024	None yet N/A – congress has been postponed to 2027	A reduced number to be done by September in the 6 month NCE. Submitting a change request to adjust these targets

	SMART Indicators	Means of Verification	Important Assumptions
Impact: (By end 2030): At least 500 PCAs across 20 countries have used the tool and 40% reporting significant shifts in the balance of power towards IPLCs and corresponding benefits for people and nature.			
Outcome (By end of project): Proof of concept for an effective and readily replicable tool for assessing PCA governance type in both terrestrial and marine contexts, including early indications of conservation becoming more IPLC-led.	0.1. At least 12 PCAs in 4 countries are using the tool, 0.2. Indirect contribution to human well-being: - At least 600 community women and/or IPs have more influence over PCA-related decision-making - At least 600 community women and 300 men have better access to PCA-related information - At least 450 community men and women reporting a change in power balance in their favour based their indicators of locally led conservation 0.3. Reduction in unauthorised resource use that can be expected to improve conservation outcomes 0.4. The tool has been recommended for rollout by the Governance, Equity and Rights Specialist Group of IUCN's World Commission on Protected Area	0.1 Reports from collaborators 0.2 Outcome harvesting plus one focus group discussion at each testing site. 0.3 One focus group discussion at each of the 3 testing sites 0.4 IUCN WCPA Newsletter	In the 5 years following the project, use of the tool extends to at least 20 countries through IUCN's WCPA and CEESP commissions and other peer-to-peer networks and endorsement by at least 2 major international conservation agencies For roll-out to additional countries, donor funding of at least £300k can be secured for a technical support unit
Outputs: 1. A prototype tool created, tested at one site in each country, and improved	1.1. First prototype tool developed and basic manual 1.2. First prototype tested at 1 site in each country and 4 site reports produced 1.3. Second prototype of the tool developed and a revised users' manual 1.4. At least 200 peer-to-peer messages on the Whatsapp group in the first year	1.1 Peer review of the tool and manual 1.2 Peer review of site reports from country level collaborators 1.3 Peer review of the tool and manual 1.4 Review Whatsapp communication of year 1	Two additional countries added to the portfolio with support from IUCN-WCPA members and other donors GIZ supports activities 3.3-3.7 Actors at 50% of the 12 sites are motivated by the assessment results to take some action towards making governance more locally led. We see this is our work with our SAGE tool and so believe it to be a fair assumption.
2. A further improved tool developed through testing, learning and adapting in at least two more sites in each country, and a strategy and supporting materials for roll-out.	2.1 Second prototype tool tested in at least 2 sites in each of the 4 countries 2.2 Version 1.0 of the tool, users' manual and virtual training package developed 2.3 Roll-out strategy and supporting materials developed	2.1 Peer review of site reports from collaborators 2.2 Peer review of version 1, manual and virtual training package 2.3 Review strategy and materials	

