



Indo-Pacific Conservation Alliance

IPCA is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to the study and conservation of the native ecosystems of the tropical Indo-Pacific region, and support for traditional peoples in their stewardship of these globally significant natural resources.

Based in Honolulu, Hawai'i, IPCA was founded in Washington DC in 1998 in association with scientists at the Bishop Museum, Smithsonian Institution, World Bank, and other leading institutions.

Rather than establishing in-country offices and infrastructure, IPCA works through existing in-country institutions and local communities. This approach **minimizes our footprint** and saves costs. But more importantly it helps build local capacity and self-reliance among the people who are most crucial in making conservation succeed.

IPCA acts not as an implementer of top-down conservation strategies, but rather as a **facilitator** to local communities who request our help. We work with local groups to identify shared priorities and goals in preserving natural resources, and then provide information, tools, training, and other support to help these local stakeholders realize their sustainable development aspirations.

IPCA has formal **partnerships** with a variety of local and international institutions such as Cenderawasih University (UNCEN), State University of Papua (UNIPA), Arnold Arboretum (Harvard University), the Asmat District Government, and Conservation International. We also work informally with the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI), Ministry of Forestry, and many others. Our work in Asmat has been made possible from generous donations by private individuals, as well as a grant from the Multistakeholder Forestry Programme of the U.K.'s Department for International Development (DFID).

IPCA is a 501(c)(3) non-profit scientific and educational organization. Contributions to IPCA are tax-deductible to the extent provided under IRS regulations.



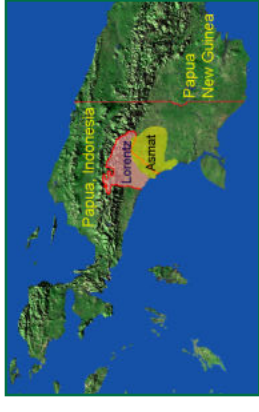
IPCA Indo-Pacific Conservation Alliance

Preserving Living Landscapes in Asmat

Indo-Pacific Conservation Alliance (IPCA) is working with the Asmat people of southwestern Papua, Indonesia, in an innovative program to preserve their forests, rivers, and seas. IPCA facilitates and provides crucial technical assistance to local Asmat initiatives that strengthen support and capacity for protecting biodiversity and maintaining important cultural traditions. We provide tools, information, and training to community leaders to document and map their critical and sacred habitat. Asmat institutions will leverage these skills and information, in dialogue with local government, to designate **community-managed conservation areas**, enabling the Asmat to remain effective stewards of their living landscapes.



Living in and around Lorentz National Park and the UNESCO World Heritage Site – one of the world's largest, most pristine and richest tropical rainforests – the Asmat people retain their strong sense of identity as well as their world-renowned woodcarving traditions. The Asmat depend upon local natural resources for almost all their needs. Biodiversity and culture are two sides of the same coin: if their forests disappear, Asmat culture will lose its foundation, and if core cultural and social values are undermined, local forests aren't likely to remain intact.



In 1999, Asmat leaders

approached

IPCA for help in preserving their land, rivers, and sea as "living landscapes" that protect biodiversity while supporting and sustaining local livelihoods.

IPCA's approach to conservation provides technical assistance to **grassroots Asmat conservation initiatives**, thereby fostering the elements of Asmat culture and society that are essential to conservation. Our program has already had significant conservation results that include stopping destructive logging and fishing operations. Together with our partners we have laid a solid foundation for achieving even more important conservation results in the future...

Cover: Asmat fishing, © George Stenmetz; Asmat man dancing © John BurkeBurnett
Above: Carving abang in men's ear, house © George Stenmetz; Below: Asmat GPS mapping © IPCA





Photos: (left to right): Asmat's illegally trapped cascade from the Bird's Head area of Papua; logging in Papua; Community mapping in Asmat; Regolina Bird of Paradise (*Paradisaea reginae*) © Bruce Beahler; Asmatcane festival © George Steinmetz; Birdwing Butterfly (*Omithoptera* sp.), Papua © George Steinmetz; Bhythis Hornbill (*Aceres pfeiferus*) © M. Moore. All photos © IPCA unless otherwise indicated.

Asmat and Lorentz National Park

Asmat, which refers both to the people and their lands, is located within and around Lorentz National Park and UNESCO World Heritage Site in southwestern Papua (western New Guinea), Indonesia. A mosaic of mangrove, swamp forest, and lowland rainforest, the Asmat-Lorentz lowlands teem with orchids, parrots, birds-of-paradise, and tree kangaroos – tens of thousands of species of animals and plants, many still unknown to science. Lorentz is the largest reserve in the Asia-Pacific region, and Asmat lands cover about one-third of the park lowlands as well as an additional one million hectares to the east.

