

STRENGTHENING PAKISTAN'S BIODIVERSITY GOVERNANCE

Locations	Pakistan
Dates	15/10/2025 - 30/11/2026

Summary

Pakistan is facing growing biodiversity loss caused by habitat degradation, climate change, deforestation and unsustainable use of natural resources. While protected areas remain central to conservation, Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs) can complement these efforts by recognising additional areas that contribute to long-term conservation outcomes. However, Pakistan currently lacks a national framework for identifying, assessing and reporting OECMs. To support Pakistan's biodiversity goals and commitments under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, CABI is working with national stakeholders to develop guidelines for recognising and managing OECMs. By strengthening biodiversity governance and supporting the integration of OECMs into national planning and reporting systems, the project will help Pakistan expand conservation efforts beyond protected areas and contribute towards its 30×30 target.

The problem

Pakistan's biodiversity is under increasing pressure from deforestation, habitat loss, land degradation, climate change, and unsustainable use of natural resources. These pressures threaten ecosystems, species, and the benefits that biodiversity provides to communities and society.

While protected areas play a critical role in safeguarding ecosystems, they cannot capture the full range of landscapes that contribute to biodiversity

conservation. Many areas outside formally protected boundaries may also support important habitats, ecological connectivity, and conservation outcomes but remain unrecognised within national systems.

To address this challenge, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) introduced the concept OECMs. OECMs are areas outside of formal protected areas that contribute to long-term biodiversity conservation, even where conservation is not the primary management objective. These areas are typically managed by local communities, private organisations, government institutions, or other stakeholders. Recognising OECMs allows countries to identify and support additional contributions to biodiversity conservation and strengthen progress toward national and global biodiversity targets.

However, Pakistan currently lacks a nationally endorsed framework for identifying, assessing and reporting OECMs. This limits the ability of government agencies to recognise potential conservation areas across different land-use sectors and accurately report progress against international biodiversity commitments.

Developing clear national guidance is therefore essential to strengthen biodiversity planning, support evidence-based decision-making, and enable Pakistan to integrate OECMs into its conservation strategies.

What we are doing

The aim of the project is to support the Government of Pakistan in developing its first National OECM Guideline, providing a consistent approach for identifying, assessing, and managing OECMs.

Through a review of international guidance, including frameworks developed by the CBD and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), alongside an assessment of Pakistan's existing policies and regulatory landscape, CABI will develop a guidance tailored to national biodiversity priorities and governance structures.

A key component of the project is strengthening collaboration among federal and provincial authorities, conservation agencies, academic institutions and technical experts. Through stakeholder consultations, the project will gather expertise and perspectives to ensure that the proposed guidelines are scientifically robust, practical, and aligned with national conservation priorities.

The project will culminate in the development of a National OECM Guideline that provides government institutions with a structured approach for identifying, assessing, monitoring and reporting OECMs. The guideline will support the recognition of community-managed and traditionally conserved areas, strengthen ecological connectivity, and expand biodiversity conservation beyond formally protected areas.

By integrating OECMs into national biodiversity planning processes, the project will strengthen Pakistan's capacity report progress under the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and support achievement of national conservation objectives.

Results so far

The project has strengthened the evidence base and technical understanding required to support the recognition of OECMs in Pakistan. Progress to date includes a review of global OECM frameworks and Pakistan's existing conservation policies to assess opportunities for integrating OECMs into national biodiversity planning processes.

Through consultations involving government agencies, academia, civil society and community representatives, the project has increased awareness of OECMs gathered stakeholder input to inform the development of national guidance.

These engagements have helped strengthen collaboration among key stakeholders and support alignment of OECM approaches with Pakistan's biodiversity conservation priorities.

The project has also helped lay the groundwork for integrating OECMs into Pakistan's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) and wider conservation frameworks, supporting efforts to recognise biodiversity contributions beyond formally protected areas.

Looking ahead, the project will develop practical guidance and assessment approaches for identifying, mapping, validating and monitoring OECMs across Pakistan, including the selection and testing of a pilot site. These outputs will inform the preparation of a National OECM Guideline, which will be reviewed by experts and refined through stakeholder engagement before being submitted for government endorsement and adoption.

Donors	International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD)
Partners	Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination (MoCC&EC)
CABI Project Manager	Muzammil Farooq



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