	2.4 At least 400 peer-to-peer WhatsApp messages in the second year	2.4 Review WhatsApp communication of year 2
3. Evidence of the tools' potential for enhancing conservation effectiveness and equity and promoting locally-led conservation has been co-produced and effectively communicated at national and global levels.	<p>3.1. Number, type and quality of communications materials produced by IIED, in country collaborators and GTTF</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - at least 3 blogs - at least 2 articles in WCPA and/or other relevant newsletters - IIED working paper and Briefing <p>3.2. Number of mentions of the tool in descriptions of events at the World Parks Congress 2024</p>	<p>3.1 Review of communication materials</p> <p>3.2 Search for the name of the tool in programmes for the 2024 World Parks Congress</p>
<p>1.1 From the membership (c 20 people) of the WCPA/CEESP Governance Type Task Force (GTTF) identify 4 countries and collaborators in each with interest and capacity to field test the tool, and establish a Whatsapp group of these collaborators for sharing experience</p> <p>1.2 Hold a hybrid workshop of GTTF to develop the first prototype tool (indicators and process) and refine the projects monitoring, evaluation and learning system – 3 days in person for the four field-testing collaborators, virtual participation for others.</p> <p>1.3 Collaborators field-test the tool at one site in each country (round 1 field testing)</p> <p>1.4 Hold a virtual workshop of the GTTF to reflect on the field-testing experience and modify the tool as necessary to produce Beta version – core group two days, other members up to one day.</p> <p>1.5 Develop a draft users' manual for the Beta version of the new tool to support round 2 field testing</p> <p>2.1 Plan round 2 field-testing for at least two additional sites per country</p> <p>2.2 Collaborators conduct round 2 field-testing in at least two additional sites per country</p> <p>2.3 Hold an in-person workshop of the whole GTTF (20 people) to reflect on experience to date (June 2024) and make further adaptations to the tool (indicators and process) to create version 1.</p> <p>2.4 Develop a users' manual and virtual training package for version 1 of the tool that will be rolled out post project</p> <p>2.5 Develop a strategy for rollout and engage donors to secure funding for a technical support facility</p> <p>3.1 Conduct applied research on impact pathways and enabling conditions for roll out based on focus groups and key informant interviews with actors at testing and other adopting sites, and higher levels.</p> <p>3.2 Prepare an IIED Working Paper and Briefing on experience and results that validate the tool, make recommendations for enabling roll out, and support advocacy on the importance of PCA governance type and quality for conservation effectiveness and equity and promoting IPLC-led conservation</p> <p>3.3 Prepare and update a communication plan including plan for the World Parks Congress 2024</p> <p>3.4 Prepare a WCPA publication on the revised framework of PCA governance type, PCA governance quality and their inter-relationship illustrated with results from using the new tool for governance type and SAGE for governance quality.</p> <p>3.5 Prepare and publish a policy brief on why IPLC-led conservation needs attention to PCA governance type and governance quality alongside financing</p> <p>3.6 Events at the World Parks Conservation Congress 2024 and CBD COP16</p>		

Workplan revised for NC request December 2024	Apr- June 2023	Jul- Sept 2023	Oct- Dec 2023	Jan- Mar 2024	Apr- Jun 2024	Jul- Sept 2024	Oct- Dec 2024	Jan- Mar 2025	Apr- June 2025	Jul- Sept 2025
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3.3 Prepare and update a communication plan including plan for the World Conservation Congress 2025										
3.4 Conduct a scoping study for a WCPA publication on the revised framework of PCA governance type, PCA governance quality and their inter-relationship illustrated with results from using the new tool for governance type and SAGE for governance quality.										
3.5 Prepare and publish a policy brief on why IPLC-led conservation needs attention to PCA governance type and governance quality alongside financing										
3.6 Plan and prepare for events at the World Conservation Congress 2025										

Checklist for submission

	Check
Different reporting templates have different questions, and it is important you use the correct one. Have you checked you have used the correct template (checking fund, scheme, type of report (i.e. Annual or Final), and year) and deleted the blue guidance text before submission?	Y
Is the report less than 10MB? If so, please email to BCF-Reports@niras.com putting the project number in the Subject line.	Y
Is your report more than 10MB? If so, please consider the best way to submit. One zipped file, or a download option is recommended. We can work with most online options and will be in touch if we have a problem accessing material. If unsure, please discuss with BCF-Reports@niras.com about the best way to deliver the report, putting the project number in the Subject line.	
Have you included means of verification? You should not submit every project document, but the main outputs and a selection of the others would strengthen the report.	Y
Have you provided an updated risk register? If you have an existing risk register you should provide an updated version alongside your report. If your project was funded prior to this being a requirement, you are encouraged to develop a risk register.	N
If you are submitting photos for publicity purposes, do these meet the outlined requirements (see section 16)?	Y
Have you involved your partners in preparation of the report and named the main contributors	Y
Have you completed the Project Expenditure table fully?	Y
Do not include claim forms or other communications with this report.	