

Indigenous Options



Newsletter of the Centres of Distinction on Indigenous and Local Knowledge (COD-ILK)
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Promoting Reciprocity for social and ecological balance

Gathuru Mburu



Background on the communities around Mt. Kenya

The **Kikuyu Community** is the largest in Kenya. They are traditionally found near Mt. Kenya on which they believe their God (Ngai) resides. Presently, the Community has a plural healthcare system of both the traditional and modern medical care systems. The traditional system, conceptualized along cultural beliefs and practices toward illnesses and diseases, is regarded as unsystematic and therefore little understood and practiced. This demeaning stance toward the traditional system was first conceived by colonialists through the Medical Practitioners and Dentists Ordinance in 1910 and the Witchcraft Ordinance in 1925. This still continues today despite enactment in 2017 of the Health Act which provides for the integration of traditional medicine into the healthcare system.

Traditional prayer is central to the traditional health system. Prayers are made to Ngai in situations of famine, drought, disease, and other significant calamities. In 2010, formal recognition of this healthcare system is made in the Kenyan Constitution. In addition, the World Health Organization (WHO), defines traditional medicine as the "*sum total of knowledge, skills, and practices based on the theories, beliefs, and experiences indigenous to different cultures, whether applicable or not that are used in the maintenance of health as well as in the prevention, diagnosis, improvement or treatment of physical and mental illness.*" However, even with these recognition, the traditional system remains underdeveloped. Nonetheless, its renaissance is being taken up through social movements in Kikuyu Community as seen in the past few years.

Key cultural players, including the *Mundu Mugo* (medicine man) and *Mugongoni* (traditional prayer leader), in the Community's healthcare system have made a comeback. After more than one hundred years of subjugation by colonialists, traditional curative and preventive practices are slowly creeping back.

Traditional medicine is not a fixed discipline as widely-propagated, but rather it is evolving. This means that practitioners are constantly learning, adjusting, and updating themselves.

Rituals to ward off the Covid-19 pandemic

Kenya was among the countries in Africa that responded swiftly to the pandemic by locking down areas with high Covid-19 infections in order to contain the virus spread. Elders joined these actions, and as part of their communities' cultural response strategy, they started performing the rituals to contain the spread of the virus. In the Kikuyu cosmovision, rituals constitute a form of reciprocity.

The African Biodiversity Network (ABN) organized its partner-members to work with the local elders. Among its members, Ngaatho Community Foundation (NCF) supported ritual performances among the Nyeri and Kiambu in Kikuyu Community.

Results

The water ritual among the Nyeri involved placing a traditional door on the opposite side of the river which prevents the disease from crossing the river and infect the Community. Days ahead of the ritual, the lead spiritual leader prepared the traditional door and spent time with spiritualists to clarify the ritual process. On the day of the ritual, a small number of elders converged under a Muguno tree at the ritual site. (*continued on page 2*)

"Traditional medicine is not a fixed discipline, it keeps on evolving"

Results *continued from page 1*

Thereafter the lead spiritual leader guided the participants through the ritual and reminded them of the meaning of the ritual materials. The ritual was last performed in Kikuyu Nation around 1930 before the final blow was dealt against the Kikuyu traditional spirituality. It was therefore important for the lead spiritualist to explain this to the younger participants who had not yet experienced the ritual. Then, standing under a Mugumo tree, the spiritual leader faced Mt. Kenya and prayed to Ngai.

He explained that he will cross the Burguret River alone in order to place the traditional door on the other side. Just as doors prevent enemy access to a compound, so will the traditional door prevent the Covid-19 virus from crossing the River and reaching Kikuyu Community. As he made his way toward the River taking with him the traditional door and a walking stick, the spiritual leader led in the chanting of a popular Kikuyu prayer.

The rainy season had just ended hence the violent rush of the waters. The spiritual leader had to balance himself against the surge of the fast-flowing waters. As a way of protecting him, the participants on the shore chanted louder and louder. Occasionally, the spiritual leader used a smoky spongy substance from the soil called *ndoogo muki* to chase away any bad omen in his way.



