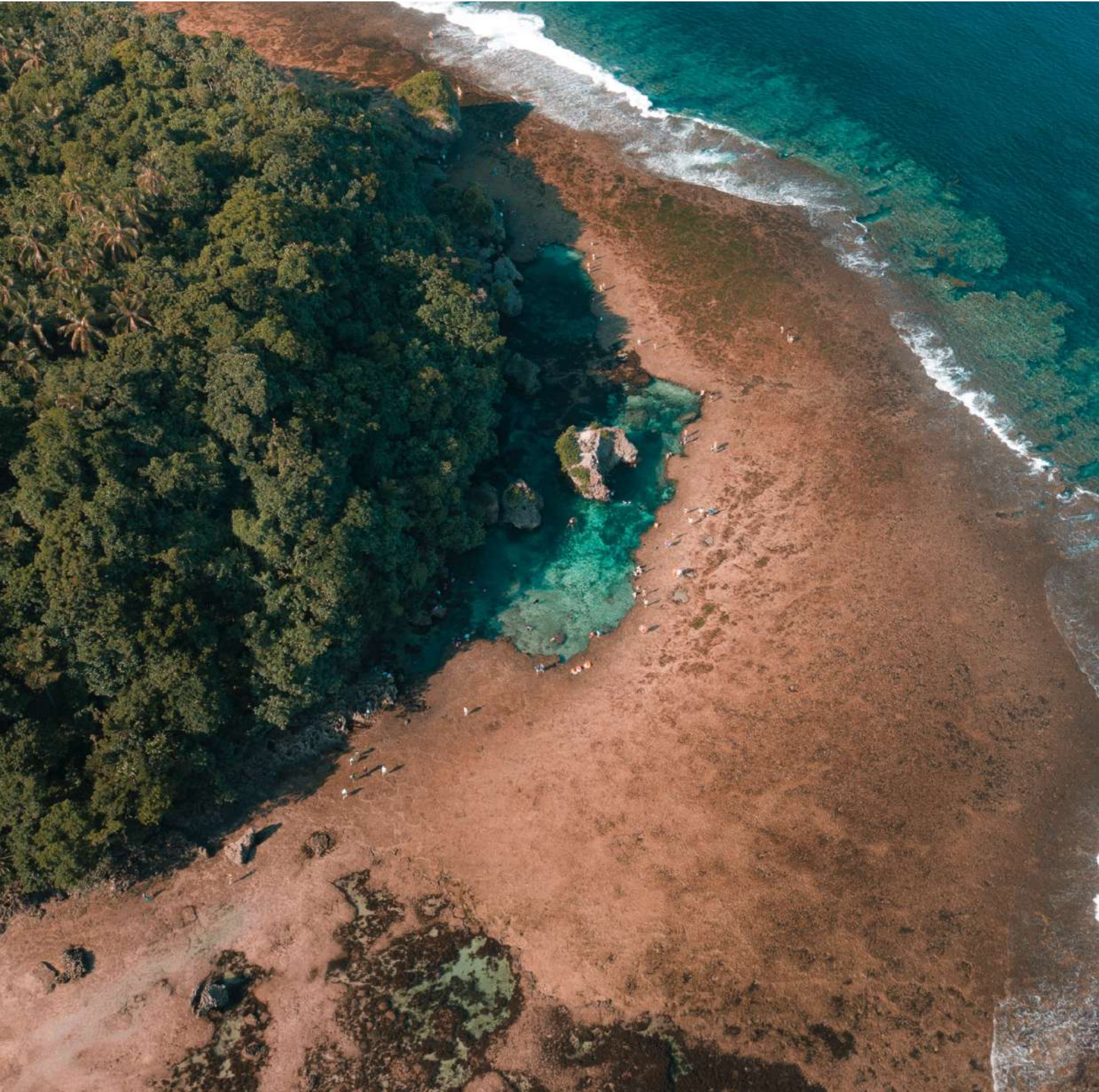


# Status of Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs) in Asia



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Cover image of Siargao, Philippines by Michael Louie on Unsplash.

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## Acronyms

APAP: Asia Protected Areas Partnership

CBD: Convention on Biological Diversity

COP: Convention of the Parties

EBSA: Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Area

IBA: Important Bird and Biodiversity Area

ICCA: Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas/territories and areas conserved by Indigenous Peoples and local communities or “territories of life”

IUCN: International Union for Conservation of Nature

KBA: Key Biodiversity Area

NBSAP: National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan

OECD: Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measure

PA: Protected Area

PADDD: Protected Area Downgrading, Downsizing and Degazettement

SDGs: Sustainable Development Goals

UNEP-WCMC: United Nations Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre

WCPA: World Commission on Protected Areas

WD-OECD: World Database on Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures

## Executive summary

The concept of "Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures" (OECMs) first appeared in 2010 in global policy, and in 2018, was formally defined through CBD Decision 14/8. OECMs were formally defined in CBD Decision 14/8 as "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". As such, they are a relatively new concept and have not been widely implemented yet, but they are a way to achieve large area-based conservation targets and reduce biodiversity loss. The key difference between OECMs and PAs is that conservation does not need to be the primary objective of an OECM as long as it is an outcome, whereas for PAs, conservation must be the primary objective. Hence, OECMs are a good opportunity to recognise and support areas of high biodiversity importance that are not within formal PA systems. OECMs also provide an opportunity to conserve more types of areas under diverse governance and management systems.

This report aims to elucidate the status of OECMs in Asia, including countries in the Asia Protected Areas Partnership (APAP), through a questionnaire study on strategies, legislation, and challenges related to OECMs and provide recommendations for a way forward. The survey received 33 responses from 17 countries that represented three broad regions in Asia. From East Asia, the countries were China, Japan, and the Republic of Korea (three countries); from South Asia: Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka (seven countries); from Southeast Asia: Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand, and Viet Nam (seven countries). Nearly all of the responding countries are represented in the APAP apart from Indonesia and the Philippines.

The survey results revealed that over two-thirds of the surveyed countries do not have existing strategies for OECMs in place, but most of these countries have plans for the future. It also revealed that only one country, Maldives, has existing legislation for OECMs. Out of the remaining sixteen countries that do not have existing legislation, ten of them stated that they have plans to develop legislation for OECMs in the future. However, it should be noted that legislation is not necessary if there are other effective means in place, such as binding agreements with landowners or customary laws. The main challenges with developing plans or legislation for OECMs were reported to be "Lack of political will to develop these", "Lack of knowledge on how to develop these for OECMs", "Lack of financial resources", and "Lack of understanding on the importance/relevance of OECMs". Since the majority of countries in the APAP and Asia do not have existing strategies or legislation for OECMs, it is important to better understand how to address the challenges with these and the way forward.

The key recommendations from this report to support action for OECMs are described below, which include guidance on 1. Capacity building for OECM recognition and important considerations such as FPIC (Free, Prior, and Informed Consent), 2. Developing a detailed national strategy through a consultative process, 3. Developing legal or other types of mechanisms for OECMs, 4. Financing opportunities for OECMs, and 5. Supporting ecologically valuable areas.

### **Key recommendations:**

1. Capacity needs to be built among policymakers, practitioners, and other stakeholders to achieve a thorough understanding of the requirements of OECMs based on the IUCN WCPA [technical report](#), [site-assessment tool](#), [training materials](#), and UNEP-WCMC reporting requirements. This will help ensure that national or sub-national guidance is aligned and any submitted sites can be reported in the WD-OECM. There are four important considerations to highlight: (i) OECMs need to conserve *important* biodiversity values, such as sites with rare species and ecosystems; (ii) OECMs must have *long term, not temporary*, mechanisms and processes that ensure biodiversity conservation; (iii) areas with sustainable use will not qualify as OECMs if they do not have very light levels of use; (iv) Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) and permission from landowners is necessary to establish OECMs. [Note that updated versions of the report and tool will be launched later in 2023]

2. Countries should aim to create a national strategy for OECMs through a consultative process with relevant stakeholders and rightsholders that includes the following: (a) a nationally-relevant set of criteria to identify OECMs based on the IUCN WCPA criteria that encompasses all key aspects such as “important” biodiversity values and obtaining Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), (b) a mechanism to formally recognise the OECMs nationally, such as in a national database, with legal or other effective measures in place to support the site (such as customary laws), (c) a method to report the sites to the WD-OECM that includes supporting landowners with the technical aspects, particularly for IPLCs, (d) a method to monitor and evaluate the sites, which could use existing national frameworks, and (e) a comprehensive financing plan. The national strategy should explicitly recognise rightsholders and stakeholders and how they will be involved, and quantitative and qualitative goals need to be integrated into the revision of NBSAPs. It would also be highly beneficial to form strategic collaborative management partnerships to facilitate this process across different organisation types due to the diverse nature of OECMs.

3. Countries should identify the best way to incorporate a legal or other type of mechanism for OECMs based on their own contexts and current laws. One way is to examine their existing laws and regulations and see where OECMs can fit into these, ensuring that these are consistent with existing guidance for OECMs. If there are nationally conserved sites that are recognised separately from PAs, it would be a good approach to redefine those as OECMs if they have existing legal frameworks and meet the OECM criteria. Another way would be to develop entirely new laws and regulations based on the key definitional elements of OECMs to help ensure that the measures for effective OECMs are upheld over time. Other effective measures, such as binding agreements with landowners, would also be acceptable. These laws and measures should be equitable, uphold social safeguards for Indigenous Peoples and local communities, and support their rights over their areas.

4. Models for sustainably financing PAs should be applied to OECMs where applicable, such as forming collaborative management partnerships, particularly by using delegated management models. Other opportunities include creating taxes or levies for certain environmentally damaging industries, activities, or products, providing tax incentives, developing payment mechanisms for ecosystem services, and creating conservation trust funds. Financing will depend on the governance and management arrangements of OECMs (e.g., if a site has more extensive management measures in place, then it could have greater costs related to personnel), and not all OECMs will require new financing, especially if they are already governed and managed by entities with sufficient funding. Hence, financing would need to be determined on a case-by-case basis. Potential examples of financing needs are monitoring costs that could involve specialised equipment and paying contractors or staff.

5. OECMs provide a great opportunity to increase support for ecologically valuable areas that are unprotected to achieve additional biodiversity outcomes. Countries should aim to establish new OECMs in the most ecologically valuable spots, such as in KBAs and EBSAs (where applicable) that have no coverage by PAs, and in areas that support important biodiversity values such as threatened ecosystems/areas with threatened species, identified either through the [IUCN Red List of Ecosystems](#) or [IUCN Red List of Threatened Species](#), for example, or through other methods and databases established nationally/sub-nationally.

# Introduction



Baa Atoll, Maldives. Photo credit: Ahmed Yaaniu on Unsplash

# Protected Areas versus OECMs

It is clear that the planet is facing both a biodiversity loss and climate change crisis (WWF, 2022). Protected areas (PAs) and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) are two important area-based conservation tools and nature-based solutions that could help alleviate both of these crises (MacKinnon et al., 2020). As the main driver of recent biodiversity loss worldwide is land or sea-use change (Jaureguiberry et al., 2022), both PAs and OECMs could help protect areas from that, if they are managed well against threats. They could also protect carbon-rich areas and areas with natural features that provide protection against the extreme weather impacts from climate change, and hence play a role in carbon storage, sequestration, and disaster risk reduction (Kettunen et al., 2021).

## Background on the introduction of “OECMs” as a concept

PAs are a long-standing conservation tool and are defined as “A clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values.” (Dudley, 2008). In comparison, OECMs were included in conservation discussions much more recently. This term was first mentioned under one of the [twenty Aichi Targets](#)—Aichi Target 11—in the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity, 2011–2020 defined in Aichi, Japan, in 2010 during CBD (Convention on Biological Diversity) COP (Convention of the Parties) 10. The target was: “By 2020, at least 17 per cent of terrestrial and inland water, and 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well connected systems of protected areas and *other effective area-based conservation measures*, and integrated into the wider landscapes and seascapes” (p. 119), as described in the [report from COP 10](#). At that stage, the now recognised acronym “OECM” had not been formally defined; it was defined in 2018 by the CBD ([CBD Decision 14/8](#)) as “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” (p. 1). The key distinction between PAs and OECMs is that PAs must have conservation as their *primary objective* whereas OECMs must deliver effective and long-term conservation outcomes, *regardless of their objectives*.

## OECMs and Target 3

Most recently, in December 2022 during CBD COP 15, OECMs were included in CBD Target 3 under the [Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework](#): “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.” (p. 9). This target is also colloquially referred to as “30 by 30” since the overarching objective of this target is to conserve 30% of terrestrial and marine areas globally by 2030. This value is supported by scientific studies as the *minimum* percentage required to achieve biodiversity conservation outcomes, though the quality of the areas conserved also needs to be focussed on to reduce biodiversity loss (Woodley et al., 2019). A more recent study (Allan et al., 2022) found that the minimum land area (terrestrial) to safeguard biodiversity is 44%; thus, these values vary depending on the calculations done but they still provide some broad guidance for policies. It should be noted that although Target 3 is gaining significant attention, it is also important to remember



that the other 70% still needs to be considered for sustainable use to protect biodiversity across all area types.

### Effectiveness of PAs and OECMs

As of March 2023, 17.08% of terrestrial areas are protected by 267,089 PAs and 634 OECMs and 8.26% of marine areas are protected by 18,445 PAs and 195 OECMs globally (UNEP-WCMC, 2023). To reach Target 3, it is critical to strengthen existing PAs and establish more PAs and OECMs. The significance of PAs in biodiversity conservation has been widely acknowledged for decades as they have been shown to effectively conserve species and ecosystems and provide ecosystem services (MacKinnon et al., 2020). There have been many studies on the effectiveness of PAs: in a study that was conducted on 359 terrestrial PAs, it was found that there was a 10.6% increase in species richness and a 14.5% increase in abundance inside the PAs compared to the outside (Gray et al., 2016). This increase was particularly significant in human-dominated land uses in the tropics, such as croplands and plantations. A separate controlled study that looked at 218 marine PAs (MPAs) revealed that, on average, the fish biomass within these MPAs was almost twice as much as that found in non-protected sites (Gill et al., 2017). A very recent study (Ceccherini et al., 2023) also found that, on average, protected forests in Europe are two metres taller and vertically more complex in PAs than in nearby unprotected areas. In addition, approximately one-fifth of the carbon sequestered by terrestrial ecosystems annually is attributed to PAs (Melillo et al., 2016). However, protected areas are limited to certain types of sites as they must have a primary conservation objective; therefore, they are not as flexible as OECMs, which can have different primary objectives but also deliver long-term conservation outcomes.

OECMs are an important addition to area-based conservation because they recognise important biodiversity outcomes as a result of the way a site is managed, regardless of the site's objectives, and outside of protected areas. There are many types of OECMs that can be under diverse governance types, such as by private entities and individuals, governments, Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLCs), and a combination of these groups in shared arrangements. Some examples of potential OECMs are sacred forests (IPLC governance), privately-owned land (private governance), undisturbed military lands (government), and more, as long as they meet the OECM criteria. As OECMs are a newer conservation tool, there have not been any studies that have demonstrated their long-term conservation outcomes and effectiveness. Nonetheless, a recent study (Alves-Pinto et al., 2022) found that the Indigenous Lands in the Brazilian Amazon and *Quilombola* (African slave descendent community) Territories—both of which could be potential OECMs in Brazil—experienced significantly less native vegetation conversion compared to their control areas. Additionally, the Indigenous lands and *Quilombola* Territories contributed two and three times more to native vegetation regrowth than their control areas, respectively, and this regrowth is crucial for safeguarding biodiversity.

### OECMs and IPLCs

A very recent [news article](#) (March, 2023) showed that *Quilombola* Territories are facing threats from an international mining company who plan to establish a new extraction project there, and it is important to have measures to protect their ecologically and culturally important lands, as well as those of other IPLCs. OECMs could be a valuable way to help IPLCs retain their rights over their areas, if governments recognise their rights appropriately and uphold social safeguards (FPP and The ICCA Consortium, 2022). This is crucially important as IPLCs own or govern at least 32% of the world's natural lands, and 91% of the lands governed by IPLCs exhibit good or moderate ecological conditions, indicating that IPLC custodianship is aligned with biodiversity conservation (WWF et al., 2021). Additionally, at least 36% of Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) worldwide, which are defined as areas that contribute significantly to the global persistence of biodiversity (KBA Standards and Appeals Committee of IUCN SSC/WCPA, 2022), are found within IPLC lands, and more than half of this proportion is not under any other form of protection (WWF et al., 2021). Although ICCAs (Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas/territories and areas conserved by Indigenous Peoples and local communities) have governance

practices that can lead to conservation outcomes, providing additional protection measures can lead to better outcomes in these lands: a recent study (Sze et al., 2022) showed that protected Indigenous territories (i.e. PAs with IPLC governance and management) in tropical regions had the greatest impact in safeguarding forest integrity and demonstrated the lowest intensity of land-use compared to unprotected Indigenous lands, non-protected controls, and even protected areas that were not under IPLC governance or management. Thus, there is great opportunity to create ecologically important PAs and OECMs in these regions with IPLC governance and management. However, it should be acknowledged that this is just one potential avenue for OECMs amongst others, and some IPLCs are wary of the implications of OECMs for their land (The ICCA Consortium and Forest Peoples Programme, 2022), hence why this should be handled with sensitivity and with the consultation of IPLCs.

### Deciding between establishing an OECM or PA

With OECMs, more areas can be formally recognised as being important for biodiversity conservation even if they would not be recognised as PAs, and they could help IPLCs retain their rights if they are established appropriately with proper mechanisms in place and government support. Therefore, OECMs play a key role in making large conservation targets more possible (Dudley et al., 2018) and offer a way to support rightsholders and other sectors with more equitable partnerships (Gurney et al., 2021). Given that Target 3 will require conserving far more areas than Aichi Target 11, significant changes in the implementation of area-based conservation are necessary, including a diverse toolbox that encompasses PAs, OECMs, and Indigenous territory recognition, a focus on social equity, and a robust monitoring and review process (Gurney et al., 2023).

It should be noted that PAs are still viewed as the first choice for area-based biodiversity conservation, but in areas where they cannot be established, OECMs are recommended instead; where both are not suitable options, they could be considered as sustainable use areas under different CBD targets (Dudley and Stolton, 2022) (Figure 1). Further guidance on OECMs is provided in the next section.

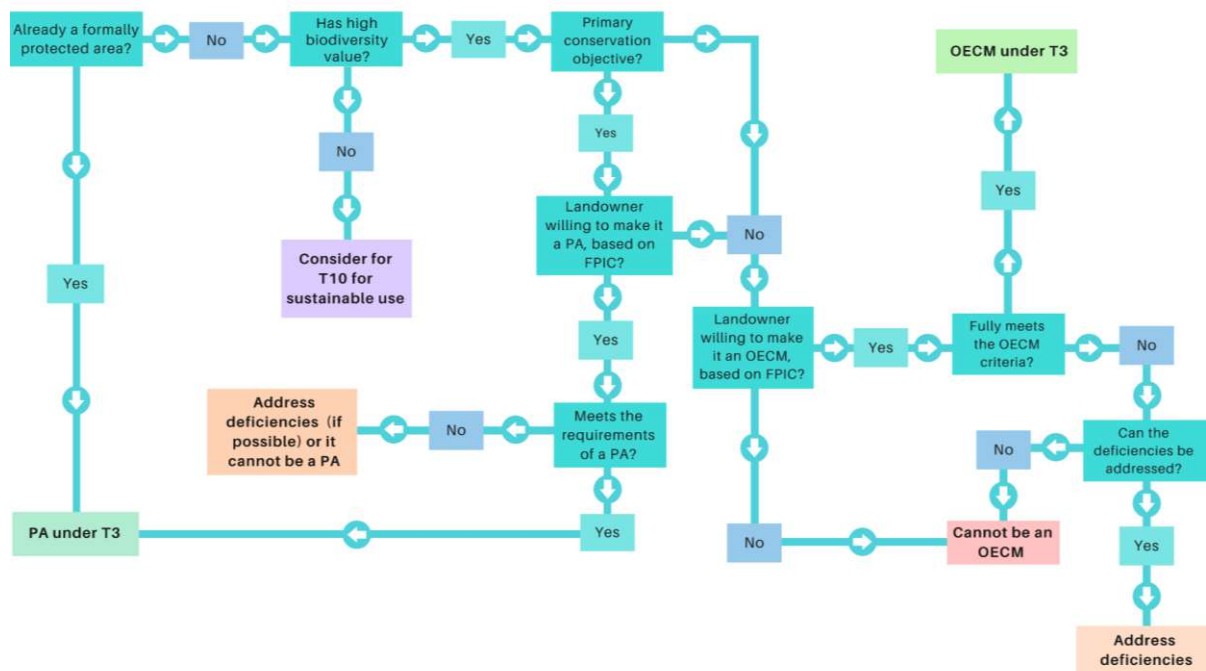


Figure 1. Decision chart for PAs vs OECMs. T10: CBD Target 10; T3: CBD Target 3; FPIC: Free, Prior, and Informed Consent.

# Technical guidance on recognising and reporting OECMs

To help countries identify and establish OECMs based on this definition, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Commission on Protected Areas' (WCPA's) OECM Specialist Group published a [technical report](#) on OECMs in 2019, and released an updated OECM [site-assessment tool](#) in May 2022.

There are several aspects to pay attention to in the definition of OECMs. The definitional elements of an OECM, as stated in the aforementioned technical report, are, a. "other than a Protected Area", b. "geographically defined area", c. "governed", d. "managed", e. "positive outcomes", f. "sustained long-term", g. "in-situ conservation of biodiversity", h. "biodiversity", i. "ecosystem functions and services", and j. "cultural, spiritual, socio-economic, and other locally relevant values" (IUCN WCPA, 2019). From these, the key terms that are relevant to the screening tool and criteria are "other than a Protected Area", "biodiversity", "geographically defined area", and "sustained long-term", in addition to other elements such as mitigating threats and addressing equity considerations (IUCN WCPA, 2019). Some aspects of these have been updated in the new tool; a summary of the latest criteria in the third version of the site-assessment tool (in development, 2023) is in the table below:

*Table 1. Summary of the updated IUCN WCPA (Version 3.0, 2023, in development) site-assessment tool criteria. The lighter green rows show that the first two criteria are the screening criteria and the rest (darker green) are for the full assessment.*

Criteria	
1	The site is <i>not</i> a protected area (PA)
2	There is a reasonable likelihood that the site is likely to supports important biodiversity values
3	The site is a geographically defined area
4	The site is <i>confirmed</i> to support important biodiversity values
5	Institutions or mechanisms exist which govern and manage the site
6	Governance and management of the site achieves or is expected to achieve the in situ conservation of important biodiversity values
7	In situ conservation of important biodiversity values is expected to be for the long-term
8	Governance and management arrangements address equity considerations

## Using the site-assessment tool involves three main steps:

**1.** The screening tool (i.e. the first two criteria in Table 1 above) needs to be used to identify whether a site can be a potential OECM based on two key components of the definition for OECMs: that an OECM cannot be a PA, but it still needs to support important biodiversity values. At the screening stage, the aspect related to biodiversity does not need to be confirmed.

**2.** Free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) from the governing authorities, custodians, and rightsholders needs to be obtained before the full assessment (i.e. the remaining criteria in Table 1) is conducted.

3. If FPIC has been obtained for the potential site, the full assessment should be conducted to assess whether the site meets all the criteria to be an OECM.

For each criterion, the options are “Yes”, “Uncertain or partial”, and “No”. If the site receives “yes” as a response for every criterion, it can qualify as an OECM if it receives consent and recognition from stakeholders and the national government. If a site receives even one “Uncertain or partial” or “No” as a response, it does not qualify as an OECM.

There are various aspects of identifying and reporting OECMs that have caused confusion and the following subsections will address some of the main ones.

#### “Important biodiversity values”:

In the new site assessment tool, biodiversity is specified as “important biodiversity values” in the criteria, and this is a key distinction to note as not all sites, such as those that have been recently restored, will have this. This is an aspect that has caused confusion as it can be difficult to determine what “important” means. For instance, “Small, semi-natural areas within an intensively-managed landscape *with limited biodiversity conservation value*, such as municipal parks, formal/domestic gardens, arboreta, field margins, roadside verges, hedgerows, narrow shoreline or watercourse setbacks, firebreaks, recreational beaches, marinas and golf courses” (IUCN WCPA, 2019) will *not* be considered as OECMs as they are not natural enough and do not have important biodiversity value (IUCN WCPA, 2019). However, several external publications assessing potential OECMs still mention arboreta/botanic gardens as potential OECMs, and this is likely leading to further confusion on what constitutes an OECM.

To clearly draw attention to what this criterion constitutes, the site must support at least one of the following to have important biodiversity values:

- (a) **Rare, threatened or endangered species and ecosystems;**
- (b) **Natural ecosystems which are under-represented in protected area networks;**
- (c) **High level of ecological integrity or intactness;**
- (d) **Significant populations/extent of range restricted species or ecosystems;**
- (e) **Important species aggregations, such as spawning, breeding or feeding areas;**
- (f) **Importance for ecological connectivity, as part of a network of sites in a larger area** (IUCN WCPA, 2023, in development).

