

Potential of OECMs in Achieving India's Commitments towards CBD Target 3

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Abstract

Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs) have been acknowledged globally as key strategy for area-based biodiversity conservation. Eight years of deliberation within the Convention on Biological Diversity resulted in an agreed definition and criteria. Countries across the globe are working to realize the achievement of “30 by 30” set by the Target 3 of the Convention of Biological Diversity and OECMs are seen as a key opportunity for success. India, as a signatory of CBD, has been working on OECMs since the 2018 CBD decision. The vast forest resource of India, covers a range of geographical zones from alpine meadows (Himalayas) to tropical rain forests (Western Ghats) to tropical arid forest (Thar Desert). However, there are still areas outside the legally defined forest and protected zones which have potential to be OECMs. The inclusion of such areas along with the extant forest cover can aid in achieving the target 3. There are still some uncertain areas for India, notably the supporting legal framework and the site-level management. This study examines the present state of India's effort to identify potential OECMs, including a detailed understanding of the legislative protection provided by India to support OECMs.

Keywords

Biodiversity Conservation, Convention on Biological Diversity, Global Biodiversity Framework, Governance, OECM

1. Global Pursuit of OECMS

Area-based biodiversity conservation is a global pursuit, through the creation and management of Protected Areas (PAs) and OECMs. As per the CBD, a PA can be defined as, *a geographical space, recognized, dedicated, and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature*

with associated ecosystem services and cultural values. (CBD Decision 14/8).

IUCN's World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) has developed six Protected Area Management Categories that categorize protected areas [1] according to their management objectives, recognized by various national governments and the United Nations. While all protected areas have the same definition and goal of nature conservation, the categories provide international standards for categorizing protected areas according to different management approaches. Protected areas provide the foundation of national biodiversity conservation strategies and delivery of Target 11 [2] [3]. It is important to appropriately recognize and report such conservation areas in meaningful categories as PAs or other effective area-based conservation measures (OECM). Outside the recognized protected area networks, biodiversity can also be effectively conserved in sacred groves, areas for drinking water, or even military areas. These areas are all potential examples of "Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures" (OECMs). In OECMs, biodiversity conservation is achieved regardless of the site's objectives, in contrast to protected areas which are dedicated to the conservation of nature as the primary objective [4].

The concept of OECMs was formally introduced in 2010 under the Convention on Biological Diversity [5] as part of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, specifically Target 11, which called for the conservation of at least 17% of terrestrial and inland water areas and 10% of coastal and marine areas by 2020. In the 2022 Global Biodiversity Framework, which supersedes the Aichi Targets, in Target-3, it is agreed that: "*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*".

The CBD defines an OECM (Other effective area-based conservation measures) 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" [5]. OECMs are therefore areas that are not designated as protected areas but still contribute significantly to in-situ biodiversity conservation. These areas achieve conservation outcomes through various means, including traditional land-use practices, community management, and private conservation efforts.

OECMs can include a diversity of conservation approaches, with a wide range

of areas such as sacred groves, community forests, private reserves, and even areas managed for non-conservation purposes where biodiversity is maintained as a by-product of management. OECMs can fill the gaps left by protected areas, particularly in landscapes where formal protection is not feasible. They provide a flexible and inclusive approach to conservation that can engage a broader set of stakeholders, including Indigenous peoples, local communities, private landowners, and the corporate sector. They are seen as important tools for achieving these ambitious conservation targets of 30 by 30. Together, the protected and non-protected areas create an integrally connected conservation landscape, thus contributing to achieving the goal of conserving 30% of the planet by 2030.

In India, there is ambiguity in categorizing both PAs and OECM. In this paper, an effort has been made to clarify the status of PAs as per the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, which states that areas protected under various legislation and other non-protected areas may be identified as potential OECMs.

