

# Developing a Community Knowledge Service to Support Communities to Enhance Livelihoods and Conserve Biodiversity

## Draft Plan for Workshop Discussion

### 1. Introduction

Over the last three years, the UNDP Equator Initiative<sup>1</sup> Ecoagriculture Partners (EP), GROOTS International and their partners have been supporting the development of an International Community Knowledge Service for biodiversity conservation and enhanced livelihoods. The goal of this Service is to enable local community representatives to share their knowledge and expertise with other local community representatives and with the broader range of stakeholders who have much to learn from community expertise in natural resources management. In turn, the service will also aim to strengthen local communities' access to knowledge and resources generated by diverse stakeholders impacting policy and practice on biodiversity conservation and rural livelihoods.

This initiative aims to directly respond to priority recommendations articulated by community-based experts and collaborators during a series of international community dialogue spaces hosted over the last three years (Box 1). It also aims to build upon and strengthen linkages between activities already underway to support and enhance community-led knowledge exchange processes worldwide.

This Berlin workshop represents the latest step in the process. Funding has now been secured to design and implement the first phase of the Knowledge Service. To provide a basis for workshop discussions and program design, an initial framework for the Knowledge Service has been drafted, based on earlier inputs and recommendations. The workshop aims to enable participants to collectively reach a shared vision on how to design, implement and finance the initial phase of the Community Knowledge Service. It also seeks to establish governance of the process by a core group of community-based collaborators and partners. It is hoped that participants will leave with a clearly articulated process, workplan and next steps to implement phase one of the Community Knowledge Service.

### 2. Background

Local communities worldwide demonstrate unique capacity to jointly address the challenges of biodiversity conservation, rural health livelihood security and improvement. Approaches are diverse and encompass community protected area management strategies, local enterprise development and market innovations, community-driven responses to health, especially HIV/ AIDS, forestry, agriculture, pastoralism and fisheries management that sustain production and livelihoods, while conserving or enhancing biodiversity. While local communities tend to naturally adopt integrated, holistic approaches to manage their natural resources, external agencies – NGOs, research

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<sup>1</sup> For further details on the Equator Initiative, please see: [www.equatorinitiative.org](http://www.equatorinitiative.org)

organizations, policy makers etc – tend to remain focused on specific sector-based strategies to deliver conservation, production and rural development objectives.

Overall, the current activities of public agencies, international NGOs and research organizations do not adequately support community action. Most existing initiatives to provide knowledge and resources to local communities are supply- not demand-driven. The diverse information materials, resources and capacity development tools that exist are rarely tailored to the needs, strengths, and capacities of local communities. They rarely recognize the knowledge and expertise of local communities, and do not systematically build on this community-based knowledge.

Therefore long-term knowledge and expertise developed by local communities worldwide is not available to be shared, learnt from and adapted for more widespread application. This is a particularly critical with respect to knowledge on local livelihoods and biodiversity conservation strategies. Understanding how to achieve synergies between strategies that improve livelihoods, for example by sustaining agricultural production, and strategies that conserve biodiversity requires very context-specific, place-based knowledge. While there are many gaps in scientific knowledge on how to development management strategies that achieve synergies rather than trade-offs, many local communities have developed this knowledge through the long-term, sustainable management of their natural resources. A key challenge is how to share knowledge from very unique, context specific situations in a ways that others can learn and benefit from?

To support and scale-up community-led approaches, there is a need for stronger 'bottom-up' processes that enable local community representatives to share their knowledge and expertise with one another and with national, regional, and international decision-makers (policy, research, NGO, business communities etc). This necessitates greater investment in processes that support and facilitate knowledge-exchange and peer-peer learning amongst local-level actors, as well as between communities and other stakeholders.

Worldwide, there are a range of tools and processes with the potential to support community-based knowledge exchange. These include the use of videos, radio and posters to document community knowledge and practices, support for community mapping, monitoring and learning exchange processes, and the development of local knowledge resource centers to enhance access to locally appropriate information. However, although these tools and initiatives exist, they are currently only available to a limited number of communities.

## Community recommendations

Recommendations from a series of international community dialogue spaces highlight the need for: investment in processes that support community-led knowledge exchange and capacity development processes; access to more appropriate, timely information to support community practitioners; strengthened connections between networks of local communities worldwide experiencing similar challenges and opportunities; strengthened representation of community expertise in policy decision making processes locally, nationally and internationally [Box 1].