Two well-established international standards related to this criteria are those for Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) and Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs). KBAs are defined as “sites contributing significantly to the global persistence of Biodiversity” (IUCN, 2016), and EBSAs are “special areas in the ocean that serve important purposes, in one way or another, to support the healthy functioning of oceans and the many services that it provides” (CBD). The criteria for KBAs and EBSAs are similar to those for OECMs (for biodiversity values) and these sites could, therefore, be an excellent starting point to identify OECMs with important biodiversity values. The KBA database can be viewed [here](#), which has an option to filter for sites that have no PA/OECM coverage by country and threat levels, and EBSAs can be found [here](#). More guidance on KBAs can be found [here](#), and more on EBSAs can be found [here](#). Additionally, the [IUCN Red List](#) could be used to identify rare or threatened species, and the [Red List of Ecosystems](#) could be used to identify threatened ecosystems, which are a part of the OECMs criteria (as well as the KBA/EBSA criteria). It is not necessary for countries to formally establish KBAs or EBSAs to establish an OECM, although they are recommended to if they meet the requirements, but working with KBAs and EBSAs provides a reliable starting point to find OECMs with important biodiversity values and also helps ensure that the most ecologically valuable areas, in terms of biodiversity, are being conserved.

Countries that have national criteria that encompass similar aspects should use those as a starting point to identify OECMs as well. These important biodiversity values can be assessed using existing national ecological frameworks and surveys that evaluate the different aspects highlighted above.

### **Free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC):**

FPIC is especially crucial for Indigenous and local territories as it ensures that IPLCs are involved in decision-making processes that affect them. "Free" means that IPLCs have the right to make decisions without any coercion, intimidation, manipulation, threats, or bribery; "Prior" means that IPLCs should be consulted and given sufficient time to consider and make decisions before any activities are authorised or commenced while respecting their time requirements and processes; "Informed" means that IPLCs should be provided with comprehensive information of the proposed activity, its impacts, procedures, actors, and more, in a language and format that is easily understood; "Consent" means that IPLCs have the right to give or withhold their consent to any decision that will impact their lands, territories, resources, and livelihoods (Buppert and McKeegan, 2014). More guidance on FPIC can be found [here](#).

### **Sustainable use:**

Another aspect that has caused significant uncertainty is sustainable use in OECMs. Sites should ensure that only very light levels of use occur there, if at all, and that their practices do not harm biodiversity; as described in the technical report, "Territories and areas managed by indigenous peoples and/or local communities (ICCAs, or sections of these areas) to maintain natural or near-natural ecosystems, with low levels of use of natural resources practised on a sustainable basis and in a way that does not degrade the area's biodiversity (IUCN WCPA, 2019). Therefore, forests with commercial logging, temporary fishing closures that are subjected to periodic use (i.e. not a long-term measure) or only have restrictions on a particular commercial species, and intensively grazed pastures would not be considered as OECMs and should be considered for different CBD targets for sustainable use instead, such as CBD Target 10: "Ensure that areas under agriculture, aquaculture, fisheries and forestry are managed sustainably, in particular through the sustainable use of biodiversity, including through a substantial increase of the application of biodiversity friendly practices, such as sustainable intensification, agroecological and other innovative approaches contributing to the resilience and long-term efficiency and productivity of these production systems and to food security, conserving and restoring biodiversity and maintaining nature's contributions to people, including ecosystem functions and services" (p. 10, CBD, 2022).

### **Restored sites:**

Restored sites have been gaining traction as potential OECMs, which is why it is important to clarify when they can be considered as potential OECMs and when they cannot. The key point to note is that "[Areas proposed for, or under active restoration efforts, should not be recognised as OECMs until they are delivering demonstrable and significant biodiversity outcomes.](#)" (p. 12, IUCN WCPA, 2019).

According to IUCN WCPA's (2019) report, restoration areas being proposed as OECMs should meet the following requirements:

"1. Restoration is taking place in an **ecosystem of high biodiversity value** so that the area, once restored, will qualify as an OECM by virtue of its conservation value and contribution to strengthening existing protected area networks;

2. Any restoration efforts should (i) have **reduced the threats** that caused the original degradation and biodiversity loss, (ii) show **successful ecosystem recovery** based on the principles of ecological restoration and (iii) contribute to **long-term maintenance** of a resilient and evolving ecosystem;

3. Demonstrate active ecological restoration or natural regeneration of a type and at a scale that is expected to **regain and maintain ecological integrity and a full complement of species.**”

Therefore, it is important to pay attention to the types of areas being restored and if they are supporting important biodiversity values at the time of assessment. For example, a site that has been very recently restored from a poor state may not immediately deliver important outcomes as it takes time for areas to flourish again. However, it could be considered as a potential OECM in the future if it demonstrably regains its biodiversity values.

### **Reporting a site in the World Database on OECMs (WD-OECM):**

Once an OECM has been formally recognised within a country by meeting the criteria and obtaining consent, as described above, it should be submitted to the WD-OECM based on the information in Box 1. It is important to ensure that sites are submitted to the WD-OECM for them to count towards international targets such as CBD Target 3.

#### *Box 1. Requirements for submitting a site to the WD-OECM.*

1. Spatial data from Geographic Information Systems (GIS). Their guidance states that polygon data are preferred, but points can also be provided where polygons are not available
2. Basic descriptive information of the site
3. Information on the source of the data, which must include details on the data provider and when the data were last updated, as well as who verified the data, where relevant
4. [A signed data contributor agreement](#) (there is a governmental version and non-governmental version)

More details on these aspects can be found in the [WDPA and WD-OECM Manual](#) (2019). The information should be submitted by the government or governing authority/NGO representative (typically, it will be the government if there is a national process in place for this) to the [World Database on OECMs](#) (WD-OECM) email address (oecm@unep-wcmc.org).

As there are many technical requirements to submit a site to the WD-OECM, IPLCs may face difficulties with this and could be dependent on governments and NGOs for technical support to achieve representation unless training and capacity building is provided from trusted organisations (FPP and The ICCA Consortium, 2022). Countries who are developing guidelines for OECMs should consider methods to support IPLCs with these aspects.

For potential OECMs governed by IPLCs, the site could also be submitted to the [ICCA registry](#) (an online information platform for Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas/ICCAs).

### **Mechanisms for recognising OECMs:**

There are diverse mechanisms for recognising OECMs, and these will vary by country (case studies on Canada and South Africa below in Box 2 and 3). For instance, although legislation is mentioned throughout this report, it is not necessary for countries to develop new legislation or regulations for OECMs. Countries could instead use or modify existing laws and regulations to include OECMs. More guidance on developing and modifying legislation for OECMs can be found in the “Conclusions and recommendations” section.

Legislation for OECMs, whether new or existing, may not be needed at all in some cases if there is an effective alternative measure in place that can help the site maintain long-term conservation outcomes; as mentioned in the IUCN WCPA report (2019), “...the management of OECMs should include “effective means” of control of activities that could impact biodiversity, whether through **legal measures or other effective means** (such as customary laws or binding agreements with the landowners).” Thus, other policy measures or formal agreements could also suffice if they help deliver the desired outcomes.

Measures, whether they are legal or other types, for the governance of OECMs should be equitable, recognise human rights (IUCN WCPA, 2019), and uphold social safeguards for IPLCs. If there are existing recognised governance measures in place that are effective, these should be given additional support and recognition instead of replaced or altered (IUCN WCPA, 2019).

*Box 2. Mechanisms for recognising OECMs: Canada*

Canada
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marine and terrestrial OECMs have been formally handled by different jurisdictions and government bodies in Canada since 2017 and 2018, respectively.</li> <li>• Marine OECMs are primarily under Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO). DFO released new <a href="#">guidelines for recognising marine OECMs</a> in 2022 that include five criteria and additional sub-criteria to determine marine OECMs in a Canadian context. To date, the areas that qualify as OECMs in Canada’s oceans are fisheries area closures (called marine refuges).</li> <li>• The Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard uses Canada’s <i>Fisheries Act</i> to establish fishing area closures as marine refuge OECMs if they meet Canada’s guidance on marine OECMs (Government of Canada, 2022).</li> <li>• Terrestrial (including freshwater) OECMs are primarily under provincial and territorial governments. Terrestrial OECM sites are determined using Canada’s <a href="#">decision support tool</a>. This tool compares various aspects of terrestrial PAs and OECMs to determine whether a potential site is better suited to be the former or latter.</li> <li>• OECMs in Canada are recognised and established based on guidance set by these government bodies that include criteria that need to be met and upheld. The data are stored in the <a href="#">Canadian Protected and Conserved Areas Database (CPCAD)</a>.</li> <li>• Canada currently has 231 OECMs reported in the WD-OECM (UNEP-WCMC, 2023).</li> </ul>

*Box 3. Mechanisms for recognising conservation areas, which could be re-defined as OECMs: South Africa*

South Africa
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• South Africa recognises ‘conservation areas’ separately from PAs and defines them as ‘areas of land or sea that are not formally protected in terms of The Protected Areas Act but are nevertheless managed at least partly for biodiversity conservation’. Hence, many of these areas could be considered as potential OECMs.</li> <li>• South Africa has different mechanisms for recognising conservation areas:</li> </ul>

- Biodiversity Management Agreement: “An agreement entered into in terms of the Biodiversity Act between the Minister or MEC and the implementer of a Biodiversity Management Plan or an aspect of a Biodiversity Management Plan” (SANBI, 2018).
  - Legal mechanism: National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act (Act 10 of 2004)
  - Binding mechanism: contract with a landowner for at least 5 years or longer in 5-year increments
  - Must have a Biodiversity Management Plan in terms of the Biodiversity Act for the site (Marnewick et al., 2021)
- Biodiversity Agreement: “...concluded in terms of contract law and is not recognised in terms of either the Protected Areas Act or the Biodiversity Act.” (SANBI, 2018).
  - Legal mechanism: Contract law
  - Binding mechanism: contract with a landowner for at least 5 years or longer (Marnewick et al., 2021)
- Conservation Servitude: “An agreement between a landholder and a third party, most typically a conservation NGO, in terms of which the landowner undertakes to set aside a section of their land for conservation purposes in favour of the third party.” (SANBI, 2018).
  - Legal mechanism: South African common law
  - Binding mechanism: notarial deed registered at the Deeds Registry for at least 99 years or in perpetuity for the landowner—also binding for the successor in title
  - Has management measures (Marnewick et al., 2021)
- PCA data is stored in the government's [Protected Areas Conservation Areas \(PACA\) database](#), which records all PCAs in the country.
- South Africa currently has 17 OECMs reported in the WD-OECM (UNEP-WCMC, 2023).

## Background on questionnaire study

It is clear that OECMs are growing in importance in discussions on area-based conservation, yet little is understood about their status in Asia. In Asia, there are currently 178 OECMs in the [World Database on OECMs](#) (UNEP-WCMC, 2023), which is 91% of all the OECMs established worldwide. All 178 of these OECMs are in the Philippines. There is immense potential to increase this number in Asia as 160,981,100 ha of land that are considered to be Key Biodiversity Areas are currently not protected by PAs or OECMs, including data from South and Southeast Asia, East Asia, Western Asia, and Central Asia (KBA Global Dataset, 2023). Asia also has the highest number of Indigenous peoples across the world (AIPP, 2019), which means that creating OECMs under their legally recognised traditional governance and management systems could help support the rights and land ownership for the majority of the Indigenous people populations and local communities. Given the difficulties of establishing new PAs, if the number of OECMs can be expanded across countries in Asia, with a focus on the quality of biodiversity conservation and strengthening equity and rights, there will be potential to improve biodiversity conservation outcomes and halt biodiversity loss.

Since recognising and reporting OECMs will be critical to achieving more ambitious conservation targets, the Ministry of Environment Republic of Korea (MOEK) requested support from IUCN to foster



progress towards the new targets through the identification, recognition, and reporting of OECMs. The overall objective for the MOEK is to further develop an effective system of protected and conserved areas, including OECMs, for the Republic of Korea, report verified 'effectiveness' and area contributions to the CBD, and share lessons and approaches with partner countries in Asia. There are three components to their work, and Component 3 is related to Asia. The overall objective of this Component is: "Regional Outreach in Asia on OECMs through the [Asia Protected Areas Partnership \(APAP\)](#)"; the APAP was launched in 2013 to help governments and other key organisations and stakeholders collaborate to achieve more effective management for protected areas within Asia. It is chaired by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and co-chaired by a member organisation rotationally.

Therefore, the aim of the present report is to assess the status of OECMs in Asia, with a focus on strategies, legislation, and challenges related to OECMs in countries in the APAP. The findings from this report are then used to provide recommendations for a way forward.

### **Methods:**

To assess the status of OECMs in Asia, a questionnaire was created (see [Appendix 1](#)) on the strategies, legislation, and challenges related to OECMs in Asian countries and sent out to APAP focal points, regional World Commission on Protected Area (WCPA) OECM Specialist Group members, and the regional networks of the Regional Vice Chairs of WCPA East Asia, WCPA South Asia, WCPA Southeast Asia, WCPA North Eurasia (for Central Asia), and WCPA North Africa, West Asia and Middle East (for West Asia). The options in the "main challenges" question (question 25) in the questionnaire were based on the conclusions of a recent (November 2022) presentation (currently unpublished) on a survey on OECMs in Europe, which had similar objectives to the current questionnaire, along with an option for "Other". The OECMs in Europe survey was conducted by the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN) in collaboration with IUCN WCPA, IUCN Global Protected Areas Programme, and the IUCN Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

The latest National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) and/or national reports submitted to the CBD for each country in the APAP and other responding countries (a total of 19 countries) were examined to find previous national targets related to Aichi Target 11 and whether there was any mention of "other effective area-based conservation measures", "OECMs", or similar variations of the term (e.g., "other effective conservation measures"). It was understood that the acronym "OECM" was only formally established in 2018, as mentioned earlier, and that it would likely not be present in older reports. The UNEP-WCMC [country level](#) database on PAs and OECMs (2023) was used to find the latest percentage coverage information for each country.

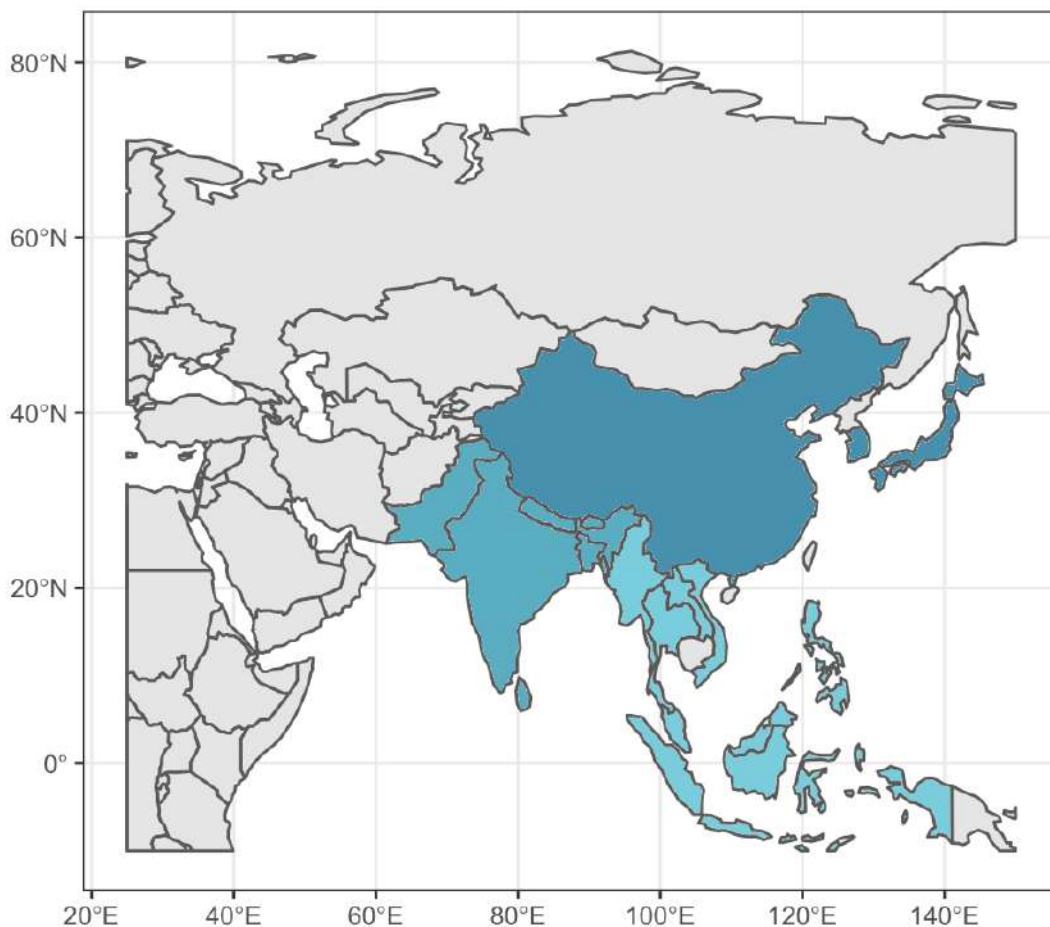
The [KBA Global Dataset](#) (2023) was used to find examples of KBA sites that could be potential OECMs; for this, the filter for "protected area coverage" was set to "0%" and select profiles of sites were assessed against the OECM criteria and guidance, based on the information available. The [ICCA Registry](#) was also used to find examples of ICCAs that could be OECMs, where case studies were available.

Information from scientific studies and other relevant publications were used to supplement the questionnaire responses, where available and suitable, particularly to find nationally-relevant examples of OECMs and potential challenges.

For the analysis, the countries were first assessed all together to assess the overall status in Asia for the five key aspects of the questionnaire: existing strategies, planned strategies, existing legislation, planned legislation, and challenges. They were split into three sub-regional groups for analysis: East Asia, South Asia, and Southeast Asia to assess whether there are stark differences between these regions on these aspects. Statistical analysis on significance could not be conducted with the number of responses received.

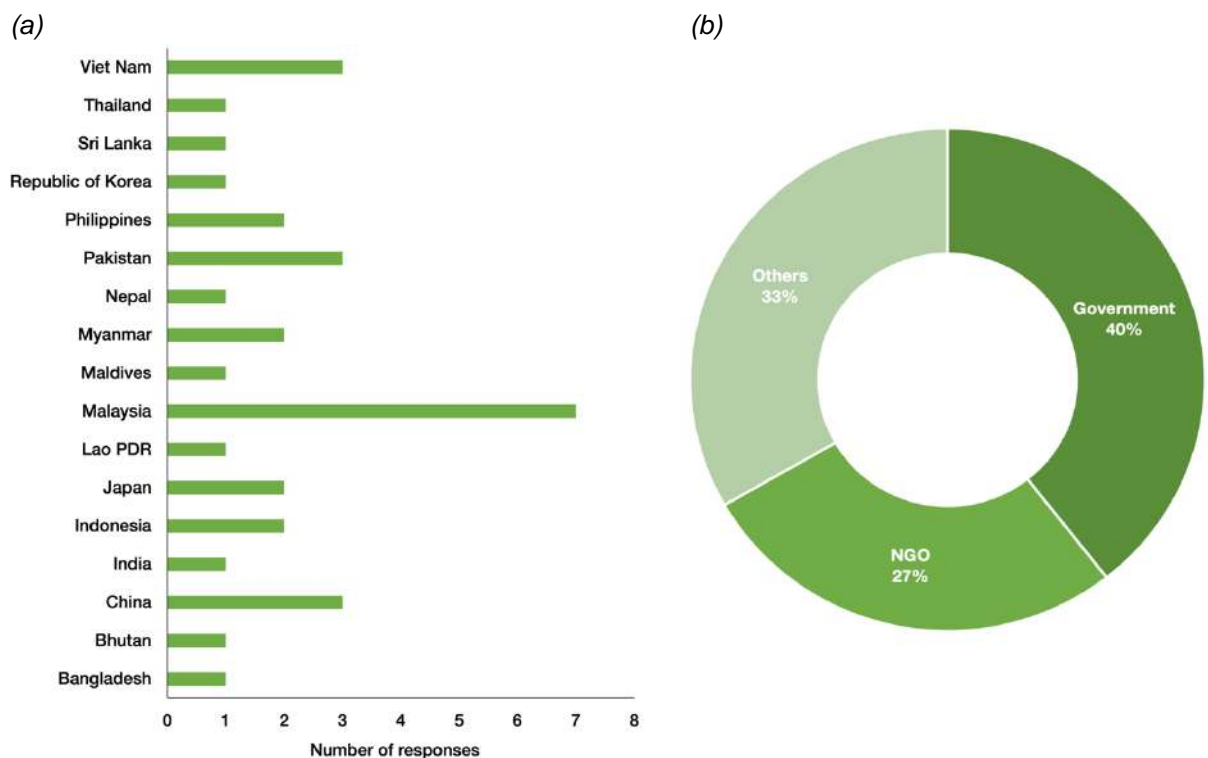
### Respondents:

Overall, 33 representatives from governments, NGOs, and other organisation types responded to the questionnaire—17 countries from three sub-regions (East Asia, South Asia, and Southeast Asia) were represented, with multiple responses from some (Figure 2a). From East Asia, the countries were China (mainland), Japan, and Republic of Korea (3 countries); from South Asia: Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka (7 countries); from Southeast Asia: Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, and Viet Nam (7 countries) (Figure 2). All of these countries are in the APAP apart from Indonesia and the Philippines. One respondent was representing multiple regions across Asia and not a specific country, and was, therefore, excluded from these values, but their suggestions for OECMs in Asia are incorporated in the Analysis section.



*Figure 2. Map of countries that responded to the OECM questionnaire. Countries coloured the same are from the same sub-region. Light blue: Southeast Asia respondents; medium blue: South Asia respondents; dark blue; East Asia respondents. Map created using ggplot2 (Wickham, 2016) in RStudio (R Core Team, 2021).*

The respondents were from a diverse range of organisation types: 13/33 (39.4%) were from government organisations, 9/33 (27.3%) were from non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and 11/33 (33.3%) were from other types of organisations such as universities, the World Bank, ICCA Consortium, Leibniz Center for Tropical Marine Research, and more (Figure 3b).



*Figure 3. Number of questionnaire responses from each country (a) and the proportion of organisation types that responded (b).*

The results from the questionnaire are included in the following sections. Responses to questions on strategies, legislation, and challenges are included in the status profile for each country, grouped by sub-region (East Asia, South Asia, and Southeast Asia), and then the overall status across Asia and sub-regional comparisons are presented. All of the countries in the APAP are included in the country profiles, even if they did not respond to the questionnaire, but they are not included in the overall summarised findings as those are based on the response data. Each section includes information that was obtained from the questionnaire supported by additional research.

# Status of OECMs in East Asia



Nami Island, Republic of Korea. Photo credit: Haman Sibayan on Unsplash

# China

## Previous national target(s) related to Aichi Target 11 and current area coverage:

China's numerical area-based targets related to Aichi Target 11 were:

- “By 2015, the total area of terrestrial nature reserves will be maintained at 15% or so of the country's land area, protecting 90% of national key protected species and typical ecosystem types.
- The percentage of the area of marine protected areas out of the marine areas under China's jurisdiction will be increased from 1.1% in 2010 to 3% in 2015.” (p. 30, The Ministry of Environmental Protection of China, 2014)

OECMs were briefly mentioned (without the acronym) in one part of a Aichi Target 11 document in China's [sixth national report](#) (2019) to the CBD: “Biodiversity can be effectively protected through expanding the protected areas network and *other effective conservation measures* as well as the effective management of protected areas.” (p.1) However, they were not explicitly mentioned throughout the rest of the document.

China reports that it currently has 15.62% terrestrial and inland waters coverage and 5.48% marine coverage with 122 protected areas and 0 OECMs, but this is based on publicly based information as China chooses not to display some data on protected areas (UNEP-WCMC, 2023).

## Existing or planned national or sub-national strategies to formally identify and recognise OECMs:

None.

## Potential OECMs:

Community-protected areas—including “[fengshui forests](#)”, sacred mountains and lakes—ecological forest areas, natural forest protection projects, fishing closure areas, and Ecological Conservation Redline zones, could be considered as OECMs in China, according to a [published interview](#) with the national coordinator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and a journal article (in Chinese) on OECMs in China (Jin et al., 2022). The aforementioned Ecological Conservation Redline (ECRL) is a governmental policy and spatial planning framework in China that aims to maintain existing land cover, prevent any overall loss of biodiversity, and avoid degradation of other ecosystem services within the ECRL (Schmidt-Traub, 2021); therefore, many ECRL areas could be OECMs (Choi et al., 2022). Additionally, Aquatic Germplasm Reserves, also known as Fishery Conservation Zones, protect commercially important, rare, or endangered fish species, but do not have a primary conservation objective, which is why they cannot be considered as PAs. However, they could be OECMs because they could lead to substantial biodiversity conservation outcomes (Bohorquez et al., 2021). Coastal wetlands and scenic sea areas supported by local governments and the community conserve mangroves and marine mammals but do not qualify as MPAs in China; hence, these could be potential OECMs as well (Zhao et al., 2022). It should be noted that although these types of areas have been recommended as potential OECMs and may indeed meet many of the criteria, they have not been fully assessed against all the OECM criteria; hence, they would still require further evaluation on a case-by-case basis.

