

Introduction to Community-Based Natural

Resource Management (CBNRM)

1. What Is CBNRM?

Element	Description
Definition	A participatory approach that places local communities at the centre of decision-making, planning, and implementation of natural resource policies and projects.
Goal	Achieve sustainable use of natural resources while improving livelihoods, cultural values, and ecosystem health.
Key Principle	People-first: the rights, knowledge, and incentives of the community drive management actions.

2. Why Shift From Top-Down to Community-Based Management?

Issue with Centralized Management	How CBNRM Addresses It
Limited local knowledge – distant officials may miss on-the-ground realities.	Communities possess traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) that informs realistic harvest limits, seasonal patterns, and species behavior.
Weak enforcement – distant authorities cannot monitor remote sites effectively.	Residents act as stewards and monitors , increasing compliance and reducing illegal extraction.
Low benefit sharing – profits often flow to external actors, creating resentment.	Benefit-sharing mechanisms (e.g., revenue from tourism, timber royalties) directly improve local welfare, fostering support for conservation.
Social inequities – elite capture of resources.	Participatory governance structures (e.g., village councils) can embed gender, youth, and minority representation, reducing elite capture.

3. Core Components of CBNRM

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1. Legal & Institutional Framework

Resource Management

- Land-use rights, user-group rights, or co-management agreements.
- Formal recognition of community institutions (e.g., forest user groups, fisheries co-ops).

2. Participatory Planning

- **Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)** or **Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA)** tools.
- Mapping of resources, stakeholder analysis, and identification of objectives.

3. Resource Governance

- Rules for access, allocation, and use (e.g., quotas, seasonal closures).
- Monitoring & enforcement mechanisms (community patrols, reporting systems).

4. Benefit Sharing & Livelihoods

- Direct income (e.g., sustainable timber, non-timber forest products, ecotourism).
- Indirect benefits (capacity building, improved infrastructure, health services).

5. Capacity Building & Knowledge Exchange

- Training in sustainable harvesting, business planning, and conflict resolution.
- Integration of TEK with scientific data (e.g., joint monitoring programs).

6. Monitoring, Evaluation, & Adaptive Management

- Indicators: biodiversity health, resource extraction rates, household income, equity metrics.
- Periodic reviews to adjust rules and practices.

4. Steps to Implement a CBNRM Project

Phase	Key Activities
1. Baseline Assessment	• Resource inventory (forest cover, wildlife, water quality). • Socio-economic survey (livelihoods, demographics).

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Phase

Key Activities

2. Stakeholder Engagement

Identify stakeholders (local users, NGOs, government agencies, private sector).

- Conduct inclusive workshops to build trust.

3. Define Rights & Governance

- Negotiate user rights (customary tenure, community concessions).

- Draft bylaws and decision-making procedures.

4. Develop Management Plan

- Set clear, measurable objectives (e.g., 20% increase in fish biomass in 5 years).

- Establish harvest limits, zoning, and seasonal calendars.

5. Build Capacity & Secure Funding