

Implementing Culturally Attuned Monitoring and Reporting Indicators

Communities across the Pacific and around the world face unprecedented challenges in continuing to sustainably manage natural resources and promote well-being in the face of **change**.

climate change severe weather events demographic changes shifting cultural practices political shocks biodiversity loss

Recognizing the interrelated social, economic, cultural, and environmental connections between people and nature is critical to improve and maintain the resilience of human and ecological communities.

National governments are setting strategies and participating in global conventions that frame the future well-being of their people and the health of their natural resources. These strategies and conventions encompass **national-level initiatives** and **international-level frameworks**.

including

- Sustainable development plans
- Biodiversity strategies
- Adaptation strategies

including

- Sustainable Development Goals
- Convention on Biological Diversity-CBD Aichi Targets
- CBD post-2020 Biodiversity Framework

including

goals, targets, and indicators

Effective monitoring and reporting indicators cannot be developed prior to an agreed upon vision or strategic plan.

Once strategic goals and targets are set, indicators are a key component of resource management as they allow us to describe complex information in a concise manner, track change over time and space, and understand how patterns we observe are linked to drivers of change. However, the process of identifying which indicators to measure and how to measure them impacts management approaches, sustainability outcomes, and even how people view, value, and relate to human well-being.

Indicators developed without attention to cultural context, or those omitting interactions between people and their environments, may overlook the factors and values that most support healthy communities and places.

For those reasons, **culturally attuned, locally derived indicators are critical** for designing, resourcing, and implementing projects and programs to improve human and environmental well-being, ultimately leading to sustainable development and nature conservation.



Why is Cultural Context Important for Developing Indicators?

National-level reporting agencies, and the groups with whom they work, frequently face a dizzying array of requests for information or data on progress towards nationally or internationally driven social or environmental goals. Yet these requests can be disconnected from local value systems. For instance, they might reinforce concepts that encourage individualism rather than community collaboration, which is problematic given community collaboration is a key component of resilience that may promote faster recovery from large disturbances.

Gathering information on locally appropriate indicators can support cross-scale planning and evidence-based sustainability initiatives and avoid situations where good intentions have negative impacts locally.

As an example, in order to assess food security,

internationally standardized systems may ask participants questions about access to food...



...that **may not cover the full scope** of a community or family's ability to provide resources (*i.e., through sharing and exchange practices like providing for community elders who are no longer able to fish or farm, or through sharing with neighboring communities in times of need*).

Some questions—*e.g., those relating to 'begging'*—may cause discomfort that forces people to respond to surveys in ways that compromise the survey results.



Questions about how vulnerable people are may be culturally inappropriate or offensive in some communities, and could severely impact how communities view themselves.

In some instances, indicators may not effectively support communities and, in worst case scenarios, may actively contradict efforts towards self-determined goals and visions.



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

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