In the [ICCA registry](#), China has some [areas](#) that could be OECMs, such as some of the aforementioned community-protected areas and ICCAs such as [Diebu County ICCAs](#):

*Table 2. Details of an ICCA site that could be a potential OECM. Data from the ICCA Registry (2023).*

<b>Site name and type</b>	Diebu County ICCAs (a collection of five ICCAs)
<b>Geographical defined space</b>	The five ICCAs have 600 ha of forested areas where no natural resource use apart from cultural uses and subsistence is permitted.
<b>Not recognised as a protected area</b>	Not considered to be PAs.
<b>Governed</b>	Governed by the local community.
<b>Managed</b>	Managed by an elected village committee with management practices that have been passed on across generations
<b>Biodiversity value</b>	The temperate coniferous forests support over 500 higher plant species, over 200 vertebrate species, and nearly twenty endangered animal species, including the Giant Panda.
<b>Permanence</b>	Long term as these areas have been conserved by the local community for decades.

There are also many KBAs in mainland China that have 0% coverage from PAs and OECMs (KBA Global Dataset, 2023) and these could be potential OECMs if they meet the rest of the criteria. One example is [Hala Hai](#):

*Table 3. Details of a KBA Site in China (mainland). Data from the Key Biodiversity Areas Partnership (2023).*

<b>Site name</b>	Hala Hai
<b>Protected area and OECM coverage</b>	0%
<b>Area</b>	41,847 ha
<b>System</b>	Terrestrial, Freshwater
<b>Biodiversity value</b>	Has a confirmed KBA status. Supports five vulnerable bird species and three endangered ones.
<b>Threats</b>	None mentioned for this site.

It seems that this area passes the screening criteria from the IUCN WCPA [site-assessment tool](#) for an OECM (i.e., 1. The site is not a protected area (PA); 2. The site is likely to support important biodiversity values), and two additional criteria (“3. The site is a geographically defined area”; 4. “The site is confirmed to support important biodiversity values”). It meets the first criteria for an OECM as it is not a protected area or overlapping with one, it meets the second criteria as it has important biodiversity values as a KBA, it meets the third one as having a specified area value, and the fourth one, again, as it is a KBA. Information related to the remaining four criteria, most of which are related to governance and management, is not available on the KBA platform and further national or sub-national consultations and site assessments would be required to determine whether the site can be an OECM. It should also be noted that many of the sites listed as having 0% coverage from PAs and OECMs in China’s data search erroneously included sites that had the term “Nature Reserve”, which are considered a type of protected area in China and should, therefore, be excluded when considering OECMs. Nonetheless, the KBA platform still provides a good starting point to at least address half of the criteria at the very start of an assessment.

### Existing or planned legislation for OECMs:

None.

### Main challenges related to developing plans or legislation for OECMs, according to the respondent(s):

- Lack of political will to develop these
- Lack of understanding on the importance/relevance of OECMs
- Lack of knowledge on how to develop these for OECMs

Aside from the challenges the respondents identified, the UNDP national coordinator in the aforementioned [published interview](#) stated that the biggest challenge is how to monitor and assess potential OECMs in the long term. A local fisherman who was also interviewed regarding a potential marine OECM site stated that funding was a major issue as it takes money for fuel and labour costs for boats to patrol the area. This is an example of where funding is needed to maintain biodiversity outcomes in OECMs.

Additionally, in scoping papers on the ECRL (Bai et al., 2016; Schmidt-Traub, 2021; Choi et al., 2022), which was mentioned earlier as an example of a potential OECM in China, the authors stated that the challenges with this include securing significant investments to guarantee the availability of competent personnel and financial resources to implement the ECRL nationwide. Other challenges include establishing relevant regulations and laws to promote the ECRL's effective implementation and enforcement, as well as negotiating and discussing with stakeholders to clearly define the ECRL's boundaries and ensure its compatibility and consistency with other spatial planning frameworks. Additionally, a comprehensive assessment is necessary to evaluate the biodiversity values and range of ecosystems encompassed by the ECRL.

## Japan

### Previous national target(s) related to Aichi Target 11 and current area coverage:

Japan's numerical area-based target related to Aichi Target 11 was:

National Target C-1: "Appropriately conserve and manage at least 17% of inland areas and inland water areas, and at least 10% of coastal areas and ocean areas, by 2020." (p. 121, Japan, 2012)

Their full strategy is outlined in their 2012 CBD [report](#), though there is no mention of OECMs or similar versions of that term (since the acronym "OECM" had not been established at that point) unless it was quoted as part of Aichi Target 11. Note that although wilderness areas, nature conservation areas, and prefectural nature conservation areas were mentioned, they are included under Japan's [subcategories of protected areas](#), and are, therefore, not OECMs.

Japan reports that it currently has 20.5% terrestrial and inland waters coverage and 13.3% marine coverage with protected areas such as national parks and wildlife sanctuaries, as of May 2023 (from the Government of Japan), and no OECMs.

For more information related to Japan and Aichi Target 11, including opportunities for further coverage, view the [Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 Country Dossier for Japan](#) (UNDP and SCBD, 2021).

### Existing or planned national or sub-national strategies to formally identify and recognise OECMs:

According to the questionnaire response, Japan has a system for OECMs that is led by the Ministry of the Environment Japan and it took three years to establish the process (since 2020).

Japan's criteria for identifying OECMs is based on the IUCN WCPA criteria and include 1. Demarcation, 2. Governance and management, 3. Biodiversity conservation value, and 4. Contribution to Conservation, which each have subcomponents that need to be addressed. It is a system that is reviewed by experts and certified by the government. In addition, the Ministry of the Environment Japan, with the help of relevant ministries, established a roadmap ([Japan's 30by30 roadmap](#)) in April 2022 to outline the necessary actions to achieve Target 3 at a national level. This roadmap mentions plans for OECMs several times. After a year of trial, the certification scheme started its operation in April 2023.

### Potential OECMs:

According to the questionnaire response from the Ministry of the Environment Japan, Japan launched a trial scheme to certify conserved areas in 2022. As a result, 56 potential sites were identified. Many of the identified sites are managed by private companies and represent a wide range of ecosystem types, including forests, SEPLS (Socio Ecological Production Landscapes and Seascapes), and urban green spaces. Japan will register OECMs, including trial sites, in the WD-OECM from 2023 and plan to establish a national database of OECMs. The Ministry of the Environment Japan has also selected 500 "important satoyama", which are a type of SEPLS, and 500 "important wetlands" for biodiversity conservation. They will consider whether these can be certified as OECMs using the following criteria:

Criterion 1: The area has a diverse and outstanding secondary natural environment.

Criterion 2: It is inhabited and nurtured by a variety of wild plants and animals that are unique to satochi-satoyama.

Criterion 3: It contributes to the formation of an ecosystem network.

Two potential sites from this list were noted to be 5-4 Hachirogata (reclaimed land) and 15-12 Kuwatori Valley. There is no existing English page for the list, but [this page](#) shows an overview in Japanese.

Another two examples of these trial satoyama sites, as described in a recent [article](#), are Nobi-Kagamida Ryokuchi-Park and Château Mercian Mariko Vineyard. The first one is a valley of rice paddies and diverse natural surroundings where once was a plan to establish a waste disposal site, which was cancelled due to strong opposition from the local community and environmental groups, and were restored and conserved by the local community. Currently, rich biodiversity including certain rare species are detected in the area. The second site is a vineyard that is rented by over a hundred local farmers and nature surveys there revealed that there are 68 insect species and 289 plant species that includes rare varieties. Beside functioning as vineyard, some conservation efforts and monitoring of species are being implemented. Although some areas where rich biodiversity is conserved or even enhanced alongside overlapping land use have been reported in Japan's OECM scheme, based on ongoing international discussions, some satoyama and SEPLS may be better placed in Target 10, and it will be necessary for Japan to draw a line between areas suitable for Target 10 and OECMs. Currently, very light levels of use in areas are still acceptable as OECMs if they do not harm biodiversity, but it will be important for Japan and other countries planning on including SEPLS to stay updated on any changes related to sustainable use and OECMs in the future.

It could be instrumental for Japan to assess KBAs and EBSAs that have no coverage by PAs and OECMs to ensure that the "important biodiversity values" criterion for OECMs is met. In Japan, there are currently 19 KBAs (KBA Global Dataset, 2023) and 5 EBSAs that have no coverage by PAs and OECMs (UNDP and SCBD, 2021), which could also be potential OECMs if they meet the rest of the criteria.

### Existing or planned legislation for OECMs:



None currently, but it is being considered. The NGO, Nature Conservation Society of Japan, proposed the need for a legislative background for OECMs and is starting discussions about this.

**Main challenges related to developing plans or legislation for OECMs, according to the respondent(s):**

- Lack of financial resources
- Other ([Lack of] “incentives for changing management objectives”)

## Mongolia

**Previous national target(s) related to Aichi Target 11 and current area coverage:**

Mongolia’s fifth national report (2014) mentioned that their Target 11 equivalent was Objective 1 in their national agenda: “Establish a complete protected area system representative of all ecosystems and protecting endangered species, including joint actions with the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China.” (p. 123), for which they indicated that good progress is being made. Though this objective does not explicitly mention OECMs, one of their indicators for this target mentions “other area based approaches”: “Trends in the connectivity of protected areas and *other area based approaches* integrated into landscapes and seascapes.” (p. 123), for which their progress was described as having “No significant impact or change”. There were no numerical national targets for the percentage of land conserved, but Mongolia’s NBSAP (2015) had numerical targets related to representative ecosystems, which is a component of Aichi Target 11: “Goal 5: At least 30% of each representative of main ecosystems, all patch and vulnerable to climate change ecosystems are included in to the National Protected Area network and their management is improved.” (p. 20); Objective 10, Outputs: “By 2025, the PA network is expanded with inclusion of at least 30% of representative ecosystems” (p. 22).

Mongolia currently has 19.8% of terrestrial and inland waters coverage with 109 protected areas and 0 OECMs (UNEP-WCMC, 2023), which meets the Aichi Target 11 quantitative value. Mongolia is landlocked, which is why marine coverage is not applicable.

For more information related to Mongolia and Aichi Target 11, including opportunities for further coverage, view the [Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 Country Dossier for Mongolia](#) (UNDP and SCBD, 2021).

**Existing or planned national or sub-national strategies to formally identify and recognise OECMs:**

Data deficient.

**Existing or planned legislation for OECMs:**

Data deficient.

**Potential OECMs:**

None officially identified; however, Mongolia has 29 KBAs that have no coverage by PAs or OECMs (KBA Global Dataset, 2023). These areas should be explored for their potential to be OECMs. One example is the following [site](#), which will be able to meet around half of the IUCN WCPA site-assessment tool’s requirements:

*Table 4. Details of a KBA Site in Mongolia. Data from the Key Biodiversity Areas Partnership (2023).*

<b>Site name</b>	Uvsiin Khar Lake
<b>Protected area and OECM coverage</b>	0%

<b>Area</b>	13,298 ha
<b>System</b>	Terrestrial, Freshwater
<b>Biodiversity value</b>	Has a confirmed KBA status. Has abundant reed and tall grass habitat along its shoreline. The tall grasses provide good shelter for breeding birds. It supports three “vulnerable” bird species and one endangered one (White-headed Duck).
<b>Threats</b>	None mentioned for this site.

Further assessments and national consultations will be needed to determine information related to governance and management requirements, as that information is not present on the KBA platform.

### Main challenges related to developing plans or legislation for OECMs, according to the respondent(s):

Data deficient.

## Republic of Korea

### Previous national target(s) related to Aichi Target 11 and current area coverage:

In the Republic of Korea’s “[Fourth National Biodiversity Strategy 2019 – 2023](#)”, Target 1 (Improving the coverage and management of protected areas) under Strategy 3 (Strengthening biodiversity conservation) is said to be related to Aichi Target 11. The aims for this national target include:

“(Terrestrial) Continue to expand terrestrial protected areas to achieve the 17% target.

- Expand the coverage of wetland protected areas, ecology and scenery conservation areas and special islands (2018 – 2022)” (p. 19). Note that these examples of areas are still considered as protected areas in the Republic of Korea and not as OECMs; OECMs were not mentioned in their terrestrial or marine targets.

“(Marine) Continue to expand marine protected areas to achieve the 10% target.

- Designate at least one new marine protected area every year based on the results of the Comprehensive National Survey on Marine Ecosystems.  
- Continue to expand protected areas through in-depth survey of coastal wetlands and an integrated management system.” (p. 19)

The Republic of Korea currently has 16.97% terrestrial and inland waters coverage and 2.46% marine coverage with 3467 protected areas and 0 OECMs (UNEP-WCMC, 2023). Therefore, the Republic of Korea was very close to achieving their quantitative terrestrial target related to Aichi Target 11 but further marine areas need to be conserved to meet their quantitative marine target.

For more information related to the Republic of Korea and Aichi Target 11, including opportunities for further coverage, view the [Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 Country Dossier for the Republic of Korea](#) (UNDP and SCBD, 2021).

### Existing or planned national or sub-national strategies to formally identify and recognise OECMs:

There are no existing strategies but there are planned ones. Research on recognising and reporting OECMs in a Korean context is proceeding. Based on this research, a national strategy on OECMs

and a roadmap to 2030 (under a project with IUCN and Korea National Park Service (KNPS)) will be released and applied. It will be completed by 2024. The process for identifying and recognising OECMs is under discussion now, and the Korean Protected Area Forum, a consortium with all the PA stakeholders, will likely have a critical role in this. The Ministry of Environment and Korea National Park Service will be leading this process.

The national guidance for identifying OECMs in Korea, called the K-OECM tool-kit, was developed (version 1.1) by the KNPS research team and is now under review by relevant government bodies and experts. It will be polished by reflecting their comments and the revised version (v 1.2) will be implemented to recognise sample sites at the pilot stage in the second half of 2023. Regarding the national term of OECM, there was a consensus to use Korean terminology rather than simple translation terms and “Nature Coexistence Area” (“Jayeon Gongjon Jiyeok” in Korean) was the most preferred word from domestic experts.

### Potential OECMs:

According to the interim results (Heo, 2022a), 28 types of potential OECMs have been identified, including Development Restriction Zones (known as green-belt), Conservation Properties, Conservation Agreements Areas, Natural Recreation Forests, Temple Forests, Buffer zone of World Natural Heritage, Buffer zone of Biosphere Reserve, Uninhabited Islands under Absolute Conservation, Uninhabited Islands under Quasi-conservation, Self-imposed Control Fisheries areas, Natural Resting Areas, and more.

From the survey response by KNPS (some parts edited): “In Cheorwon, in the far north of South Korea, close to the demilitarized zone, lies the remarkable ‘Rice Paddy for Cranes’ community conserved area. This patchwork of wetland and paddy fields sits within a mosaic of both production and wild landscapes, and hosts a critical habitat for populations of the white and red necked crane, migratory species that are both on the IUCN Red List, vulnerable and threatened, respectively. The traditional rice paddy conserves nature effectively, but is not a formal protected area. Rather it has been conserved by Cheorwon Crane Protection Association commissioned by the National Nature Trust, notably by Cheorwon local Mr. Baek who has been observing these cranes for more than 30 years. The National Nature Trust purchased this site with the financial support of Lam Research Korea and managed it as a trust asset. KNPS is supposed to provide conservation technical advice and guidance, as an institution specialising in the management of protected areas. The site is now a candidate site that can be considered as an OECM.

During October 2022, a team of Korean and international experts used the IUCN WCPA OECM screening tool to examine the core values, including the high biodiversity values and key elements of the site. The rice paddy is and has been governed and managed in a way that secures these natural values, whilst also recognising and assuring other locally relevant values in and around the site such farming, eco-tourism and ecosystem services that support local farmers and residents. The local communities see great value in conserving the habitats for the cranes, and have created innovative conservation contracts to achieve these outcomes. The area falls under the National Trust Act, which allows for a clear legal basis for the long-term effectiveness and monitoring of the site.

*Table 5. Details of Rice Paddy for Cranes, Cheorwon Korea (Heo, 2022b)*

<b>Site name and type</b>	Rice Paddy for Cranes (Conservation Asset of National Nature Trust)
<b>Geographical defined space (Location)</b>	3217 / 3218, Yangji-ri, Cheorwon, Gangwon province
<b>Site designation</b>	National Trust Act, Article 2. 4

<b>Governance and management</b>	Cheorwon Crane Protection Association Commissioned by the National Nature Trust
<b>Main Biodiversity value</b>	IUCN Red-list (White-naped crane, Red-crowned cranes) National Natural Monuments 202 / 203
<b>Relevant Stakeholders</b>	Local Government, Crane Conservation Bodies, Military Units

Furthermore, there are 10 KBAs in the Republic of Korea that have no coverage by PAs and OECMs (KBA Global Dataset, 2023), which could also be potential OECMs if they meet the rest of the criteria.

#### **Existing or planned legislation for OECMs:**

None. According to the respondent, the Republic of Korea has several types of PCAs and each of them has specific measures, frameworks, and management needs that meet the criteria of OECMs.

#### **Main challenges related to developing plans or legislation for OECMs, according to the respondent(s):**

- Lack of human resources
- Lack of political will to develop these

The respondent also noted that “The absence of integrated management of PCAs is a challenge in Korea.”

# Status of OECMs in South Asia



Mahabaleshwar, India. Photo credit: Rajkumar Vachhani on Unsplash

# Bangladesh

## Previous national target(s) related to Aichi Target 11 and current area coverage:

In Bangladesh's "[NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN OF BANGLADESH 2016-2021 \(NBSAP 2016-2021\)](#)", which is the latest report Bangladesh submitted to the CBD, national Target 11 is meant to reflect Aichi Target 11: "Target 11. By 2021, Bangladesh's 3% area under terrestrial ecosystem (forests), 3% area under inland wetlands and coastal ecosystems and 5% of total marine area will come under PAs or ECAs with development and implementation of management plan for these areas" (Department of Environment, 2016). "ECA" stands for "Ecologically Critical Area". These are considered separate from PAs but are currently not OECMs.

On the UNEP-WCMC (2023) platform, Bangladesh is reported to have 4.61% terrestrial and inland waters coverage and 5.36% marine coverage with 51 protected areas and 0 OECMs. However, a respondent noted that this value should be 3.16% for terrestrial and 6.12% for marine as ECAs are likely being counted for the terrestrial values when they are neither PAs or OECMs at this stage, and the EEZ area is likely to be different for the MPA value. Therefore, Bangladesh met their quantitative marine target but further terrestrial and inland wetland areas need to be conserved to meet their other quantitative targets.

For more information related to Bangladesh and Aichi Target 11, including opportunities for further coverage, view the [Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 Country Dossier for Bangladesh](#) (UNDP and SCBD, 2021).

## Existing or planned national or sub-national strategies to formally identify and recognise OECMs:

There are no existing strategies yet. However, from September 2022 to 2023, the Bangladesh Forest Department, under the SUFAL project, is funding Arannayk Foundation for "The OECM (Other Effective Area based Conservation Measures) project to develop a mechanism for biodiversity conservation in Bangladesh that will contribute towards Bangladesh's CBD targets for in-situ conservation, including Aichi Target 11 and targets for in-situ conservation under the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. This project will also explore other potential (at least 50) OECMs in Bangladesh that meet the criteria set up by the World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA)."

The project's objectives are to:

- "Establish a national mechanism for identification, assessment, selection, and documentation of OECMs.
- Identify and document at least 50 OECMs in Bangladesh that meet the criteria set up by the World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA)."

A very recent [news article](#) revealed that Arannayk Foundation will do this by June this year (2023).

Additionally, OECMs were mentioned in Bangladesh's recently released strategy for climate change, "National Adaptation Plan of Bangladesh (2023-2050)" (Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, 2022): "managing urban heat islands with planned urbanization and keeping green areas at 25 percent following 'other effective area-based conservation measures' (OECM) principles"; "achieving OECM principles under the biodiversity framework" (p. 65).

## Potential OECMs:

According to the respondent, Village Common Forests in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and the proposed Blue Belt in coastal and marine areas could be potential OECMs. Freshwater wetlands also have the criteria to be declared as an OECM.

These are also featured in IUCN WCPA (2022)'s OECM [Case Study Compilation](#) and meet the OECM criteria, as shown below:

*Table 6. Details of a potential OECM in Bangladesh. Adapted from the IUCN WCPA (2022) compilation (p.10).*

<b>Site name and type</b>	Village Common Forests; ICCA
<b>Geographical defined space</b>	There are around 314 VCF covering 12,141 ha.
<b>Not recognised as a protected area</b>	Not considered to be PAs.
<b>Governed</b>	Governed by Indigenous peoples/local community.
<b>Managed</b>	Managed by a Forest User Group with a village headman and villagers
<b>Biodiversity value</b>	The forests support 33 amphibian species, 61 reptile species, 187 bird species, 38 mammal species, and 113 plant species.
<b>Permanence</b>	Long term as these forests have been conserved by the Indigenous people across generations.

*Table 7. Details of a potential OECM in Bangladesh. Adapted from the IUCN WCPA (2022) compilation (p. 30).*

<b>Site name and type</b>	"Blue Belt OECM"; marine conservation area
<b>Geographical defined space</b>	270,000 ha
<b>Not recognised as a protected area</b>	Not considered to be a PA
<b>Governed</b>	Governed by a shared government/NGO partnership (Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) Bangladesh)
<b>Managed</b>	Managed by a shared government/NGO partnership (WCS Bangladesh)
<b>Biodiversity value</b>	The waters surrounding Bangladesh are home to a wide range of aquatic creatures, such as dolphins, porpoises, whales, sharks, rays, and marine turtles. Among these, there are several threatened species.
<b>Permanence</b>	Long term.

Additionally, a recent study (Chaudhary et al., 2022) stated that the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH), which is an incredibly ecologically rich and important mountainous area that encompasses 420,000,000 ha, has immense potential for OECMs within the seven countries that it is found within (the HKH spans across the entirety of Bhutan and Nepal, as well as the mountainous areas within Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Myanmar, and Pakistan). The HKH region comprises a total of 575 protected areas (PAs) that span an area of 172,189,400 hectares. This area accounts for 40.17% of the entire HKH region and around 8.49% of the global coverage of protected areas. In terms of country-

wise distribution, China has the largest share, contributing 45% to the total PA coverage of the HKH, followed by Pakistan (35%), India (11%), Nepal (3%), Myanmar (2%), Afghanistan (1.83%), Bhutan (1.7%), and Bangladesh (0.11%). As Bangladesh is one of the countries it is found within and currently has the lowest share, it is worth considering creating more OECMs or even PAs in that region.

Additionally, there are 9 KBAs in Bangladesh that have no coverage by PAs and OECMs (KBA Global Dataset, 2023) that could also be potential OECMs if they meet the rest of the criteria. Similarly, Bangladesh's ECAs could also be potential OECMs as they are not protected areas, would have a geographically defined space, and have high biodiversity value.

### **Existing or planned legislation for OECMs:**

There is no existing legislation yet. However, the respondent from the Forest Department of Bangladesh noted that the Wildlife (Conservation & Security) Act, 2012, is relevant to PAs and OECMs and that Bangladesh has the provision of Community Conserved Areas as PAs; this Act needs to be amended. The respondent also noted that they are conducting a study to develop a framework for the declaration of OECMs.

### **Main challenges related to developing plans or legislation for OECMs, according to the respondent(s):**

- Lack of understanding on the importance/relevance of OECMs
- Lack of knowledge on how to develop these for OECMs

The respondent noted that technical support is required for these matters.

## **Bhutan**

### **Previous national target(s) related to Aichi Target 11 and current area coverage:**

In Bhutan's "[Sixth National Report](#)" (2018), which is the latest report Bhutan submitted to the CBD, National Target 11, which is in their [NBSAP](#) and national report, is meant to reflect Aichi Target 11: "National Target 11: Maintain the current Protected Area System with enhanced management effectiveness and financial sustainability" (p. 82).

The actions and strategies highlighted for this target did not mention OECMs; they were focussed on PAs and Protected Area Systems, in which they included PAs and biological corridors (Ministry of Agriculture and Forests, 2014), though some biological corridors could be considered as a type of OECM if they meet the criteria.

Bhutan reports that it currently has 49.67% terrestrial and inland waters coverage from 22 protected areas and 0 OECMs (UNEP-WCMC, 2023). Bhutan is landlocked, which is why marine coverage is not applicable. Therefore, not only has Bhutan far exceeded the quantitative percentage requirements of Aichi Target 11, they have also far exceeded the quantitative percentage requirements of CBD Target 3.

For more information related to Bhutan and Aichi Target 11, including opportunities for further coverage, view the [Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 Country Dossier for Bhutan](#) (UNDP and SCBD, 2021).

