

Mainstreaming Indigenous Knowledge

Africa Region • The World Bank

The Indigenous Knowledge (IK) Program has been supporting local and national efforts to mainstream the use of traditional knowledge in the development process since 1998. A number of African countries have undertaken various initiatives to integrate IK in agriculture, healthcare, and education.

Uganda has taken the lead in the formulation of a national policy on IK, Ghana in the use of IK to improve agricultural practices, and Burkina Faso in highlighting the role of traditional hunters in natural resource management.

The IK Program has supported ongoing local initiatives by documenting and disseminating these practices through its database of over 200 cases and dedicated publication, "IK Notes." It has promoted regional networks and funded national consultative workshops to bring together the key stakeholders to develop national strategies on IK. The Program has also sought to match knowledge seekers with providers, through community-to-community exchanges.

Bank supported projects integrate IK

The IK Program set up an IK Integration Fund for the amount of \$250,000, which is being allocated to task managers to integrate IK in Bank-supported projects:

The Agricultural Research and Training Project (ARTP II) in Uganda builds on practices in agriculture to make them part of the outreach program. The Agricultural Extension team in Uganda plan to build its monitoring on IK. The IK Program's role is to provide the methodological input to transfer relevant technolo-

gies and IK and improved cultural practices to farmers' fields and promote their adoption. Examples of these practices include the use of small farm implements designed for the smaller cattle of Uganda, such as the improved Ugandan plow.

In Eritrea, IK practices in early childhood and development are being promoted through the use of new information technologies. In Lake

Malawi, IK is being linked with scientific knowledge to enhance the quality of the environmental protection program. In Kenya, Ethiopia and Ghana, projects are underway to promote medicinal plants as an integral part of health related IK to provide alternative sources of income and maintain biodiversity. It is hoped that the success of these projects can be used to mainstream and replicate the use of IK in the development of new projects.



IK stakeholders meeting in Kampala, Uganda

National strategy for IK

In July 1999, the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST) initiated a study supported by the Bank to explore the diversity of IK in Uganda in relation to agriculture, health sciences, and technology. This formed the basis of a national strategy that would include all the stakeholders, from indigenous healers to civil society, as well as policy makers.

Six months later, a national workshop involving these key players was held to draft a national strategy and framework for action. This was the genesis of the Kampala Declaration on IK for sustainable development. The Declaration urges the government to support the development of IK and planners to include IK in the national planning process. This is being implemented in several ways, such as including IK into Uganda's Poverty Eradication and Action Plan (PEAP). The Bank has funded an Institutional Development Fund (IDF) grant of \$ 400,000 to support the development of a national Centre for Indigenous Knowledge. The IK Program has played a facilitating role to support the Steering Committee to monitor the implementation process and a Secretariat to coordinate activities specifically related to IK.

Efforts are underway to support national activities in other countries to mainstream IK. The IK Program is jointly sponsoring a national workshop in Tanzania with the FAO Links project. The consultative forum will be convened by the Office of the Vice-President of Tanzania to develop a national IK strategy and action plan.

Community-to-community exchanges

The Swiss Development Corporation (SDC) is planning to provide trust fund resources in support of activities designed to strengthen the capacity of selected African community-based organizations to better utilize indigenous knowledge in the development process.

The SDC supported program includes: *community-to-community exchanges of IK practices* (e.g., connecting local communities by matching knowledge seeking/providing communities, promoting cross-community exchanges through local events, field days, excursions, story telling, etc.).

The primary focus of these activities is on issues related to poverty, especially in the agriculture and health sectors as well as in gender in development. A first pilot exchange was recently conducted in South Africa financed by the Bank and IFAD, and lessons learned so far will be applied in other countries.

These include exchanges between local communities living in the Trans-Frontiers Conservation Areas that border Mozambique, Swaziland, and South Africa. The indigenous knowledge to be exchanged is in traditional medicine, community based eco-tourism, and integration of traditional and scientific knowledge in conserving biodiversity.

In Kenya, the IK Program is sponsoring an exchange between Maasai pastoralists and Luo farmers. The Simba Maasai community of the Ngong Hills have created a museum in the village, meant for the preservation of the local material culture. The community has also set up a project to conserve the local



Bank staff advises clients on the use of IK in medicinal plants



Tanga AIDS Working Group

trees and document their medicinal values. The Luo community of rural farmers are equally innovative. Located in western Kenya, on the outskirts of Kisumu, a group of women have developed a number of indigenous food varieties.

They were also instrumental in organizing local milk coops and informal credit schemes. This will be one of the pioneer exchanges to cut across different communities and practices.

In Tanzania, The Tanga AIDS Working Group (TAWG) has one goal: to alleviate suffering from HIV/AIDS using indigenous knowledge. The HIV/AIDS pandemic is multi-

sectoral and cross-cutting, impacting on the community as a whole. With this in mind, TAWG has identified three 'communities' in Tanga which represent the areas of treatment, self-help, and care; that they would like to involve in exchanges of indigenous knowledge with similar communities in Tanzania (and possibly Kenya). These are local networks of traditional healers, people living with AIDS and staff working within the TAWG Home Based Care project.

Traditional healers in the Tanga locality have identified and are using traditional plant remedies in the treatment of oppor-

tunistic infections secondary to HIV. They possess a wealth of information on the whole process of treatment, including plant collection and preparation, uses and methods of usage, as well as indicators of efficacy.

Similar communities exist in other parts of Tanzania and beyond, and TAWG believes mutually beneficial exchanges of indigenous knowledge could occur in well-matched groups of traditional healers.

The SHDEPHA+ group have developed a system of self-help and self-support that enables its members to both live positively with AIDS and generate modest in-

come. Group members have tended to live longer than other TAWG clients, partly because of the mutual support that is always present.

Whereas many HIV/AIDS interventions focus on prevention, TAWG recognizes that people with HIV/AIDS need all the help they can get. Patients receive little help from the formal health sector, which is simply

unable to cope with the heavy demand. TAWG has developed a state of the art, low cost, home care program that includes counseling, HIV testing, home visits, medical treatment, and social support. They believe the system is replicable and would like to share their knowledge with other organizations working in the same field.



TAWG healer treats 2,000 AIDS patients using three herbs



TAWG staff provide counseling

IK Program Website: www.worldbank.org/afr/ik/default.htm

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