



22 benefits of equitable land tenure

As the inheritors and custodians of unique cultures and knowledge systems, indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs) have been stewards of nature since time immemorial and play a key role in biodiversity conservation and sustainable use. When the land tenure rights of indigenous peoples and local communities are secured, ecosystems, forests and biodiversity flourish. Defined by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations as *"the relationship, whether legally or customarily defined, among people, as individuals or groups, with respect to land"* [FAO, 2002], land tenure determines how land and other natural resources are controlled, distributed, and accessed within communities. In commemoration of the International Day for Biological Diversity, on 22 May, we are sharing a list of reasons why equitable land tenure is so important for the well-being of people and nature.

1. Biodiversity prospers

Multiple studies, including the second edition of [Local Biodiversity Outlooks](#) and the [IPBES Global Assessment](#), have shown that in areas where indigenous peoples and local communities control their natural resources, biodiversity prospers. When indigenous peoples and local communities have control of their land, they are able to use their rich traditional knowledge to yield positive outcomes for biodiversity.

2. Contributing to sustainable development

Land tenure security is crucial for sustainable development, including for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Multiple SDG targets are related directly to equitable land tenure security, while equitable land tenure can also contribute to realizing the social, economic, and environmental aspects of other SDGs.

3. Contributing to poverty eradication

Equitable land tenure contributes to the achievement of SDG Goal 1, which aims to eradicate poverty. Land tenure security is particularly important for achieving [target 1.4](#): “by 2030 ensure that all men and women, particularly the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership, and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology, and financial services including microfinance”.

4. Contributing to ending hunger

The land tenure rights of IPLCs also contribute directly to achieving SDG 2 on ending hunger. Without equitable land tenure, we cannot put an end to food insecurity or achieve [target 2.3](#), which aims to “by 2030, double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, including through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment”.

5. Contribute to gender equality

SDG 5 on gender equality is also closely linked with the issue of equitable land tenure. This Goal underscores the importance of guaranteeing the land tenure rights of women from IPLCs. Land tenure security is particularly important for achieving [target 5.a](#): “undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws”.

6. Enabling sustainable development of IPLCs

IPLCs have suffered from historical injustices, including dispossession from their lands, territories and resources. The [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) affirms that such dispossession has prevented indigenous peoples from exercising “their right to development in accordance with their own needs and interests”. Ensuring the equitable governance and land tenure security of

11. Contributing to fulfilling UNDRIP

The [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) foregrounds the importance of land tenure rights. The rights of indigenous peoples to their lands and natural resources are recognized and affirmed throughout the Declaration.

12. Supporting social inclusion

Land tenure security allows for more social inclusion, especially in rural communities, according to research from the [International Fund for Agricultural Development](#). Secure access to land empowers women and girls, by increasing and improving their economic security and their control over decisions in their household. Land tenure security gives women and girls a voice in their community.

13. Supporting resilience to climate change

Land tenure security can contribute to building the resilience of IPLCs to climate change, especially those dependant on biodiversity. Research from the [International Fund for Agricultural Development](#) shows that when IPLCs have secure land tenure, they are more likely to invest in farming practices and infrastructure that can mitigate climate change.

14. Supporting biodiversity monitoring

IPLCs play an important role in biodiversity monitoring and reporting when they have full access to their lands. In conversation with [Scientific American](#), Pamela McElwee, a lead author of the [IPBES Global Assessment](#), noted that many IPLCs collect data through their everyday experiences and practices, which is especially important for bolstering knowledge about the state of biodiversity in remote or rural areas where there is a lack of scientific presence.

15. Enhancing biodiversity in agricultural lands

When IPLCs have control over their lands, the landscapes they steward tend to be more diverse. According to Zsolt Molnár, a coordinating lead author of the [IPBES Global Assessment](#) who spoke with [Scientific American](#), indigenous tenured lands tend to be more biodiverse than typical agricultural lands that contain the same species.

16. Supporting restoration

Land tenure security can enable IPLCs to undertake restoration efforts in their traditional lands, waters, and territories, contributing to the goals of the [United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration](#). According to the second edition of the [Local Biodiversity Outlooks](#), “IPLCs in different regions of the world are contributing to ecosystem restoration and resilience by planting trees, cleaning up water sources, improving waste management, and restoring neglected water systems and degraded environments”.