### **Existing or planned national or sub-national strategies to formally identify and recognise OECMs:**

According to the respondent from the Nature Conservation Division in the Government of Bhutan, Bhutan established their process to identify and recognise OECMs in 2020 and it took one year to



establish. Bhutan uses the scientific and administrative criteria of KBA, stakeholder consultations, and government endorsement to do this. The criteria used is adapted from International KBA Guidelines and they have developed a national-level administrative criteria and guidelines to identify KBAs. They also follow the international process for registering KBAs into the global database. This is led by the Department of Forests and Park Services with involvement from local communities, local governments, and local NGOs.

Although KBAs can be established as OECMs, it is important to note that the KBA Guidelines and criteria differ from the criteria for OECMs, as KBAs are not required to have governance and management measures, for instance. Therefore, each KBA would also need to be assessed against the IUCN WCPA criteria to be established as an OECM.

### Potential OECMs:

According to the respondent, eleven potential KBA sites that fulfil the KBA Criteria are currently being assessed for its designation at the national level that could be submitted to the UNEP-WCMC database. Other potential OECMs include Forest Management Units, Community Forests, and Local Forest Management Areas.

Bhutan is also adopting the High Conservation Values (HCV) approach through the Living Landscape (LL) initiative, which aims to safeguard the significant biological, ecological, social, or cultural values in the nine south-western districts of Bhutan that fall outside of the PA systems. The LL initiative is a joint effort between the Royal Government of Bhutan, WWF Bhutan and Germany, Tarayana Foundation, and local communities to secure HCVs, and it is also reported to be a potential OECM according to a [project brochure](#) from WWF Bhutan. The key details relating to the OECM criteria are summarised in the table below.

*Table 8. Details of a potential OECM in Bhutan. Information from a WWF Bhutan [project brochure](#) (2021).*

<b>Site name and type</b>	"Living Landscape"; forested area
<b>Geographical defined space</b>	996,745 ha
<b>Not recognised as a protected area</b>	Not considered to be a PA
<b>Governed</b>	Governed by a shared partnership (Royal Government of Bhutan, WWF Bhutan and Germany, Tarayana Foundation, and local communities)
<b>Managed</b>	Managed by a shared partnership (Royal Government of Bhutan, WWF Bhutan and Germany, Tarayana Foundation, and local communities)
<b>Biodiversity value</b>	The area contains key faunal species such as tigers, Asiatic elephants, hornbills, and red pandas and has floral diversity
<b>Permanence</b>	Long term conservation initiative, according to the project brochure.

Additionally, as also mentioned for Bangladesh, the Hindu Kush Himalaya is another excellent option for OECMs in areas where it is not already protected, and this region spans across the entirety of Bhutan (Chaudhary et al., 2022).

### Existing or planned legislation for OECMs:

There is no existing legislation for OECMs in Bhutan. However, according to the respondent, the concept of OECMs has been included as Other Effective Conservation Areas in the Forests and Nature Conservation Bill that has been tabled for discussion at the parliament and passed by both the houses with the joint sitting of the Upper and Lower House of the Parliament due for June 2023.

**Main challenges related to developing plans or legislation for OECMs, according to the respondent(s):**

Not applicable.

## India

**Previous national target(s) related to Aichi Target 11 and current area coverage:**

India's [National Biodiversity Target 6](#) was related to Aichi Targets 10, 11, and 12, and included OECMs: "Ecologically representative areas on land and in inland waters, as well as coastal and marine zones, especially those of particular importance for species, biodiversity and ecosystem services, are conserved effectively and equitably, on the basis of PA designation and management and *other area-based conservation measures* and are integrated into the wider landscapes and seascapes, covering over 20% of the geographic area of the country, by 2020".

India reports that it has exceeded this national target by conserving 27% of the nation's geographical area, consisting of 770 protected areas (25 of which are marine) (2018). This value is not reflected on the UNEP-WCMC database as India has not shared all information on protected areas publicly, which is mentioned on the platform. However, it is described in their [national report](#) to the CBD and in a separate [national publication on Aichi Target 11](#) (2018). National OECMs such as biosphere reserves, community conserved areas, sacred groves, and eco-sensitive zones were also mentioned in these reports, which have not been established on the UNEP-WCMC database on OECMs, but it is unclear whether these were counted officially towards their target.

**Existing or planned national or sub-national strategies to formally identify and recognise OECMs:**

The Government of India's Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), National Biodiversity Authority of India (NBA; an autonomous and statutory body of the MoEFCC), and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) developed "[Criteria and Guidelines for Identifying OECMs in India](#)" (2022), which was a three-year long process.

India has an [online portal](#) where state sectoral departments, bilateral and multilateral funding agencies, civil society organisations, industry, academic and research institutes, and communities can submit potential OECM sites to, after which they will be reviewed by government bodies (MoEFCC and NBA) before being submitted to UNEP-WCMC. The Ministry of Environment Forests and Climate Change along with the National Biodiversity Authority and UNDP, India lead this.

India uses four criteria to identify OECMs, which are based on the IUCN WCPA criteria: Criteria A: Area should not be recognised as a PA; B: Area should be effectively governed and managed, and it should be geographically defined; C: Area should achieve sustained and effective in situ conservation of biodiversity, and D: Area should deliver associated ecosystem functions and services and cultural, spiritual, socio-economic and other locally relevant values. It appears that India is not using all the IUCN WCPA criteria, which requires that OECMs conserve areas that have "important biodiversity values", though there are more details on biodiversity in their full guidelines document.

India has defined three categories of OECMs. (i) Terrestrial (including Biodiversity Parks, Industrial Estates for Conservation Purposes, Village Common Lands, Important Bird Areas, Urban Trees and Forests, Unique Agricultural Systems, Individual Green Lands); (ii) Waterbodies (Inland and Coastal), and (iii) Marine (Important Marine Areas and Ecologically/Culturally/Internationally Significant Marine and Coastal Areas. India also included “urban city gardens” under their terrestrial OECM types (p. 17, MoEFCC, NBA and UNDP, 2022) but formal/domestic gardens are not considered to be OECMs in the IUCN WCPA (2019) report as they are not considered natural enough or have important biodiversity value; hence, these areas will need to be carefully evaluated for their biodiversity value.

### Potential OECMs:

The first OECM in India, Aravalli Biodiversity Park, was established in 2022. Currently, more than 25 potential OECMs have been identified in India, of which 15+ have been submitted to the WD-OECM, though none of them are currently reported on the platform. As mentioned earlier, common types of national OECMs in India include biosphere reserves, community conserved areas, known sacred groves and notified eco-sensitive zones. India published “[A Compendium of OECMs in India](#)” (2022) developed by the NBA and UNDP, which has further information on these. Examples of OECMs from this that meet the IUCN WCPA criteria are shared below, which were also featured in the IUCN WCPA (2022) case study compilation:

*Table 9. Details of the first established OECM in India. Adapted from the NBA and UNDP (2022) compilation and IUCN WCPA (2022) compilation.*

<b>Site name and type</b>	Aravalli Biodiversity Park; previously abandoned mining site that was restored as a forest in 10 years
<b>Geographical defined space</b>	158.6 ha
<b>Not recognised as a protected area</b>	Not considered to be a PA
<b>Governed</b>	Governed by the state (Municipal Corporation of Gurgaon)
<b>Managed</b>	Managed by the Municipal Corporation of Gurgaon and the corporation Hero MotoCorp Limited
<b>Biodiversity value</b>	The park is home to over 300 native species of endangered and rare plants found in the Northern Aravalli hills. It also provides habitat to a variety of wildlife, including 201 species of birds as well as numerous mammal and reptile species.
<b>Permanence</b>	Long term as it is a nationally established OECM with governmental support.

*Table 10. Details of a potential OECM in India. Adapted from the NBA and UNDP (2022) compilation and IUCN WCPA (2022) compilation.*

<b>Site name and type</b>	Jabarkhet Nature Reserve; private forest owned by an entrepreneur
<b>Geographical defined space</b>	44 ha
<b>Not recognised as a protected area</b>	Not considered to be a PA
<b>Governed</b>	Privately governed by a Board of Directors comprising three people, including the legal owner of the land and a conservationist

<b>Managed</b>	Managed by the conservationist, who is also the Managing Director and co-founder of the reserve.
<b>Biodiversity value</b>	The reserve supports more than 300 species of flowering herbaceous plants, over 40 species of ferns and grasses, and over 100 species of fungi. Over 150 bird species and almost all mammals found in the middle Himalayas, with breeding populations were also found here. Additionally, significant mammal species have been recorded, including the common leopard, Himalayan black bear, golden jackal, the leopard cat, and tigers.
<b>Permanence</b>	Long term as this land has been with the owner's family for more than 90 years.

*Table 11. Details of a potential OECM in India. Adapted from the NBA and UNDP (2022) compilation and IUCN WCPA (2022) compilation.*

<b>Site name and type</b>	Jagatpur Wetland; wetlands
<b>Geographical defined space</b>	40 ha but the lake's waterlogged section, which is confined by natural boundaries, can expand to cover an area of 400 ha during floods
<b>Not recognised as a protected area</b>	Not considered to be a PA
<b>Governed</b>	Shared governance by local communities, Mandar Nature Club (local NGO), and the Bhagalpur Forest Division (Department of Environment, Forest and Climate Change)
<b>Managed</b>	Managed by the local community, with support from Bhagalpur Forest Division, MNC, and the Eco-Development Committee (EDC).
<b>Biodiversity value</b>	The wetland serves as a vital habitat for numerous endangered species, including the greater adjutant stork, Pallas's fish-eagle, and oriental darter. It also functions as a crucial link and corridor for birds and other wildlife, connecting diverse landscapes and offering breeding, foraging, and roosting grounds for many species.
<b>Permanence</b>	Long term as the wetland has been traditionally protected by the local community, and they now have additional support.

Additionally, there are many KBAs in India that have no coverage by PAs and OECMs (KBA Global Dataset, 2023) that could also be potential OECMs if they meet the rest of the criteria, as well as the aforementioned Hindu Kush Himalaya in areas where it is not already protected (Chaudhary et al., 2022).

#### **Existing or planned legislation for OECMs:**

None.

## Main challenges related to developing plans or legislation for OECMs, according to the respondent(s):

- Lack of knowledge on how to develop these for OECMs
- Lack of political will to develop these

Additionally, a respondent noted that “India has a complex land tenure system which has been a cause for severe complications for local communities. It is important that OECMs be recognised as common rights and that they are protected from external exploitation by structuring them legally. India has a rich heritage of Community Conserved Areas and these need to be recognised and protected as OECMs since they are currently facing threats of land grab and resource exploitation at an unprecedented scale. OECMs should not be just another overlapping category of land but actually be used to protect these areas for biodiversity in the future.”

## Maldives

### Previous national target(s) related to Aichi Target 11 and current area coverage:

In their [latest NBSAP](#) in 2016, Maldives created national targets and national Target 18 is the closest to Aichi Target 11: “18. By 2025, at least 10% of coral reef area, 20% of wetlands and mangroves and at least one sand bank and one uninhabited island from each atoll are under some form of protection and management”. In Maldives’ [Strategic Action Plan for 2019–2023](#), which is a much broader plan than the NSBAP submitted to the CBD, a few additional targets related to protected areas and protection mechanisms for areas were mentioned:

“Target 2.1: By 2023, a comprehensive and functional protected areas system in the Maldives in accordance with the international standards is established

Target 2.2: By 2022, a comprehensive reef restoration and protection mechanism under the concept of “Jazeera Island Reef” is introduced and implemented

Target 2.3: By 2023, at least 10% of coral reef area, 20% of wetlands and mangroves and at least one sand bank and one uninhabited island from each atoll are under some form of protection and management

Target 3.1: By 2023, establish an evidence-based monitoring system to track the status of key ecosystems, species, and genetic diversity as well as protected areas and species found in the Maldives”

The respondents from Maldives note that the NBSAP is going to be reviewed this year to align with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework 2022.

Maldives reports that it currently has more than 2.3% terrestrial and inland waters coverage and 0.07% marine coverage (UNEP-WCMC, 2023) from [79 protected areas](#) and 0 OECMs (Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Technology, 2023). In their [latest national report](#) (2023), Maldives assessed their progress for national Target 18 as “On track to exceed target”, with around 5% of coral reef areas protected, and the Government pledged to protect more areas, including mangroves and wetlands.

For more information related to Maldives and Aichi Target 11, including opportunities for further coverage, view the [Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 Country Dossier for Maldives](#) (UNDP and SCBD, 2021).

## Existing or planned national or sub-national strategies to formally identify and recognise OECMs:

Maldives established a process to identify OECMs in September 2022 after taking 4 years to establish it. Currently, only resorts can propose to be an OECM. The resorts have to submit a survey report and officially request the Ministry of Environment in Maldives to become an OECM. A panel consisting of members from the Ministry of Environment (Protected Area Section), Environmental Protection Agency (Environment Research Section), and Ministry of Tourism will review the application and approve it, and these organisations also lead this process. A one-year period will be given to the Candidate OECM member to conduct the tasks and finally become an official OECM permanent member. Maldives has developed detailed [guidelines](#) for recognising areas as OECMs that mention their criteria (summarised): (a) the proposed OECM is not a protected area; (b) it has rich biodiversity and is managed; (c) the activities in the proposed area ensures protection and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystem services; (d) it supports the provision of cultural, economic, social and other values, where applicable; (e) no activity in the proposed area shall have a negative impact on biodiversity and ecosystem services. Maldives assesses whether a site can be managed sustainably long-term as part of their screening process, though it would be beneficial to add this in the criteria as well.

## Candidate OECMs:

The respondent from the Environment Protection Agency in Maldives noted that several potential OECMs were identified using their national criteria and process to identify OECMs:

- Kuredu Resort Island. Governed by the owner of the resort
- Six Senses Laamu. Governed by the owner of the resort
- Huravalhi Island Resort. Governed by the owner of the resort

These are no-take zones under the Tourism boundary regulation; from Maldives' latest national report (2023): "There is a no take policy on all resorts; no fishing, no seafood from reefs and no use of groundwater. The tourist resorts are sustainably operating systems that conserve biodiversity" (p. 159)

The UNDP and SCBD Dossier on Maldives (2021) found that "In total, there are 13 resorts, covering marine (coral reef area) of estimated 1153 hectares to be declared as OECMs", though this value could be higher now. All of these would be governed and managed by their respective resort owners.

*Table 12. Potential OECMs in Maldives. All of these are coral reef areas that will be governed and managed by the resort owners. Table adapted from the UNDP and SCBD Dossier on Maldives (2021).*

Resort name (governing and managing body)	OECM size proposed by the resort owner (ha)
Kuramathi	6.49
Kurehdhoo	121.9
Kurumba	16.21
Olhuveli	567.06
Shangri La	23.36
Soneva Jani	159.36
Taj Coral Reef	3.34
Taj Exotica	86.09
Soneva Fushi	17.9
Angsaana Velaavaru	123.69
Bandos	5.58
Huravalhi	12.8

Aside from these, many other resort islands could also be OECMs; according to the latest national report (2023), “Maldives has 140 operational resort islands. Each resort island has a reef and lagoon area around it legally leased to the resort. The "Regulation on the Protection and Conservation of the Environment in the Tourism Industry" requires all resort establishments to keep 80% of their land area un-built and the entire lagoon and reef area free from any type of extraction or exploitation. Therefore, these 140 islands, their lagoons and reefs area effectively managed and conserved and can fall under OECM” (p. 172).

Since Maldives’ national process for OECMs includes conducting thorough ecological surveys and their national criteria mentions “rich biodiversity”, it is assumed that these identified areas meet the biodiversity requirements as well, all of which are coral reef areas. Maldives’ coral reefs are critically important for biodiversity and are an excellent area to have OECMs as they form the seventh-largest reef system in the world (ICIMOD and UNDP, 2021). These reefs are estimated to encompass up to 5% of the global reef area and they support an incredibly diverse range of species, including globally significant populations of whale sharks, manta rays, giant grouper, and giant clams, and serve as a significant feeding ground for the endangered hawksbill and green turtles (ICIMOD and UNDP, 2021).

#### Existing or planned legislation for OECMs:

There are [regulations and a framework](#) for OECMs in Maldives. Once an area has been declared as an OECM after the required assessments, the Ministry will publish its recognition in the Government Gazette, which will include details on different aspects such as an (1) an introduction; (2) name of the area; (3) boundary and zonation; (4) activities allowed and prohibited in the area; (5) the ecological and biological significance; (6) conservation benefits, and (7) management responsibilities. From the [guidelines](#) (2022): “The area submitted shall be within the boundary of a tourist resort registered at the Ministry of Tourism and shall fall under the legal boundary of the resort designated under the Regulation no: 2012/R - 7 (Regulation on Determining Boundaries of Leased Islands for Tourism Development) and shall not fall under an existing protected area boundary designated under the Law No: 4/93 ([Environment Protection and Preservation Act of Maldives](#)) and Regulation no: [2018/R-78](#) (Regulation on Protected Areas” (p. 4). Established OECMs will be submitted to the UNEP-WCMC database and will also be included in a database on the Ministry’s website.

#### Main challenges related to developing plans or legislation for OECMs, according to the respondent(s):

Not applicable.

## Nepal

#### Previous national target(s) related to Aichi Target 11 and current area coverage:

Nepal’s [latest national report](#) (2019) mentions a few targets that are related to Aichi Target 11. The most relevant are Target 1: “By 2020, at least 25% area of the country will be sustainably managed under protected area system” (p. 48), Target 2: “By 2020, local forest user groups will be capacitated for conservation friendly management of forests in five important corridors and climate refugia identified and mapped” (p. 48), and Target 3: “By 2020, at least 20 Protection forest[s] will be declared for biodiversity conservation outside PAs” (p. 49). Though OECMs were not explicitly mentioned, it is possible that some of these areas could be redefined as such.

Nepal reports that it currently has 23.63% terrestrial and inland waters coverage from 49 protected areas and 0 OECMs (UNEP-WCMC, 2023). Nepal is landlocked, which is why marine coverage is not applicable.

For more information related to Nepal and Aichi Target 11, including opportunities for further coverage, view the [Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 Country Dossier for Nepal](#) (UNDP and SCBD, 2021).

### Existing or planned national or sub-national strategies to formally identify and recognise OECMs:

There are no existing strategies for OECMs in Nepal but there is currently an ongoing GEF-funded project that is working on developing national criteria and indicators for OECMs and identifying potential OECMs in Nepal, according to a representative from the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation in Nepal.

### Potential OECMs:

Forests cover 6.61 million ha of land in Nepal and 82.7% of these forests are found outside of the protected area system. Thus, a representative from Nepal’s Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation noted that there is a great potential for OECMs here. This includes 11 Forest Conservation Areas that are outside the PA system that cover 194,155 ha.

Nepal also has several Community Conserved Areas (CCAs) that could be potential OECMs, which include sacred forests, community forests, sacred wetlands, and religious groves, as documented in a [report](#) on CCAs in Nepal by Jana (2009). An example of one is shown below:

*Table 13. Details of a potential OECM in Nepal. Information from Jana (2009), p. 14.*

<b>Site name and type</b>	Godavari Kunda Community Forest; Community Conserved forested area
<b>Geographical defined space</b>	147 ha
<b>Not recognised as a protected area</b>	Not considered to be a PA
<b>Governed</b>	Governed by the executive committee of the Godavari Kunda community forest user group (CFUG), which comprises 540 community members from 108 households in the region
<b>Managed</b>	Managed by the executive committee of the Godavari Kunda CFUG. Their aims are “to conserve the forest area including all the resources in the area; conserve natural biodiversity by conserving flora and fauna in the area; utilise the forest resources as per the forest law of Nepal and promote socio-economic status of the people.”
<b>Biodiversity value</b>	The community forest holds immense biodiversity value. It has a diverse range of fauna and flora, with 300 bird species, 512 angiosperms, and 259 butterfly species being found in the area. In addition, over 50 medicinal herbs have been documented. The forest also serves as an ideal habitat for a variety of wildlife, including 200 reddish deer ( <i>Cervus elaphus</i> ), 200 porcupines, and 50 wild cats.



<b>Permanence</b>	Long term as the CFUG was established in 1996/1997 under Nepal's Forest Act of 1993.
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Additionally, there are 11 KBAs in Nepal that are not covered by any PAs or OECMs (UNDP and SCBD, 2021); these could be potential OECMs if they meet the criteria and any threats are mitigated. One example is the following [site](#):

*Table 14. Details of a KBA Site in Nepal. Data from the Key Biodiversity Areas Partnership (2023).*

<b>Site name</b>	Phulchoki Mountain forests
<b>Protected area and OECM coverage</b>	0%
<b>Area</b>	4,299 ha
<b>System</b>	Terrestrial
<b>Biodiversity value</b>	Has a confirmed KBA status. It supports numerous bird species, two of which are listed as "critically endangered" (White-rumped Vulture and Slender-billed Vulture). It also supports the Clouded Leopard, which is listed as a "vulnerable" species.
<b>Threats</b>	Three were mentioned for this site: 1. Transportation & service corridors: Roads and railroads 2. Biological resource use: Gathering terrestrial plants 3. Human intrusions & disturbance: Recreational activities  All three were described as "Medium" level impacts

Further assessments and national consultations will be needed to determine if the threats can be mitigated, and to understand if the site can meet the governance and management requirements of OECMs, as that information is not present on the KBA platform. Nepal's protection forests and biodiversity corridors could also be OECMs if they are redefined and meet the criteria, as they are considered separate from PAs, as well as areas of the Hindu Kush Himalaya that are not protected already as the HKH spans across the entirety of Nepal (Chaudhary et al., 2022).

#### **Existing or planned legislation for OECMs:**

None. However, as there is existing legislation for many types of CCAs (Jana, 2009) that could be considered as OECMs in Nepal, such as for CFUGs (under Nepal's Forest Act of 1993), those could be adapted to make legislation for OECMs.

#### **Main challenges related to developing plans or legislation for OECMs, according to the respondent(s):**

- Lack of political will to develop these
- Lack of financial resources

## **Pakistan**

#### **Previous national target(s) related to Aichi Target 11 and current area coverage:**

Pakistan's [latest NBSAP](#) to the CBD (2018) included eight national action points under Aichi Target 11:

“11.1. The lists of protected areas will be refined to include only those sites that meet the internationally recognized definitions

11.2. Management plans will be prepared on priority basis and implemented for effective and equitable management of protected areas integrated into the wider landscapes

11.3. The protected areas network will be expanded by 2020 to cover at least 17% of terrestrial area to fill in the gaps in the protected area system and to establish corridors between fragmented habitats of threatened species

11.4. Mechanisms will be developed for financial sustainability of protected areas

11.5. Representative forest landscapes of special importance for biodiversity will be designated as Forest Biodiversity Reserves and effectively managed

11.6. Wetlands protected areas will be established by 2019 covering at least 15% area of wetlands of biodiversity significance and effectively managed together with the surrounding landscapes

11.7. Management plans will be prepared and implemented for integrated management of RAMSAR sites including the surrounding landscapes after the NBSAP is adopted

11.8. Protected areas covering at least 10% of the marine area of biodiversity significance will be established and managed effectively as seascapes for conservation and sustainable use” (p. 80)

OECMs or related terms were not mentioned in this report, though the “Forest Biodiversity Reserves” mentioned in 11.5 seem like a potential option for future OECMs, based on their description.

Pakistan reports that it currently has 12.31% terrestrial and inland waters coverage and 0.77% marine coverage with 178 protected areas and 0 OECMs (UNEP-WCMC, 2023). Therefore, Pakistan will need to conserve many more areas to reach their quantitative targets.

For more information related to Pakistan and Aichi Target 11, including opportunities for further coverage, view the [Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 Country Dossier for Pakistan](#) (UNDP and SCBD, 2021).

### **Existing or planned national or sub-national strategies to formally identify and recognise OECMs:**

There is currently no specific strategy to formally recognise OECMs; however, Pakistan is considering it for their future NBSAP and sub-national BSAPs.

### **Potential OECMs:**

According to the respondents, important birding areas, wetlands, community-managed conservation areas, and sea turtle beaches could be potential OECMs in Pakistan. Important areas in Pakistan are identified on the basis of habitat suitability and the presence of important species. Parts of the Hindu Kush Himalaya that are not already protected could also be OECMs (Chaudhary et al., 2022). Most of the examples of community-managed conservation areas, or CCAs in Pakistan, are in Pakistan’s game reserves (Rasheed and Ahmed, 2010; Conservation Frontlines [news article](#)), and these could also be OECMs if the site is not already established as a PA, has important biodiversity values, low use, and regulations in place to prevent unsustainable and intensive trophy hunting (along with the rest of the OECM criteria).

One example is the [Western Jhelum area in Pakistan](#), specifically the Padhri Game Reserve and Salt Range hills, which supports threatened wildlife such as the Punjab Urial, pangolins, and vultures. In 2005, a local alliance of residents and conservationists, supported by the government, established the Western Jhelum Community-based Conservation Organisation (CBO) to reduce environmental degradation in the Salt Range hills and Nala Bunhar River. In 2011, the CBO was officially adopted as the recognized management mechanism for 25,000 ha of rangeland, which included the Padhri Private Game Reserve, covering an area of 1,000 ha. Tourism has been the main source of revenue and trophy hunting is strictly controlled there. Since then, the Urial population has shown a steady increase, and good governance has been the key to its success. According to the article, IUCN is supporting them to confirm their status as an OECM.