### Box 1: Key Recommendations from Community Dialogue Spaces

June 2003: [Learning from Community Action](#) to realize the MDGs: Biodiversity and HIV/AIDS workshop, Nairobi, Kenya: On the basis of workshop discussions, Kenya-based communities set up a series of community-learning exchanges to enable the continued sharing knowledge, practices, and skills. [See [link](#) for further details]

September 2004: Community Shamba, Nairobi, Kenya: Shamba participants emphasized the need to:

- Enhance local communities' knowledge, skills and awareness by investing in effective, systematic knowledge-sharing and learning processes;
- Support communities to rigorously document their ecoagriculture practices at a landscape scale, to enable learning and adaptive management.
- Create mechanisms to institutionalize ecoagriculture friendly policy and program development with the full and active participation of all stakeholders.

June 2005: [Community Commons](#), New York, USA: Commons participants called for the development of an international Community Knowledge Facility, a community-governed fund to support community-led innovation, knowledge sharing and learning. At a side meeting hosted by EP, participants agreed to form an international planning committee to design the Knowledge Service. Community representatives will be the primary committee members, with support from key partners. The planning committee should aim to hold a project planning workshop in early 2006.

March 2006: [Community Taba](#), Curitiba, Brazil: During consultations at the Taba, participants discussed the need for and desired attributes of a Community Knowledge service. Recommendations included the need to work through partners to deliver knowledge services such as dialogue spaces, knowledge networks and learning exchange methodology at the global, national and regional level. Such activities can help share examples of good practices and lessons learnt. Critical issues include ensuring that there are incentives for communities to share their knowledge; that language difference are respected; and that mechanisms to protect their Intellectual Property are in place wherever necessary.

A number of initiatives are already underway to take forward these recommendations. These include:

- GROOTS International, an international network of grassroots women's organizations, has developed considerable expertise in facilitating community-community learning exchanges worldwide. These have included a series of East African-based learning exchanges conducted in collaboration with the Equator Initiative and partners<sup>2</sup>.
- The [UNDP Equator Initiative](#), an international partnership to support exemplary grassroots initiatives seeking to improve livelihoods while conserving biodiversity, seeks to strengthen the voice of local communities within international policy process by convening community dialogue spaces during major policy forums on key biodiversity conservation and poverty reduction issues. In follow up to a number of dialogue spaces, the Equator Initiative has supported community learning exchanges in east Africa and between small island developing states
- [Ecoagriculture Partners](#) (EP), an international NGO supporting successful ecoagriculture approaches that enhance rural livelihoods and sustainable agricultural production while conserving biodiversity, has been working with community-based partners to develop community ecoagriculture knowledge services. An EP Community Facilitation Team was formed to strengthen ecoagriculture knowledge exchange among community conservation and farmer organizations; and to ensure active participation of community groups in all EP programs. Preparations are underway to pilot test a community ecoagriculture documentation process in Kenya and Uganda, led by Kenyan and Ugandan-based Community Shamba participants. EP is also working to strengthen its partnership with national community-driven Landcare movements, particularly within Africa and Asia, and with farmers' organizations linked with the International Federation of Agricultural Producers
- GTZ, the German Technical Cooperation Agency, is working to support local and indigenous communities to document their contributions to the delivery of the Millennium Development Goals, for example developing posters to illustrate examples of their work<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> For Further details, see: [www.undp.org/equatorinitiative/documents/pdf/Community\\_Community\\_Exchanges\\_.pdf](http://www.undp.org/equatorinitiative/documents/pdf/Community_Community_Exchanges_.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> For further information, see: <http://www.gtz.de/en/themen/umwelt-infrastruktur/umweltpolitik/10509.htm>

### 3. Community Knowledge Service: Draft Framework

#### Overall Goal (Draft):

To design and implement an international Community Knowledge Service that supports community-led knowledge-exchange and learning processes, which in turn enables participating local communities to strengthen and scale-up their work to enhance livelihoods, while sustaining and conserving biodiversity. The Service will be designed to support communities to document the knowledge they have, articulate their knowledge needs and appropriate formats for sharing that knowledge, with other communities, as well as a broader group of stakeholders: policy makers, research organizations, public agencies etc.

#### Objectives: (Draft)

- To develop processes that support the sharing of knowledge and experiences between local community representatives at a local, national regional and/or international level
- To strengthen mechanisms for local communities to share their knowledge with a broader range of stakeholders whose decisions and activities impact upon community livelihoods (eg international conservation organisations, policy makers, researchers etc)
- To design a community-governed financing mechanism that supports local level innovation.