As the most populous ethnic group in the Lorentz lowlands area, the Asmat people are **the critical element in a successful conservation strategy for Lorentz**, which was called “probably the single most important reserve in New Guinea” by Birdlife International. Asmat was identified as a priority conservation area by Conservation International, and it also contains three of World Wildlife Fund’s “Global 200” Ecoregions.



Conservation Threats and Opportunities

Industrial fishing and logging by foreign companies is the most serious direct threat to biodiversity and livelihoods in Asmat and Lorentz. Logging pressure is currently inactive but likely to return. Asmat was made a new administrative area (*kabupaten*) in 2004, and is now required to develop a spatial development plan. Ensuring that this plan is culturally and environmentally appropriate is one of the most critical priorities for conservation.

Other threats include large-scale oil development, the illegal species trade, and forest conversion for plantation agriculture and shrimp ponds. Logging and associated activities are often social vectors for the spread of HIV and other diseases.



IPCA’s Approach and Strategy

IPCA is careful to work within a culturally and socially appropriate context. Our program in Asmat is an authentic grassroots effort. Program priorities are determined and implemented by traditional (*adat*) institutions that are our main local partners and constituents: the Asmat Traditional Council, **Lembaga Musyawarah Adat Asmat** (LMAA), and local Sub-Councils, **Forum Adat Rumpun** (FAR). We have worked closely with Asmat community leaders and members to understand their needs and aspirations, to identify and support common shared goals, and to establish trust. Conservation actions are determined and implemented not by IPCA, but by these *adat* institutions — our partners and constituents.

In New Guinea, *adat* institutions are the most appropriate and effective resource managers, and our strategy is developed around this notion. IPCA’s approach of providing long-term technical assistance and training to *adat* organizations without imposing an outside model of conservation or sustainable development is critical to avoid creating dependencies on external support that have often impacted similar efforts elsewhere.

Since our work with them began in 2001, several LMAA staff trained by IPCA have moved into government positions. Current **Bupati** (head of local

government) Mr. Yufen Biakai also remains Chairman of LMAA, and IPCA thus maintains uniquely close ties with the local administration.

Our strategy is underpinned by new Special Autonomy laws for Papua that allow for the re-designation of forests from “state-owned” to “traditionally-managed”. Our local *adat* and government partners are keen to leverage community conservation agreements to establish a culturally appropriate and effective system for conservation area management both for eastern Lorentz, as well as **new indigenous-managed areas** outside the park. This is an innovative and challenging approach, but the essential elements are in place to achieve an important conservation outcome.

Conservation Results in Asmat...

In 2001, with IPCA’s help, LMAA and the FARs successfully **stopped a 150,000 hectare clear-cut logging concession**, and negotiated a **moratorium on a large commercial fishing operation** that would have trawled the inland seas and rivers, stripping the fish and shrimp that are one of the communities’ main sources of protein. Tools and training supplied to LMAA have enabled them to complete forest tenure maps for large areas.

New Conservation Tool...

Building upon these successes, IPCA and our *adat* partners will be using a new participatory mapping and survey tool known as Multidisciplinary Landscape Assessment (MLA). **MLA identifies and maps socially critical habitat and sacred forest areas**, and also documents the *adat* traditions that underlie them. Developed by the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), MLA is an innovative tool that helps reveal why different aspects of the landscape and biodiversity matter to local people, how much it matters, and to whom.



MLA uses community interviews, biological surveys, and participatory mapping to assess critical forest, freshwater, and marine habitat from biological, social, and cultural perspectives. For example, communities identify forest areas that are important for hunting, sago cultivation, or woodcarving materials, as well as areas that are culturally sacred. These core areas, combined with biological information, will be used to **generate a map of priority habitat areas**. These maps will



then be used by our partners in dialogue with the government and other stakeholders to define economic and spatial plans in ways that are consistent with the important cultural and biological priorities in Asmat.

Technical support from IPCA is thus vital to assisting our partners and other stakeholders to make informed decisions about the development, management, and conservation of natural resources in Asmat — and the culture that relies upon them.

We Need Your Support

This is a critical time of transition for Asmat, and IPCA needs your support to continue our work. We strive to minimize overhead costs and instead apply money where it is most urgently needed — in the field. Support for our work is crucial — and simple to do. Simply visit our website and click on the Donate Now button. Credit card donations are made through the independent *Network for Good* system via a secure server.