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In Kiambu, the ritual involved prayers around a Mugumo tree. A small number of elders participated wherein an assortment of indigenous seeds mixed with milk and honey is used in the ritual prayer. The spiritual leader, with other senior elders, prayed around a Mugumo tree which they sprinkled with the mixture as they called on Ngai to protect the Community from the fast-spreading virus.

They called for peace of the mind, body, and soul because when epidemics strike, peace disappears. They also mentioned the suffering of parents and their children and of the government, which is caused by events related

to the pandemic, such as early pregnancies among young girls, drug and substance abuse, and delayed development projects as a result of the banning of in-school learning and movement as measures in containing the virus. They asked Ngai to end the spread of the virus especially in their area and for normalcy to return so that the social problems caused by the spread of the virus could cease.

Challenges

The rituals were done during a national lockdown, a government strategy to contain the virus. People could not move freely which was to avoid transferring the virus from one area to another. Large congregations were also banned for the same reason. The rituals, in normal times, were attended by large numbers of people, however during the pandemic only up to fifteen elders participated in each of the site.

The other challenge relates to process. The last time the rituals were conducted was almost 90 years ago, and so the processes had to be well-clarified beforehand. There are different approaches in doing the rituals and the elders had to discuss and agree on how to do it and what was needed. They had limited time to do this and their movement was inhibited due to the lockdown.

To move this practice forward, NCF is working with relevant sectors of the communities in utilizing existing policy and legal opportunities that promote traditional health care approaches alongside modern health systems.

Lessons Learned

Given the opportunity, the communities have their own strategies to address some of the social challenges they are faced with today.

It is also important that cultural practices are revived and lived, and not wait for a challenge before doing so.

Under an enabling policy environment, which is the case in Kenya, the traditional approach in preventive medicine should be continuously clarified and reintegrated into the lives of the people.

Asserting Biocultural Rights and Autonomy through Cultural Festival and Spiritual Gathering in Tharaka, Kenya

Simon Ndonco Mitambo

The Bio-Cultural Festival and Spiritual Gathering

SALT held the first *Tharaka Annual Cultural Festival, Spiritual Gathering and Pilgrimage, and Walking Workshop* on October 12 to 15, 2023 at Chiakariga Market in Chiakariga sub-County. The Workshop involved a divine process instigated by the local community. The elders led the People of Tharaka in reconnecting with themselves and the wisdom and worldviews of their ancestors.

The event was held in Chiakariga (original name: Miruguyuni) because apart from its indigeneity, it is home to the Gumba, the first native people who lived in Tharaka. The Gumba were hunters, gatherers, and blacksmiths.

Chiakariga is also the ancestral home of the Tharaka spiritual leader, Mũgwe and Kĩbũka, the saviors of Tharaka. The story is that Kĩbũka was later betrayed by the very people he saved.

The four-day event, with the overarching theme *"Finding our ways into the heart of conservation of biocultural diversity through rerooting with our culture and indigenous wisdom,"* allowed for other communities to attend and immerse themselves in the rich culture of Tharaka. Sub-themes identified for each day ranged from origin and pilgrimage stories of the Tharaka People to their community's seasonal calendars, ritual ceremonies, and practices. It was an effective strategy of appreciating and upholding the diversity of African cultures.

The four days is also symbolic of the Tharakan worldview. The number four represents the elements of life - Fire, Air, Water, and Earth - and the four directions.

The Workshop concluded with a walking event and pilgrimage. Participants walked to the Kĩbũka Grand Falls where the elders of Tharaka's 30 clans performed the appeasement rites. The rites were directed to Kĩbũka, the mythical God from the legend of the Tharaka People.