Additionally, there are 14 KBAs (KBA Global Dataset, 2023) and 3 EBSAs in Pakistan that have no coverage by PAs or OECMs (UNDP and SCBD, 2021); these could be potential OECMs if they meet the criteria. One example is this [site](#), which would still require further evaluations related to threats, governance, and management to determine whether it can be an OECM:

*Table 15. Details of a KBA Site in Pakistan. Data from the Key Biodiversity Areas Partnership (2023).*

<b>Site name</b>	Phoosna Wetlands Complex
<b>Protected area and OECM coverage</b>	0%
<b>Area</b>	360 ha
<b>System</b>	Terrestrial, Freshwater
<b>Biodiversity value</b>	Has a confirmed KBA status and supports three vulnerable bird species.
<b>Threats</b>	None described for this site.

#### **Existing or planned legislation for OECMs:**

None, though some of the existing laws for CCAs, for example, could be modified into laws for OECMs in provinces where they are not established as PAs.

#### **Main challenges related to developing plans or legislation for OECMs, according to the respondent(s):**

- Lack of political will to develop these
- Lack of financial resources
- Lack of human resources
- Lack of understanding on the importance/relevance of OECMs
- Lack of knowledge on how to develop these for OECMs

A respondent also noted that there is community dependence on natural resources and a lack of awareness on OECMs amongst the officials/officers and other stakeholders. The respondent mentioned that long or short-term training and financial assistance would be needed to help.

## **Sri Lanka**

#### **Previous national target(s) related to Aichi Target 11 and current area coverage:**

Sri Lanka's [NBSAP](#) includes national Target 3, which is linked to Aichi Target 11: "By 2022, the protected area (PA) network is made representative of all critical ecosystems and species and managed

effectively.” (p. 121) Sri Lanka has already far surpassed Aichi Target 11’s terrestrial goal of protecting 17% of land. Therefore, no quantitative terrestrial targets are mentioned in their plan. However, as Sri Lanka has not met their marine targets, they mentioned “At least 10% of coastal and marine areas protected” (p. 138) as one of their indicators for this target. OECMs were not explicitly mentioned in this report.

Sri Lanka reports that it currently has 29.86% terrestrial and inland waters coverage and 0.07% marine coverage with 660 protected areas and 0 OECMs (UNEP-WCMC, 2023). Therefore, Sri Lanka reports being close to meeting the terrestrial percentage value for Target 3 but many more marine areas need to be conserved to reach their quantitative marine target.

For more information related to Sri Lanka and Aichi Target 11, including opportunities for further coverage, view the [Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 Country Dossier for Sri Lanka](#) (UNDP and SCBD, 2021).

**Existing or planned national or sub-national strategies to formally identify and recognise OECMs:**

None.

**Potential OECMs:**

A recent study (Bandara et al., 2022; currently only released as a conference abstract) evaluated how effective Sri Lanka’s “Environmentally Sensitive Areas” (ESAs) are at sustainably conserving biodiversity and found that they could be potential OECMs. ESAs are defined as “*an area outside the Protected Areas, that is vital for the long-term maintenance of biodiversity and its services/or the productivity of water, soil and other natural resources to provide ecological, environmental, economic and cultural benefits to the local community involved, as well as to the nation and global community as a whole*” (p. 2, Ministry of Environment, Sri Lanka, 2021).

The site evaluated in the study (Bandara et al., 2022) was Gangevadiya ESA, which spans across an area of 2,290 ha and has an exceptional variety of flora and fauna in its terrestrial, marine, and brackish water habitats. Within its boundaries, a total of 921 species were identified; 6% were endemic and 10% were endangered. A co-management plan with voluntary commitment from diverse stakeholders from the government, community, community-based organisations, private sector, and academia was devised for the site. The co-management plan encompasses a range of activities, such as transitioning from harmful practices to sustainable resource use and monitoring conservation progress. Its overarching objective is to mitigate threats to biodiversity and safeguard associated ecosystem functions and services through diverse approaches that prioritise in situ conservation. Thus, the site appears to meet the criteria for OECMs and seems to be an excellent example of a potential OECM.

Religious places, military camps, reservoirs with its catchment areas, tourism development zones, and forest patches of plantation estates could also be potential OECMs, according to the respondent.

Furthermore, there are 16 KBAs in Sri Lanka that have no coverage by PAs and OECMs (KBA Global Dataset, 2023), which could also be potential OECMs if they meet the rest of the criteria. An example of this is this [site](#), which would still require further evaluations related to threats, governance, and management to determine whether it can be an OECM:

*Table 16. Details of a KBA Site in Sri Lanka. Data from the Key Biodiversity Areas Partnership (2023).*

<b>Site name</b>	Indikada Mukalana
<b>Protected area and OECM coverage</b>	0%

<b>Area</b>	778 ha
<b>System</b>	Freshwater
<b>Biodiversity value</b>	Has a confirmed KBA status and supports a critically endangered invertebrate species, <i>Ceylonthelphusa nata</i> , which is a type of freshwater crab endemic to Sri Lanka.
<b>Threats</b>	None described for this site.

#### **Existing or planned legislation for OECMs:**

None. The respondent noted that “In Sri Lanka, there are sufficient provisions under the Fauna and Flora Protection Ordinance and Forest Ordinance to declare various categories of protected areas (private and state lands); therefore, there are less concerns to formulate legislations for OECMs.”

However, Sri Lanka could use the existing policy for ESAs, for example, instead of formulating new ones, as ESAs are very similar to OECMs.

#### **Main challenges related to developing plans or legislation for OECMs, according to the respondent(s):**

- Lack of understanding on the importance/relevance of OECMs
- Lack of knowledge on how to develop these for OECMs

# Status of OECMs in Southeast Asia



Sabah, Malaysia. Photo credit: Fahrul Azmi on Unsplash

# Cambodia

## Previous national target(s) related to Aichi Target 11 and current area coverage:

In Cambodia's NBSAP (2016), Target 8 is meant to reflect Aichi Target 11:

"In 2020, at the latest, existing protected areas and *conservation areas*, including community-based natural resource management areas, have management plans and have started effective implementation.

By 2020, (i) The coverage of marine and coastal protected areas and freshwater protected areas has at least doubled as compared to the 2010 levels; (ii) Currently the unprotected areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services that are under a lot of pressures from human activities are identified and integrated in the protected area system; and (iii) Protected areas and conservation areas have been valued, are part of a well-connected protected area system and have been integrated in national sustainable development goals and national green growth strategies, plans and programmes; By 2029, protected forest covers 3.0 million hectares, in line with the objectives of the National Forest Programme 2010-2029".

OECMs were not mentioned in Cambodia's "[FIFTH NATIONAL REPORT TO THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY](#)", which is the latest national report Cambodia submitted to the CBD (2014), though the term "conservation areas" was used in the NBSAP, as shown above.

Cambodia currently has 39.74% terrestrial and inland waters coverage and 1.44% marine coverage with 69 protected areas and 0 OECMs (UNEP-WCMC, 2023). Therefore, Cambodia has exceeded the quantitative terrestrial requirements of not only Aichi Target 11, but CBD Target 3 as well.

For more information related to Cambodia and Aichi Target 11, including opportunities for further coverage, view the [Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 Country Dossier for Cambodia](#) (UNDP and SCBD, 2021).

## Existing or planned national or sub-national strategies to formally identify and recognise OECMs:

Data deficient.

## Potential OECMs:

No potential OECMs have been officially identified, but the "conservation areas" and "community-based natural resource management areas" mentioned in Cambodia's latest NBSAP could be considered as potential OECMs if they meet the criteria.

Additionally, an unpublished concept paper from August 2022 led by the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity revealed that there are new developments in designating urban wetlands as ASEAN Heritage Parks, and some wetlands in Cambodia could be OECMs in the future. This includes Boeng Cheung Ek, which is a large peri-urban wetland in south Phnom Penh, Cambodia, that provides multiple valuable ecosystem services. It has a surface area of around 2,000 ha in the wet season and 1,400 ha in the dry season.

Furthermore, there are 7 KBAs in Cambodia that have no coverage by PAs and OECMs (KBA Global Dataset, 2023), which could also be valuable potential OECMs if they meet the rest of the criteria. [Koh Tang Archipelago](#), for instance, supports a critically endangered bird species (Christmas Frigatebird) (Key Biodiversity Areas Partnership, 2023).

### Existing or planned legislation for OECMs:

Data deficient.

### Main challenges related to developing plans or legislation for OECMs, according to the respondent(s):

Data deficient.

## Indonesia

### Previous national target(s) related to Aichi Target 11 and current area coverage:

Indonesia's latest [NBSAP](#) (2016) to the CBD included national target 11, "Realization of sustainable maintenance and improvement of conservation areas" (p. 230), which is the most closely linked to Aichi Target 11. Note that "conservation areas" refers to national parks and other types of protected areas, and not OECMs, in Indonesia. OECMs were not mentioned in their targets in this report.

Indonesia currently has 12.17% terrestrial and inland waters coverage and 3.06% marine coverage with 733 protected areas and 0 OECMs (UNEP-WCMC, 2023). Indonesia did not have numerical targets for percentage coverage in their NBSAP to compare these values against.

For more information related to Indonesia and Aichi Target 11, including opportunities for further coverage, view the [Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 Country Dossier for Indonesia](#) (UNDP and SCBD, 2021).

### Existing or planned national or sub-national strategies to formally identify and recognise OECMs:

A roadmap entitled "[MPA Vision 2030 and Roadmap to MPA Management: Securing 10% of marine waters in Indonesia towards biodiversity](#)" was published by the Indonesian Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries (MMAF) and key stakeholders in 2020. It includes a section (AoW (Area of Work) 6) on the importance of formally recognising OECMs in the future. However, the report states that there are currently no mechanisms to recognise OECMs in Indonesia and they still need to develop a clear definition and criteria for OECMs in the Indonesian context.

### Potential OECMs:

A respondent noted that "A scoping study to identify potential marine OECMs in Indonesia was published in 2022, which identified over 390 potential marine OECMs". This study provides examples of OECMs under diverse governance types. However, not all of the identified sites can be considered as OECMs and would be more suitable under other categories. For example, temporary fishing closures, as identified in the study, are not suitable as OECMs since OECMs need to be a long-term measure for biodiversity (IUCN WCPA, 2019). Thus, the sites in this study would need to be re-evaluated carefully against the OECM criteria with a focus on the "important biodiversity values" and "long-term biodiversity conservation" aspects.

Additionally, the respondent noted that "Indonesia has several managed areas that fit the OECM criteria, but are currently called by a different name (e.g., daerah perlindungan laut/local conservation areas, sacred places, military sites, hak ulayat/marine tenure region, etc). Unfortunately, information on each are scattered and many are not documented."

Community-managed forests, such as Village Forest (*Hutan Desa*) schemes, and Indigenous peoples-led conservation areas are other examples that could be considered as potential OECMs in Indonesia (Pusparini et al., 2023), if they meet the criteria.



Two sites from Indonesia were also a part of the IUCN WCPA (2022) OECM case study compilation, shown below:

*Table 17. Details of a potential OECM in Indonesia. Adapted from the IUCN WCPA (2022) compilation and PARKS [case study](#) by Eghenter (2018).*

<b>Site name and type</b>	Tana' ulen Lapan River; ICCA.
<b>Geographical defined space</b>	8821 ha. Based on natural boundaries.
<b>Not recognised as a protected area</b>	Not considered to be a PA.
<b>Governed</b>	Governed by Indigenous peoples/local community (the Dayak Kenyah of various sub-ethnic groups)
<b>Managed</b>	Managed by the customary councils and customary Chief.
<b>Biodiversity value</b>	Valuable as it consists of primary forests in pristine conditions and abundant wildlife.
<b>Permanence</b>	Long term since it is a long-standing tradition among Dayak Kenyah people.

*Table 18. Details of a potential OECM in Indonesia. Adapted from the IUCN WCPA (2022) compilation and PARKS [case study](#) by Utomo and Walsh (2018).*

<b>Site name and type</b>	Hutan Harapan Ecosystem Restoration Concession; production landscape managed for conservation.
<b>Geographical defined space</b>	98,000 ha. Defined by a legal licensing procedure.
<b>Not recognised as a protected area</b>	Not considered to be a PA.
<b>Governed</b>	Governed privately with an NGO partnership.
<b>Managed</b>	Managed privately by a company but there is collaboration with the communities who live inside the concession.
<b>Biodiversity value</b>	Recognised as a KBA. It supports over 1350 plant and animal species, including the Sumatran tiger and Asian elephant.
<b>Permanence</b>	Long term as the ERC licence to manage the southern part of the site is for 100 years (started in 2008). The licence to manage the northern part is for 60 years (started in 2017).

Furthermore, there are 226 KBAs (KBA Global Dataset, 2023) and two EBSAs in Indonesia (UNDP and SCBD, 2021) that are not currently protected, which could be valuable potential OECMs if they meet the rest of the OECM criteria. One example is the KBA site "[Sidiangkat](#)", which supports the critically endangered Sumatran Orangutan (Key Biodiversity Areas Partnership, 2023).

### Existing or planned legislation for OECMs:

In Indonesia's roadmap for marine management, AoW 6-2 states "Establish a legal umbrella for OECM recognition in Indonesia", which includes different aims such as identifying legal mechanisms to recognise OECMs, internalising OECMs into Fisheries Law revisions and regulations on the Conservation of Fish Resources, and developing ministerial regulation on OECMs (MMAF, 2020).

### Main challenges related to developing plans or legislation for OECMs, according to the respondent(s):

- Lack of understanding on the importance/relevance of OECMs
- Lack of knowledge on how to develop these for OECMs
- Other ("Confusion on which institutions should be responsible to recognize, monitor and report the OECMs")

Additionally, as mentioned in a presentation on "OECMs in Indonesia" by the Coral Triangle Center in 2022:

- "Lack of data on effective biodiversity protection and management"
- "Lack of evaluation mechanisms on governance"

## Lao People's Democratic Republic

### Previous national target(s) related to Aichi Target 11 and current area coverage:

The two national targets that were stated to be related to Aichi Target 11 in [Lao PDR's NBSAP](#) were: "Target 1.2.2 National wetlands strategy in place while management plans with substantive funding are implemented in at least 12 important wetlands sites" (p. 65) and "Target 1.5.2 Geographically contiguous village forestry sites are recognized /promoted to form an organic part of 2 BD corridors that would link critical fragmented habitats together." (p. 68) OECMs or related terms were not explicitly mentioned.

Lao PDR currently has 18.69% terrestrial and inland waters coverage with 31 protected areas and 0 OECMs (UNEP-WCMC, 2023). Lao PDR is landlocked, which is why marine coverage is not applicable. Lao PDR did not have numerical targets for percentage coverage in their NBSAP to compare these values against, though in their [national report](#), Lao PDR indicated that their work for Aichi Target 11 at the time (2016) had "more efforts to be made" but that it was improving.

For more information related to Lao PDR and Aichi Target 11, including opportunities for further coverage, view the [Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 Country Dossier for Lao People's Democratic Republic](#) (UNDP and SCBD, 2021).

### Existing or planned national or sub-national strategies to formally identify and recognise OECMs:

A respondent noted that this was in the process of being developed.

### Potential OECMs:

Some of the village forestry sites and corridors mentioned in Lao PDR's NBSAP targets could potentially be OECMs.

New developments in designating urban wetlands in ASEAN as ASEAN Heritage Parks also suggests that some wetlands in Lao PDR could be OECMs in the future. One example from an unpublished

concept paper from the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (2022) is the Nong Kham Sen wetlands, which cover 64 ha of wetland habitat and sacred forests that are seasonally flooded. They are located in the Hadsaiphong District of Vientiane Prefecture and are one of the few remaining semi-natural wetlands in the Mekong Plains. To ensure their protection, the wetlands are maintained through collaborative efforts involving six local communities that have overlapping land rights, with support from the provincial authorities, particularly the Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office. The wetlands are home to a diverse range of birds, with 179 species recorded in the area.

Furthermore, there are 15 KBAs in Lao PDR that have no coverage by PAs and OECMs (KBA Global Dataset, 2023), which could also be potential OECMs if they meet the rest of the criteria. One of these sites is “[Siphandon](#)”, which supports four critically endangered species, among several other endangered and threatened ones (Key Biodiversity Areas Partnership, 2023).

### Existing or planned legislation for OECMs:

A respondent noted that “Lao PDR might use the Decree on Protected Areas (2022)”. According to an [article](#) from Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) Lao PDR, in 2021, the Department of Forestry in Lao PDR held a consultation meeting to revise this Decree with representatives from various government agencies and WCS. The proposed changes in the Decree are aligned with the Forestry Law of 2019 and the country’s sustainable and green growth priorities. The changes aim to better define protected areas in terms of government jurisdiction, categories, and zones to improve management planning and alignment with international standards. enhance planning and coordination among various sectors, local communities, and the private sector, to achieve long-term sustainable development and biodiversity management. The updated Decree will promote a landscape management approach and partnerships to sustainably finance the management of protected areas in Lao PDR. The revision is supported by the EU, French Agency for Development (AFD), and WCS through the four-year “Ecosystem Conservation through Integrated Landscape Management in Lao PDR (ECILL)” Project that covers three biodiversity-rich areas in the country. The revised PA Decree is a significant step forward in safeguarding Lao PDR’s biodiversity landscapes. Thus, parts of this Decree could be applied to OECMs as well, where relevant.

### Main challenges related to developing plans or legislation for OECMs, according to the respondent(s):

- Lack of knowledge on how to develop these for OECMs
- Lack of human resources
- Lack of financial resources
- Lack of political will to develop these
- Lack of understanding on the importance/relevance of OECMs

## Malaysia

### Previous national target(s) related to Aichi Target 11 and current area coverage:

In Malaysia’s [sixth national report](#) (2020) to the CBD, national Target 6 was the most closely linked to Aichi Target 11 and mentioned an intention to establish OECMs: “By 2025, at least 20% of terrestrial areas and inland waters, and 10% of coastal and marine areas, are conserved through a representative system of protected areas and *other effective area-based conservation measures*.” (p. 7). OECMs were also mentioned across other indicators and plans in this report.

Malaysia reports that it currently has 13.33% terrestrial and inland waters coverage and 5.56% marine coverage with 31 protected areas and 0 OECMs (UNEP-WCMC, 2023). Therefore, Malaysia will need to conserve more areas to reach the quantitative aspect of their target by 2025.

For more information related to Malaysia and Aichi Target 11, including opportunities for further coverage, view the [Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 Country Dossier for Malaysia](#) (UNDP and SCBD, 2021).

### **Existing or planned national or sub-national strategies to formally identify and recognise OECMs:**

The NGO/research organisation [South East Asia Rainforest Research Partnership \(SEARRP\)](#) has been heavily involved with the national OECM process of Malaysia since 2019, and a respondent from the organisation said that “A localised OECM framework would need to be developed, with adaptation from the IUCN OECM guideline and site assessment tool before any OECMs in Malaysia can be identified, recognised and reported. A high-level committee to discuss and decide the legal pathways for recognition, together with stakeholder engagements and discussion would be needed. The identification of potential OECM sites may also need to be assessed on a case-by-case approach, particularly those governed and managed by Indigenous people and local communities. Benefits and support once sites have been recognised as OECMs need to be clear and beneficial to the sites.”

The respondent also stated that “The development of the National Framework of Protected Areas under the Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment and Climate Change (NRECC) is still ongoing. OECMs are also taken into account on how they will fit in the National Framework. The National Policy on Biological Diversity (NPBD) 2016–2025 is currently undergoing a review, and will align with the Global Biodiversity Targets 30x30. OECMs will be featured as one of the targets under the revised (NPBD), and the identification as well as recognition of OECMs will be outlined as an action plan under this target. The revised policy is anticipated to be completed sometime this year.”

### **Potential OECMs:**

Several potential OECMs were identified in Malaysia’s sixth CBD report (2020): “...other identified potential conservation areas include the international Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (IBAs) promulgated by the Malaysian Nature Society (MNS) as a partner of Birdlife International. There are 55 sites across Malaysia named as IBAs. In addition, under the cross-border partnership of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP), Bako Buntal Bay in Sarawak has been identified as an important flyway for migratory water birds. Similarly, Malaysia has seven (7) Ramsar sites denoting wetlands of international importance, with a total area of 134,182 ha” (p. 42).

The respondents also identified several potential OECMs:

“Indigenous community restricted fishing area known as "tagal" - formally recognised by State government/ Fisheries department, Wildlife corridors cutting across agriculture landscape - there is potential.”

“1. Genting Tea Estate, Pahang - Privately owned area; considered as an important arboretum for Malaysian dipterocarp species; extensive (over 50 years) entomological research (butterflies and moths).

2. Sungai Pin Conservation Area, Sabah - Privately owned area; conservation area set aside in an oil palm plantation landscape; important for connectivity as it is located nearby key PAs in the Kinabatangan landscape; high biodiversity values - some plant and animal species listed under the IUCN Red List as well as the State protected species, some are endemic to Sabah

3. Sekar Imej Conservation Area, Sabah - Privately owned area; High Conservation Value (HCV) area set aside in the Wilmar Oil Palm Plantation estate; high biodiversity values - some plants and animal species listed under the IUCN Red List.

4. The Habitat Penang Hill, Penang - Land owned and governed by State Government, but the area is managed privately. Site is used for conservation, research, education and eco-tourism; high biodiversity values - some plants and animals listed under the IUCN Red List and there are several animal species that are hyper endemic to the Penang Hill.

5. UITM Kuala Pilah, Negeri Sembilan - Forest located within a University campus; governed and managed by the University; Site is used for biological research and education for students and lecturers; an important forest that connects to a larger forest landscape in Peninsular Malaysia i.e. the Central Forest Spine.”

Two of these sites are expanded upon below:

*Table 19. Details of a potential OECM in Malaysia. Information from a SEARRP (2022) presentation.*

<b>Site name and type</b>	Sungai Pin Conservation Area, Sabah; lowland mixed dipterocarp and seasonal freshwater swamp forests
<b>Geographical defined space</b>	2,632 ha
<b>Not recognised as a protected area</b>	Not considered to be a PA.
<b>Governed</b>	Privately governed by Sawit Kinabalu.
<b>Managed</b>	Privately managed by Sawit Kinabalu.
<b>Biodiversity value</b>	High biodiversity value. Plant diversity: 521 taxa from 95 families; 99 are endemic to Borneo; 12 are endemic to Sabah. IUCN Red List: 13 vulnerable species, 2 endangered species, 5 critically endangered species  Animal diversity: 21 mammal species, 104 bird species, 18 fish species IUCN Red List: 5 vulnerable species, 1 endangered species, and 2 critically endangered species
<b>Permanence</b>	<i>Likely</i> to be long term if there are renewal measures in place, as there are inter-agency memorandums of understanding (MoUs) and a 10-year management plan. There is also robust protection, enforcement, and monitoring.

*Table 20. Details of a potential OECM in Malaysia. Information from a SEARRP (2022) presentation.*

<b>Site name and type</b>	Sekar Imej Conservation Area, Sabah; largely lowland mixed dipterocarp Forest, with varying degrees historically logged-over forests
<b>Geographical defined space</b>	2,469 ha.
<b>Not recognised as a protected area</b>	Not considered to be a PA.

<b>Governed</b>	Privately governed by Sekar Imej Sdn Bhd (private limited company), Wilmar
<b>Managed</b>	Privately managed by Sekar Imej Sdn Bhd (private limited company), Wilmar
<b>Biodiversity value</b>	High biodiversity value. Supports IUCN Red List critically endangered animal and plant species including including the pangolin, clouded leopard, slow loris, <i>Shorea palembanica</i> , and <i>Shorea leprosula</i>
<b>Permanence</b>	<i>Likely</i> to be long term if the agreement is renewed. The site is under RSPO certification and has a HCV Management and Action Plan 2021–2025 that is reviewed every 5 years. There is also robust protection, enforcement, and monitoring.

### Existing or planned legislation for OECMs:

The SEARRP respondent noted that “The legal framework process for OECMs in Malaysia will be led by the relevant Ministry i.e., Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment and Climate Change. From the OECM project SEARRP was involved in, we engaged with a legal consultant to review existing legislations and policies, one of the key recommendations from this exercise is to amend existing legislation and include OECMs. The works on the development of a National OECM Framework will start this year, led by the Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment and Climate Change.”

### Main challenges related to developing plans or legislation for OECMs, according to the respondent(s):

- Lack of political will to develop these
- Lack of financial resources
- Lack of human resources
- Lack of understanding on the importance/relevance of OECMs
- Lack of knowledge on how to develop these for OECMs
- Other (“dependent on process and buy in”)

Other barriers, as mentioned in the SEARRP (2022) presentation, were “Missing fundamental aspects relating to recognising OECMs (e.g., by whom, implications, legal mechanism)” and “No consensus building to establish agreed criteria for identification of OECMs, given that land and parts of marine water are State matters”. However, progress is being made in Malaysia as the Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment and Climate Change will lead the process to develop the National OECM Framework in Malaysia this year, as mentioned earlier.

