“Biological diversity and human rights are interlinked and interdependent. The two must go hand-in-hand..."

Protecting the rights of indigenous peoples and others directly dependent on natural ecosystems is not only required by human rights law, it is often the best way of protecting biodiversity.

~ Prof. John Knox, UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment
Collective customary tenure systems

- Regulate the lives of at least 1.5 billion people around the world (CLEP 2008)
- Communities are reported to own, control or otherwise claim under customary ownership ~6.8 billion hectares =~52% of the global land area! (Alden Wily 2011)
- While tenure is a crucial factor – so is self-governance and self-determination.
- Clear links between collective tenure and conservation outcomes.

Indigenous land rights key to stopping deforestation

![Graph showing deforestation rate with and without indigenous tenure](Ding et al. 2016)
ICCAs... is an abbreviation for:
“territories and areas conserved by indigenous peoples & local communities”

or the “jewels”, the “heart”, the “seeds” ...

...of bio-cultural diversity around the world!

ICCAs all have 3 characteristics

1. Close bond to natural area
2. **de facto** capacity/power to take and enforce decisions (functioning governance institution)
3. decisions & practices lead to conservation of nature (preservation, protection, sustainable use, sustainable livelihoods, ecosystem restoration, positive trends...)
Examples of ICCAs

- Chizire sacred forest, Zimbabwe
- Wetlands in Qashqai mobile peoples’ territory, Iran
- Caribou migration corridors in Inuit territory, Canada
- Santiago de Covelo, neighborhood woodland, Spain

• Numerous successful examples of collective decision-making about nature ... the oldest form of “conservation” on earth... closely related to peoples’ livelihoods, culture and identity...
Customary conservation:

Based on:
- Local knowledge, understanding of relations between natural resources and community livelihoods
- Historical experience of scarcity
- Cultural values (world views, spiritual and religious beliefs...)

Regulated by:
- Customary institutions
- Access & use rules & limitations
- Sacred, forbidden, “reserved” spaces
- Species-specific interdictions (taboo)
- Capacity for sanctions
- Voluntary mutual obligations
- Within and between communities

The ICCA Consortium (www.iccaconsortium.org)
- Rooted in the movements that promoted equity in conservation (1990s+) and growing international policy recognition of ICCAs
- Created in 2008 & legally established in Switzerland in 2010 as a global, member-based association
The mission of the ICCA Consortium:

"To promote the appropriate recognition of and support to territories and areas conserved by indigenous peoples and local communities (ICCAs) at local, national and international levels"

• **Members** – IP and LC federations, organizations and supporting NGOs (approx. 150 worldwide)

• **Honorary members** – individuals with relevant concerns and capacities (approx. 300 worldwide)

• **Partners** – UNDP GEF SGP, IUCN GPAP, CBD Secretariat, UNEP-WCMC, TCF, SwedBio...

• **Semi-volunteer personnel** – about 24 people based in 20 countries... no dedicated offices... work with and through members...
Self-strengthening «ICCAs»

Why should ICCAs strengthen themselves?

**ICCAs have enormous values**: for livelihoods, nature, identity, ....

*Unprecedented pressures and threats* are weighing upon them: on nature, but also on the *diversity of cultures* (e.g., languages, knowledge and wisdom of local institutions) essential for their survival.

**Opportunity**: *support is available* to sustain ICCA custodian communities willing to govern, manage and conserve their own territories.

What kind of support?
Work at local level

Aims: ICCA self-awareness and strength, increased capacity, security, resilience, self-determination…

Supported initiatives:

• grassroots processes
  (discussions, self-analysis analysis of problems and opportunities, conception and implementation of initiatives to strengthen and restore ICCAs (GEF SGP funding and others), support inscription in the UNEP WCMC Registry, support communication (videos & photostories, local radio, etc.), ICCA youth groups, self-monitoring of conservation & livelihoods results governance vitality

Consortium tools:
Methodology for photostories, "Resilience and Security Tool", environmental monitoring & impact tools...etc.
Work at **national** level

**Aims:** mutual solidarity & “critical mass” for effective advocacy for appropriate legislation, policy and practice in support of ICCAs; engaged civil society & leaders/ champions

**Supported initiatives:**

- Promotion and support to national ICCA networks/ federations/ unions
- Capacity building events
- Advocacy with technical agencies and policy makers for appropriate ICCA recognition and support
- Exchange visits
- Reports on “legal options” to recognize ICCAs
- Exchange visits and collaboration; recruitment of new Members
- National/regional governance evaluation processes (with IUCN)
Work at international level

Aim: enhanced recognition of the ICCA contribution to conservation of nature and culture, mitigation of and adaptation to climate change, food security and sovereignty, collective rights and responsibilities and human wellbeing

Initiatives:

• Publications with CBD, IUCN and other UN bodies
• Topical Policy Briefs
• Active presence at CBD, UNFCCC, UNCCD COPs and other regional and international events (e.g. UNPFII, EMRIP, FAO meetings, IUCN WCC, Green List events, etc.)
• Regional and international exchanges among IPs and LCs

Responses by international policy:


...all finally recognise and support ICCAs!
Our take on land rights...

- **Collective territorial rights & other forms of collective land tenure**, rather than individual land rights.
- i.e. systems that: “operate to express and order ownership, possession, and access, and to regulate use and transfer. [...] Although the rules which a particular local community follow are known as **customary law**, they are rarely binding beyond that community. Customary land tenure is **as much a social system as a legal code** and from the former obtains its **enormous resilience, continuity, and flexibility.**” (Alden Wily 2011)

How do we work?

- Contributing to a broad variety of policy arenas (not just BD) e.g. CC, sustainable livelihoods, food sovereignty, etc.
- Working on both sides:
  - the constructive, positive, promotional, proactive
  - the defensive, safety-net, supportive- when there are threats
- Self-strengthening at the foundational community level: all of our work derives and leverages up from that
- Helping connect communities and organisations with each other
- Facilitating skill-sharing
- Providing advocacy support, incl. global policy advocacy
- Very tailored to specific needs
- Working with a unique flexibility
- Strong focus on solidarity and genuine concern & commitment