

## **Report on Participation in the 6<sup>th</sup> ICCA Southeast Asia Consortium Assembly**

**21<sup>st</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> April, 2025, Mataram, Lombok, Indonesia**

**By**

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**and**

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### **A. Yaongyimchen CCA, Nagaland**

#### **1. Presentation on Our Community's Conservation Initiatives**

During the assembly, each country representatives were given 3-5 minutes each to share about our activities and initiatives on Sustaining Territories of Life. I had the privilege to share on our community's ([Yaongyimchen Community Biodiversity Conserved Area](#) led by Dr. Y Nuklu Phom) inspiring journey in establishing a Community Conservation Area (CCA). Starting from a position of limited resources and no financial support, and over the years how our community demonstrated strong collective will and determination to protect and manage our degrading ecosystem.

Through grassroots organising, intergenerational knowledge-sharing, and the strengthening of customary practices, we began mapping our traditional territory and identifying ecologically and culturally significant areas. The initiative gained momentum as more community members participated, seeing both the need and the opportunity to safeguard our heritage and biodiversity.

Key points I shared include:

- **Initial Challenges:** Lack of formal recognition, limited technical capacity, no financial support, the community's dependence on the forest (hunters and gatherers), and external and internal pressures on land, forest and resources.
- **Community Mobilization:** Formation of a local conservation working group, engagement of elders and youth, and collective decision-making.
- **Actions Taken:** Participatory mapping, biodiversity monitoring, revival of traditional ecological knowledge, and setting community rules for sustainable use.

- **Achievements:** Greater internal unity, improved natural resource governance, sustainability, regeneration of biodiversity, expansion of biodiversity corridors and growing recognition from local authorities and partners at both national and international levels.
- **Financial Support:** The need to support the communities who are our conservation partners through alternative livelihood interventions, capacity building, technical support, etc.
- **Vision:** expansion of more biodiversity corridors beyond the borders: Trans Border Conservation Effort/Transboundary Vision

## 2. Regional Interest in Our Transboundary Vision

A particularly inspiring outcome was the interest shown by participants from other countries in our vision for **community-based transboundary conservation**. Representatives from neighboring Indigenous communities expressed a desire to connect more deeply and explore opportunities for cross-border collaboration based on shared ecosystems, cultures, and traditional knowledge systems.

This showed us that our local efforts resonate regionally—and that many communities face similar challenges and aspirations. It opened the door to future partnerships built on solidarity, respect for Indigenous sovereignty, and ecological connectivity.

## 3. Reflections and Way Forward

Participating in the ICCA-SE Asia assembly reaffirmed the value of our work and strengthened my belief in the importance of Indigenous-led conservation. It allowed me to connect with other Indigenous and local leaders across the region, learn from diverse experiences, and explore new tools and strategies to strengthen our work. Through various interaction sessions and field visits, I also gained a deeper understanding of regional and international advocacy spaces for ICCAs and the importance of securing legal recognition for our territories.

My takeaway from this participation was the new perspectives, ideas, and relationships that can support and enrich our efforts.

Moving forward, we aim to:

- Deepen our community's engagement in regional Indigenous networks

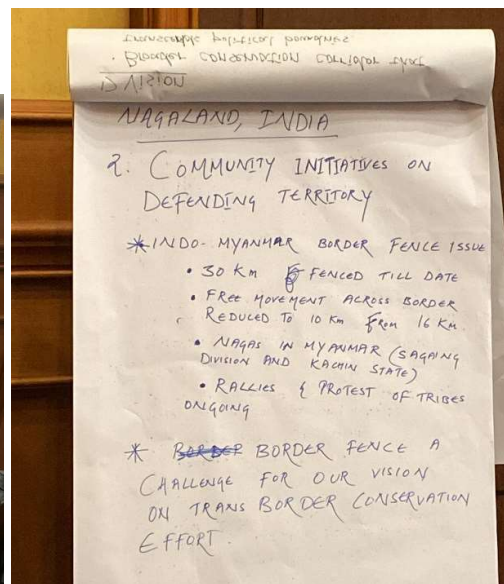
- Explore formal mechanisms for transboundary ICCA collaboration
- Continue to advocate for national and regional recognition of our conservation area

## Conclusion

My participation in the ICCA Southeast Asia Consortium Assembly has profoundly deepened my understanding of the important role Indigenous and local communities play in biodiversity conservation and sustainable land management. The assembly underscored the necessity of integrating Indigenous knowledge systems and governance models into national conservation strategies. It is imperative that we, in our own country, continue to identify and recognise and support the rights of the communities, ensuring their active involvement in decision-making processes that affect their ancestral territories/land. By fostering such inclusive and rights-based approaches, we can enhance the effectiveness of our conservation efforts and contribute to the global biodiversity agenda.



Poster presentation of Nagaland CCAs



Discussion Points



Watikala(L) and Pentile (R) presenting at the Assembly







## **B. Sendenyu CCA, Nagaland**

### **1. Introduction**

The presentation shed light on the inspiring journey and achievements of the community-led conservation initiative in Sendenyu village, launched in 2001 on land voluntarily donated by clans and individuals. Aimed at protecting wildlife from poaching and habitat loss, the initiative integrated traditional practices such as creating water holes to support wildlife during dry seasons and drew on deep ecological knowledge to regenerate native tree species that serve as food sources for birds and animals.