2. Conservation Scenario in India

India accords legality for protected areas via the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, whereby PAs are systematically designated four legal types *viz.* National Parks (NP), Wildlife Sanctuaries (WLS), Conservation Reserves (CR) and Community Reserves (CmR). As of February 2025 [6], a total of 1134 PAs occupies 5.69% of India's total geographic area, including 106 NPs, 574 WLSs, 145 CRs, and 309 CmRs. Other than these four types of PAs in the country, there are other areas protected under various legislations and are managed under different regimes; such as Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBBAs), Community Conservation Areas (CCAs), Sacred Groves, Biosphere Reserves, Wetlands, Biodiversity Heritage Sites, Elephant Corridors, etc. Such areas fall also contribute effectively to the *in-situ* conservation of biodiversity and complement contiguity to protected areas in delivering conservation outcomes. They play an important role in improving the suitability of the landscape matrix, improving connectivity, and providing secure refuges to species beyond PAs.

These combined efforts align with global targets, such as the “30 by 30” initiative. However, there is ongoing debate about the social implications of these targets, particularly concerning the rights of Indigenous peoples and local communities. Ensuring that OECMs are effective and equitable requires careful governance and monitoring to avoid negative impacts like land dispossession.

In India, there is a need to clarify the status of some areas to allow for proper recognition, management, and reporting.

Type 1: India has reported four types (NP/WLS/Cons. Res/Com. Res) to WDPA as a Protected Area. As per Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 [7], Amendment Act 2002, a “Protected Area” is defined in Section 2(24A) as a National Park, Sanctuary, Conservation Reserve, or Community Reserve notified under sections 18, 35, 36A, and 36C of the Act.

1) National Parks (reported as a Protected Area as per IUCN category II “Na-

tional Park”): An area, whether within a sanctuary or not, is, because of its ecological, faunal, floral, geomorphological, or zoological association or importance, constituted to protect, propagate, or developing wildlife therein or its environment, it may, by notification, declare such area as a National Park.

2) Wildlife Sanctuary (reported as a Protected Area as per IUCN category IV “Habitat/Species Management Area”): Any area comprised within any reserve forest or any part of the territorial waters, that is considered by the Central/State Government to be of adequate ecological, faunal, geomorphological, natural, or zoological significance to protect, propagate or developing wildlife or its environment, declared as a sanctuary.

3) Conservation Reserve (roughly corresponds to IUCN “Category V Protected Landscape/Seascape”): The State Government may, after having consultations with the local communities, declare any area owned by the Government, particularly the areas adjacent to National Parks and sanctuaries and those areas which link one protected area with another, as a conservation reserve for protecting landscapes, seascapes, flora and fauna and their habitat: Provided that where the conservation reserve includes any land owned by the Central Government, its prior concurrence shall be obtained before making such declaration.

4) Community Reserve (roughly corresponds to IUCN “Category VI of Protected Area with some sustainable use of natural resources”): The State Government may, where the community or an individual has volunteered to conserve wildlife and its habitat, declare any private or community land not comprised within a National Park, sanctuary or a conservation reserve, as a community reserve, for protecting fauna, flora, and traditional or cultural conservation values and practices.

Type 2: The term “Forest Area” (or recorded forest area) generally refers to all the geographic areas recorded as forests in government records, comprising Reserved Forests (RF) and Protected Forests (PF), which have been constituted under the provisions of the Indian Forest Act, 1927 [8]. India has not reported these areas as PAs to WDPA.

1) Reserved Forest: The forest declared to be reserved by the State Government under section 20 of the Indian Forest Act, 1927 (16 of 1927); having a full degree of protection. In Reserved Forests, all activities are prohibited unless permitted.

2) Protected Forest: It is an area or mass of land, that is not a reserved forest, and over which the Government has property rights, declared to be so by a State Government under the provisions of section 29 of the Indian Forest Act, 1927. Protected forests of India are natural areas where the habitat and resident wild species have a certain degree of protection. These forests are managed by the government, and the local people are allowed to collect fuelwood/timber and graze their cattle without causing serious damage to the forests.

3) Village Forest/Van Panchayat/Community Conservation Areas (CCAs): Under Section 28 of the Indian Forest Act 1927, the Government may assign to any village community the rights over land that may be a part of a reserved forest for

the use of the community. Usually, forested community lands are constituted into Village Grazing Reserves (VGR). Parcels of land so notified are marked on the settlement revenue maps of the villages.

Type 3: Areas protected under other legislatures and reported as PAs to WDPA.

