

Dialogue Workshop on Assessment of Collective Action of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities in Biodiversity Conservation and Resource Mobilization

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Conveners: Government of Guatemala and the CBD Secretariat

**Methods and tools used by ICCA Consortium for documenting and visualizing indigenous peoples and local communities contribution to biodiversity conservation by their collective action in territories and areas conserved by indigenous peoples and local communities (ICCAs)**

**Background**

Indigenous peoples’ and community conserved territories and areas (abbreviated as ICCAs) are natural sites, resources and species’ habitats conserved in a voluntary, common and self-directed way by indigenous peoples and local communities throughout the world. This conservation practice— profoundly intertwined with local strategies for livelihoods, the spiritual and material values of local cultures and many local attempts to secure land, water and natural resource rights —is the oldest on earth. Paradoxically, it is also the least understood and officially recognized, and it is in extreme jeopardy today, under a variety of external and internal threats (e.g. extractive industries, land grabbing, privatization of natural resources, loss of local languages, knowledge, skills, institutions, values...).

Since the World Parks Congress of 2003 and the 2004 incorporation in the Programme of Work on Protected Areas (PoWPA) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), ICCAs have been “re-discovered” as one of the few remaining avenues to strengthen the edifice of conservation. ICCAs can be about preservation (e.g., strict custodianship of sacred sites), sustainable use (e.g., collective, regulated access and use of forests, fisheries and pastures) and restoration of ecosystems (e.g., community-restored habitats and sites). It has recently been powerfully argued that ICCAs uniquely contribute to achieve all 20 CBD Aichi Targets.

A substantive role to promote and support all this has been played by the Members and Honorary members of the ICCA Consortium ([www.iccaconsortium.org](http://www.iccaconsortium.org) ) and their affiliated groups in the IUCN Commissions. For several years, the Consortium has been engaged in processes to deepen the understanding of the ICCA phenomenon with respect to varying historical/ regional contexts; to identify and support field initiatives where ICCAs can be safeguarded, enabled, strengthened and/or promoted in practice; and to support consequent national, regional and international policy. Throughout those, the Consortium has developed and applied a number of tools to document, visualize and diffuse information about ICCAs.

**About the Term “ICCA”**

“ICCAs” is an abbreviation for:

***I***ndigenous Peoples’ and ***C***ommunity ***C***onserved Territories and ***A***reas

(or the “seeds”, the “jewels”, the “heart” ...of bio-cultural diversity around the world! )

ICCAs are defined by the UICN as “natural and/or modified ecosystems, containing significant biodiversity values, ecological benefits and cultural values, voluntarily conserved by indigenous peoples and local communities, both sedentary and mobile, through customary laws or other effective means”. They include cases of continuation, revival or modification of traditional practices. Their origins can be ancient but can also include new initiatives, such as restoration and innovative uses of resources taken up by indigenous peoples and local communities to face new threats and opportunities.

ICCAs are extremely diverse but three defining characteristics are common to ICCAs:

* A people or community has a close and profound relationship with a particular site (territory, area or habitat) and/or species—a link that is related to history, culture, identity, livelihoods and/or well-being.
* The people or community is the predominant or *de facto* decision-maker and implementer of decisions about the site (local “governing institution”).
* The people´s or community´s decisions and efforts contribute to conservation of nature and associated cultural values (regardless of stated objectives, which may be livelihoods or spirituality)

Custodians of ICCAs do not necessarily have legal title or tenure rights over the lands and resources. Many documented ICCAs are on state land, but are de facto controlled and effectively managed by indigenous peoples or local communities. Of critical importance is the integrity of customary or traditional governance systems, which are the heart and mind of collective action.

**Assessing the conservation and livelihoods results and governance vitality of ICCAs -- supporting communities to self- monitor and communicate their ICCAs**

The ICCA Consortium has developed in different continents different methods and tools to document and visualize collective action in territories and areas conserved by indigenous peoples and local communities (ICCAs). Some are briefly recalled here.