What started as a local initiative has, after extensive dialogue and negotiation, evolved into a broader landscape-level movement involving five villages in collective conservation efforts. The initiative gained wider recognition when a faunal diversity study by Kalpavriksh, supported by The Nature Conservancy, recorded 23 wild animal species within the Community Conservation Area (CCA). Over the years, the area has seen a noticeable increase in species like monkeys, sambar, barking deer, wild dogs, and wild boar. Notably, the protection and conservation of the upland forests have contributed to the revival of the culturally revered lake 'Nsonji' downstream, which today serves as a tranquil natural site for eco-tourism while enhancing the region's ecosystem services.

Building on this momentum, the Sendenyu Biodiversity Education Experience Centre was recently established to promote deeper ecological understanding, foster inter-generational learning and hence nurture future conservation leader. This model offers a hopeful and replicable example of how rooted community action can restore ecosystems, preserve cultural heritage, and inspire broader conservation landscapes.

### **2. Insights from the meet:**

The assembly offered a rich platform for reflection, learning, and strategic planning among community leaders, Indigenous Peoples, allied organizations and partners for a week-long engagement focused on strengthening community-conserved areas (ICCAs) and deepening regional solidarity. The event included thematic sessions, strategy development, field visits, and intergenerational exchanges. Some of the key insights and learnings are:

1. **Community-Led Conservation in Practice**  
Field visits to Bayan customary forest showcased robust, community-based governance systems. Traditional ecological and landscape management knowledge of the indigenous people of Bayan demonstrated how local customs and collective action underpin the sustainable management of terrestrial ecosystems.
2. **Intergenerational Learning and Leadership**  
The assembly emphasized nurturing future leaders through education, cultural transmission, and peer exchanges. This was reflected in the traditional school and weaving studio in Bayan which are dedicated to inter-generational knowledge transfer
3. **Sustaining Territories of Life**  
Team India came up with their Visions, Conditions necessary to realise the vision, Targets by 2027, Plan and Support needed in sustaining their territories of life (detailed below).

4. Engaging with Market and Non-Market Mechanisms  
The sessions on carbon markets critically examined the risks, benefits, and implications for Indigenous territories. Case studies from the Philippines underscored the necessity of clear tenure rights and community-informed carbon governance.
5. Policy Engagement and Advocacy  
The discussions underscored the role of ICCAs in national and global biodiversity frameworks, including the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and ASEAN guidelines. With regard to communities initiatives on defending territory, the team India highlighted the ongoing Indo-Myanmar border fencing as a significant challenge to their vision of trans border conservation effort.

*India (Nagaland) map to Sustain territories of Life:*

Local communities play a vital role in safeguarding and nurturing their Territories of Life which they have governed, conserved and co-existed with for generations. These efforts are not just about protecting biodiversity but also about affirming cultural identity, autonomy and sustainable living. As an ICCA partner, our vision and approach for sustaining these territories by 2027 are outlined below:

**VISION** - Communities aspire to establish a broader conservation corridor that transcends political boundaries, particularly across sensitive regions like the Indo-Myanmar border. This vision seeks to foster ecological connectivity and collaborative stewardship between communities across borders. At the heart of this vision is the resilience of diverse local dwellers, who are equipped to respond to ecological, cultural, and socio-political challenges while preserving their traditional ways of life.

**CONDITIONS** - To realize this vision, communities should take the responsibility and become more accountable and conscious in their conservation efforts. A key priority is to sustain a balance between livelihoods and natural resources, ensuring that progress and development are achieved without compromising ecological integrity.

**TARGETS** – Our vision can be achieved by building a strong cross-border coalition, particularly engaging youth as conservation ambassadors, to ensure continuity and innovation in conservation leadership. And enhancing public awareness and actively engaging in the identification and documentation of ICCAs, to protect customary rights and ensure recognition.

**PLANS** – To sustain and expand these efforts, it is critical to implement a multi-pronged strategy that includes regular outreach to both internal and external stakeholders; initiate cross-learning of best practices across communities; strengthening stewardship practices by recognizing communities as custodians of their resources; and building capacity in community-based resource monitoring to enhance local ability to track and manage natural assets.

**SUPPORT** - Support would be needed to facilitate knowledge exchange and cross-cultural learning that bridges traditional knowledge systems with contemporary approaches. Additionally, promoting alternative income-generating opportunities such as sustainable agriculture, handicrafts, eco-tourism, and other culturally rooted enterprises can help reduce pressure on natural resources while strengthening local economies.

**3. Scope for potential future collaboration:**

- There is strong interest from organizations in Myanmar to further advance transboundary conservation efforts.



- Opportunities also exist to connect with global funding mechanisms such as the Tropical Forest Forever Facility, the Cali Fund, and the Nusantara Fund.
- Additionally, collaboration with the International Land Coalition Asia could be explored to access potential project grants focused on community-conserved areas in India.
- There is also a potential to initiate online webinars focused on knowledge exchange between communities across Asia in collaboration with other ICCA partners.

14 May, 2025