1) Natural World Heritage Sites (WHS) (India has reported this as PAs to WDPA under IUCN Category II): These are declared under the World Heritage Convention. All NWHS are already protected as National Parks and completely owned by the Government.

2) Ramsar Sites (Areas under Govt. ownership reported as PAs (NP/WLS) IUCN category II/IV): Declared under the Ramsar Convention, on which India is a signatory. The Ramsar Sites are mostly wetland sanctuaries already been protected under the Wildlife (Protection), Act, of 1972. Some Ramsar Sites have areas other than PAs; the ownership is with communities or the government.

3) Wetlands (Areas under Govt. ownership reported as PAs (NP/WLS) IUCN category II/IV): India has a large network of wetlands protected under Wetland (Conservation & Management) Rules, 2017. Some wetlands are also protected under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, of 1972. The areas of wetlands include PAs/RFs/community lands.

4) Tiger Reserves (the NP and WLS are reported as PAs to WDPA under IUCN category II/IV): Government owned and notified under Project Tiger and Wildlife (Protection), Act, 1972, and some areas under Indian Forest Act, 1927. Tiger Reserves are comprised of National Parks, Wildlife Sanctuaries, and Reserve/Protected Forest Areas.

5) Elephant Reserves (areas of WLS are reported as PAs to WDPA under IUCN category IV): Government These are partially Government and partially community-owned, but legally notified under Project Elephant, Wildlife (Protection), Act, 1972, and some areas under Indian Forest Act, 1927. Elephant Reserves are comprised of Wildlife Sanctuaries and Reserve/Protected Forest Areas.

Type 4: Areas protected under other legislatures but not reported as PAs to WDPA.

1) Eco-Sensitive Zones (SEZs) and Eco-Sensitive Areas (ESAs): These are notified under the Indian Environment Protection Act, of 1986. Most ESZ areas are under Government management as RFs/PFs but some areas are under community/private ownership like revenue villages. ESZs are essentially declared around National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries, whereas ESAs are declared in large landscapes.

2) Biodiversity Heritage Sites (BHS): Community, Co-managed/Joint management and legally notified under the Indian Biological Diversity Act, 2002.

Type 5: Areas not protected under any legislature and not reported as PAs to WDPA.

1) Grasslands: In India, grasslands cover multiple geographical area and possess various ecological characteristics. Starting from Alpine meadows to wet-alluvial or Terai grasslands of Himalayan foothills to Shola grasslands of Western Ghats.

Generally, grasslands are private, community, or government-owned.

2) Sacred Groves: Sacred groves of India are forest fragments of varying sizes, which are communally protected, and which usually have a significant religious connotation for the protecting community. Hunting and logging are usually strictly prohibited within these patches.

3) Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs): KBAs are an umbrella term commonly used to include areas that contribute to the global persistence of biodiversity, including vital habitats for threatened plant and animal species in terrestrial, freshwater, and marine ecosystems. Globally KBAs are a scientific designation under the IUCN KBA Standard and 531 KBAs are identified in India. Being designated as a KBA does not mean the area is protected. There have been 531 KBAs identified in India. Because KBAs have no legal notification, they are conserved through PAs, RFs, non-PAs, and community lands.

4) Biosphere Reserves: Biosphere reserves are sites established by countries and recognized under UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme to promote sustainable development based on local community efforts and sound science. Being designated as a Biosphere Reserve does not mean the area is protected. Some legal governance mechanism is required beyond the designation.

5) Tiger/Elephant corridors: These are not legally defined areas and are generally considered as habitat linkage between two consecutive PAs through private, community-owned, and not protected.

3. The Potential of OECMs

Many of the conservation sites in India have overlapping designations, causing ambiguity in reporting status. There are a large number of conservation areas (maybe around 20% of the geographical area of the country) falling outside formally designated protected areas in India (around 5% of the geographical area of the country). There is a great opportunity to declare suitable non-protected areas as OECMs. OECMs offer a significant opportunity to recognize *de facto* conservation that is taking place outside currently designated protected areas and being implemented by a diverse set of people, including private actors, Indigenous peoples, and local communities as well as government agencies [9].

