

WILD BIRD TRUST
HUMAN RIGHTS APPROACH TO
CONSERVATION

JUNE 2021



WILD BIRD TRUST

OUR COMMITMENT

The Wild Bird Trust (WBT) is committed to supporting inclusive and sustainable development and to advance dignity by protecting and empowering vulnerable human populations, while safeguarding the environments in which they live.

“There is nothing more important to us as the leaders of this organization than building a diverse, equitable and inclusive Wild Bird Trust. Moving forward, together we will continue to monitor our progress to ensure that the culture of our organisation is a reflection of the just world we wish to help create.”

Steve Boyes, Chairman, Wild Bird Trust

John Hilton, CEO, Wild Bird Trust

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION (DEI)

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion are the principles guiding how the WBT builds our teams, cultivates leaders and creates an organisation that’s the right fit for every person regardless of their age, race, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, physical or mental ability, ethnicity, nationality or professional title.

The WBT celebrates and encourages multiple approaches and points of view and since we believe that diversity helps drive innovation and success, we’re committed to building a culture where differences are valued. We strive to create a workplace where everyone feels empowered to bring their full, authentic selves to work. We recognise that we have a global, multicultural and diverse following and we want to reflect that inside our organisation and our team.

FREE, PRIOR, AND INFORMED CONSENT (FPIC)

The WBT recognizes the unique potential of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs) as partners in the conservation and management of natural resources. As such, our goal is to improve the impact and sustainability of our projects by ensuring that they respect IPLCs rights and engage IPLCs as partners in our project processes. As such the policy of the WBT will be to ensure that IPLCs are included in the decision-making and management of ecosystems in the territories in which we operate.

CONTEXT

IPLCs are distinct social and cultural groups that share collective ancestral ties to the lands and natural resources where they live, occupy or from which they have been displaced. The land and natural resources on which they depend are inextricably linked to their identities, cultures, livelihoods, as well as their physical and spiritual well-being.

While IPLCs own, occupy, or use a quarter of the world's surface area, they safeguard 80 percent of the world's remaining biodiversity. They hold vital ancestral knowledge and expertise on how to adapt, mitigate and reduce climate and disaster risks.

When the rights of IPLCs are protected – and particularly their rights to land, territories and resources – their culture thrives and nature thrives.

IPLCs' contributions are thus essential in assisting with the design and implementation of solutions for ecosystems. This traditional knowledge and heritage can contribute to environmental assessments and sustainable ecosystem management.

Evidence shows that stewardship led by IPLCs makes for better, longer-lasting conservation results¹. Supporting IPLC leadership is, therefore, one of the most impactful ways to protect critical places, address climate change and build a future in which people and nature thrive.

WBT POLICY

The WBT recognizes the unique potential of IPLCs as partners in the conservation and management of natural resources. As such, our goal is to improve the impact and sustainability of our projects by ensuring that they respect IPLCs rights and engage IPLCs as partners in our project processes.

By taking into consideration the ways that our projects and activities may impact cultures, territories, resources and/or livelihoods, the policy aims to promote thoughtful and direct engagement of IPLCs in the design, implementation and monitoring of projects to ensure the communities benefit and that those benefits are in line with the communities' self-determined development objectives.

POLICY OBJECTIVES

Our policy has three objectives:

1. Strengthen engagement with IPLCs to safeguard against harm and support their development priorities and self-reliance;
2. Increase the integration of IPLCs concerns across all projects at the WBT;
3. Empower and foster an enabling environment for Indigenous Peoples and their representative organizations to advocate for and exercise their rights.

¹ The Nature Conservancy. 2017. Strong Voices, Active Choices: TNC's Practitioner Framework to Strengthen Outcomes for People and Nature. Arlington, VA. <https://www.nature.org/en-us/what-we-do/our-insights/perspectives/strong-voices-activechoices/>

OPERATING PRINCIPLES

Five operating principles: **Identify, Analyse, Engage, Safeguard**, and **Partner** will be utilised in order to achieve our objectives and will be incorporated into our dealings with IPLCs across all projects and in all the territories in which we operate.

Identify

The WBT will identify both Indigenous Peoples and local communities in areas where we work. This process will be supported by conversations and consultations with Community Engagement Specialists, Local Community leadership and institutions and other subject matter experts for additional guidance and local context.

Analyse

The WBT will seek to analyse IPLCs' opportunities and challenges in the areas where we operate. The analysis will include:

- How and when during the project to engage IPLCs,
- Which issues, objectives, projects, and/or activities are the most relevant for IPLCs?

Engage

The WBT will through direct engagement of IPLCs seek to clarify and understand their priorities, capacities and preferred approaches. The engagement will provide IPLCs access to all information about activities that may impact them, in settings, languages and formats that meet their needs. The process of engagement and consultation should facilitate mutual understanding about our projects, operations, objectives and activities. This will help staff, contractors and implementing partners and potentially impacted communities identify potential impacts and consider risk mitigation approaches.

As part of this communication and engagement, a number of key considerations should be incorporated:

- Informal engagement should be supplemented with formal consultations throughout the project cycle.
- Engagement activities should also establish a climate of mutual trust in order to promote consultations conducted in good faith. This can be done by establishing procedural steps or "rules of engagement" for the ongoing consultation process.
- Consultations should be able to serve as pivot points to either influence and/or redirect project aims if these no longer align with the priorities of Indigenous Peoples.

Safeguard

Safeguarding the rights and well-being of IPLCs throughout the cycle of our projects should be approached as follows:

- In coordination with IPLCs, identify potential adverse impacts during stakeholder engagement, consultancies, Inclusive Development Analyses and/or Social Impact Assessments.

- By working with IPLCs identify ways to minimize or mitigate potential identified risks. These risk mitigation measures should be documented within the social impact assessment. FPIC should be sought for those activities and should be clear and documented.
- Right to Withhold Consent: Respect for indigenous peoples' right to withhold consent to initiatives that they determine may have a significant impact on them.
- By acting in accordance with our Safeguarding Standard Operating Procedures.

Partner

The WBT will ensure that the Human Rights approach is applied consistently across programs and geographies, by all staff and partners and will seek to establish respectful, equitable partnerships with IPLCs. The approach will focus on treating Indigenous People as the environmental experts that they are thus allowing traditional knowledge to be incorporated into our project research, activities and goals.