

## **Report of the WG8j Dialogue on Integrating Traditional Knowledge into the Science Policy Interface by Joji Carino**

The 8<sup>th</sup> meeting of Working Group 8j and Related Provisions of the CBD completed its meeting last week with significant outcomes for moving forward on the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity (2011-2020) and with important messages for IPBES. The in-depth dialogue on **“Connecting Traditional Knowledge Systems and Science, such as IPBES, including Gender Dimensions”** heard presentations

- about the benefits, risks and opportunities of collaborating and sharing knowledge;
- on multiple evidence based approaches to knowledge generation and assessments;
- on the importance of distinct women’s knowledge spaces and gendered knowledge in indigenous societies as complementary knowledge systems;
- and how IPBES, as a new knowledge platform could institute procedures and approaches which are open and inclusive of indigenous and local knowledge and worldviews.

The various innovative ways in which the CBD and Working Group 8j, in particular, has promoted recognition, respect for and protection of traditional knowledge, by embedding inter-culturality into its meetings and practices, could serve as a model for maximum flexibility in applying existing rules for UN and other intergovernmental meetings, such as IPBES.

Trust, reciprocity, equal sharing and transparency were identified as key ingredients of dialogue across knowledge systems. Empathy, modesty, attentive listening and mutual learning are essential. Mindful of the historical colonial relationship between western science and indigenous knowledge and existing power imbalances, vital safeguards for its protection include upholding the principle of free prior and informed consent for the use of traditional knowledge, and the establishment of appropriate mechanisms for the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples and local communities in newly created knowledge spaces. The use of traditional knowledge carries an “ethical obligation to become informed about the many potential dilemmas and sensitivities of working with traditional knowledge and associated living cultural heritage”<sup>1</sup> and to be mindful of attendant risks.

Several participants noted that the indigenous perception of nature widely differed from concepts used in international fora. The notion of separating biodiversity, genetic resources and traditional knowledge, for example, was foreign to the indigenous worldview. Knowledge sharing requires a global community of learning in a truly multicultural setting, where knowledge complexity can be expressed in new ways and languages, including by using oral tradition or artistic representation.

Regarding gendered knowledge, the example of the traditional knowledge of Metis women and their function within Metis society was highly informative. Women are as familiar as men with the techniques of navigation, hunting, fishing and the gathering of natural medicines. They are producers of crops and understand and practise techniques required for the preparation and storage of food. Metis women are also

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<sup>1</sup> Preston Hardison and Kelly Bannister, (2013) “Ethics in Ethnobiology: History, International Law and Policy, and Contemporary Issues”

teachers responsible for the intergenerational transmission of knowledge through techniques of work and play, as illustrated by the use of dance as a mechanism of socialization which taught children about social relationships and safe physical contact. Traditional knowledge is set within cultural identity, and women play an important role in choosing how to transmit that knowledge to young people. They are important as land managers and leaders, and are also important actors at the gatherings held on burial sites where the Metis meet periodically to share knowledge and experience. However, Metis women also meet on their own to speak among themselves and share their experiences among themselves.

During the in-depth dialogue, a report was given about the recently convened international expert and stakeholder workshop on “Building Synergies with Science” held in Tokyo, Japan from 9 to 11 June 2013, as an IPBES inter-sessional activity contributing to IPBES2 Plenary meeting in December. That workshop examined and identified procedures and approaches for working with indigenous and local knowledge systems in the framework of the Platform and reviewed and assessed possible conceptual frameworks for the work of the Platform that are open and inclusive of indigenous and local knowledge systems and worldviews. The Tokyo workshop identified the following capacity-building needs: education and awareness raising, training scientists about indigenous and local knowledge, inclusion of indigenous and local knowledge in education curricula, building awareness about the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services among indigenous people, building capacity of local and indigenous scientists, and the need to address that fact that the loss of ethno-biodiversity might be more serious crisis than the loss of biodiversity. This Tokyo workshop report is now available in both the CBD and IPBES websites.

The multiple evidence based approach was presented, which emphasizes the complementarity of knowledge systems, the importance of letting each knowledge system speak for itself, and the need for mechanisms within each system to evaluate and validate knowledge.

Community-based monitoring and information systems, for assessing the state of traditional knowledge, biodiversity, climate change impacts, and community well-being, is now being piloted and developed by a network of indigenous peoples and local communities, under the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity Working Group on Indicators, together with many collaborators. The aim is to strengthen the local knowledge base for territorial resource management and community development, as well as contributing case studies and complementarity data for monitoring the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and Aichi Targets and other international commitments under climate change and sustainable development. This same network will also be important in contributing to the IPBES functions of assessments, knowledge generation, policy relevant tools and capacity-building.

Knowledge helps humanity adapt to change and although the current need for adaptation is a global issue, local communities were often the ones that have first-hand experience in that regard. Given that power of knowledge - cultural diversity, sharing and collaboration are challenges to be grasped.