At the same time, SALT celebrated its 10-year anniversary. The celebration was attended by more than 3,000 people from Kenya and East Africa. Attendees included people from the Maasai (Narok and Kajiado), Ogiek (Nakuru), Imenti (Meru), Chuka (T/Nithi), Maara (T/Nithi), Kikuyu (Laikipia, Nyeri, Nakuru), Kamba (Machakos), and Mbeere (Embu). From East Africa, the African Biodiversity Network (ABN) brought people from Rwanda, Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Uganda. One participant came from Dakar, Senegal.

They joined the celebrations through songs, dances, poems, percussions, storytelling, and ritual ceremonies. Participants included men and women elders, custodians of sacred natural sites, spiritual leaders Mugwe, Oloibon, and Mugo.

Introduction

Tharaka traditional territory is known as *Nthiguru iri Njuki* ('The Land of the Bees'), a semi-arid land characterized by lowland scrub and hill ranges. It is located between the foothills of Mount Kenya and River Tana, a biodiversity hotspot area.

Tharaka has very rich cultural traditions and elders who have deep ecological knowledge which is at the center of their governance systems. However, these traditions are being increasingly undermined. The colonialists started this erosion.

After independence, the government and external agencies, victims of colonialism, promoted projects ill-conceived for the region. Examples are livelihood projects that promote livestock and seeds that are not adapted to local conditions. Along with the traditional governance system, customary laws controlling the cutting of trees, hunting of animals, and farming too close to water sources have been eroded. Powerful external forces continue to divert the community from seeking solutions of their own. There has been, in the name of poverty alleviation, privatization and commercialization of their land, ecological knowledge, and biocultural diversity.

All these contributed to the Community's increasing vulnerability to pandemics and climate disruption. However, with the formation of the Society for Alternative Learning and Transformation (SALT) in 2012 and its legal registration in 2013, the tide has since been slowly changing. Collaborating with SALT, the Community discovered that the solutions they have been seeking are just lying deep in their indigenous culture.



© Ngaatho Community Foundation



Participating constituents included school children from the Kithino Learning Center, Chiakariga Girls Secondary School, Kajimpau Secondary School, Kirimankari Primary School, Kombo Primary School, Kijege Primary School, and Mutaranga Primary School. The school children performed and learned from the elders

Mr. Nobert Komora, Tharaka Nithi County Commissioner, officially opened the event. He was accompanied by Mr. Kaloki Kyalo, Chiakariga sub-County Commissioner. They both represented the President of the Republic of Kenya.

Senior government officials and policy-makers graced the occasion, including Mrs. Bridget Wambua, County Director of Education. She was accompanied by a team from the Ministry of Education, namely Hon. Susan Ngugi Mwindu, Member of the National Assembly and Women Representative; Hon. Joseph Kinyua, area Member of the County Assembly; Muthini Karangi, County Minister for Public Service, Administration and Devolution Affairs; and, John Kibabaya, who represented Hon. George Gitonga Murugara, Member of Parliament for Tharaka Constituency.

National and local media houses were also represented, which included The Star Newspaper, Radio Africa Group, Kenya National News Agency, Tuliza FM, Mwariama FM, Meru FM, Geetu FM, Wendani FM, Muuga FM, and Weru TV.

The Importance of a Biocultural Festival and Spiritual Gathering

The Workshop brought together diverse knowledge systems in dialogue, a process known as Indigenous Futures Thinking Walking Workshop or Pilgrimage, toward enhancing biocultural protection.

The Tharaka Cultural Festival and Spiritual Gathering is an important event as it gives the Tharaka Community the opportunity to revive and revitalize their indigenous and local knowledge systems through intergenerational learning. Indigenous and local knowledge and practices play a critical role in the protection and conservation of biological diversity and regeneration of the land. Formal recognition of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs) was made in the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Nagoya Protocol.

Participants took a walk through their ancestral landscape of Tharaka, the Kibuka Grand Falls. It is one of the most sacred natural sites in Tharaka, which is now threatened by dam construction, a flagship project under the Kenya Vision 2030. The walk was an opportunity for participants to reconnect with themselves to their sacred land and ancestral territory and the Tharaka People's ancient wisdom and worldview. It was also a celebration of their cultural identity. This is critical as it connects well with national and global networks in which SALT engages with that link the local to global processes.