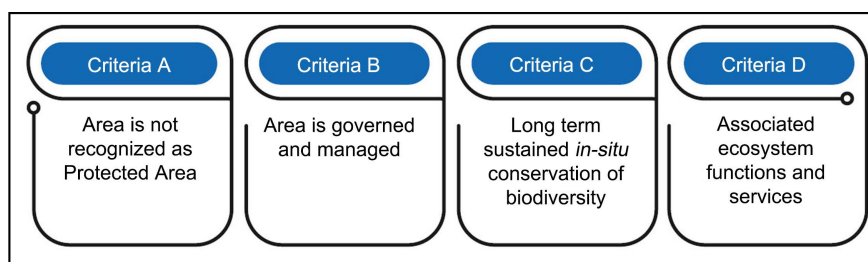
Recent research and efforts in India surrounding Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs) have focused on identifying and documenting diverse areas that contribute to biodiversity conservation outside of traditional protected areas. OECMs are recognized as a complementary approach to conserving biodiversity, where conservation outcomes are achieved as a byproduct of other primary land or water use objectives.

In 2020, the Government of India created a national-level committee that developed Criteria and Guidelines for identifying OECMs based on 12 categories of potential OECMs, including sacred groves [10]. Subsequently, a committee headed by the National Biodiversity Authority of India identified OECMs on the ground and prepared guidelines for their reporting. A final compendium on

OECMs in India identified 14 OECMs as individual sites and documented their conservation practices [11].

Therefore, it is important to study on each of 14 identified OECM and evaluate on case-by-case against globally agreed criteria, including their biodiversity values. We need to push forward the agenda of conservation through proper identification, notification, and recognition of conservation sites in India. Enabling policies backed by good governance and adequate funding support are essentially needed for the effective management of conservation sites in India to meet the conservation goals of the country.

Four General Criteria were developed based on IUCN guidelines (IUCN-WCPA Task Force on OECMs, 2019), which were applied to the identification of potential OECM categories in India.



The types can be briefly summarized below.

Private Forest: As per the Indian Supreme Court landmark judgment Dec 1996, Private forests are also governed as per India Indian Forest Conservation Act 1980 and shall be managed as per the working plan approved by the Government of India. The purpose of Private Forest is not biodiversity conservation, but the resulting outcome may allow them to be considered an OECM.

Community Conserved Areas (CCAs) Or Indigenous Community Conserved Areas (ICCAs): There is no legal mechanism to recognize CCAs in India. However, this was stressed by the CBD in the 7th COP under the Programme of Work on Protected Areas (PoWPA) in 2004 and IUCN's Fifth World Parks Congress (WPC) in Durban in 2003. ICCAs are "natural or modified ecosystems containing significant biodiversity values, ecological services, and cultural values, voluntarily conserved by indigenous, mobile and local communities, through customary laws and other effective means" (IUCN 2008). Since, no legal backing in CCAs, biodiversity conservation is secondary, this may be considered a potential OECM. Without a legal backing, community owned management practices are prevalent in CCAs.

Sacred groves: Sacred groves of India are forest fragments of varying sizes, which are communally protected, and which usually have a significant religious connotation for the protecting community. Hunting and logging are usually strictly prohibited within these patches, but the areas may have no formal legal framework, biodiversity conservation is secondary, this may be considered a potential OECM.

Eco-Sensitive Zones (ESZs) and Eco-Sensitive Areas (ESAs): ESZ areas falling

outside RFs/PFs and having no control by government might be considered as potential OECM. Such areas are governed by non-forest state regulations and environmental protection act wherein sustained resource utilization is ensured; there is checks on anthropogenic development works and construction works as well. Additionally, ecosystem services like groundwater recharges/soil moisture conservation measures caters to the community needs.

Wetlands: MoEFCC has been implementing the National Lake Conservation Plan (NLCP) since 2001 for the conservation and management of polluted and degraded lakes in urban and semi-urban areas. Wetlands have been recognized globally as carbon sinks, consequently being crucial in climate change mitigation actions. Wetlands also serve to provide sustainable livelihoods and ecosystem services to the communities. The wetland areas other than which have been notified as PAs, may thus be considered as potential OECM.

