

**Developing a Community Knowledge Service in support of  
Local Community Leadership  
in Rural Development and Biodiversity Conservation**

**Concept Note**

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## 1. Introduction

This concept note outlines an 18-month planning process to design and implement an international Community Knowledge service (CKS). The CKS will enable local community leaders to strengthen and scale-up their work to enhance livelihoods while sustaining and conserving biodiversity through bottom-up processes to facilitate the sharing of knowledge and expertise, and the adaptation and application of knowledge learnt to strengthen their management practices. This initiative responds to the need to recognise community-based practitioners as principal stewards of natural resources and takes forward recommendations articulated by community leaders during a series of international community dialogue spaces, convened since 2002.

During September 2006, 23 community leaders and partners met at a strategic planning workshop in Berlin to collectively develop a common vision on the CKS' purpose and niche, desired outcomes, design, implementation, finance and governance<sup>1</sup>. This proposal articulates the CKS framework and process development strategy developed by Berlin workshop participants.

## 2. Rationale

Local communities worldwide demonstrate unique capacity to jointly address the challenges of biodiversity conservation, rural health and livelihood improvement. Approaches are diverse and encompass community protected area management strategies, local enterprise development and market innovations, community-driven responses to health, forestry, agriculture, pastoralism and fisheries management that sustain production and livelihoods, while conserving or enhancing biodiversity. The CKS addresses the acute need to invest in long-term relationship-building and knowledge-sharing processes that enhance ongoing opportunities for learning between community-led initiatives, and support community representatives to adapt and apply knowledge acquired through participation in knowledge-sharing processes.

While recognition of community leadership in conservation and development is growing, a key challenge remains incompatibility between the holistic management approaches employed by communities to sustain inter-linked livelihood objectives, and the institutional environment within which they operate. 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 designed by local community representatives, or tailored to build upon their existing expertise and capacity. The long-term knowledge and expertise developed by local communities worldwide is rarely shared, learnt from and adapted for more widespread application. Yet this is 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 develop 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

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For more information please see 'CKS Strategic Planning Workshop Summary, 7-8 September 2006, Berlin' and CKS Workplan Framework (Draft) [[www.undp.org/equatorinitiative/equatorknowledge/cks.htm](http://www.undp.org/equatorinitiative/equatorknowledge/cks.htm)]

(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. It also requires existing tools and processes developed to support community-based knowledge exchange to be made more accessible to community groups worldwide. Such tools include videos, radio and posters to document community knowledge and practices; support for community mapping, monitoring and learning exchange processes; local knowledge resource centers to enhance access to locally appropriate information. Facilitating broader availability of these tools through strengthened multi-institutional co-ordination, complemented by community leadership in determining which tools most appropriately meet their needs offers significant potential to realise globally-meaningful impacts to community livelihoods and conservation.

Recommendations developed by community-based experts and collaborators during a series of international community dialogue spaces since 2002 [including '[Learning from Community Action](#) to realize the MDGs; Community Shamba; [Community Commons](#), and [Community Taba](#)<sup>2</sup>] 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 linkages and learning 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. CKS development directly responds to these priority recommendations.

### 3. CKS Goals, Objectives and Desired Outcomes

**Goal:** To enable local community representatives to share their expertise more broadly, and apply newly acquired knowledge to strengthen and scale-up their work to enhance livelihoods while sustaining and conserving biodiversity.

#### Objectives

- To develop long-term bottom-up processes that empower local communities to transform their realities by sharing their expertise with other local communities experiencing similar opportunities and challenges (at a local, regional and international level).
- To facilitate the scaling up of effective community-led development processes to achieve globally meaningful impacts.
- To strengthen opportunities for local communities to share their knowledge and expertise with the broader range of stakeholders whose decisions and activities locally, nationally and internationally impact upon community livelihoods. For example NGOs, policy makers, researchers, etc.
- To mobilise the direct delivery of finances and resources to the community-level, in support of local-level innovation to enable adaptation and application of newly acquired knowledge.

#### Desired Outcomes

- Long-term community knowledge-sharing and learning platforms established by community-based practitioners and partners from the ecosystem-level upwards – with co-ordination between local, regional, and international levels.

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<sup>2</sup> For more information please consult the Community Dialogue Space Declarations, available at [www.equatorinitiative.org](http://www.equatorinitiative.org)

- 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).
- Community expertise is better integrated in decision making processes on rural development and biodiversity conservation at the local, national and international level.
- An international strategy is developed to mobilise partner resources and financing to support direct investment in community-led development and natural resources conservation on a globally meaningful scale.
- A broad coalition of partners representing local communities, CBOs, NGOs, researchers, public agencies and private sector partners share the common CKS vision and are collectively working to support grassroots community leadership, building upon diverse strengths and synergies.

#### **4. CKS Operational Principles**

- Community representatives are process leaders, who set priorities for collective action and resource allocation.
- CKS activities should be community-driven from the bottom-up, highly dynamic and rapidly responsive to community needs.
- The process will recognize, empower and build upon the collective knowledge and wisdom that exists within local communities worldwide, ensuring recognition of traditional and indigenous knowledge.
- Activities, partnership and fundraising strategies operate in accordance with the principles of subsidiarity, transparency, strength in diversity, equity, accountability, complementarity and shared ownership.
- A minimum of 70 % of available resources will be directly invested in community-based activities.
- Commitment to and focus on investing in long-term learning processes and knowledge cycles, where knowledge is enabled to transform people's realities on the ground.