The Gathering and Pilgrimage began with an appeasement ritual at the Kibuka Grand Falls, which sought to break the intergenerational curse directed via the Legend of Kibuka to the Tharaka People.

The ritual restored peace and built solidarity with all people, other Earth communities, and the ancestral spirits of the land and territory.

SALT decided that beginning in 2023 the Gathering and Festival will be made an annual event.

The journey with regard to the appeasement ritual and breaking the curse

The actual effects of the journey with regard to the appeasement ritual and the breaking of the curse were great. We experienced rains immediately after the appeasement ritual process. The elders said that this was a good sign to show that the offerings were accepted by the Kibuka, the ancestor of the rains, and our ancestors.

Some of the elders had dreams, which they interpreted as an affirmation that the ritual of appeasement was accepted. The elder Chabari Mwarania, a healer, saw monkeys visiting people in his dream. He was told that visitation by the monkeys will be an affirmation that Kibuka and the ancestors were happy and that their offerings were accepted. Some community members called during and immediately after the festival to confirm the visitation by monkeys.

The appeasement ritual reconnected the people with their ancestral land, their wisdom, and worldview. It helped mend the relationship that had been broken by betrayal of Kibuka by the people. One of the elders confirmed that this was a good step forward in breaking the intergenerational curse.

The elders are keen to continue with this ritual and agreed to perform it annually. They said that the more it is performed, the more it will restore the broken relationship with Kibuka and the ancestors. They also said that there would be more signs to be seen and thus promised to be vigilant in reading the signs of nature and respond accordingly.



SALT

SALT is a community-based network of cultural and ecological governance institutions founded and established under the customary laws of the indigenous and local communities of Tharaka. These cultural and ecological institutions include clans, chiefdoms, kingdoms, councils of elders, custodians of sacred natural sites, diviners and spiritual leaders, and traditional healers.

SALT has been reviving and revitalizing culture to build solidarity and assert biocultural rights. The customary laws that manage the use of the land and its resources are slowly being respected and followed again. There are 30 sacred natural sites (SNS) being revived, and their central role to culture, food sovereignty, and the protection of the ecosystems is being returned. Tharaka elders have been remembering how their Community had survived pandemics and plagues like COVID-19 as well as climate-related calamities like drought and famine. They had traditional and cultural ways of responding to these crises, embedded in the Community's cosmivision and worldviews. These helped Tharaka People remain resilient in the face of many challenges.

Tharakan traditional knowledge is now quickly returning, thanks to the work of SALT reviving and revitalizing these cultural ways through intense community dialogues over the past decade. It has not been easy!

SALT is now evolving into diverse strategies toward reinvigorating indigenous knowledge and practices in community and ecosystem resilience. Among such strategies is holding an annual cultural festival, spiritual gathering, and walking workshop. These activities are all geared toward indigenous futures thinking on bringing Tharaka Community and their leaders together for dialogue to assert their biocultural rights and autonomy over their ancestral land and territory.

Restoring and Potentiating Kivaa Socioecological Systems in Kenya

Martin Muriuki



Meeting at Thome Center. © ICE

Kivaa Sacred Hill Socioecological System

Kivaa Hill is situated in Machakos County. The local community had migrated to the area around 1940. There they found a beautiful hill famed for attracting rain. The hill had become a tower of rocks and then it pronounced itself a sacred hill through a seer from a different region.

ICE started working in the Kivaa region in 2008 and in 2012, the issue of the being sacred was discussed with ICE, and a cultural response guided by the local earth spiritualists was agreed upon. The gods had to be appeased and the hill needed to be cared for, protected, and strengthened as a sacred hill. These two processes required the support of the local community, and a broad-based mobilization process was agreed upon, which involved community dialogues mainly to achieve informed consent of the people.