## Myanmar

### Previous national target(s) related to Aichi Target 11 and current area coverage:

In Myanmar’s latest national report (2018) to the CBD, two targets were closely related to Aichi Target 11; national target 10.1 was related to marine coverage and mentioned OECMs: “By 2020, 15 per cent of Myanmar’s coral reefs conserved within MPAs, including LMMAs and *other area-based conservation measures*” (p. 39), and national target 11.1 was related to terrestrial coverage and mentioned ICCAs, some of which can also be considered as OECMs according to the IUCN WCPA criteria: “By 2020, 8% of Myanmar’s land area is conserved within PAs, including ICCAs” (p. 41).

Myanmar reports that it currently has 7.18% terrestrial and inland waters coverage and 0.48% marine coverage with 59 protected areas and 0 OECMs (Nature and Wildlife Conservation Division, Myanmar, 2023). Therefore, Myanmar reports that it came relatively close to reaching their terrestrial target, although they do not have any ICCAs in the [ICCA Registry](#) (2023), but will still need to conserve many more marine areas to reach their quantitative marine target.

For more information related to Myanmar and Aichi Target 11, including opportunities for further coverage, view the [Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 Country Dossier for Myanmar](#) (UNDP and SCBD, 2021).

### **Existing or planned national or sub-national strategies to formally identify and recognise OECMs:**

Although Myanmar's national report mentioned *other area-based conservation measures*, this report was released in 2018 and OECMs were only formally defined by the CBD in the same year; hence, it is unlikely that this report was referring to a formal strategy for them.

According to a respondent (some parts edited), "Myanmar has implemented a strategy for KBA assessment and identification at a national level since 2005 but we have not started a formal identification and recognition of OECMs at a national or sub-national level yet. Some individual organisations (e.g., Myanmar Biodiversity Fund) are initiating work on the identification of OECMs and are trying to have a national level identification process. However, the current political situation is very challenging and has put much of the progress on hold."

### **Potential OECMs:**

The UNDP and SCBD Dossier on Myanmar (2021) states that (some parts edited) "In Myanmar, the Forest Department has designated and managed permanent forest estates, including not only protected areas but also reserved forests and protected public forests. Some of these forests have similar conservation purposes as protected areas (e.g., watershed conservation forests, mangroves reserved forests etc.). Furthermore, the Department of Fisheries has designated locally managed marine areas in accordance with the Fisheries Law. These areas can be considered as OECMs. However, OECMs are not officially included yet in the national reporting system. Further legal procedures are still needed to recognize and include inside the OECMs." (p. 12)

Another potential example, as identified in the literature (Chaudhary et al., 2022), is unprotected parts of the incredibly biodiverse Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH), which covers the mountainous regions of Myanmar. Some community protected areas, which are ICCAs in Myanmar's context, community forests, and sacred forests are other potential options to be designated as ICCAs. Additionally, Myanmar's strategy for KBA assessments could be useful for identifying OECMs, as KBAs and OECMs have some overlapping criteria. However, there may be some challenges such as land tenure conflicts during designation processes.

### **Existing or planned legislation for OECMs:**

None.

### **Main challenges related to developing plans or legislation for OECMs, according to the respondent(s):**

- Limited financial resources
- Limited human resources
- Limited knowledge on how to develop these for OECMs
- Limited understanding on the importance/relevance of OECMs

\*Note that in the multiple-choice question about this in the questionnaire, these options were phrased as “Lack of...” instead of “Limited”, but were edited here during the review stage by the Nature and Wildlife Conservation Division, Myanmar.

According to the Nature and Wildlife Conservation Division, Myanmar, “Even though there are some challenges associated with PA establishment, our country Myanmar has been addressing all challenges with the collaboration of the government, NGOs and INGOs, and multi-stakeholders, including Indigenous People and local communities. Since Myanmar has a lot of experience in developing PA establishment strategies, legislation and KBAs assessment with the collaboration of all stakeholders, it will lead to more work on OECMs in the future.”

## Philippines

### Previous national target(s) related to Aichi Target 11 and current area coverage:

In the Philippines’ “[Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2015–2018](#)” (BMB DENR, 2016), OECMs were mentioned in National Target 19: “By 2028, there will be a 10% increase in total area from 2015 levels of terrestrial including inland wetlands, PAs managed through NIPAS, and other conservation measures (indigenous community conserved areas, local conservation areas, critical habitats) that overlap with KBAs” (NIPAS: National Integrated Protected Areas System) and 20 “By 2028, there will be a 20% increase from 2015 levels in the coverage of established MPAs/sanctuaries across various aquatic habitats.” (p. 89). OECMs were also mentioned under Target 1.1 in a section for Program Intervention 1—Habitat Loss: “By 2028, equitably managed terrestrial areas, important for biodiversity and ecosystem services, is increased to 10% of total land area through NIPAS and *other effective area-based conservation measures*” (p. 166).

The Philippines currently has 15.87% terrestrial and inland waters coverage and 1.74% marine coverage with 273 protected areas and 178 OECMs (UNEP-WCMC, 2023). The national targets for the Philippines have a timeline until 2028, which is why it is currently unclear how much they have progressed with this and if the targets will be reached in time. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that the Philippines is currently the only country in Asia, and one of the few worldwide, to establish OECMs in the official database. Thus, the nation is greatly leading efforts on OECMs in this region and globally, though a study by Claudet et al. (2022) found that their reported sites were missing supporting documentation in the database, and this is worth addressing in the future.

For more information related to the Philippines and Aichi Target 11, including opportunities for further coverage, view the [Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 Country Dossier for Philippines](#) (UNDP and SCBD, 2021).

### Existing or planned national or sub-national strategies to formally identify and recognise OECMs:

According to a respondent, this is “still an ongoing process that started around 2012. There were NGO-government partnership projects that led to a process of recognizing ICCAs. Philippines uses a process based on the UNEP-WCMC ICCA registry. Mostly NGOs lead this, but are supported by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).”

### Potential OECMs:

Two examples featured in IUCN WCPA’s [2022](#) case study compilation are shown below:



*Table 21. Details of a potential OECM in the Philippines. Adapted from the IUCN WCPA (2022) compilation.*

<b>Site name and type</b>	Mount Candalaga Dumut; ICCA.
<b>Geographical defined space</b>	16,800 ha. The area is defined by the community and their Ancestral Domain in their Ancestral Domain Sustainable Development and Protection Plan (ADSDPP).
<b>Not recognised as a protected area</b>	Not considered to be a PA.
<b>Governed</b>	Governed by the Indigenous Mansaka people.
<b>Managed</b>	Managed by the local community for generations.
<b>Biodiversity value</b>	It is within a KBA, which is home to threatened and restricted-range species, including the Philippine Eagle.
<b>Permanence</b>	Long term as the aforementioned ADSDPP is a “long term comprehensive spatial and development plan”.

*Table 22. Details of a potential OECM in the Philippines. Adapted from the IUCN WCPA (2022) compilation.*

<b>Site name and type</b>	Danjugan Island; private land with conservation aims.
<b>Geographical defined space</b>	43 ha of limestone forests.
<b>Not recognised as a protected area</b>	The island itself is not considered to be a PA. The surrounding waters are part of MPAs and these cannot be considered as OECMs.
<b>Governed</b>	Privately governed by the Philippine Reef and Rainforest Conservation Foundation Inc. (PRRCFI), who purchased the island with the World Land Trust in 1994 to protect the biodiversity there from exploitation.
<b>Managed</b>	Privately managed by the PRRCFI.
<b>Biodiversity value</b>	Biodiverse island. Has at least 72 bird species, 10 bat species, and 22 butterfly species.
<b>Permanence</b>	Long term (at least 25 years).

Mount Apo KBA was also featured in IUCN WCPA’s [2017](#) case study compilation. Sites in the ICCA Registry that have not already been established as PAs or OECMs, such as Mount Manlaku ICCA and Mount Tagub-Kampalili ICCA, which are also within KBAs, should also be considered. There are 32 other KBAs in the Philippines that have no coverage from PAs or OECMs that are worth assessing further as well (KBA Global Database, 2023).

Additionally, according to a respondent, “There are also many ancestral domains and sacred sites, which have not been recognized as OECMs.”

#### **Existing or planned legislation for OECMs:**

According to a respondent, “There is a pending ICCA bill which should recognize OECMs legally, but this has been delayed and postponed. NGOs want to push for recognition and this may happen through the NBSAP.”

### **Main challenges related to developing plans or legislation for OECMs, according to the respondent(s):**

- Lack of political will to develop these
- Lack of financial resources
- Lack of understanding on the importance/relevance of OECMs

## Thailand

### **Previous national target(s) related to Aichi Target 11 and current area coverage:**

In Thailand’s [latest NBSAP](#) to the CBD, the following were mentioned as being relevant for Aichi Target 11: Strategy 2 Measure 1.1, 1.6, Measure 2.3, Measure 3.2, 3.5. These are copied below:

“1.1 Strengthen and increase efficiency in management of protected areas and conservation areas according to law.

1.6 Promote integrating management of ecosystems into the wider landscape and seascape in order to promote conservation and sustainable utilization and maintain ecosystem services.

2.3 Develop and support implementation of good practices for wetland management in urban and suburban areas and incorporate them into provincial and local plans.

3.2 Control and protect marine and coastal resources, wetlands and vulnerable ecosystems that may be affected by community expansion, pollution, overfishing and climate change.

3.5 Push for implementation of the cabinet resolution of 3 November 2009 on Inventory of internationally and nationally important wetlands of Thailand, and wetland conservation measures.” (p. 23)

Although OECMs were not explicitly mentioned in their report, the term “conservation areas” was used alongside the term “protected areas” in Measure 1.1, which suggests that it is considered separately.

Thailand reports that it currently has 18.55% terrestrial and inland waters coverage and 4.44% marine coverage with 246 protected areas and 0 OECMs (UNEP-WCMC, 2023). No numerical national targets were provided in their report to compare these values against, but Thailand reports that it has surpassed Aichi Target 11’s terrestrial percentage requirement.

For more information related to Thailand and Aichi Target 11, including opportunities for further coverage, view the [Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 Country Dossier for Thailand](#) (UNDP and SCBD, 2021).

### **Existing or planned national or sub-national strategies to formally identify and recognise OECMs:**

The respondent from ONEP (Office of Natural Resource and Environmental Policy and Planning, Thailand) noted that this is in the process of being developed: “The process is based on consultation with response agencies based on area-based [conservation], local community and NGOs. For government agencies within the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment: ONEP, DMCR (Department of Marine and Coastal Resources), DNP (Department of National Park, Wildlife and Plant

Conservation) [are responsible]; for NGOs: IUCN. At the moment, the criteria for OECMs are any area with high biodiversity outside protected areas.” During this development process, Thailand should consider adding measures for governance, management, and long-term protection to ensure that their national criteria are aligned with the IUCN WCPA criteria.

### Potential OECMs:

Potential OECMs in Thailand include areas that are not considered to be PAs, such as Forest Parks, (there are 22 in Thailand, which comprise 105,184 ha of land), and Non-Hunting Wildlife Areas (there are five in Thailand, which comprise 651,376 ha of land). These would be governed and managed by the Department of National Park, Wildlife and Plant Conservation (DNP) in Thailand, according to an unpublished presentation by IUCN Thailand.

In addition, 22 KBAs (KBA Global Dataset, 2023) and 1 EBSA (UNDP and SCBD, 2021) have no coverage by reported PAs and OECMs, and these could be potential OECMs. An example of this is the [site](#) below, which can be considered if the threats can be mitigated and the governance and management needs for OECMs can be met:

*Table 23. Details of a KBA Site in Thailand. Data from the Key Biodiversity Areas Partnership (2023).*

<b>Site name</b>	Ao Pattani
<b>Protected area and OECM coverage</b>	0%
<b>Area</b>	1,039 ha
<b>System</b>	Freshwater, Marine
<b>Biodiversity value</b>	Has a confirmed KBA status and supports a critically endangered bird species (Spoon-billed Sandpiper), two other endangered bird species (Black-faced Spoonbill and Spotted Greenshank), and a vulnerable mammal species (Smooth-coated Otter).
<b>Threats</b>	Hunting of shorebirds (main threat); conversion of mangroves and intertidal mudflats into ponds and salt pans; pollution.

### Existing or planned legislation for OECMs:

The respondent stated that “Relevant agencies, academic institutes and NGOs for instance; DMCR, DNP, Ramkhamhang University understand the concept of OECMs, which could support 30 by 30. Last year, a consultation workshop on OECMs was organised by GIZ in cooperation with ONEP. Additionally, Thailand signed for the High Ambition Coalition (HAC); therefore, there is a plan for a regulatory framework for OECMs. However, at this stage, it is unclear how long it will take, but it is likely two or three years from now”.

### Main challenges related to developing plans or legislation for OECMs, according to the respondent(s):

- Lack of political will to develop these
- Lack of financial resources
- Lack of knowledge on how to develop these for OECMs

## Previous national target(s) related to Aichi Target 11 and current area coverage:

Viet Nam's latest [NBSAP](#) submitted to the CBD mentions some specific targets for their vision to 2020; the most relevant group of targets to Aichi Target 11 was the first one: "To improve the quality and increase the area of protected ecosystems, ensuring that the area of terrestrial protected areas accounts for 9% of the total territorial area, marine protected areas account for 0.24% of the sea area, forest coverage reaches 45%, primary forest remains at 0.57 million hectares, coupled with effective protection plans; that mangrove forests, seagrass beds, and coral reefs are maintained at the current levels; that 15% of degraded critical ecosystems are restored; and the number of internationally recognized protected areas are increased to 10 Ramsar wetlands, 10 biosphere reserves, and 10 ASEAN heritage parks." (p. 93) OECMs were not explicitly mentioned in this report, but a respondent mentioned that OECMs were mentioned in the NBSAP that was approved in 2022; however, this has not been published on the CBD database.

Viet Nam reports that it currently has 7.58% terrestrial and inland waters coverage and 0.56% marine coverage with 209 protected areas and 0 OECMs (UNEP-WCMC, 2023). Therefore, Viet Nam came relatively close to reaching their terrestrial percentage target and surpassed their quantitative marine target.

For more information related to Viet Nam and Aichi Target 11, including opportunities for further coverage, view the [Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 Country Dossier for Viet Nam](#) (UNDP and SCBD, 2021).

## Existing or planned national or sub-national strategies to formally identify and recognise OECMs:

Screening criteria were developed based on the IUCN and CBD criteria in a report on OECMs by national experts (draft version November 2022; currently not available publicly): "(i) protected area but not protected area; (ii) Governed and managed area; (iii) Sustainably and effectively contribute to biodiversity conservation and contribute to in-situ conservation; (iv) Areas with linked ecological functions and service, cultural, spiritual, socio-economic values for the locality". This is not considered to be the formal procedure to identify OECMs in the country as the report proposed a project to develop a full set of criteria and procedure to identify OECMs.

One respondent noted that the "NBSAP approved in January 2022 references OECMs and GIZ has completed a policy review and analysis of potential OECMs."

According to a respondent from IUCN Viet Nam, "We have started to develop an OECM GIS database that assesses potential sites using the OECM criteria".

Another respondent mentioned that "Viet Nam is considering using OECMs as a new approach for landscape and habitat management".

## Potential OECMs:

The following is summarised from the aforementioned report on OECMs in Viet Nam. Based on the screening criteria developed in the report, different types of OECMs were identified:

Nine main groups of potential OECMs:

1. Protection forests that would be geographically defined by the forest owners

2. Natural production forests, which are found across production forests but are protected and managed separately by assigned organisations or groups
3. Buffer zones, determined based on the establishment of PAs
4. Protected zones of aquatic resources
5. Biodiversity conservation corridors defined by the Law on Biodiversity and others
6. Areas of high biodiversity value according to the Law on Planning
7. Important wetlands regulated by Decree 66/2019/NĐ-CP and others
8. Important ecological landscapes according to the Law on Planning
9. Private biodiversity conservation facilities

Others smaller types of OECMs:

- Sacred forests determined by the Law on Forestry
- Geographical areas assigned to community organisations to manage the protection of aquatic resources determined by the Law on Fisheries

One example, as identified in an IUCN [article](#), shows how businesses can support biodiversity conservation, and it could potentially fall under the ninth identified OECM category: A prominent dairy company in Viet Nam, TH Milk, owns properties in Nghe An Province, which includes a 50 ha sugar factory. The majority of this land comprises untended lakes and grasslands that have been allowed to naturally "re-wild" without using chemicals, cutting grass, and removing dead trees—this has led to an explosive increase in insect and bird populations. The property is so well-preserved that it could potentially serve as a suitable location for reintroducing species such as turtles, which have gone extinct in the wild.

Furthermore, there are 41 KBAs in Viet Nam that have no coverage by PAs and OECMs (KBA Global Dataset, 2023). These could also be potential OECMs if they meet the rest of the criteria, such as the KBA site "[Dong Mo Lake](#)", which supports the critically endangered Yangtze Giant Softshell Turtle.

### Existing or planned legislation for OECMs:

At the time of response, a respondent mentioned that "Viet Nam plans to organize a national consultation on OECMs in February 2023". The report from November 2022 also leads the way for legislation to be developed for OECMs as it identified many laws related to OECMs (though none specifically for it). Importantly, the report also provided a legal basis for financing OECMs through regulations on payment mechanisms for ecosystem services as outlined in Article 138 of the Law on Environmental Protection in Viet Nam. By applying such payment mechanisms, a sustainable income stream can be generated, which could support wider implementation of OECMs in Viet Nam.

### Main challenges related to developing plans or legislation for OECMs, according to the respondent(s):

- Lack of human resources
- Lack of financial resources
- Lack of political will to develop these
- Lack of understanding on the importance/relevance of OECMs
- Lack of knowledge on how to develop these for OECMs

# Overall status and regional comparisons



Bali, Indonesia. Photo credit: Maro Schorr on Unsplash

## Summary

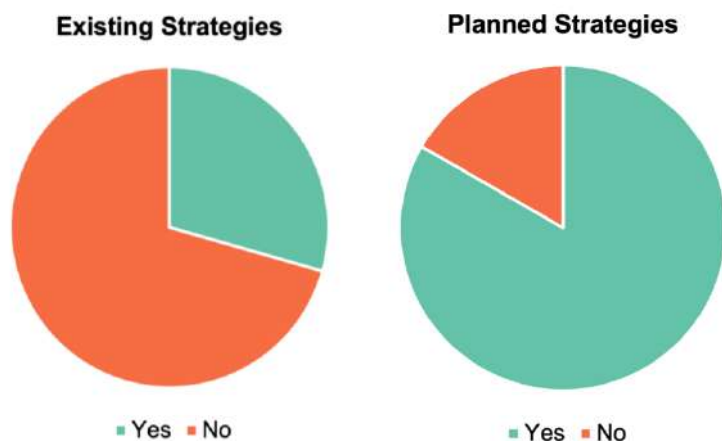
The results of the four main “yes” or “no” questions from the survey are summarised below in Table 24. These will be expanded upon in the following sections, along with the results from the question on challenges.

*Table 24. Survey questions with a “yes” or “no” response related to strategies and legislation summarised. The darkest grey shows the responding countries from East Asia, the medium grey shows the countries from South Asia, and the lightest grey shows the countries from Southeast Asia.*

Country	Existing national or sub-national strategies to formally identify and recognise OECMs	Planned national or sub-national strategies to formally identify and recognise OECMs	Existing legislation for OECMs	Planned legislation for OECMs
China	No	No	No	No
Japan	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Republic of Korea	No	Yes	No	Yes
Bangladesh	No	Yes	No	Yes
Bhutan	Yes	No	No	Yes
India	Yes	No	No	No
Maldives	Yes	No	Yes	No
Nepal	No	Yes	No	No
Pakistan	No	Yes	No	No
Sri Lanka	No	No	No	No
Indonesia	No	Yes	No	Yes
Lao PDR	No	Yes	No	Yes
Malaysia	No	Yes	No	Yes
Myanmar	No	Yes	No	No
Philippines	Yes	No	No	Yes
Thailand	No	Yes	No	Yes
Viet Nam	No	Yes	No	Yes

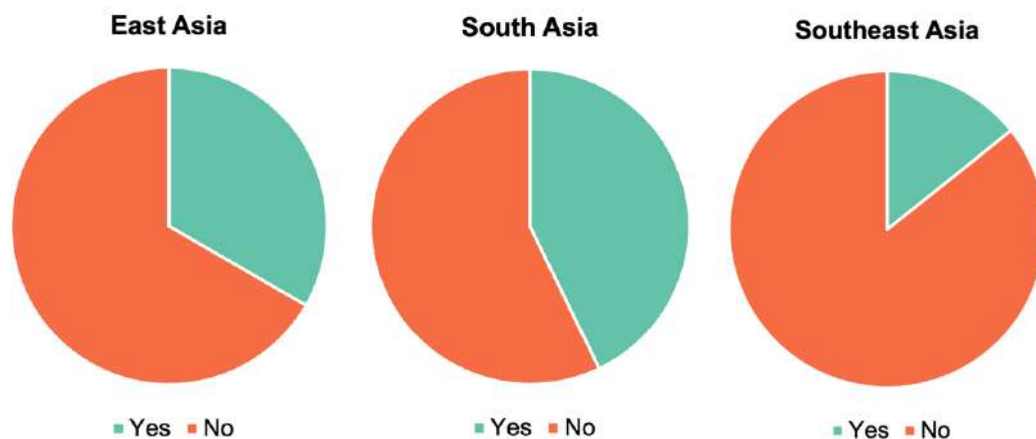
## Existing and planned strategies for OECMs

Out of the surveyed countries, 5/17 (29.4%) said they have existing strategies for OECMs while 12/17 (70.6%) do not. Out of the 12 countries that do not have existing strategies, ten of them (83.3%) said they have planned strategies for OECMs in the future, while the remaining two (16.7%) do not (Figure 4).



*Figure 4. Proportion of countries in the APAP and Asia with existing and planned national or sub-national strategies to formally identify and recognise OECMs. The “planned strategies” chart only includes countries that answered “No” to the “existing strategies” question to avoid duplication.*

Out of the three categorised regions—East Asia, South Asia, and Southeast Asia—South Asia has the most countries with existing national or sub-national strategies to formally identify and recognise OECMs (Figure 5). For East Asia, 1/3 countries have existing strategies for OECMs (33.3%); in South Asia, 3/7 countries do (42.9%), and in Southeast Asia, 1/7 countries do (14.3%).



*Figure 5. Proportion of countries in the APAP and Asia with existing national or sub-national strategies to formally identify and recognise OECMs. Responses categorised by region.*

In East Asia, out of the two countries that have no existing strategies, the Republic of Korea stated that they have plans to implement this (Table 23). In South Asia, out of the four countries that have no existing strategies, three of them stated that they have future plans for OECMs. Lastly, in Southeast Asia, all six of the countries that have no existing strategies stated that they have plans for OECMs in the future (Figure 6).



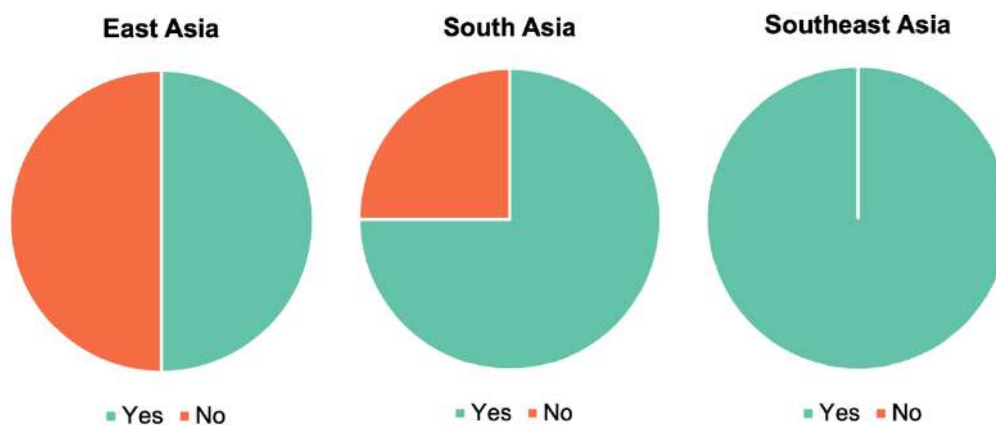


Figure 6. Proportion of planned national or sub-national strategies to formally identify and recognise OECMs for countries that responded “No” to the “existing strategies” question. Does not include countries that responded “Yes” to avoid duplication.

## Existing and planned legislation

Only 1/17 countries (5.9%) have existing legislation for OECMs. Out of the remaining sixteen countries that do not have existing legislation, ten of them (62.5%) stated that they have plans to develop legislation for OECMs in the future (Figure 7).

