Traditional Knowledge and Human Well-Being in the 21st Century

Coordinating convening lead author: Carol J. Pierce Colfer
Convening lead authors: Marcus Colchester, Laxman Joshi, Raj Puri, Anja Nygren and Citlalli Lopez

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Outline

What is traditional knowledge (TK)  (Slides 3-4)

The importance of TK  (Slides 5-6)

Barriers for the use of TK  (Slides 7-8)

Challenges for the wider use of TK and to enhance its contribution to sustainable resource management and human well-being  (Slides 9-11)

The way forward  (Slides 12-14)
TK encompasses a wide range of different types of knowledge

TK can

• relate directly to the environment
• consist of knowledge about what the environment means to people and how it should be managed

• relate to social relationships and to the allocation of rights to use and manage the environment.
TK is embedded in the cultural context

- TK is holistic: typically looks at the entire forest habitat or agro-ecosystem.
- It often relates to local biophysical and social systems and customary values.
- It is often practical, responsive to changing circumstances and involves skill, flexibility and adaptability in a given context.
- It often involves mechanistic explanation of natural processes.
TK is an integral part of local lives

- TK has cultural, symbolic, social, economic and environmental implications.
- The recognition of the value of TK contributes to the self-respect and self-confidence of those whose knowledge is thus recognized.
- TK contributes to connecting local people in a more mutually beneficial way to non-local actors.
TK can contribute to sustainable resource management

• TK can contribute to environmental and human well-being.

• It can enhance the understanding of local human systems and interaction between human systems and the environment.

• It can strengthen the voice of local people in making policies more appropriate to their needs.
TK is vastly under-recognised and under-utilised

• Those in power tend to be ignorant of the knowledge of the less powerful and to consider such knowledge without use and lacking in authority.

• TK has not been visible in policy contexts.

• TK and modern, scientific knowledge share some characteristics, but also differ.
TK is often held by small, diverse groups

- It varies greatly within and among different communities, by e.g. ethnicity, age, gender, interests, “occupation” and wealth.

- TK is often expressed, shared and passed along in non-dominant languages.
Challenges for enhancing well-being

- The potential of combined TK and scientific knowledge should be harnessed for enhancing environmental and human well-being.
- Policy makers should be made aware of the potential utility of TK in advancing sustainable resource management.
- Mechanisms for incorporating local knowledge into location-specific policy making should be developed.
- Forest people’s capabilities to participate in development processes should be recognised, and their knowledge should be more widely used.
Challenges in harnessing TK for sustainable multiple forestry

How to

• accommodate the diversity in TK within and among communities?
• harness the dynamic and evolving nature of TK to serve sustainable multiple forestry?
• understand the processes of learning and transmitting of TK?
Challenges in clarifying the ownership of TK

• The links among TK, practice, livelihoods and rights to land should be acknowledged.

• The real “owner” of TK should be identified in connection with the efforts to publicize or commercialize TK.

• Commercialization should be based on the principle of free, prior and informed consent.
The ownership of TK should be recognised

The recognition of TK as a part of indigenous property rights is likely to require
• secure indigenous rights over land and resources
• recognition of customary laws
• the establishment of knowledge registers and trust funds (for benefit sharing) as complementary measures.

This would
• improve conservation and development efforts
• protect and strengthen traditional ways of life
• increase the prestige and feelings of self-worth among forest peoples.
TK should be combined with scientific knowledge

• Together they form the potentially most powerful combination for environmental and human well-being.

• TK systems should be studied:
  – to find paradigms that can help to deal with the complex world
  – to strengthen the involvement of traditional peoples in formal natural resource management.

• Researchers should acknowledge the contributors of TK when using such knowledge.
Forestry training should be strengthened for learning about TK

Forestry professionals, including field personnel, should also be trained:

- in relativity
- in methods for understanding other knowledge systems
- to identify those having pertinent knowledge and to work in collaboration with them.