The local people are agro-pastoralists who depend on rainfed agriculture and keeping of livestock as livelihood options. The area is dry and access to clean and adequate water is a challenge. During the community dialogues, the

the community outlined the benefits that they had been accruing from the sacred hill, which included ritual performance at the sacred site, sourcing of herbal medicine and pasture, and water from rains. However, the benefits were short-lived as massive illegal logging and uncontrolled sourcing of pasture led to the destruction of the hill. The dialogues concluded that a holistic approach should be employed to address the different issues affecting the community and an ecosystem approach was agreed upon. The following action plans were identified:

1. Potentiation of the sacred site
2. Restoration of water wells
3. Reviving local ritual calendar
4. Recuperation of indigenous seeds
5. Reviving biocultural conservation practices

Vaccinating Kivaa Hill

Sacred sites in Kivaa region manifest in two categories depending on levels of potency: rituals that are performed each year at the lower-level sacred sites and once every two years at the higher-level sacred sites. Once this ritual is done at a sacred site, the potency of the site rises to high levels which enables the site to protect itself from acts of desecration. The ritual process is equated to vaccination which gives the body immunity.

Once this ritual was conducted, the local people stopped destroying the hill and it regenerated into a beautiful sacred environmental phenomenon. Since then, rituals are consistently conducted every two years to sustain potency of the hill.

They also revived the use of traditional beehives for the protection of trees since it is taboo in the Akamba Community to cut down a tree on which a beehive hanging. In this case, the earth spiritualists and local youth are setting beehives on trees that would be targeted for logging in order to protect them and also harvest honey to earn an income.

Reviving Traditional Control Mechanisms for Pests and Disease

Traditionally, this Community conducted rituals every season to protect their crops from destruction. Over time, this practice was abandoned due to the influence of new religion, and the Community adopted chemical inputs which led to a decline in farm produce as the use of inorganic inputs increased. This issue was discussed at length during the community dialogues, and a decision was reached to revert to traditional pest and disease control measures.

In the subsequent seasons, earth spiritualists conducted rituals to ward off pests and diseases, and it worked for them.

They now consistently conduct rituals each season which has brought mixed reactions from different religious groupings.

Rejuvenating the water wells

Kivaa area is classified as a semi-arid region where access to clean and adequate water is a challenge. The local community therefore dug water-wells in the different villages to provide water for household use.

Special sanctions were also provided which maintained a spiritual connection between people and the water. People were supposed to observe high standards of respect and love for each other when fetching water at the wells. Failure to do so would lead to the wells drying up.

The community was suffering from water shortage, and they knew they had violated the sanctions, but they did not have the confidence to perform rituals to restore the wells for fear of stigmatization.



During the community dialogues, the wells that had dried up were identified and the earth spiritualists planned to conduct rituals to unblock them.

With support from ICE, this happened over several years, and in 2023, three of the remaining wells were unblocked.

The Community now has water closer to them, and they are protecting the wells by maintaining respect among themselves as they fetch the water.

Recuperation of indigenous seeds

Ritual practice in this Community involves the use of certain indigenous seeds, most of which are on the verge of disappearing. During the community dialogues, a key outcome was setting up a seed research group which was tasked to search for possible areas where these seeds still exist.

The group retraced their migration route and visited the communities along their migration route. They found the seeds they needed and brought them back to their agro-ecosystem. The seeds were shared among the farmers who multiplied them and kept sharing.

The process of multiplication has had some challenges, especially during extreme dry weather and pest or disease outbreaks. However, the connections along the migration routes have kept replenishing the seeds, which is of vital importance until the situation stabilizes.