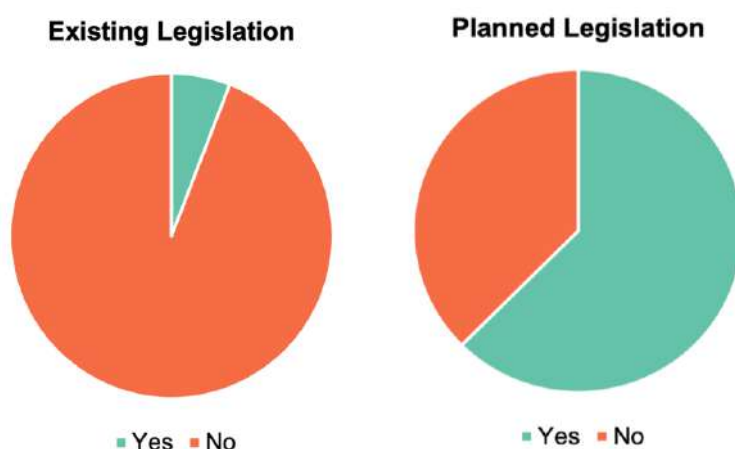


Figure 7. Proportion of countries in the APAP and Asia with existing or planned legislation for OECMs. The “planned legislation” chart only includes countries that answered “No” to the “existing legislation” question to avoid duplication.

Broad regional comparisons were not possible for the existing legislation question as only Maldives reported to have existing legislation.

However, there were more differences in the responses for the planned legislation question (Figure 8). In Southeast Asia, 6/7 of the countries (85.7%) have plans; in East Asia, 2/3 of the countries (66.6%), Japan and the Republic of Korea, have plans. Lastly, in South Asia, 2/6 of the countries (excluding Maldives as they already have legislation), Bangladesh and Bhutan, have plans (33.3%).

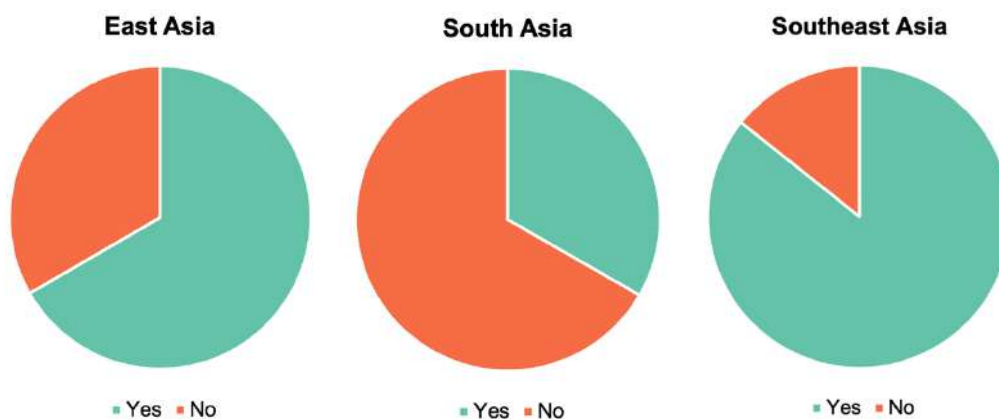


Figure 8. Proportion of countries in the APAP and Asia with planned legislation for OECMs. Only includes countries that answered “No” to the “existing legislation” question to avoid duplication. Responses categorised by region.

## Challenges with developing plans or legislation

As can be seen in Figure 9 below, the main challenges with developing plans or legislation are 1. “Lack of political will to develop these” and “Lack of knowledge on how to develop these for OECMs” (both 21.3%), 2. “Lack of understanding on the importance/relevance of OECMs” and “Lack of financial resources” (both 19.1%), 3. “Lack of human resources” (12.8%), and lastly, 4. “Other” (6.4%). There could have been differing reasons for selecting “Lack of political will to develop these”; for instance, one respondent chose this option because their country is planning on applying existing mechanisms for PCAs to OECMs and, thus, they do not need to develop new legislation. It could also have been chosen by others due to more pressing national priorities, or because the importance of OECMs is not clear at a national level, for example.

These results were mostly consistent across different regions as well. In East Asia, the main challenges were reported to be 1. “Lack of political will” (28.6%), and the rest were all equally divided (14.3%). In South Asia, it was 1. “Lack of political will” and “Lack of knowledge on how to develop these” (both 27.3%), 2. “Lack of understanding on the importance/relevance of OECMs” and “Lack of financial resources” (both 18.2%), 3. “Lack of human resources” (9.1%), and 4. “Other” (0%). Lastly, in Southeast Asia, “Lack of knowledge on how to develop these for OECMs”, “Lack of financial resources”, and “Lack of understanding on the importance/relevance of OECMs” were all tied as the main challenge (20.7%), followed by “Lack of political will to develop these” (17.2%), “Lack of human resources” (13.8%), and “Other” (6.9%).

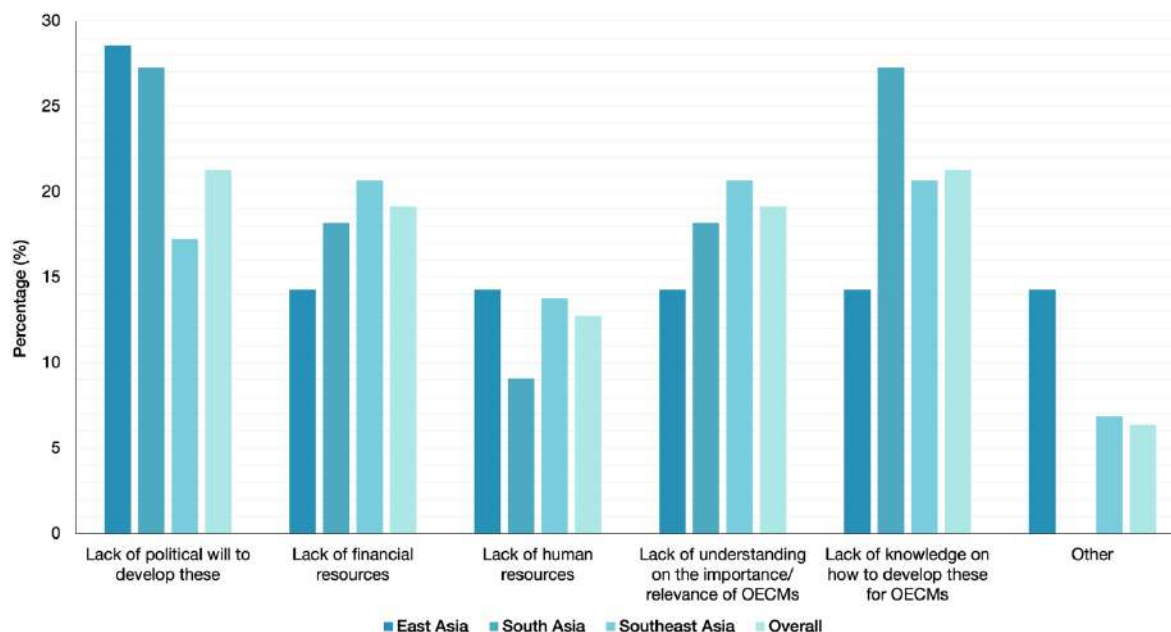


Figure 9. Proportions of the challenges with developing plans or legislation for OECMs. Includes regional comparisons between East Asia, South Asia, and Southeast Asia.

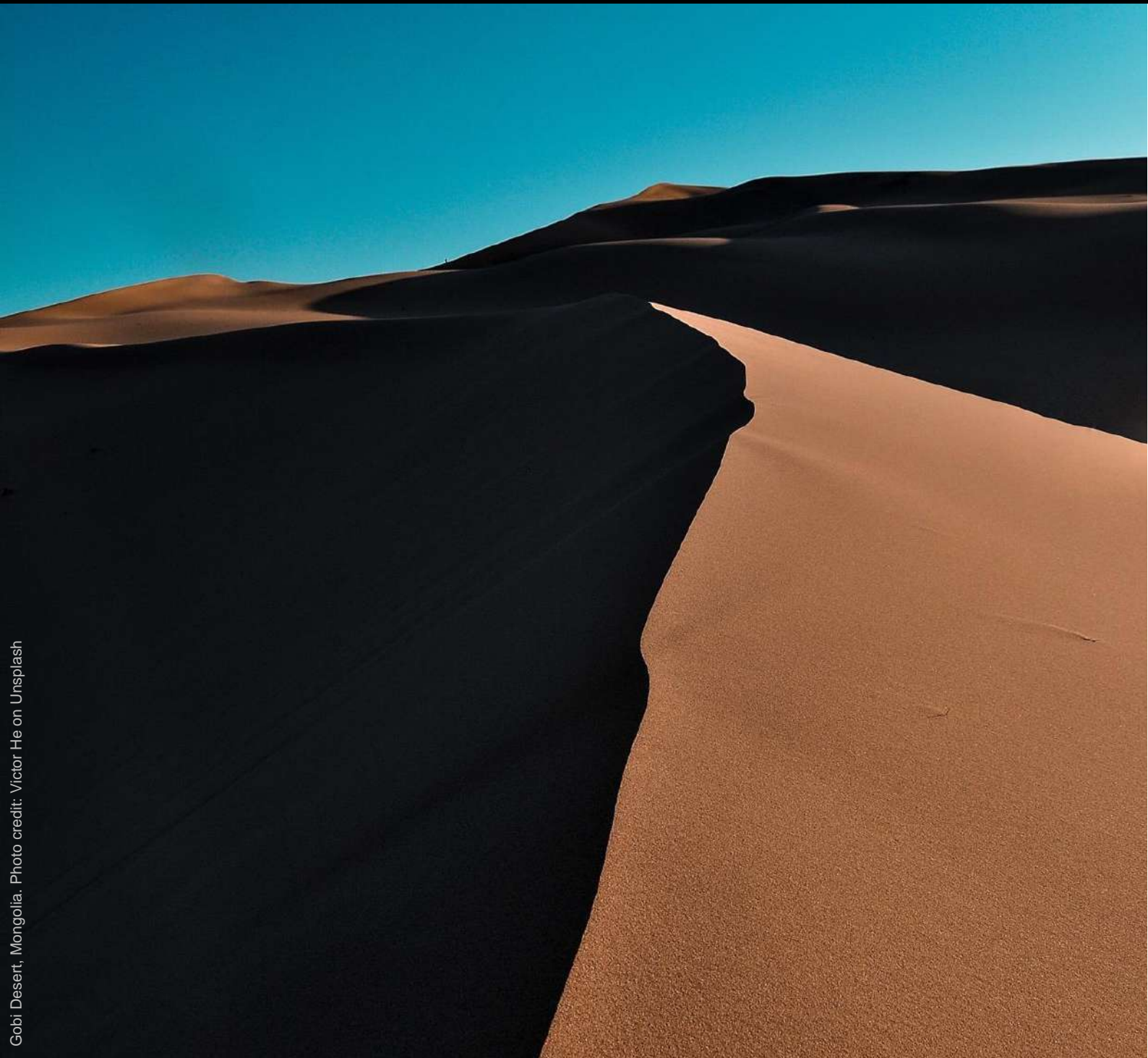
### Potential solutions and ideas suggested by the respondents:

- The CBD term "OECMs" may be difficult to translate in non-English speaking countries; therefore, it could be worth having a term that can be translated more easily in other countries to improve more nations' understanding of what this term means. IUCN WCPA has a Task Force that has been working on developing a lexicon of terms for area-based conservation, and providing a more intuitive version of the term "OECMs" is one of the issues being addressed.
- Provide incentives such as Biodiversity or Nature Credit Schemes to create a financial flow for nature conservation efforts and visualise how much businesses support conservation.
- Consider piloting a project to help government organisations in improving legislations and designation of OECMs.
- Identify the ecological, hydrological, economical and other benefits and values of OECMs.
- Provide incentives, recognition, and encouragement for private sectors and State governments to register OECMs.
- Involve the agriculture and fisheries sector and provide OECMs as part of best management practices for agriculture with a certification for high conservation value.
- Better capacity building on OECMs (identification, enabling environment, monitoring) at a national level with effective integration at sub-national levels.
- Develop a legally-binding agreement of OECMs at the international and/or regional levels, and then develop a global template for countries to develop and implement OECMs with

detailed instructions, not just narratives, and make it flexible enough for the template to be adapted and adopted for a lowest possible administrative unit.

- For SE Asia, work closely with the ASEAN secretariat and improve the roles and functions of the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity in terms of OECMs.

# Conclusions and recommendations



Gobi Desert, Mongolia. Photo credit: Victor He on Unsplash

## Overview

This report aimed to elucidate the status of OECMs across countries in the APAP and other countries Asia with a focus on strategies, legislation, and challenges related to OECMs. The questionnaire revealed that over two-thirds of the surveyed countries do not have existing strategies for OECMs in place, but out of these countries, the vast majority have plans for the future. The study also revealed that one country has existing legislation for OECMs and many other countries stated that they have plans to develop legislation for OECMs in the future.

The main challenges with developing strategies or legislation for OECMs were noted to be “Lack of political will to develop these”, “Lack of knowledge on how to develop these for OECMs”, “Lack of understanding on the importance/relevance of OECMs”, and “Lack of financial resources”. Some potential solutions to these challenges, more generally, include increasing knowledge exchanges between countries on developing and recognising OECMs, enhancing training and capacity building with existing and additional resources, and increasing overall budgets for protected areas while diverting additional resources toward OECMs. By implementing these solutions, it may be possible to overcome these challenges and increase political support for the recognition of OECMs, though this may still not be possible in areas with more difficult political situations. It is also worth noting that rather than just a lack of political will, it could also be a lack of some form of integrated planning mechanism to facilitate work on OECMs amongst different groups of people and the ability to share resources for this, since OECMs are a multi-sectoral matter. One solution to this is by forming collaborative management partnerships, which will be elaborated on later in this section.

The following subsections will address how three specific challenges can be overcome in more detail—“Lack of understanding on the importance/relevance of OECMs”, “Lack of knowledge on how to develop these for OECMs”, and “Lack of financial resources”—and provide guidance on creating, monitoring, and evaluating OECMs, all of which, taken together, could address the remaining challenge and increase political will.

### “Lack of understanding on the importance/relevance of OECMs”

OECMs are highly important for achieving Target 3, which would contribute greatly to achieving long-term biodiversity conservation outcomes in a more effective and equitable way (Gurney et al., 2021; Claudet et al., 2022). In addition, OECMs and PAs can contribute to eleven out of seventeen of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aside from more recognisable ones (SDG 14 (life below water) and 15 (life on land), and SDG 13 (climate action)), such as SDG 3 (good health and well-being), by acting as a source of natural medicines and raw materials for pharmaceuticals, and SDGs 10 and 5, (reducing inequality, including gender inequality) by encouraging more inclusive staff selection and changing attitudes in management (Dudley et al., 2022). PAs have become more difficult to establish, and OECMs offer a complementary approach to area-based conservation. Many more areas, such as certain ICCAs, can be designated as OECMs as conservation does not need to be the primary objective in the site, as long as it is an outcome. Having local values aligned with conservation goals would likely lead to better conservation outcomes and increased compliance with regulations (Gurney et al., 2021), as it would benefit all parties. Having a greater diversity in approach may provide a more stable framework for conservation as it would reduce an overreliance on governments governing and managing PAs and OECMs, which could change with new national priorities (Gurney et al., 2021). Changes in priorities could, for instance, lead to protected area (and OECM) downgrading, downsizing, and degazettement (PADDD); from 1892 to 2018, over 3,700 PADDD events have been documented in 73 countries, which has affected around 2 million km<sup>2</sup> (Golden Kroner et al., 2019). It is important to communicate these messages clearly to relevant stakeholders in an engaging manner to ensure that

the importance and relevance of OECMs is understood; some methods include webinars, workshops, short briefings, multimedia information products, and training courses.

The IUCN WCPA OECM Specialist Group works on issues related to these by devising technical guidance and supporting capacity building events. Following the Specialist Group's guidance is important to ensure that the identified OECMs in each country meet international standards and will be reported in the UNEP-WCMC World Database on OECMs. There were some countries from the survey who stated that they were not familiar with WCPA's guidance on OECMs, including the [technical report](#) and [site-assessment tool](#), and the vast majority who said they were familiar with it said they have not tested the tool. It is highly recommended that countries thoroughly familiarise themselves with this guidance if they have not done so already, which has been explained in the Introduction's Technical Guidance section as well. There are also more introductory resources on the OECM Specialist Group's [website](#), including a [training course](#) and short videos. The Specialist Group will be releasing a new version of the technical report and tool this year, and all countries should read the latest ones as well to ensure their knowledge on this topic is relevant. However, the survey results also revealed that countries who stated that they were familiar with the WCPA guidelines still chose the two aforementioned challenges related to a lack of knowledge and understanding in the questionnaire. Future versions of these knowledge products will aim to address those two challenges more clearly to ensure that countries are able to understand the legislative aspects more clearly, as well as the importance and relevance of OECMs.

Aside from knowledge products specifically on OECMs, it is necessary to clearly understand Target 3, as that is one of the main reasons why OECMs have become increasingly important. A key resource for this, which was made in collaboration with IUCN WCPA, The Nature Conservancy, and Equilibrium Research, is "[Best Practice in Delivering the 30x30 Target](#)" (Dudley and Stolton, 2022), which has a section on OECMs. Additionally, a new guide on Target 3 will be released later in 2023.

## "Lack of knowledge on how to develop these for OECMs"

Strategies and legislation for OECMs will vary by country; therefore, there is no one "correct" way to develop these, as long as they are based on the key elements of the IUCN WCPA criteria and guidance for OECMs described in the Introduction. It is worth mentioning that, especially for countries that are new to the concept of OECMs, rather than becoming excessively preoccupied with the legality and designated agency responsible for OECMs in each country, the initial emphasis should be on engaging in discussions with all pertinent stakeholders (both governmental and non-governmental) to explore potential options and opportunities in an open and non-committal manner. This approach allows for a comprehensive assessment of the situation and enables progress to be made, while prioritising easily attainable conservation sites that present minimal controversy and have unambiguous legal and ownership arrangements. Nonetheless, there are some key pointers mentioned below that could ensure that the strategies or any legislation include important aspects.

### **Developing a strategy for OECMs:**

A good strategy for OECMs could include the following: (a) a nationally-relevant set of criteria to identify OECMs based on the IUCN WCPA criteria and guidance that encompasses all key aspects such as "important" biodiversity values and obtaining FPIC, (b) a mechanism to formally recognise the OECMs nationally, such as in a national database, with legal or other effective measures in place to support the site, (c) a method to report the sites to the WD-OECM that includes supporting landowners with the technical aspects, particularly for IPLCs, (d) a method to monitor and evaluate the sites, which could involve using existing frameworks, and (e) a funding plan. The relevant parties in charge (e.g., the owner of the site or specific government department, etc.) of each aspect should also be highlighted for

clarity. Developing nationally-relevant criteria is not necessary, but it could help countries adopt the criteria more easily if they are more relevant to certain area types found in the country. It is important to ensure that nationally-relevant criteria *fully* encompass the IUCN WCPA criteria as there are instances where this has been an issue, particularly for the “important biodiversity values” criterion, as the word “important”, or synonyms, have been left out, and this entirely affects whether the site can be considered an OECM. The goals from these plans, if any, such as a percentage target and other qualitative targets, could then be highlighted in the next NBSAP or national report submitted to the CBD to track progress for Target 3.

The process for developing a strategy could begin with national consultations that involve stakeholders from the government, relevant NGOs, IPLC representatives, and even the private sector, for example, as OECMs can be under various governance and management types and it could be valuable to gain insights on how they would work for each group. This is particularly important for IPLCs, who have historically not had their rights and views respected in such matters and may be apprehensive towards OECMs; to quote the 2022 briefing from The ICCA Consortium and Forest Peoples Programme: “some Indigenous Peoples and local communities are concerned that government agencies and other actors may not uphold the standards referred to in the Annexes to Decision 14/8 when interpreting OECM guidance in their own jurisdictions and/or will not properly engage and consult with Indigenous Peoples or with communities, particularly in countries where existing recognition of the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities to their lands, waters, territories, and resources is weak or non-existent.” (p. 7).

Governments that need technical support for creating a strategy could form “collaborative management partnerships” (CMPs), which refer to partnerships between a protected area (or in this case, OECM) authority (private, government, or community) and a partner (private or NGO) to manage the area (Baghai, 2018). This would improve management and decision-making, increase knowledge-sharing across organisation types, and even increase funding for protected and conserved areas, which will be elaborated on in the “Lack of financial resources” section, amongst other benefits. This could be done by working closely with relevant local NGOs that are familiar with OECMs, such as in the case of Malaysia and SEARRP, and Bangladesh and Arannayk Foundation.

Other supplementary ways to receive technical support is to participate in capacity building workshops on OECMs, and/or contact IUCN WCPA for specific queries if the answer is not available in the latest technical report or site-assessment tool. A working group for OECMs in Asia led by the IUCN WCPA OECMs Specialist Group will be established in the future and this would be a good point of contact going forward. Understanding examples of how other countries have created strategies is also valuable, and a good example from Asia is Maldives’ [strategy](#), which includes nearly all of the aspects of a good strategy described above. Other existing strategies from Asia that are published and publicly available include India’s [guidelines](#), and these encompass most of the aspects described above, apart from some such as specifying “important” (or a synonym) for biodiversity values in the criteria.

### **Developing legislation for OECMs:**

Developing legislation for OECMs is not currently common practice, nor is it necessary if there are other effective measures in place, as described in the Introduction, and there is limited guidance for it. Having laws or at least similar effective measures would enable OECMs to be managed better over the long-term, and is a requirement in the site-assessment tool (IUCN WCPA, 2022). Other effective measures could include binding agreements with landowners that are fixed for a certain number of years (see the case study on South Africa in the Introduction—Box 2, which includes different agreement types), customary laws, and other types of privately established policies.

Only one of the surveyed countries, Maldives, has legal regulations for OECMs; this section will use their legislation development as a short case study, as well as other ways that legislation can be



developed. Maldives created a national [guidelines for OECMs](#) which included a framework that was based on elements of the OECM definition and related it to existing laws. Maldives has a particularly unique approach as they are currently only considering resort islands as potential OECMs; they are including the area submitted under the legal boundary of the resort under their existing legal regulation for this (Regulation no: 2012/R-7 (Regulation on Determining Boundaries of Leased Islands for Tourism Development), rather than a boundary for a protected area. The proposed area still needs to be at least 100 m away from the resort's existing infrastructure. This means that the site would not be considered as part of a protected area and, therefore, can meet the first criteria for OECMs. They are still reported separately as OECMs in Maldives' Government Gazette and database with all the management requirements of IUCN WCPA and more locally relevant ones. The owner of the resort also needs to submit a management plan to the Ministry for the OECM, which includes aspects such as details on enforcement and compliance with the OECM regulations, and failure to do so can lead to the site being delisted. As Maldives has over a hundred resorts, most of which are on individual islands, it is interesting to see how a unique approach has been taken in this country.

Other countries could also aim to modify existing laws where possible and apply them to OECMs, and consider the unique geographical features of the country to see how OECMs can fit in. One of the first things to consider for this is if there are areas being conserved in the country under a different name, such as "conservation areas", that are recognised separately from protected areas. In the survey, 12/17 countries answered "Yes" to a question about this. If these areas can become assessed using the IUCN WCPA criteria and designated as OECMs, it would make the process of establishing OECMs significantly easier for nations if there is an existing legal framework or regulations for those areas. ICCAs could also fall under this category, as the Philippines has established many ICCAs as OECMs, which have been accepted in the OECMs database.

Aside from amending existing laws, countries could also develop new laws or regulations specifically for OECMs by taking elements of the definition of OECMs and creating regulations for each aspect (Paterson, 2023). For reference, the definition for an OECM is "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" (p. 1, [CBD Decision 14/8](#)). The key terms of importance to establish an OECM are "geographically defined area", "other than a Protected Area", "governed", "managed", "long-term", and "conservation of biodiversity". Detailed guidance on creating regulations for these terms can be found in this recent [publication](#) by Paterson (2023). It is also important to look at the site-assessment tool and the specific guidance for each criterion, as it is noted there that biodiversity, for example, is mentioned as "important biodiversity values", and would, therefore, need to be of a certain standard. Lastly, it is crucial for countries to report their nationally established sites to the UNEP-WCMC World Database on OECMs following the data requirements of the platform or they will not count towards Target 3. Therefore, legislation, or other effective means, need to be specific to these.

Regardless of the type of mechanism used, these laws or measures should be equitable, ensure that they uphold social safeguards for IPLCs, and support their rights over their areas.

## "Lack of financial resources"

OECMs will require funding and financial resources to deliver long-term conservation outcomes, and this is a difficult aspect to tackle. Deutz et al. (2020) found that the majority of funds (57%) for nature conservation comes from domestic budgets and tax policies (governmental funds); thus, governments play the largest role in allocating funds effectively. Allocating funds to PCAs is an investment that will

provide significant returns: Waldron et al. (2020) found that there could be avoided-loss values of over USD \$534 billion a year by reaching the 30% target for the ecosystem services provided by PCAs against the damage from climate change; this number was calculated when only accounting for forests and mangroves—the actual value when including other area types would be far higher. Removing environmentally harmful subsidies is one way to recover funds that could then be redirected towards PCAs; a recent report (Koplow and Steenblik, 2022) found that, even based on incomplete estimates, at least USD \$1.8 trillion a year, or around 2% of global GDP, goes towards environmentally harmful subsidies. These include subsidies for fossil fuels (\$640 billion a year), agriculture (\$520 billion a year), forestry (\$155 billion a year), and marine capture fisheries (\$50 billion a year). Thus, this is a vital issue to address and an opportunity to increase significant funding for OECMs. It is acknowledged that this may be a difficult process, and other solutions for financing are provided below that could be used in the meantime.