1. **Methodology for Grassroots discussions on ICCAs**

The first methodology applied by the ICCA Consortium in different contexts, tested in 20 countries and 4 sub-regions is a methodology for Grassroots discussions on ICCAs. The methodology evolved during its application through learning by doing. The following considerations were common in all the case studies:

1. participatory process
2. adapted to the context
3. large variety of combined methods and tools, with emphasis on visual tools (e.g., mapping, trend analysis) carried out by community groups
4. focus on the status of the ICCA, its eventual threats and needs & what kind of recognition and support it wishes to receive
5. **Participatory mapping and documentation of ICCAs: 2D & 3D maps and Participatory Geographic Information Systems (PGIS)**

A variety of visual tools were employed in grassroots discussions of ICCAs, focusing on participatory mapping and documentation of the customarily conserved territories and areas carried out by communities for their own aims and use. Tools include 2D and 3D format maps, eco-calendars, fauna and flora inventories, “speaking maps”, graphics, photographs, videos and a variety of animations and illustrations. In places such as the Philippines and Iran, mapped ICCAs are now systematically included in participatory geographic information systems run and controlled by the concerned communities— a fact that greatly enhances the processes of ICCA recognition, demarcation and self-determination.

1. **Resilience and security tool for ICCAs**

ICCAs are frequently under threat— of external but also internal origin. They also greatly vary, in terms of their resilience under conditions of stress. As the recent international recognition of their value for biodiversity, livelihoods and the realization of human and indigenous peoples’ rights has not yet emerged in many countries, threats to ICCAs go often unperceived and unchecked. This makes the more urgent to understand the characteristics that contribute to ICCA resilience and security, which should be strengthened in all possible ways. Considerations such as these just noted prompted the ICCA Consortium to develop and test the [ICCA Resilience and Security Tool](http://www.iccaconsortium.org/wp-content/upload/images/stories/Database/Resourcestools/rst_icca_draft_oct_2012.pdf%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank).

The Tool helps communities to self-assess their own internal and external strengths and weaknesses affecting the existence and sustainability of their ICCAs.  The tool and accompanying methodology were field tested by the Consortium and its members in Senegal and Nepal in 2011 and in the Philippines, Indonesia, Niger and Spain in 2012. They were then variously used as inspiration for community discussions in India, Cambodia, Bolivia, Paraguay, Iran, Democratic Republic of Congo and other countries.

The Tool comprises a set of questions/ entry points for indigenous peoples and local communities to discuss and evaluate a combination of internal and external factors that affect the resilience and security of their ICCAs. The questions could be answered by:

* the community institution in charge if governing the ICCA;
* different focus groups in the community (separate answers taken into consideration by the governing institution, which compiles and summarizes them);
* a representative sample of community members (after collective discussion and obtaining a consensus on preferred answers).

Usually the methodology involves a facilitator. In the process of testing the Tool, it was also found that it is possible to reduce the length of the exercise by summarizing together some questions.

The internal components of the Tool include questions related to the main defining characteristic of ICCAs:

* integrity and strength of the connection between the community and its ICCA (e.g. richness of motivations, relationship embedded into culture and sense of community identity);
* capacity of the community to govern the ICCA (e.g. respected institution, leaders capable of taking decisions and having those implemented, accountability to the community and others, etc.);
* results of management decisions implemented by the community for both conservation of nature (biodiversity, ecosystem functions) and local livelihoods (well being, income, sustainable lifestyle).

Questions also relate to internal threats to cohesion, and internal socio-political and cultural change.

The external components of the Tool include questions relate to recognition and support (in particular various types of received support compared with support desired and sought after), as well as questions related to existing threats and disruptive forces likely to affect the sustainability of ICCAs.

For each component in the Table the members of the community using the tool are invited to consider whether the factor is strong; fairly strong or strengthening; medium; fairly weak or weakening; or weak. Some suggestions about what to consider before doing that are given in parentheses, including an evaluation of tendencies (is the factor growing? Is it weakening?). weak at times do reverse). Factors with disproportionate power to disrupt or protect the ICCA (e.g., if it can alone counteract all or most of the others, as it could be for a dam being built that will flood and submerge the ICCA), the respondents are asked to note it specifically.

1. **Participatory methodology for the development of Video and Photo stories on Threats to ICCAs & community responses**

Inspired by a successful wave of social and visual media sweeping the globe this past decade, the Consortium has begun exploring photo stories as tools for documenting and raising awareness about ICCAs. Several Photo Stories and Videos were produced in Indonesia, Niger, Nepal, Iran, Senegal, the Philippines, Spain, Bolivia, Chile, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Paraguay, India, Canada, Cambodia and other countries.

