

“Knowledge matters—understanding how people and societies acquire and use knowledge is essential to improving people’s lives, especially the lives of the poorest.”
World Development Report 1998

Indigenous Knowledge for Development



Women in Mali painting fabric, using traditional Bogolan motifs and techniques



Initiative led by the World Bank in partnership with CIRAN/Nuffic, CISDA, ECA, IDRC, ITU, SANGONet, UNDP, UNESCO, WHO, WIPO

What are the objectives and activities of the initiative?

Disseminating information

- Developing a *database* of indigenous knowledge (IK) practices and lessons learned
- *Publishing* cases in print and electronic format

Facilitating information exchange among developing communities

- Helping build *local capacity* to share indigenous knowledge
- Identifying appropriate *methods of capturing and disseminating* indigenous knowledge among local communities
- Facilitating a *global network* to exchange indigenous knowledge

Applying Indigenous Knowledge in the development process

- *Raising awareness* of the importance of indigenous knowledge among development partners
- *Advocating the use of indigenous knowledge in programs and projects* of the World Bank and its development partners

Establishing partnerships

- *Learning* from local communities and NGOs
- *Leveraging the limited resources* of partners to obtain a greater impact on the ground
- *Addressing intellectual property rights* issue of indigenous knowledge

An example from the IK database

Application: *Transfer of the Washambaa agricultural system to Rwanda, adaptation and re-transfer.*

The Washambaa of the Usambara Mountains in Tanzania have long cultivated their land by simulating the natural vegetation. Mixing trees and shrubs in the same plot with their crops helps to maintain soil fertility. This successful practice was studied and transferred to Rwanda through a donor-assisted project. Farmers and development workers in Rwanda adapted the model and enhanced it with the integration of cattle keeping and fodder planting. This helped farmers in Rwanda to grow more food and increase income while at the same time maintaining soil fertility.

Lesson: *Simulation of natural vegetation is a valid approach to soil conservation; transfer, adoption and adaptation could add value to the original practice.*

How to contribute to the database:

Should you know about a successful indigenous practice, share it with us!

Please provide the following information: *Where* is the practice applied (country and location)? *by whom* (e.g., Washambaa, local healers)? in which *sector* (agriculture, health)? and what *technology* (e.g., soil erosion control, childcare)?

Please describe the main features of the practice, why is it important for the local community? why should development organizations learn more about this? why might it be beneficial to other communities? and where can we inquire further: Please do not forget your *name, address, phone, fax* and, if available, *e-mail*

Why is it important?

- Indigenous knowledge provides *problem-solving strategies* for local communities, especially the poor. It represents an important *component of global knowledge* on development issues.
- Indigenous knowledge is an *underutilized resource* in the development process.

Why should the development community be concerned?

- Learning from indigenous knowledge can improve *understanding of local conditions*.
- Understanding indigenous knowledge can increase *responsiveness to clients*.
- Adapting international practices to local conditions can improve the *impact and sustainability* of our work.
- Investing in disseminating indigenous knowledge can help to *reduce poverty*.
- Sharing of Indigenous Knowledge within and across communities can *enhance cross-cultural understanding*

Background to the initiative

The Global Knowledge Conference held in Toronto in June 97 emphasized the urgent need to learn, preserve, and exchange indigenous knowledge. In the context of the Partnership for Information and Communication Technology for Africa (PICTA), the World Bank has agreed to lead an Indigenous Knowledge Initiative to stimulate recognition, utilization, and exchange of indigenous knowledge in the development process.

What is Indigenous Knowledge?

Indigenous knowledge is *unique to every culture* and society. It is the *basis for local decision-making* in agriculture, health, natural-resource management and other activities. Indigenous knowledge is embedded in community practices, institutions, relationships and rituals. Indigenous knowledge is part of every day life, such as herbal medicines, acupuncture etc.

Who are the partners?

CIRAN/Nuffic, CISDA, ECA, IDRC, ITU, SANGONet,
The World Bank (lead partner), UNDP, UNESCO, WHO,
WIPO

Global IK- Network, indigenous knowledge centers in
developing countries.

Looking for more partners...

How to contact us:

Contributions, comments, and inquiries are welcome.

The World Bank

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