

## Guidelines for developing a National Strategy on Indigenous Knowledge

Based on the successful experiences of certain African countries, the following are some basic lessons learned, that should form the key ingredients in the formation of a national strategy on indigenous knowledge. The key is to foster a country driven process from the start:

1. Find a **Sponsor**: The minimal "configuration" - and of course, always depending on the situation - would be, to have a fairly senior person in the Government in a rather important Ministry to act as a Sponsor. The sponsor would have to provide a protective umbrella over the entire IK undertaking, advocate it on the political level, mention it in speeches, talk to the donors about it etc. basically be a promoter of the press. Alternatively, the person could be somebody of such prominent stature from outside the political establishment.
2. In the Ugandan case, it is, to some extent, the President himself - he could even be called a global sponsor, he kicked the idea off at the Global Knowledge Conference in 1997 in Toronto.

In Tanzania, the Vice-President's Office President has taken up the challenge, to give IK the national importance it commands in the development process.

3. Find a **Champion**: There has to be a sufficiently well connected (especially to the sponsor) senior person from a well reputed institution/ organization, preferably public, but not necessarily though. The organization/ institution should have the ability or even the mandate to work across sectors in the country. It should also have experience with cooperation with Civil Society. It is also helpful if the institution is not considered as driving too much its own agenda.

The institution should have the clout, the organizational capacity and convening power to call potential stakeholders around the IK subject for a national event. It should be able to draw in civil society, public and private sector, the press etc. The champion must be the driver of the process. The champion must also ensure that he or she is not the only person in the institution that "champions" IK. As the initiative moves along, it is equally important that mid level staff of the organization is drawn into this and gradually takes over day-to-day work related to the IK activities.

4. Co-opt **Strategic Allies**: A Champion and a Sponsor alone cannot do the trick. As we have seen in Uganda, many institutions, public, NGO and even private have been working on IK issues before. These institutions and individuals are the ones who have been driving IK already quite a while, often isolated, on tight budget, on the fringes of their respective scientific establishment and locally rather than on a national level, an issue, rather than cross sectoral. They are most knowledgeable of what really happens in a country on IK, know the IK potential, the bearers of IK, could have their confidence or may even represent them. They need to be part of the first round to kick off a national strategy.

(A sponsor and a champion may have the conviction that IK is useful, often only out of personal experiences, but these people have professional experience with the benefits of IK). We also need an ally in the country office, usually the NGO officer (apart from the support of the Country Director/ Resident Representative), seeking other donors' input may also be helpful.

5. Identify a **Forum/Workshop**: Once the institutional landscape is known, there needs to be a forum for exchange, discrete events, later possibly continuous. In a first step, a workshop to discuss a strategy on how to go about all this could be a good start, maybe with some prior input from a survey or a draft, maybe adapted from another country.

The forum has to be "inclusive", i.e. stakeholders should be represented. At this point in time it is also advisable to include legitimate representatives of bearers of IK. The initial outcome could be a rough road-map on what needs to be done in adopting and mainstreaming or better, operationalizing an IK strategy in a country.

6. **Link IK into broader national development objectives**: Seek link to a relevant ongoing political process in the country: Whatever initial thrust the national strategy will have, it should be linked to a political process in the country, whether it is the Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF) or the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) from a Bank perspective, or the Poverty Eradication Action Program. From there it can find its way into national, Bank and other donor strategies. Ideally this link is made by Sponsor and Champion.
7. **Action**: Identify concrete activities to kick off the implementation and which promise "nice" results (relatively quick, impact on level of objectives of political priority), that can be achieved either on the level of the champion or with one of the important stakeholders.

Obviously situations vary from country to country, but the above mentioned "ingredients" remain more or less the same. While it is important to work from bottom-up, the political support from the very top makes it a lot easier to implement, whether you work in a sector or cross-sectoral approach.