#### Desired Outcomes: (Draft)

- Regional knowledge exchange and learning platforms/processes engaging community-based practitioners and key partners are established. Community representatives participating in the Knowledge Service are more effectively supported to document their knowledge, expertise and lessons learnt for sharing with other communities and a broader range of stakeholders (within conservation and development sectors).
- Initiatives of support organizations (public agencies, NGOs, research organizations) are responsive to the articulated knowledge needs of communities;
- Community knowledge and expertise are better integrated in policy decision making processes (locally, nationally and internationally).

Funding Status: A budget of 100,000USD is available (from TerrAfrica – a regional partnership to support sustainable land management - and the World Bank Development Grant Facility) from September 2006 to support process design and implementation. This financing can be allocated to support community-based knowledge sharing and documentation processes, especially on management strategies that jointly deliver biodiversity conservation, sustainable production and livelihoods improvement benefits. Current financing particularly supports activities within Mesoamerica and East Africa, with additional finances available to support international knowledge sharing processes. Further funding is currently being sought to support the process. Promising sources include the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Christiansen Fund.

#### Overview of the Framework:

The framework outlines a four-year process to design and implement the Knowledge Service (2007-2010) in selected regions. If successful, it is anticipated the Service would be scaled up after 2010 to serve communities around the world. The Service is envisioned to have two main components. The first involves regional and/or national knowledge-sharing and learning processes; the second is an International Community Knowledge Facility and Secretariat to co-ordinate regional activities and mobilize finance for the overall process. It is proposed that the Knowledge Service be designed and governed by a core group of community representatives from different regions, strategically supported by national and international partners. This core group will take a lead role in work planning and allocation of funds.

[NB: A number of key challenges associated with designing the Knowledge Service have already been identified. These are outlined in Annex 1].

#### Component 1: Regional and/or National Community Knowledge Sharing and Learning Processes

At a regional and/or national-level, the first phase of the Knowledge Service could support a group of community representatives to develop and test their own 'knowledge-exchange and learning' processes, with support from partners as requested. The Knowledge Service could possibly play two key roles within each region. The first could be to support participating communities to share their knowledge with other communities. Knowledge-sharing could take place at regional, national and/or local level, depending on scale might be most useful.. Knowledge-sharing could be focused on specific management approaches, issues and/or policy challenges, depending on what is considered a priority. The second role of the Knowledge Service could be to strengthen the voice of local communities in key regional and/or national policy processes.

Possible regional-level activities that the Knowledge Service could support include:

1. Strengthening knowledge sharing between communities within a region (and/or a country) on priority issues, challenges and opportunities. For example, knowledge sharing might focus on issues such as market access and development, transboundary protected area management etc. Activities such as community-to-community exchange visits, information sharing workshops etc. could be organized to support knowledge sharing.
2. Supporting communities to document their knowledge in ways that can be shared with other communities and/ or a broader range of stakeholders. A number of tools to support knowledge sharing could be tested, for example using video, radio, posters and the internet to document and share knowledge (Box 2).
3. Strengthening local *communities' access* to knowledge and resources developed by NGOs, research organizations etc: The Knowledge Service could play a role in making existing information and resources (developed by

international NGOs, research organizations, UN agencies etc) more available to communities. For example, information on policy issues, markets and/or on resource management strategies, depending on what might be useful. The Knowledge Service could provide a platform to strengthen collaboration between local communities and other stakeholders working in the region. For example UN country offices, conservation NGOs, research organizations etc. The aim would be to encourage these organizations to more effectively support community-led initiatives, in ways that have been requested by the communities.

4. Strengthening community representation in key policy processes at the national and regional level. Regional activities could play a role in strengthening opportunities for community representatives to engage in key national and regional policy processes. For example, national strategies to deliver the Millennium Development Goals or the Convention on Biological Diversity. To support effective participation, some of the financing allocated to regional activities could be used to develop community-led leadership, advocacy and negotiation training activities.