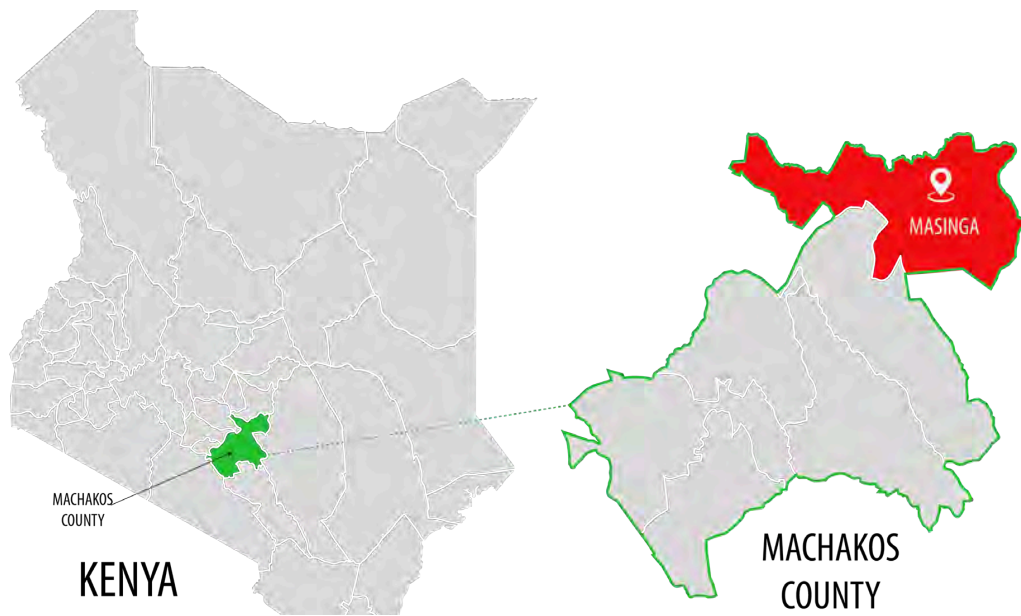
Growing of indigenous food varieties such as beans, sorghum, wheat, and pumpkin among others has been key to ICE conservation agenda in the area to cushion communities against climate change and promote resilience since these crops are known for their ability to adapt to the changing climate. The communities have also been mentored on seed saving and preservation of indigenous varieties to prevent them from extinction.

Reviving the Ritual Cycle

One outcome of the community dialogues was that rituals played an important role in maintaining socioecological balance in the community. Agropastoral activities and biocultural conservation were all part of an elaborate ritual cycle. Due to the influence of new faiths, this was abandoned and the socioecological balance caved in.

The Community decided to develop a ritual calendar alongside seasonal activities to guide them in reviving the rituals and thereby firing up the Kivaa socioecological system.

Following this, rituals are conducted every year at the lower-level sacred sites and after every two years at the higher-level sacred sites. Other rituals are conducted seasonally to keep pests and diseases away, "cool" new crops before harvesting, and pray for rains.



Thome, the Community Learning Centre

Having worked to revive their socioecological landscape, the local community is now setting up a community learning center for intergenerational learning. It is at this center that the Community has been drawing their ecocultural maps and calendars, validating the knowledge they revive in the different sectors, prioritizing community activities to realize their life plans as drawn during development of ecocultural maps, mentoring the youth, and holding inter-knowledge dialogues with other knowledge systems.

Challenges experienced by the Community

Restoration of Kivaa Hill has not been a walk in the park. Based on its strategic placement, there is a lot of interest both from communities who were over-depend on it for firewood, charcoal, and harvesting of medicinal herbs and also the private sector who have encroached to install communication masts on top of the hill. Somehow, the communications mast installed four years ago failed to work, which is attributed to lack of respect for the sacred hill.

In responding to these challenges, earth stewards have teamed up with local youths to scout around the hill every so often to keep away would-be loggers. It is this group of young people who worked with the earth stewards to set up bee hives on the hill as a deterrent to logging.

Conclusion

The Kivaa success presents to ICE an important case for revitalization of socioecological landscapes for protection of people and nature. It is also a good case for understanding the contribution of indigenous knowledge to ecosystems conservation today as promoted by various global environmental conservation undertakings including the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES).

ICE

The Institute for Culture and Ecology (ICE) is a Kenyan non-governmental organization (NGO) established in 2006 following the NGO Coordination Act. ICE was established in response to a clear need in Kenya to promote the inherent and natural role of culture in environmental and resource management.