Biosphere Reserves: Since BRs are not legally notified and the buffer areas are not reported to WDPA which may be considered as potential OECM. BRs act to conserve a wide ecological zone consisting of multiple landscapes and provide important connecting corridors between two different geographical areas. BRs conserve a particular biodiversity zone as a whole, without fragmenting it to multiple notified areas and thus proves to be a most important tool in conservation practices. For biosphere reserves to be potential OECMs there must be an accepted management mechanism, such as community management that is shown to result in effective conservation. The mere designation of Biosphere does not make it an OECMs.

Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs): KBAs other than Sanctuaries/RFs, which are not protected may be considered as potential OECMs. KBAs conserves habitats as a whole, for both plant and animal species and encompasses both soil and aquatic ecosystems (fresh and marine). Such zones, when are managed as per local communities using Indigenous Traditional Knowledge (ITKS) could be potential OECMs.

Tiger/Elephant corridors: Since these are not protected through any legislation, but may be considered as potential OECMs if they meet all the criteria. Corridors are not recognized as PA in IUCN definitions, though corridors are of vital importance in the rapidly spreading urbanization and human developmental needs. Corridors contribute to conservation as safe passage for protected animal species and also preserves the habitat. Corridors fundamentally join clusters of forest and PAs spread over a wide geographical zone.

Grasslands: Since these are not protected through any legislation, may be considered as potential OECMs, if they meet all the criteria. Decision will need to be made on a case-by-case basis. In India, grasslands are not categorized under any legal definition and generally is included in wastelands. However, grasslands provide the major fodder source to both wild and domesticated animals. These areas may also serve as soil carbon sink and help in mitigating climate change issues. Communities are mostly involved in the grasslands managements and while preserving the dual purpose of resource and sustainable conservation goals.

4. Turning the Tide from Conversion to Conservation

Recent research on Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs) in India has primarily focused on identifying potential sites and understanding their contributions to biodiversity conservation outside of traditional protected areas. “**Criteria and Guidelines for Identifying OECMs in India**” published by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) provides detailed criteria for identifying OECMs in India, adapted from the CBD criteria. It includes a classification system for potential OECM sites, ranging from terrestrial to marine environments, and discusses the integration of these sites into India’s broader conservation strategy. Sengupta *et al.* [12] have mentioned the potential of OECMs in realizing the “30 × 30” target in India. Dhyanani *et al.* [13] also indicated the importance of OECM based conservation approach in aiding India’s ecosystem health assessments.

India’s approach to conservation is evolving to integrate OECMs alongside PAs. The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), in collaboration with the National Biodiversity Authority (NBA) and various international organizations, is working to identify and document potential OECMs across the country. The goal is to recognize the conservation efforts of communities, private landowners, and other stakeholders who manage these areas effectively.

Challenges	Opportunities
<p>Recognition and Documentation: Identifying and officially recognizing OECMs is still in the early stages, with challenges in documenting these areas due to their diverse and often informal nature.</p>	<p>Inclusive Conservation: OECMs provide an opportunity to involve local communities and private stakeholders in conservation efforts, promoting a more inclusive approach.</p>
<p>Governance: Effective governance frameworks are needed to ensure that OECMs are managed sustainably and contribute to long-term biodiversity conservation. This includes ensuring that the rights and responsibilities of different stakeholders are clearly defined and that there is a strong framework for monitoring and managing these areas.</p>	<p>Achieving Global Targets: OECMs can help India contribute to international biodiversity targets, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity’s 30 by 30 target.</p>
<p>Balancing Human and Ecological Needs: The inclusion of OECMs in national and global conservation strategies must consider the rights and livelihoods of local communities and Indigenous peoples. This includes addressing potential conflicts over land use and ensuring that conservation efforts do not lead to displacement or other negative social impacts. However, human use much support biodiversity conservation.</p>	<p>Innovative Conservation Models: OECMs allow for the implementation of innovative conservation models being less stringent in legislative and pecuniary aspects. Thereby conflicts are fewer and services are easily generated via community participation.</p>

Similar to any developing country, India is also under massive pressure to accommodate the expanding population and related urbanization as well as civic requirements. Inevitably the sporadic demands of construction activities befall on the conversion of forest lands to adjust the anthropogenic needs. The compensatory afforestation though providing a balanced option, does not immediately address the loss of ecosystem values and the biodiversity. However, the main barrier for identifying and implementing the OECM model lies in the current deficit of clarity in conservation related policies. The Indian policies are definitively fixed on preserving notified forest land and priority animal species. Allowances must be made by amending government level policies so that areas outside forest could be acknowledged for its potential of ecosystem and biodiversity values.