#### **4. Process Overview**

The initial phase of the CKS has two main components: The first is regional community knowledge-sharing and learning process, initiated and developed from the community-level upwards within select ecosystems. Initial activities will be seeded in strategically-located, priority ecosystems within the regions of Asia Pacific, Africa and Latin America. These ecosystem-based activities will be supported by a regional co-ordination mechanism, responsive to ecosystem-based needs and priorities. The second is an international component. An international program will be established to support cross-regional process co-ordination and resource mobilisation. International activities will also support strengthened integration of community expertise into international policy process on rural development and biodiversity conservation.

**Component 1: Regional process planning and development:**

[To be undertaken in parallel in Asia Pacific, Africa and Latin America regions]

1. *Process Planning:* Regional steering committees will be formed, composed of CKS collaborators representing local communities, community-based organisations (CBOs) and supporting partners. Regional committees will convene to develop a collaborative work plan, define roles and responsibilities. Key regional staff may be appointed to support regional co-ordination. Planning activities will identify strategic ecosystems within the regions as the initial sites for seeding activities.
2. *Institutional Mapping:* Building upon existing community-led activities and capacity, a baseline 'institutional mapping' will be undertaken of existing initiatives and potential partners working to support community-led management, knowledge-sharing, leadership and capacity development. Scoping will strengthen understanding of activities already underway within the regions; identify current gaps; strengthen partnerships and learning between ongoing initiatives; establish collective 'conditions for success'
3. *Documenting practices:* CKS activities will 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. Regional Steering Committees will work with local communities to identify priorities for knowledge-sharing activities within each pilot ecosystem, and more broadly. Regional Steering Committees will identify priorities for case study documentation, and opportunities to support communities to document their practices and knowledge.
4. *Knowledge Sharing:* Regional Steering Committees will work with groups of community representatives to develop and test their own 'knowledge-exchange and learning' processes, with support from partners as requested. Diverse tools and processes may be considered [For examples, see **Box 1**] Knowledge-sharing may focus on specific management approaches, issues and/or policy challenges, depending on what is considered a priority.
5. *Strategic Planning:* After ~12 months, outcomes and lessons learnt from regional planning processes assessed. Lessons will be documented and regional knowledge-sharing workshops for community representatives and partners responsible for process planning will be convened. Strategic planning will be undertaken to establish a long-term regional knowledge platform, based on the foundation laid by the 18-month planning process.

**Box 1: 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 Process Development**

1. *International Co-ordination and Resource Mobilisation:* An interim International Steering Committee and Secretariat will support process co-ordination. The International Secretariat will include secondments from international, national and/or community-based partners. Initial responsibilities for the International Steering Committee and Secretariat will include developing an appropriate long-term governance structure, partnership and fundraising strategies.

2. *Inter-linkages ongoing regional processes*: Mechanisms will be developed to ensure strong inter-linkages between ongoing regional processes, and facilitate the international sharing of knowledge and resources generated by each regional planning process (Component 1).
3. *Strengthening community engagement in key international policy processes*: Building upon the existing community dialogue space model, international activities will include strengthening community voices and expertise within strategic international policy processes. For example, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Millennium Development Goals etc.
4. *Outreach and Communication*: Outreach activities will focus on raising awareness of CKS development amongst broader range of stakeholders internationally, including other networks of community-based practitioners and their partners, policy makers, research institutions, development and conservation agencies. A web-based portal will be developed to support information and knowledge-exchange.

## 5. Timeline

An initial 18-month planning phase is proposed to implement the above work program, from January 2007 – June 2008. This planning process will lay the foundation for launching the CKS at CBD COP9, June 2008.

## 6. Organisation

The planning process will be implemented by CKS partners at the local, regional and international level. CKS Regional Steering Committee members will take leadership of regional process development and co-ordination. Regional processes and the development of an international CKS program will be supported by an interim International Steering Committee and Secretariat. Governance and co-ordination of CKS activities at regional and international levels will include at least 50% representation of community members, with support from partners. Process development will explicitly seek to learn from and build upon the significant capacity and expertise of the diverse CKS collaborators, as well as a broader range of partners engaged in support community-led innovation internationally.

**Current CKS Collaborators** include ANAI/Talamanca Initiative, Costa Rica; CHIEHA, Zimbabwe; Ecoagriculture Partners; Forest Peoples Consortium, Nigeria; Foundation for Revitalisation of Local Health Traditions, India; Garifuna Emergency Committee, Honduras; GROOTS International; GROOTS Kenya; GTZ; IFAP Uganda; KAMICYDI, Philippines; KENVO, Kenya; Landcare Philippines; Landcare Uganda; Makuleke Community, South Africa; M.S. Swaminathan Foundation, India; UNDP Equator Initiative Partnership

## 7. Budget and Co-financing

\$US 1,200,000 is sought for an initial 18-month planning process, to finance regional process development within Africa, Asia-Pacific and Latin America and proposed international activities. Costs support the establishment and co-ordination of Regional Steering Committees and an International Secretariat; regional planning; direct support to community-led 'institutional mapping', documentation and knowledge-exchange processes. Significant co-financing is anticipated from CKS partners and donors, of which \$265,000 has been secured from World Bank Development Grants Facility; TerrAfrica; Dutch Government, Ecoagriculture Partners and the UNDP Equator Initiative. Substantive in-kind commitments have also been secured from community-based partners in the form of expert consultancy.