ICE works with communities to rediscover the significance of local knowledge and naturally-endowed resources in improving livelihoods and conserving the environment. As a result of this, communities are taking control of their own development and breaking free from the cycle of poverty.

ICE collaborates with like-minded organizations, institutions, and individuals at the national, regional, and international levels.

NEW PUBLICATION

Soft Launch

at the IPLCs Dialogue Session
on November 10, 2023 in Geneva, Switzerland



SOWING SEEDS OF WISDOM:

Intergenerational
transmission of indigenous
and local knowledge

The book uses case studies to explore ways to transmit traditional knowledge, written by members of the COD-ILK Network.

NEW YORK



IIFBES OPENING AND CLOSING STATEMENTS AT 10TH IPBES PLENARY

Opening Statement

Polina Shulbaeva
Center for Support of Indigenous Peoples of the North (CSIPN)

The (IIFBES) joins widespread praise for the achievements of the IPBES Global Assessment, and its impact on the adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

Its findings grounded and elevated general understanding about the contributions being made by Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities to the global conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, whilst highlighting systemic drivers of diversity loss, needing fundamental changes in human-nature relationships.



We urge IPBES members to use the findings from the various IPBES assessments including Values and the Sustainable Use of Wildlife to put human rights, including those of Indigenous Peoples at the centre of the revisioning, implementation, monitoring and reporting of National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans.

On Values Assessment

Values are critical to our ways of thinking and doing. Diverse ways of valuing nature have been displaced by other values, leading to nature degradation, social conflicts and violations of indigenous peoples' rights. The values assessment highlights respect for multiple value systems in the new global biodiversity framework relevant to addressing problems of aggression, displacement, and criminalisation when Indigenous Peoples defend nature based on our values.

We hope this report will open the valuation spectrum to other visions, helping decisionmakers to prevent socio-environmental conflicts, arising from the dominance of unsustainable perspectives in the valuation and management of nature.

On Invasive Alien Species

The IPBES assessment on Invasive Alien Species has enabled us to examine our own narratives towards understanding better this phenomenon.

Its drivers and impacts are more complex than biological relations leading to species extinctions, including human and environmental health, ecosystems degradation and fundamental human rights. Hence strategies must consider other environmental drivers such as climate change and pollution and take a holistic approach to addressing IAS. Such complexity calls for concerted and collaborative efforts of governments, scientific Communities and Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities to effectively manage and control invasive species.

On IPBES Inclusion of Indigenous and Local Knowledge and Participatory Mechanisms for Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities

IPBES10 will review its performance towards the inclusion of indigenous and local knowledge. Today we can sincerely say that its participatory mechanisms for IPLCs have progressively expanded. Structured dialogues on key issues covered in the different thematic assessments, and providing feedback on 1st and 2nd order drafts, have made these more specific and substantive. The organization of field trips to indigenous communities, as a part of the dialogues, allows direct exchanges about traditional practices and collective actions.

Participation in such dialogues has increased, with the presence of indigenous peoples from 7 geo-cultural regions. However, a gap remains in providing funding for indigenous representatives from developed countries, thus undermining their equitable participation in the work of IPBES.

These are some perspectives from Indigenous Peoples and local communities participating at IPBES10, and we look forward to making time for further exchanges on these topics during this busy week.

Closing Statement

I speak on behalf of the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity and Ecosystem services (IIFBES).

After 10 years of efforts and joint work to co-produce knowledge and recognize the remarkable contributions of IPLCs to nature conservation and our key role as partners in the science- policy and society interface, IPLCs highlight the achievements and challenges that diversity of ideas and processes implies and the importance of ILK work in IPBES as a pathway and example for other international agreements, bodies, national governments, and society.

IIFBES welcomes the approval of the Assessment on Invasive Alien Species. We are very concerned about invasive species in our territories and resulting ecological and cultural impacts. As we are the most directly dependent on nature, our work, and contributions in monitoring, identifying, and controlling invasive alien species are critical to address this problem. Beyond the negotiation of words contained in the SPM, we all need to vigorously implement its findings and recommendations.