Recent efforts have focused on mapping potential OECMs in India, with a particular emphasis on areas like sacred groves, community-conserved forests, and sustainable agricultural landscapes. These efforts are critical for expanding India's conservation footprint beyond traditional protected areas. Overall, OECMs represent a significant evolution in conservation thinking, moving beyond the traditional focus on protected areas to include a wider range of areas that contribute to biodiversity conservation. As the global community strives to meet ambitious conservation targets, OECMs offer a promising pathway to more inclusive and still effective conservation strategies. However, realizing their full potential will require overcoming challenges related to recognition, governance, and equity.

While analyzing the various on ground management practices for OECMs, it presently differs between different types of OECMs. In case of community-controlled area *i.e.* sacred groves, CCAs, KBAs and grasslands the community practices sustainable resource usage from the area. It can be in form of community grazing ground, local livelihood support in form of collection of non-timber forest produces and fuel wood etc. whereas in areas partially protected by legislation *i.e.* wetlands, tiger corridors, biosphere reserves, the state machinery deals with the administrative controlling while allowing a limited conditional access to local communities for resource utilization. Such collaboration generally provides positive outcome in form of less offence and more sustainable usage by the general public.

A particular case study can be cited where the importance of sacred groves was highlighted for its much previously unreported contribution towards biodiversity conservation [14]. The study has established the potential of sacred groves (Oran in regional language) situated in Thar Desert of Rajasthan as a community conservation tool. The local communities hold the ownership of said orans and the orans have immense impact on the conservation of desert ecosystem while preserving the endemic fauna and flora.

5. Conservation Needs Await a Decision

The future of OECMs in India lies in their integration into broader conservation strategies. This includes improving the methodologies for identifying and moni-

toring OECMs, developing robust governance frameworks, and ensuring that OECMs contribute effectively to global biodiversity targets. OECMs represent the future of biodiversity conservation by recognizing the diverse ways humans and nature can coexist. Traditional protected areas cover only approximately 17% of world's land and 8% of the oceans, making it tough to achieve the 30 by 30 goal. OECMs help fill this gap by recognizing the conservation inputs provided by community managed areas, and community managed ecologically sensitive zones, and wetlands.

OECMs can also support indigenous rights while ensuring conservation. A plethora of services like carbon sequestration, flood control, climate adaptations, etc. can also be attributed to such types of lands with the potential of becoming OECM. While managing OECMs, the importance of recognizing and respecting the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities is paramount. The policy makers and administrators frequently form local management committees where the community representatives participate in decision making process and voice any local concerns, both. Eco-development committee (EDC) and Self-Help Group (SHG) play a crucial role in such inclusive management. The SHGs are also supported by seed-fund, market linkage and government branding to facilitate their economic uplifting.

Further research however is needed to understand the ecological and social outcomes of OECMs, particularly in diverse contexts such as agricultural landscapes, urban areas, and marine environments. There is also a need to explore the potential for scaling up OECMs and integrating them into national and global reporting frameworks. Additionally, there is still a lack of institutionalization of financial support to each category of community and direct handholding of the communities as a whole. The same can be resolved by putting the OECM conservation in the mainframe policy related to biodiversity conservation.

Simple policy-level work and paper identification of OECMs may not be sufficient to take forward the conservation approach. Most of the OECMs will need ground truthing surveys to be demarcated on the ground and require engagement with other related agencies (such as State Forest Departments, State Biodiversity Boards, etc.) and seek support for the implementation of the guidelines while recognizing OECMs. The work is gigantic and exhaustive, but so is conservation. With a will to uphold the global commitment, the target can be easily achieved.

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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