17. Reducing deforestation

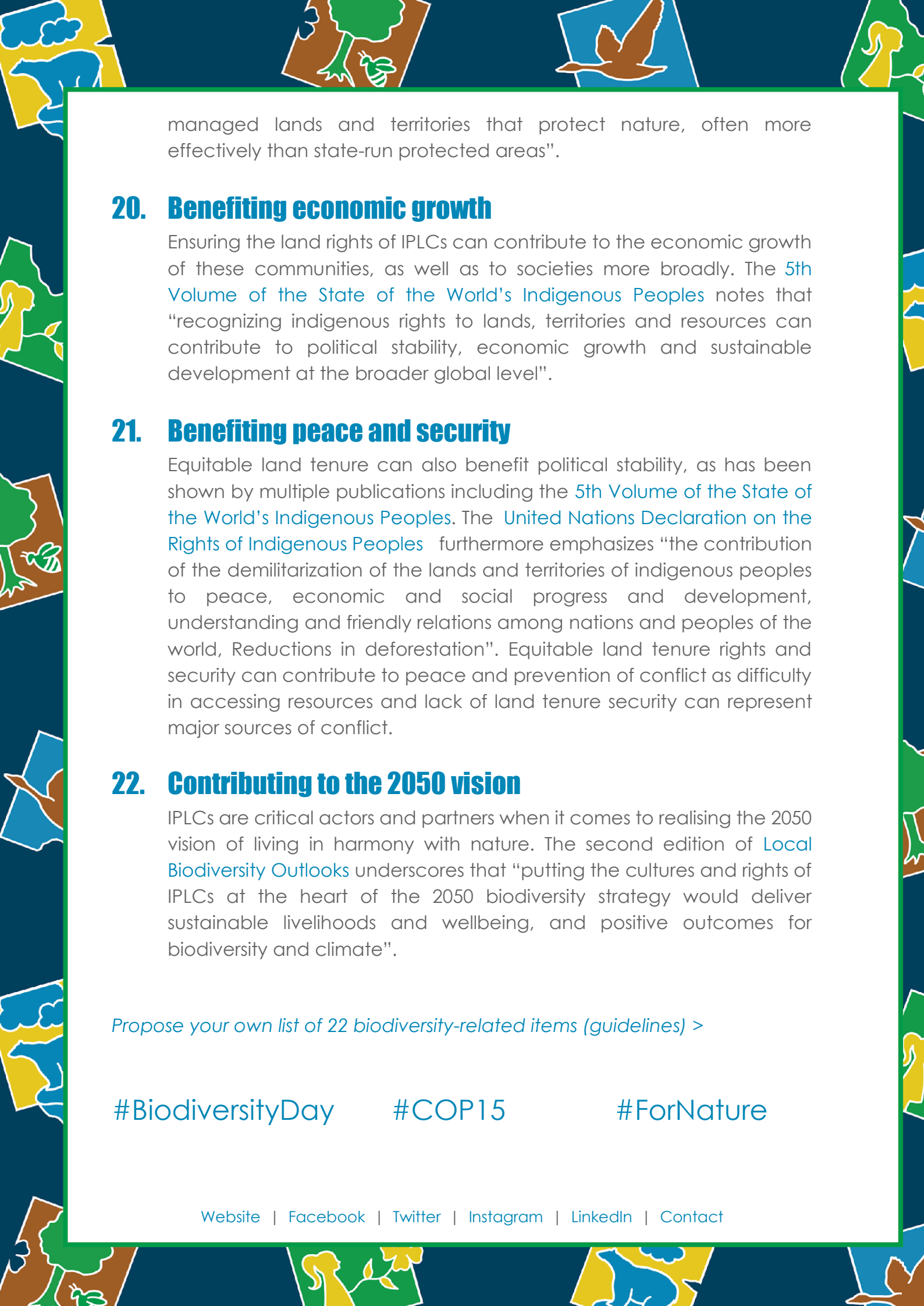
Lands managed by IPLCs commonly have lower rates of deforestation and forest carbon emissions than other areas, according to the second edition of [Local Biodiversity Outlooks](#). The report finds that this is “due in part to the greater sustainability of customary natural resource management systems based on traditional knowledge”. Equitable land tenure enables IPLCs to serve as stewards of their land, waters, and territories, and helps reduce deforestation.

18. Supporting human rights principles

Securing the land tenure rights of indigenous peoples can help to ensure that other human rights principles are also respected, such as the principle of free, prior and informed consent. The [United Nations Declaration](#) on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples makes repeated reference to the importance of consultation and free, prior and informed consent.

19. Making protected areas more equitable and effective

The significant contributions of IPLCs towards the equity and efficacy of protected and conserved areas have been well-established in research, including in [the second edition of Local Biodiversity Outlooks](#). The report underscores the benefits of conservation approaches that are positively rights-affirming, which includes guaranteeing the land tenure rights of IPLCs. It notes that “a transformation is required towards conservation approaches that are positively rights-affirming, going beyond outreach and collaboration towards full recognition of IPLCs’ rights and increased support for the huge contribution of sustainably

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managed lands and territories that protect nature, often more effectively than state-run protected areas”.

20. Benefiting economic growth

Ensuring the land rights of IPLCs can contribute to the economic growth of these communities, as well as to societies more broadly. The [5th Volume of the State of the World's Indigenous Peoples](#) notes that “recognizing indigenous rights to lands, territories and resources can contribute to political stability, economic growth and sustainable development at the broader global level”.

21. Benefiting peace and security

Equitable land tenure can also benefit political stability, as has been shown by multiple publications including the [5th Volume of the State of the World's Indigenous Peoples](#). The [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) furthermore emphasizes “the contribution of the demilitarization of the lands and territories of indigenous peoples to peace, economic and social progress and development, understanding and friendly relations among nations and peoples of the world, Reductions in deforestation”. Equitable land tenure rights and security can contribute to peace and prevention of conflict as difficulty in accessing resources and lack of land tenure security can represent major sources of conflict.

22. Contributing to the 2050 vision

IPLCs are critical actors and partners when it comes to realising the 2050 vision of living in harmony with nature. The second edition of [Local Biodiversity Outlooks](#) underscores that “putting the cultures and rights of IPLCs at the heart of the 2050 biodiversity strategy would deliver sustainable livelihoods and wellbeing, and positive outcomes for biodiversity and climate”.

[Propose your own list of 22 biodiversity-related items \(guidelines\) >](#)

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Disclaimer

We acknowledge that there are thousands of individuals and organizations around the world undertaking extraordinary work for biodiversity each and every day.

The information provided within each list of 22 biodiversity-related items is meant to create engagement and participation in the [Biodiversity Day](#) campaign and is by no means exhaustive or fully representative of all the initiatives taking place around the globe or all the individuals, organizations, and entities that promote biodiversity. We apologize for any inconvenience or misunderstanding this could cause and we look forward to your feedback. Please [contact us](#) for any comments and suggestions to rectify any inconsistencies. More importantly, we also invite you to create your own lists of 22 biodiversity-related items, which will be more representative of your work and adapted to your topic of interest.

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