

Exploring Culturally Attuned Monitoring and Reporting Indicators

Before starting to work on indicators that focus on issues of well-being, biodiversity conservation, and sustainability, what do you need to know?

All indicators relate to an overarching vision, management plan, or framework, and it is useful to review this broader context in order to help set plans in place to address what is needed for local applicability and cultural relevance.

Who will develop the indicators, for what purpose, and how will the resulting information be used?

There are many sources of information relevant for indicator monitoring and evaluation processes, including Indigenous and local knowledge. Decision makers need to have the skills to access, and process to acknowledge, different kinds of information. This can also assist with identifying indicators that are most meaningful to a specific group of people or place. Consistent with global guidelines on free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC)*, we recommend developing a clear plan for FPIC during the early stages of project development.

*<https://tinyurl.com/y4zfxku2>

When **setting up your indicators**,

it is important to identify the **core components** of resilience or well-being, and to consider how you share information regarding progress and needs. For instance, resilience narratives, such as knowledge of where, when, and how to gather and prepare traditional foods after extreme weather events, can often be more motivating at the local level than vulnerability indicators, such as measures of food insecurity or “poverty” levels.

..... *sometimes referred to as categories, dimensions, pillars*

For a strong example of navigating evidence for decision-making, see **Aotearoa New Zealand Environmental Protection Authority’s Guide on Incorporating Māori Perspectives in Decision-making**.**

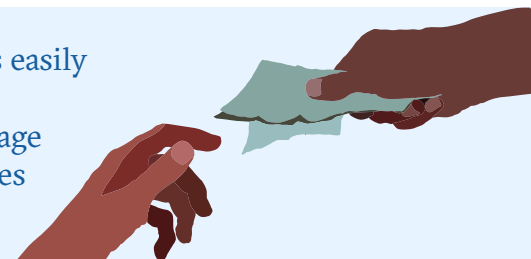
**<https://tinyurl.com/u899l36>



Evaluate what indicators need to be compared across sites/scales and why. Factors that need to be compared across sites have to have the same indicators, whereas those that do not can have site-specific ones. Indicators on agricultural imports, exports, and subsistence/artisanal production may be useful to compare across areas in order to evaluate food security goals. On the other hand, subsistence productivity might be measured using ranking, scoring, or other indices depending on community management and food sovereignty interests (e.g., focusing on gardening in one area and fishing in another).

Not everything that is measurable is important and not everything that is important is easily quantifiable.

For instance, monetary exchange is easily measured but may not be the most important metric to track and manage in many settings, especially in places without a large cash economy.



When **developing and evaluating indicators for local relevance**,

consider specificity, feasibility, and alignment with local values.

Specificity Consider if the indicator is specific enough to sufficiently address local nuances. Equally important is if the indicator considers the role of age, gender, ethnicity, governance type, or other issues of equity.

For instance, some international indicators measure percent coverage of protected areas by ecosystem type but not by use and management types. Incorporating Indigenous and local knowledge on management practices, including sustainable harvest, can enhance management effectiveness.

Feasibility Evaluate feasibility, specifically if the group responsible for using or measuring the indicator has the necessary skills, knowledge, and resources required to measure this indicator. Measurement methods, including where, when, and how often to measure, should respect and align with local values, customs, livelihood strategies, seasonal responsibilities, and other timing considerations.

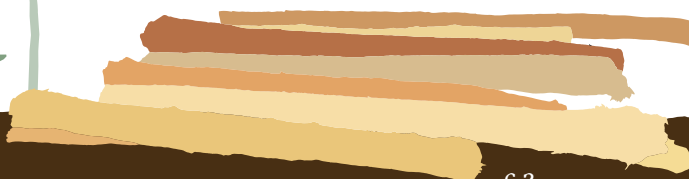
Value alignment Ideally, indicators will reflect local contexts and align with local priorities and values.

Examples may include emphasizing place-based knowledge and practices in school curricula.

As an example, regarding sustainable harvesting,

commercial harvest activities like timber production and commercial fishing can be a meaningful pathway for local development if **driven by local values, priorities, and livelihood strategies**, if conducted in a way that is inclusive of, respectful toward, and aligned with **community governance structures**, and if designed with careful attention to scope, scale, and safeguards to limit impacts on surrounding environments and communities.

Development goals and resulting indicators that are not informed by local values and processes may result in unintended consequences, for instance modifying social norms or devaluing local knowledge and traditions. **Others might lead to social conflict, or promote behavior that could degrade the environment**, for example promoting extractive practices without requiring sustainability safeguards.



If you are asked to use an **externally developed set of indicators** to monitor and evaluate progress,

you may be able to adjust indicators to better meet your needs and respect local nuances and sensitivities.

Widen definitions

Definitions of key terms (e.g., *productivity, livelihood, sustainability*) in the indicators could be broadened to encompass ones more appropriate to, and more significance for, local settings.

Find alternative benchmarks

Some measures (e.g., *\$1.90 daily income, an international poverty benchmark*) have limited applicability in different contexts. There is an opportunity to reframe so that this is locally appropriate.

Categorize data as needed

Indicator categories or other groupings should encompass locally important variables such as types of local decision-making structures, ecological habitat, and land and marine tenure (e.g., *protected area + community co-managed areas + customary tenure areas*). In some instances, larger data groupings can be useful to protect sensitive details, like fishing grounds and fish spawning areas.

For example, rather than asking...

Do people ever reduce the size of a child's meal because there was not enough food?

Did children skip meals because there was not enough food?

You could instead collect qualitative information on...

How do people ensure that they can access food after a tropical cyclone?

What are the knowledge sources for identifying, locating, and acquiring emergency food sources (e.g., *upland gardens, etc.*)?

Who holds that knowledge and how is it passed on?

In combination with exploring quantitative information on...

What is the average length of time for which households in the community have a stable, culturally valued food supply after a disaster?



If these modifications are not feasible then you may be able to develop your own indicators towards the targets, perhaps building on ones used by other groups in your region.

When preparing to collect data,

carefully consider how, when, where, and at what scale measurement should occur, as well as what are appropriate criteria for success. Data availability, reliability, and feasibility to collect new data should also be discussed during this stage, as these will impact monitoring and reporting methods and timelines.

Examples of Culturally-Attuned Indicators

Households and communities are able to move around between different production activities and locations as necessary

Source: UNU-IAS 2014,
<https://tinyurl.com/y7pcqq2l>

Individuals with a strong social network (families and kinship networks, built over generations), have others they can rely on in times of need and neighbors they can trust

Source: Vanuatu Alternative Indicators of Wellbeing as described in Sterling et al. 2017
<http://rdcu.be/yggN>

Opportunities for people to develop a sense of place, belonging, rootedness or connectedness, associated with different entities of the living world (e.g., cultural, sacred and heritage landscapes, sounds, scents and sights associated with childhood experiences, iconic animals, trees or flowers)

Source: Diaz et al. 2018
<https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aap8826>

Trends in the degree to which traditional knowledge and practices are respected in national implementation through their full integration and presence of safeguards, together with the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

Source: UN Convention on Biological Diversity's Indicators for Traditional Knowledge and Customary Use
<https://tinyurl.com/vjv5cy>

Percentage of Māori adults who feel strongly or very strongly connected with their ancestral *marae* (cultural meeting grounds)

Source: Aotearoa New Zealand Living Standards Framework
<https://treasury.govt.nz/publications/wellbeing-budget/wellbeing-budget-2019>



For additional materials in this informational series, visit: <http://amnh.org/assessing-biocultural-indicators>

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