The Second Global Assessment will be a critical contribution to the Kunming- Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, and being consistent with its content, recognizing IPLCs' contributions to nature conservation, rights, different values systems, respecting ILK, and the sharing of benefits with. We look forward to full and effective participation of IPLCs in all the assessment processes and IPBES functions. As well as ILK and IPLCs issues, gender perspectives need to be mainstreamed in this Second Global Assessment, with special attention to the issues of indigenous women and girls and the human rights-based approach to inform the implementation and monitoring of the K M GBF.

The task forces, technical support units and all IPBES bodies, are the spaces to include and co- produce knowledge, capacity building activities and policy creation in a multidisciplinary way, we encourage for a better involvement and participation of IPLCs representatives in the tasks approved during this plenary. In this regard, we look forward to more efforts from parties to work with us and support our initiatives and representativeness in the global decision-making spaces, by providing funding for the participation of all IPLCs representatives from 7 geo-cultural regions recognized by the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, including those from developed countries, consistent with other UN practices.



We thank Ana María Hernandez for all your support to IPLCs to improve the work with ILK in the IPBES functions. We look forward to continuing and strengthening our work to give to the decision makers and society the “best evidence” to benefit nature and people.

IPLCs have been and still committed to nature conservation and good relationships with Mother Earth as custodians for millennia. The current challenges call for putting us at the core of biodiversity conservation. This could be possible if countries are committed too, respect and recognize our rights. We look forward to continuing working in a cooperative and respectful way between different knowledge systems in the benefit of Mother Earth.

Event Highlights

National Roundtable Discussion on Indigenous Peoples and Biodiversity in the Philippines

29 – 30 November 2023 Quezon City, Philippines

COD-ILK and Member Partners for Indigenous Knowledge-Philippines (PIKP) co-hosted the event which aimed to provide background information and context on Indigenous Peoples and biodiversity including on the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF), identify and develop common visions, strategies, and priorities for the updating process and implementation of the Philippine Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (PBSAP), create a space for dialogue and networking among Indigenous People's organizations and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), and, discuss plans for future collaboration.



Hosts and Participants, National RTD on Indigenous People and Biodiversity in the Philippines. *Photo courtesy of PIKP.*

CBD 12th Meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Intersessional Working Group on Article 8(j) and Related Provisions

12 – 17 November 2023 Geneva, Switzerland

COD-ILK Convenor and Members, also representing the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity (IIFB), participated in the deliberations on the set agenda priorities knowledge management component of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), the joint programme of work on the links between biological and cultural diversity, and the role of Indigenous languages in the intergenerational transmission of traditional knowledge, innovations, and practices.



Hosts and Participants, National RTD on Indigenous People and Biodiversity in the Philippines. *Photo courtesy of PIKP.*

Stakeholder Day and 10th Plenary Session of IPBES

28 August – 2 September 2023 Bonn, Germany

COD-ILK Convenor and Members, also representing the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IIFBES), participated in the Stakeholder Day on August 27, 2023 and in the Tenth Plenary Session on August 28 to September 2, 2023.

Highlight of the Session was the launch of a new report on invasive alien species and their control. Priorities were the approval of the Summary for Policymakers (SPM) of the Invasive Alien Species (IAS) report, decisions on the topics of the assessments to be added to the rolling work programme up to 2030, and revising the structure and terms of reference of the IPBES task forces.



Rune Fjellheim of Saami Council at IPBES 10. *Photo courtesy of IISD-ENB.*

2023

Ngaatho Community Foundation (NCF) and the
Centers of Distinction on Indigenous and Local Knowledge (COD-ILK)

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The network of COD-ILK was established to promote, respect and recognition of indigenous and local knowledge in relevant local-global knowledge-policy platform levels and to support institutions, organizations, and networks of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, linking them horizontally and vertically for strengthened collaboration and problem-solving based on abiding cultural values on inextricable relationships between nature and cultures.