### **Collaborative management partnerships (CMPs):**

Funding the OECM agenda in any country will require financial and in-kind contributions from multiple partners against a clear plan that outlines and recognises actual costs. One way to integrate these contributions with a clear planning mechanism is through collaborative management partnerships (CMPs). As mentioned in the previous section, CMPs can help increase funding for protected and conserved areas: median funding associated with CMPs is 1.5, 2.6, and 14.6 times greater than baseline state funding for PA management, for the financial and technical support, co-management, and delegated management models, respectively (Lindsey et al., 2021). More details are provided on these partnership models below:

- Financial and technical support can be provided in two main ways: advisory or implementary. In both cases, the state is typically the primary authority responsible for providing this support. When the support is advisory, the state takes the lead role in all aspects of governance and management. In implementary models, non-profit organisations may also be involved in the hiring and firing of some personnel and play a shared role in implementing management decisions.
- Co-management models can be structured in two ways: an integrated approach or a bilateral approach. In the integrated approach, the partners collaborate to create a specialised entity dedicated to the management of the resource or program. In contrast, the bilateral approach involves the government and non-profit organisations working together side by side in their existing organisational forms.
- In delegated management models, which was shown to receive significantly more funding, a special purpose entity is often established to manage and govern a protected area. This governing body typically operates by consensus, with the non-profit partner often nominating a majority of its members. Strategic and oversight decisions are jointly made by the state and non-profit partner. The non-profit partner appoints high-level management staff and assumes full responsibility for management activities on the ground, which helps to ensure accountability for both conservation outcomes and donor funding.

The reason why the delegated management method is the most successful is that it leads to several benefits such as improved governance and strategic oversight, the ability to hire skilled and motivated staff through transparent selection procedures, autonomy outside traditional bureaucratic structures, insulation from political interference and corruption pressures, increased accountability as delegated CMP partners become responsible for the management of a protected area and accountable for its success or failure, and long-term commitments that allow for long-term strategic planning and attract greater private sector and donor investment (Lindsey et al., 2021). These methods could potentially be

applied to OECMs as well, depending on the type of site. More information on CMPs can be found in the [CMP Toolkit](#) (World Bank, 2021).

OECMs provide a good opportunity to engage with the private sector if they are declared as a nature-based solution and tool for biodiversity conservation as corporations could be interested in funding the OECM site in exchange for being affiliated with its protection if it benefits their image. However, it is important that there are stringent management measures in these cases to avoid greenwashing. An example of an OECM that is managed and funded by a company is Aravalli Biodiversity Park in India, which is [managed by Hero MotorCorp Limited](#). Another method is by engaging with philanthropists who wish to use their private land as an OECM—which can only be considered if it supports important biodiversity values. An example of this includes the Jabarkhet Nature Reserve in India, which is owned by an entrepreneur who partnered with a conservationist to manage the site (UNDP and NBA, 2022). These arrangements could also be viewed officially or unofficially as a type of CMP.

### **Taxes and tax incentives:**

Using taxes and levies strategically is another method for sustainable financing (Cabrera et al., 2021): This mechanism involves imposing taxes and levies on certain products, services, or activities associated with environmentally harmful practices, such as those caused by the agriculture, fisheries, forestry, and fossil fuel industries. The generated revenue can then be used to fund conservation efforts in OECMs. Taxes can also be used in a different way by providing tax incentives to taxpayers who own land that could become an OECM. For instance, South Africa offers income tax deductions to taxpayers who make conservation commitments to protect their private land. These deductions allow for the value of the land to be deducted from taxable income, along with conservation-related costs, including anti-poaching, invasive species control, and species monitoring (Stevens and van Wyk, 2020). This tax incentive has various financial advantages, such as enabling landowners to offset their land expenses and management costs, reducing the overall expenses incurred by the government in procuring and maintaining new protected areas, offering an affordable incentive program with minimal transaction costs for the government, and enhancing the economic viability of landowner entities. This measure is expected to contribute over USD \$80 million to South Africa's protected areas network by 2026 (DEA, 2017). More information on this measure can be found in [Section 37D National Report 2015 – 2020](#).

### **Payments for ecosystem services:**

Payments for ecosystem services (PES) involves compensating ES providers for their contributions towards maintaining and enhancing ES, such as carbon sequestration, watershed protection, providing a source of natural medicines, and more; hence, this mechanism provides economic incentives to landowners and encourages conservation practices. Many OECMs would provide valuable ES and, thus, PES can be used to fund these sites. More information on developing PES can be found in [Payments for Ecosystem Services Getting Started: A Primer](#) (Forest Trends, The Katoomba Group, and UNEP, 2008).

Revisiting the previous section that addressed legislation, another way of using existing laws for OECMs, apart from adding them into existing conservation areas or other types of areas, is to see how they can help the site with financing. An excellent example of this in relation to PES was provided in a currently unpublished report on OECMs by Viet Nam in 2022. The report mentioned a potential legal basis for financing OECMs through regulations on payment mechanisms for ecosystem services as outlined in Article 138 of the Law on Environmental Protection in Viet Nam. By applying such payment mechanisms, a sustainable income stream can be generated, which could support wider implementation of OECMs in Viet Nam.

### **Conservation trust funds:**

Conservation trust funds (CTFs) are defined as “...private, legally independent institutions that provide

sustainable financing for biodiversity conservation. The core business of CTFs is to mobilize resources from diverse sources – including international donors, national governments and the private sector – and to direct them, primarily through grants, to a diverse range of environmental programs and projects through non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community based-organizations and governmental agencies (such as national parks agencies)” (Bath et al., 2020). CTFs can support biodiversity initiatives more broadly or they can also be created for specific conservation areas to finance them sustainably. One example of such a CTF is [Mulanje Mountain Conservation Trust](#), which supports the Mount Mulanje Biosphere Reserve in Malawi. Guidance on designing and managing CTFs can be found in the [Practice Standards for Conservation Trust Funds](#) (Bath et al., 2020).

### **Creating a financing plan:**

Having a good financing plan or model that (a) clearly presents and considers available funding sources, such as revenue from current or proposed financing models, (b) identifies financial gaps, and (c) estimates funding targets for in-country and donor funding, is, in and of itself, another way to attract donor funding, particularly from the private financial sector (Cabrera et al. 2021).

Thus, there are several options for financing OECMs and diverse funding sources are recommended to ensure that an issue with one source does not stop funding altogether. The IUCN WCPA Sustainable Finance Specialist Group is also working on a new “Good Practice Guidelines” report for sustainably financing PCAs, which will include OECMs, and this will provide further guidance on this aspect.

## **Creating, monitoring, and evaluating OECMs**

As mentioned in the section above, following the criteria is key to ensuring that the efforts to establish OECMs achieve long-term biodiversity conservation outcomes and count towards Target 3. On the Protected Planet [website](#) (2023), which contains the WD-OECM, it clearly states that “it is essential that OECMs are identified in accordance with [CBD](#) and [IUCN-WCPA guidance](#)”. Although not linked on their website, this should also include the guidance in the [site-assessment tool](#). In addition, they have other guidelines such as providing spatial data and other descriptive information to their email address, as detailed in the Introduction of this report. In general, if the site (1) meets the requirements from the site-assessment tool with appropriate documentation to support it, (2) has available spatial data from Geographic Information Systems (GIS), and (3) has received [Free, Prior and Informed Consent](#) (FPIC) from the governance authority of the site, the site should be able to qualify as an OECM, though assessments will still need to be conducted on a site-by-site basis.

It is necessary to emphasise that although meeting global percentage targets is worthwhile and can motivate policy formation, it is more important to focus on the quality of the areas being conserved to achieve long-term biodiversity conservation outcomes. There are concerns that the area-based target numbers could lead to “blue washing” if organisations only re-define areas as OECMs without delivering biodiversity conservation outcomes (Claudet et al., 2022). Even the OECMs that have already been reported in the Protected Planet database seem to have this issue as most of them do not have supporting documentation or are missing data, which makes it more difficult to assess their conservation value (Claudet et al., 2022). This needs to be addressed in the early stages of OECM development in countries to ensure that the OECMs reported will be more than just an additional percentage value.

### **Ecological value:**

One way to do this is to conserve sites that have the most ecological value, such as those that contain the most biodiversity, which relates to the “support important biodiversity values” criterion. As mentioned in the Introduction, using the criteria for KBAs and EBSAs can help identify sites that meet this requirement. One way to do this more easily is to use the [KBA online database](#) (KBA Global Dataset,

2023). In the APAP regions of Asia, 1836 Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) (1130 in South and Southeast Asia; 706 in East Asia) have reportedly no coverage from PAs or OECMs (KBA Global Dataset, 2023). A study on the prevalence of OECMs in KBAs (Donald et al., 2019) found that out of the 740 KBAs assessed, one or more potential OECMs were found in 566 of them (76.5%), and they were under a wide range of governance and management types. Therefore, there is great potential in these regions to have more valuable OECMs established, if these areas meet the rest of the criteria. Some examples of KBA sites that could be OECMs have already been provided throughout this report. However, it should be noted that the KBA database sometimes erroneously shows PAs in their data as well if countries have multiple designations for PA types, which is why it is still important to check these sites carefully. Aside from KBAs, there are other types of recognised areas that support important biodiversity, such as [EBSAs](#), or ones that have already been locally recognised to contain substantial biodiversity. Sites that are known to provide important ecosystem services, such as significant carbon sequestration, or those that have threatened species and ecosystems according to the [IUCN Red List](#) and [IUCN Red List of Ecosystems](#), or those identified at a national level, would also be valuable to conserve.

### **Cultural, spiritual, socio-economic, and other locally relevant values:**

Many areas with ecological value also overlap with territories owned by IPLCs that have cultural, spiritual, socio-economic, and other locally relevant values, which could also be OECMs. These areas should be conserved with these important values in mind. Other types of culturally-important areas that could be potential OECMs include historic shipwrecks and other heritage sites that may not be inhabited by people, but OECM governance and management measures should still aim to uphold the cultural values of these sites. In these cases, it is essential to recognise and protect the connections between biological and cultural diversity, as well as the governance and management approaches that lead to positive biodiversity outcomes, such as the customary sustainable use of biodiversity. Conversely, any management efforts aimed at cultural, spiritual, socio-economic, or other locally relevant values within an OECM should not have a detrimental impact on the conservation values associated with biodiversity (IUCN WCPA, 2019).

### **Monitoring and evaluation:**

It is also important to ensure that these sites are being monitored well by implementing the following monitoring measures that were in the IUCN WCPA (2019) guidelines: “(i) baseline documentation and ongoing monitoring of the sites’ biodiversity values; (ii) ongoing [community-based monitoring](#), participatory mapping and incorporation of traditional knowledge, where appropriate; (iii) monitoring conservation actions, including those focused on sustaining biodiversity and improving in situ conservation, and (iv) monitoring of governance, stakeholder involvement and management systems that contribute to the biodiversity outcomes”. The new site-assessment tool (2023, in development) also mentions monitoring threats. This is a crucial aspect to consider as designating a site as an OECM, or PA, does not automatically mean that it is completely protected, and measures such as monitoring and evaluation can help assess where the gaps and challenges lie; these would then need to be addressed with other management measures and plans. The monitoring and evaluation plan could vary by country depending on the features of the site and other variables such as human resources and funding, and existing national frameworks could be used for this.

As an example of a monitoring plan for OECMs, Maldives’ [guidelines for OECMs](#) (2022) states that resort owners should submit a monitoring report of their OECM to the Maldives Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, and Technology annually. They provided a report template that includes sections on a summary of the previous ecological and biological condition of the area (based on the ecological survey conducted when the area was designated as an OECM), the current ecological and biological condition, socio-economic aspects on how the area has benefited people, and enforcement and compliance. The monitoring approach Maldives uses for OECMs is in line with the Maldives National Coral Reef Monitoring Framework and other national guidelines, which include details on marine

indicators such as species abundance and the number of IUCN Red List species present. Failure to comply with the monitoring requirements (or other requirements, such as meeting the OECM criteria) within a certain time frame can lead to the site being delisted as an OECM. One aspect that would improve this approach is by adding a section on monitoring threats and details on how the findings will be evaluated.

A recent study (Maini et al., 2023) that interviewed a panel of marine conservation experts about OECMs found that the “experts agreed that multiple actors need to engage in evaluation, highlighting the need for transdisciplinary knowledge co-production to develop evaluation processes and for collaborative approaches to undertaking evaluation”; this could be addressed by including different actors such as the owners, managers, governments, NGOs, and applied academics (these actors were also identified by the experts) to form collaborative partnerships. Monitoring and evaluation are necessary to address the key requirement of OECMs to provide long-term conservation outcomes, and could increase funding and support for OECMs in the future if there are demonstrable impacts from them; hence, they should be a key part of strategies moving forward.

## Key recommendations and looking ahead

OECMs are a new area-based conservation tool and nature-based solution and, as such, there is still progress to be made, both within Asia and globally. Nonetheless, Asia has many plans in place for OECMs in the future as efforts are growing within the region, even if strategies have not been fully developed yet, and there are many potential OECMs within the region that could support important biodiversity values under diverse governance types. By assessing the status of OECMs in Asia and understanding where the challenges lie, the following actions are recommended:

**1.** Capacity needs to be built among policymakers, practitioners, and other stakeholders to achieve a thorough understanding of the requirements of OECMs based on the IUCN WCPA [technical report](#), [site-assessment tool](#), [training materials](#), and UNEP-WCMC reporting requirements. This will help ensure that national or sub-national guidance is aligned and any submitted sites can be reported in the WD-OECM. There are four important considerations to highlight: (i) OECMs need to conserve *important* biodiversity values, such as sites with rare species and ecosystems; (ii) OECMs must have *long term, not temporary*, mechanisms and processes that ensure biodiversity conservation; (iii) areas with sustainable use will not qualify as OECMs if they do not have very light levels of use; (iv) Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) and permission from landowners is necessary to establish OECMs. [Note that updated versions of the report and tool will be launched later in 2023]

**2.** Countries should aim to create a national strategy for OECMs through a consultative process with relevant stakeholders and rightsholders that includes the following: (a) a nationally-relevant set of criteria to identify OECMs based on the IUCN WCPA criteria that encompasses all key aspects such as “important” biodiversity values and obtaining Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), (b) a mechanism to formally recognise the OECMs nationally, such as in a national database, with legal or other effective measures in place to support the site (such as customary laws), (c) a method to report the sites to the WD-OECM that includes supporting landowners with the technical aspects, particularly for IPLCs, (d) a method to monitor and evaluate the sites, which could use existing national frameworks, and (e) a comprehensive financing plan. The national strategy should explicitly recognise rightsholders and stakeholders and how they will be involved, and quantitative and qualitative goals need to be integrated into the revision of NBSAPs. It would also be highly beneficial to form strategic collaborative management partnerships to facilitate this process across different organisation types due to the diverse nature of OECMs.

**3.** Countries should identify the best way to incorporate a legal or other type of mechanism for OECMs based on their own contexts and current laws. One way is to examine their existing laws and regulations and see where OECMs can fit into these, ensuring that these are consistent with existing guidance for OECMs. If there are nationally conserved sites that are recognised separately from PAs, it would be a good approach to redefine those as OECMs if they have existing legal frameworks and meet the OECM criteria. Another way would be to develop entirely new laws and regulations based on the key definitional elements of OECMs to help ensure that the measures for effective OECMs are upheld over time. Other effective measures, such as binding agreements with landowners, would also be acceptable. These laws and measures should be equitable, uphold social safeguards for Indigenous Peoples and local communities, and support their rights over their areas.

**4.** Models for sustainably financing PAs should be applied to OECMs where applicable, such as forming collaborative management partnerships, particularly by using delegated management models. Other opportunities include creating taxes or levies for certain environmentally damaging industries, activities, or products, providing tax incentives, developing payment mechanisms for ecosystem services, and creating conservation trust funds. Financing will depend on the governance and management arrangements of OECMs (e.g., if a site has more extensive management measures in place, then it could have greater costs related to personnel), and not all OECMs will require new financing, especially if they are already governed and managed by entities with sufficient funding. Hence, financing would need to be determined on a case-by-case basis. Potential examples of financing needs are monitoring costs that could involve specialised equipment and paying contractors or staff.

**5.** OECMs provide a great opportunity to increase support for ecologically valuable areas that are unprotected to achieve additional biodiversity outcomes. Countries should aim to establish new OECMs in the most ecologically valuable spots, such as in KBAs and EBSAs (where applicable) that have no coverage by PAs, and in areas that support important biodiversity values such as threatened ecosystems/areas with threatened species, identified either through the [IUCN Red List of Ecosystems](#) or [IUCN Red List of Threatened Species](#), for example, or through other methods and databases established nationally/sub-nationally.

Lastly, a point to note for future work is that there are data gaps for many countries for Target 3 and OECMs, including those in Asia, and although this report fills some of those, there is more progress to be made. If more countries provided information about their status, gaps, opportunities, and priority actions for the quantitative and qualitative elements of Target 3 (such as in a format shown in Appendix B), this could lead to a much greater understanding of nations' progress and which aspects to prioritise to reduce biodiversity loss, both regionally and globally.

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## Appendix A: Questionnaire (Document Version)

### Strategies, Legislation, and Challenges for OECMs in Asia

#### Introduction to this Questionnaire:

This questionnaire is being used for a project supported by the IUCN Asia Regional Office and funded by the Ministry of Environment Republic of Korea (MOEK) to foster progress towards the new targets through the identification, recognition, and reporting of OECMs. It is being led by an external consultant (Mitali Sharma; [mitalisharma.6776@gmail.com](mailto:mitalisharma.6776@gmail.com)/[mitali.consultancy@outlook.com](mailto:mitali.consultancy@outlook.com)) with guidance from the IUCN WCPA OECMs Specialist Group Leads.

The overall project objective is to:

“Further develop an effective system of protected and conserved areas, including OECMs, for the Republic of Korea, report verified ‘effectiveness’ and area contributions to the CBD, and share lessons and approaches with partner countries in Asia”.

There are three components to this project, and Component 3 is related to Asia. The overall objective of this Component is:

“Regional Outreach in Asia on OECMs through the Asia Protected Areas Partnership (APAP)”, which is what this questionnaire is focussed on. We have also decided to ask other regional experts in Asia aside from APAP focal points for their inputs to further our understanding of OECMs in Asia.

The answers from this questionnaire will be used to develop a report on the status of OECMs in APAP countries and Asia. Participating in this questionnaire means that you consent to having your answers used in this report.

Therefore, we are seeking your participation to learn more about your country’s progress or challenges with OECMs. If you work across multiple countries, please answer this questionnaire for the country in Asia you know most about regarding OECMs.

We would be grateful to have your responses **by January 6, 2023**, based on the timeline for this project.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

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### Part 1: Contact Information

Please note that we will not share your name or email in the report, but your country information will be included. If you would prefer for us to not mention the name of your organisation in our report, please just answer the type of organisation it is.

**Question 1:** Country name:

**Question 2:** Affiliation/organisation name and organisation type (e.g. NGO):

**Question 3:** Name of respondent:

**Question 4:** Email of respondent:

## Part 2: Strategies and Plans for OECMs

**Question 5:** Does your country have a national or sub-national (e.g. NGO or state-led) process to formally identify and recognise OECMs (i.e. such as how Protected Areas are typically formally recognised and accounted for)?

(Please select your response with the highlighter tool or by bolding it)

Yes

No

Please answer the next four questions (Questions 6–9) if you answered “Yes” to Question 1.

If you answered “No” to “Question 1”, please skip ahead to Question 10.

**Question 6:** If so, when was this process formally established and approximately how long did it take to establish it?

**Question 7:** What is the process or method your country uses to formally to identify and recognise OECMs?

**Question 8:** Who leads this process (e.g. national or sub-national organisation, which department(s)) and who else is involved with it?

**Question 9:** What criteria does your country use? Please share any relevant documents to Mitali Sharma (Consultant) at [mitalisharma.6776@gmail.com](mailto:mitalisharma.6776@gmail.com) (cc: [mitali.consultancy@outlook.com](mailto:mitali.consultancy@outlook.com)) and mention the question number and your information from Part 1.

**Question 10:** Does your country have any existing national or sub-national strategies or plans to formally identify and recognise more OECMs that have already been implemented?

Yes

No

**Question 11:** If not, does your country have any existing national or sub-national strategies or plans to formally identify and recognise more OECMs in the future?

Yes

No

**Question 12:** If there are existing or future plans, please describe them (indicate whether they are existing or for the future, and whether they were devised at a national or sub-national level).

## Part 3: Potential and Established OECMs

**Question 13:** Is your country familiar with the IUCN World Commission on Protected Area Guidelines for OECMs, including the [technical report](#) and [site-assessment tool \(version 2.0\)](#)?

Yes

No

**Question 14:** If so, has your country tested the site-assessment tool (version 2.0) for OECMs (either potential or established)?

Yes

No

**Question 15:** Has your country established any OECMs in the [UNEP-WCMC Protected Planet World Database on OECMs \(WDOECM\)](#)?

Yes

No

**Question 16:** Has your country identified any *potential* OECMs (that are currently not in the UNEP-WCMC Protected Planet OECM database) within your country, that fit the IUCN WCPA criteria (i.e. you would be able to provide information on whether it is a 1. geographically defined space, 2. confirm that it is not recognised as a protected area, 3. that it is governed and managed, 4. it has substantial biodiversity value, and 5. will be a long-term measure).

Yes

No

**Question 17:** If so, please describe these potential OECMs. Please include the names and locations, land/sea use type (such as production forest or fishing refuge), and who governs them (e.g. Indigenous peoples or community/private/government/shared) and if there are any plans to submit them to the UNEP-WCMC Protected Planet OECM database. Please share any relevant documents to Mitali Sharma (Consultant) at [mitalisharma.6776@gmail.com](mailto:mitalisharma.6776@gmail.com) (cc: [mitali.consultancy@outlook.com](mailto:mitali.consultancy@outlook.com)) and mention the question number and your information from Part 1.

**Question 18:** If your country has identified OECMs or potential OECMs, does your country have a national or sub-national database for OECMs specifically to record and/or track this information?

Yes

No

**Question 19:** Does your country have any areas that could be considered as OECMs but are currently called by a different name (e.g. “conservation areas”) and are separately recognised from protected areas?

Yes

No

**Question 20:** If so, please describe them, where that information is stored, and if there are any plans to redefine them to be OECMs using modified criteria.

## Part 4: Legislation for OECMs

**Question 21:** Does your country have any existing legislation and regulatory frameworks for OECMs?

Yes

No

**Question 22:** If not, does your country have any planned legislation and regulatory frameworks for OECMs (including consultation processes with stakeholders)?

Yes

No

**Question 23:** If there are existing or planned legislation/regulatory frameworks for OECMs, please describe them (indicate whether they are existing or planned). Please share any relevant documents to Mitali Sharma (Consultant) at [mitalisharma.6776@gmail.com](mailto:mitalisharma.6776@gmail.com) (cc: [mitali.consultancy@outlook.com](mailto:mitali.consultancy@outlook.com)) and mention the question number and your information from Part 1.

**Question 24:** If not, please indicate describe how your country currently recognises OECMs, such as using other types of agreements or databases.

## Part 5: Challenges

**Question 25:** If your country does not have any plans or legislation for OECMs, please identify the main challenges or difficulties your country is facing to develop these (can select more than one).

- Lack of political will to develop these
- Lack of financial resources
- Lack of human resources
- Lack of understanding on the importance/relevance of OECMs
- Lack of knowledge on how to develop these for OECMs
- Other (please provide more information below)

**Question 26:** What do you believe would help your country address these challenges better?

## Part 6: Free Response

**Question 27:** If you have other comments and thoughts related to OECM strategies, legislation, and challenges in your country, including thoughts on a way forward and the future of OECMs in your country, please share them below. These do not need to be specific to national-level strategies or government work only:

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Thank you very much for participating in this questionnaire. We greatly appreciate your support.

If you have any questions, please contact Mitali Sharma (Consultant) at [mitalisharma.6776@gmail.com](mailto:mitalisharma.6776@gmail.com) (cc: [mitali.consultancy@outlook.com](mailto:mitali.consultancy@outlook.com)).



## Appendix B: Status, gaps, and opportunities table

Per country:

Elements of T3	Status	Gaps	Opportunities	Priority Actions
Quantitative elements: terrestrial, marine, coastal  PA  OECM				
Areas important for biodiversity				
Areas important for ecosystem services				
Ecological representativeness				
Connectivity and corridors				
Management effectiveness				
Equitable governance of systems of PCAs				
IPLC, territories and rights				
Integration into wider land and seascapes				