Box 2: Examples of possible tools and processes to support knowledge sharing activities:

- Peer-to-peer learning exchanges and site visits
- Community dialogue spaces and workshops
- Leadership development training initiatives
- Participatory video and radio methodologies
- Web-based knowledge exchange platforms and networks
- Local knowledge centres (physical resources centers)
- Written documentation of community practices (Case studies, Posters etc)

## Component 2: International Community Knowledge Facility

The International Community Knowledge Facility would support and co-ordinate processes in the regions. As called for during the Community Commons, the Facility should aim to be governed and directed by a committee of local community representatives. To provide effective support, the International Facility (through its Secretariat) could play four key roles:

1. Ensure strong coordination and inter-linkages between ongoing activities in each region: The Facility could provide a mechanism to ensure strong inter-linkages between ongoing regional processes. It could also facilitate the international sharing of knowledge and resources generated within each region. For example, resources might include examples of case studies, policy recommendations etc.
2. Ensure Knowledge Service outputs are communicated to a broader range of target audiences. The International Facility could act as an interface. It could adapt and communicate outputs from regional activities to a broader range of stakeholders internationally. These stakeholders could include other networks of community-based practitioners and their partners, policy makers, research institutions, development and conservation agencies etc.

3. Strengthen the direct delivery of financing to support community-based innovation: A key role of the Facility (and its Secretariat) should be fundraising to sustain financing for ongoing activities within each region. The Facility could mobilize financing to support the application and/or adaptation of knowledge learned during participation in learning processes. The Facility could help link potential (international) funders with community-based initiatives within each region and/or help channel international financing directly to community-based organizations. The Facility could also play a lobbying role, advocating for changes in existing donor financing frameworks to more effectively meet community needs.
4. Strengthening community engagement in key international policy processes: Building upon the existing community dialogue space model, the Facility could play a role in strengthening community voices and expertise within strategic international policy processes. For example, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Millennium Development Goals etc.

#### 4. Timeline

It is envisaged that the Knowledge Service will be implemented in number of regions from September 2006-2010, during which time diverse approaches and tools will be developed and evaluated. If successful, the program could expand globally.

During the first year (September 2006-2007), with available resources, the core group and partners will initiate activities in a small number of regions or countries in East Africa (Kenya and Uganda) and Central America (Costa Rica and Panama), complimented by seed work in Philippines, southern Africa and India; and design and set up the International Facility and Secretariat. As new funding becomes available, activities will be undertaken in all of these six regions and possibly others, and an international program will be implemented.

#### 5. Governance and Organization of the Knowledge Service

An Interim International Planning Committee will be established to design the Knowledge Service. The Committee will be responsible for developing the work plan and budget for the first year; and determine roles and responsibilities for implementation. The committee will be primarily composed of community representatives (workshop participants?), with representation from key partners as necessary. International partners currently available to support the process include Equator Initiative, Ecoagriculture Partners, GTZ (TBC) and GROOTS (TBC)

During the first year, the Interim Committee will develop a longer-term governance system to incorporate additional regional areas and new communities involved in the Knowledge Service.

#### 6. Interim Contact Points

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## Annex 1: Key Design Challenges for the Knowledge Service

### Overall Design Challenges

- What should be the priorities for the Community Knowledge Service if it is to genuinely support communities to deliver joint livelihood and conservation benefits? [For example, what should be the priority issues to focus on? What should be its geographic scope? Number and types of participants to engage in the design and initial implementation process?]
- What are the most effective ways of enabling community-based knowledge to be shared? How can communities be supported to apply the knowledge they have gained from participating in knowledge-sharing activities?
- How can the Knowledge Service operate internationally, but still be decentralized and specific enough to provide locally-useful information and support services?

### Challenges for Regional -level activities (Component 1)

- What should be the priority focus of regional level activities? [For example Priority issues? Geographic scope? Number and types of knowledge-sharing processes? Number of participants to engage in design and initial phase of implementation?]
- What coordination mechanisms are needed at the regional and/or country level? For example a Steering Committee? A physical office space? A facilitator to support process development? A web-based platforms to support knowledge sharing?
- How should design processes build upon existing initiatives and activities ongoing within the region?
- How can funding for Knowledge Service activities be appropriately allocated between knowledge-sharing processes vs. investment in 'field level' activities
- Who decides which communities participate in Knowledge Service activities? What should be the basic unit of regional activities? (a cluster of communities in a district, or sub-region, or country?)

### Challenges for the International Community Knowledge Facility (Component 2)

- How should the Secretariat and Facility be structured to most effectively support regional processes?
- What are the types of activities that should be implemented at an international level by the Facility that could benefit many different communities in many different regions?
- What financing role should the Facility play? For example, should the Facility support each set of regional knowledge-sharing processes and/or play a role in administering grants directly to selected community based organizations?