A Photo Story is essentially a short video (normally between 5-10 minutes) consisting of photos accompanied by running script (on the screen) and/or voice/music narration. It can easily be uploaded and available to anyone with access to internet.

The general methodology used by the Consortium to facilitate the production of photostories and Videos has been to combine several grassroots discussions in the following steps:

1. Introductory meeting and agreement with the community, visit to the ICCA and preparation of the first community discussion
2. Holding the **first community discussion** focusing on the ICCAs, its history, situation, eventual threats, the community responses to such threats, and the current needs to secure the ICCA
3. Identifying a ***local team***, which engages in writing the script of the Photo-story or Video
4. The ***local team*** takes photos/ shoots the video
5. The ***local team*** records traditional music and the voice over
6. The ***local team*** and facilitators compile and edit the photo story or video
7. Holding a **second community discussion** to **vision and correct** the draft photo story or video
8. Holding a **third community discussion** to **validate** the final photo story or video, use the **Resilience and Security Tool** to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the community and **plan the next steps to secure its** **ICCA**
9. **Interactive radio programs on ICCAs in local languages**

In Casamance (Senegal), the ICCA Consortium has engaged for several years in monthly radio programs in local language by which local members of governing institutions explain their ICCAs in the marine and coastal environment (e.g. the zoning envisaged, the rules for resource extraction, the functioning of the governing body, the relationship between national policies and local practice, surveillance issues, volunteer work, monitoring protocols, etc.). The listeners can call a local number and pose their questions or comments directly on air. The program is extremely popular and has resulted in greatly enhanced awareness of the ICCAs, wide respect for their rules and replication of their experience. As a result, four ICCAs exist now in Casamance: one fully recognized; two in final steps of recognition and one in middle stage. Several others are in earlier stages of internal discussion.

1. **Toolbox for Environmental Monitoring of ICCAs threatened by extractive development.**

A Toolbox for Environmental Monitoring of ICCAs threatened by extractive development has also been actively developed -- in 2014 and 2015—by the ICCA Consortium under the leadership of its member SAVIA, from Bolivia.

The Toolbox provides a series of instruments for monitoring and conservation of ecosystems inside indigenous peoples’ conserved territories. It is meant to empower the indigenous organizations facing the many threats that impact the development and conservation of the cultures and traditions of their peoples.

A number of workshops and field visits were held with indigenous people in the course of three case studies in Bolivia (Isoso, Pilon Lajas and Moseten Indigenous Territories) and allowed to develop different instruments to measure the impacts of the expansion of the agricultural frontier (colonization, agroindustry, oil, gas and mining operations, or megaprojects such as roads and large dams). The Toolbox developed in this way strengthens the capabilities of the organizations, and the handling of relevant information regarding the damaging processes carried out by private companies or the government.  The instruments alert the relevant communities and offer arguments to resist and negotiate, and to seek conclusive answers on existing or potential impacts. They also provide a source of information and motivation to conserve the all that is being threatened, and enhance the communication capability of the involved communities.

Some of the tools are mostly for information and consultation, while others help to perceive and measure impacts, and to gather data and information about the processes that generate the negative impact themselves. Other tools are of technological nature, such as digitalized data and web pages to monitor the status of forests, or data bases with information relevant for the conservation of the territory.

The objective is that -- with time -- these tools will become an essential part of the governance, management and conservation of broad ecosystems and ICCAs in particular, and that they will develop into training tools for adult, intermediate, young, male and female leaders, including through their diffusion and instruction in schools.

1. **Biocultural Community Protocols: A toolkit for Community facilitator´s**

Natural Justice, a member of the ICCA Consortium developed a very useful set of tools directed to

* support communities to secure their rights and responsibilities and strengthen customary ways of life and stewardship of their territories and areas.
* support facilitators from the communities themselves or from supporting organizations with whom they have long-standing and positive relationships.

This methodology was applied in Asia and Africa.

**Lessons learned**

The experience developed in the process of application these methods and tools used by the ICCA Consortium and its members shows that **appropriate methods, tools and interactions respect and strengthen communities** and leave them:

* better connected with their natural commons & more capable to govern and manage them well
* fully aware of their own history & culture and able to govern themselves (self-determination)
* richer in terms of resources, capital and infrastructure, and with more autonomy
* stronger, more respected by others and better connected with other communities
* with dependable friends and allies in civil society and in government quarters
* wiser, more responsible and more capable to learn, innovate and prevent and solve problems.